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RK Narayan: The Pride of India

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Abstract

When the pride of Madras, who later became the pride of the country Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami passed away at the age of 94 in 2001, it seemed like his legacy had come to an end. But this great personality has given us an innumerable works to the readers to read and cherish his memories. Over seven decades of literary activity, he had produced fourteen novels, countless essays, and dozens of stories, the majority of his fiction set in a South Indian town that he called Malgudi. His works gave him a lot of awards like **Sahitya Academy, Filmfare, Padma Vibhushan and the Padma Bhushan and lot more.**

As his professional career his personal life wasn't that great. Had a lot of up's and down's. Took an extra year to complete his degree where his father was the professor of the college in Mysore in which he also studied. Did his schooling in the school of Madras (Chennai) where his father was headmaster at. He was one amongst 8 children with 6 brothers and 2 daughters. He initially joined as a

school teacher and then had to quit it because his school headmaster to take up job of physical trainer to students. When one day he was at his sister's place at Madras he fell in love with a girl named as Rajam.

After having a lot of differences between both the families Narayan convinced her father and married her. Rajam died of typhoid in 1939. Her death affected Narayan deeply and he remained depressed for a long time; he was also concerned for their daughter Hema, who was only three years old. After all this he worked hardly in the field of literature only and strengthened himself in financial and literary aspects. He drove Mercedes Benz back then and to visit his daughter who lived in Coimbatore after her wedding. His few works which gave him those prestigious awards were **Malgudi days, The English Teacher. Mr. Sampath The Financial Expert, Waiting for the Mahatma, The Man-Eater of Malgudi, A Tiger for Malgudi, Talkative Man, Under the Banyan Tree and Other Stories, A Writer's Nightmare.**

Keywords: RK Narayan, Malgudi, A Hero, Swaminathan

Introduction

Malgudi Days, written by R.K Narayan, chronicles the lives of people in the fictional town of Malgudi. The stories, which share the lives of everyone from entrepreneurs to beggars, all take place in and near this Indian village. Thus, the heart and the soul of that village is on display and we find it is a place where most people are haunted by illiteracy and unemployment. Yet despite the ubiquity of the poor many of the stories come across with humorous good-natured episodes of their lives. Among the stories the reader meets an astrologer, a gatekeeper, and a young man yearning to pass the examinations. There are also animals including a forlorn dog who befriends a blind man and a ferocious tiger. Following publication of this collection, the stories in this book were made into both serials and cinema. Through these tales the author, R.K Narayan, captures the reader's heart with his journey through the village of Malgudi and it's not so unfamiliar denizens. Malgudi a fictional town created by R.K Narayan has given a lot memories to late 90's kids. There are a lot of stories which was created in Malgudi town such as Man eater of Malgudi, Swami and his friends, tiger of Malgudi and lot more. The novel is basically a short story collection. A lot of people have written articles on Narayan's several stories, which tells us how popular he was amongst old and new generation. Schools, colleges and professional course colleges have his stories in their English and Kannada text books or the regional languages.

I personally being R.K Narayan's fan or call me a follower who have a come across a lot of his stories written by him since my childhood. Heard lot of stories of his from my mother too as Malgudi days was telecasted in television in late 90's as I have mentioned above. There is nothing like my favourite story as such but I would like to give my over view on.

Malgudi Days

Malgudi days isn't one story it's a series of stories under the shelter of one title. In these series of stories Narayan talks much about the social problems or the society problems in his period like supernatural elements, dowry system, astrology and other superstitions and the elements. In a story he talks about how to fight our fear and about parenting too. Some of the stories may be viewed as social criticism; Narayan looks with a satiric eye on various aspects of traditional South Indian society. R.K Narayan has mentioned the smallest details he could perhaps tell us about Malgudi, he has spoken about the beggar, street Wenders, rich people (Maalik or owner) and the poor (Gulam or servant). Here now I will tell two stories which R.K. Narayan has written which are so different from each other yet very unique. These 2 stories cover very unique concept which tells us about the belief in super natural entities and other will tell us about a bravery and how to act wisely at the right moment.

Old Man of the Temple

The talkative man of the Malgudi village was passing by the big banyan tree situated in between the village where people under the tree and talk about daily things happening in the village or the country affairs, this happens even today in a lot of villages in the country. It is narrated by the talkative man. This is his own experience of his life. The narrator prefaces his story as "It was some years ago that this happened. It had always mystified me". Then he goes on to narrate with apparent matter-of-factness of the story. Some years ago, the narrator had engaged a taxi for going to Kumbum which was fifty miles from Malgudi. The narrator started at 9a.m. and completed his work there and returned to his hometown. It was past nine in the evening. The narrator engaged a taxi driver, Mr. Das a 19 years young boy, whom was generally engaged the narrator for going wherever. Das is a well-behaved, obedient and really a rare quality driver. When the car passed the village, Koopal, there was complete darkness. The village street was deserted. The insidious darkness relieved by the distant starlight and the noise of the car wheel monotonously dulling one's mental power. Everyone had gone to sleep. All of a sudden Das swerved the car and shouted at an old man who came across the car. To the narrator's eyes, the old man was coming out of the roadside ruined temple. He was scolding the old man in his mother tongue which happened to be Urdu. But surprisingly the narrator couldn't see anyone there, not even a single person. Confused narrator asked Das again if he could see the old man, and the driver didn't deny it even once. He kept talking about the old man as if he was actually there and he could see him. Puzzled and little scared narrator asked driver to take rest for a while thinking he is not well and he is hallucinating the presence of the old man. Within a spark of time, the old man was sitting next to Das in the car and wanted a lift. The driver asked the narrator to give lift to the old man. But the narrator puzzled by Das's request and suspects that he has had a drop of drink, but driver totally denied it giving religious reasons. The narrator pleaded Das to take rest for some time. He now slept for a while but to his despair, Das assumed a hunched-up position, rubbed his eyes with trembling replied in a thin, piping voice to resume their journey. Now Das became a different person. The old man was nothing but a spirit who possessed Das. Das went inside

the temple and sat there and next Das narrated the previous history of the old man who entered the body. He revealed his name was Krishna Batter. He built the temple before a cactus field. He one day was going home from the road that passes through the forest. He was on the bullock cart and had some jewels with him which his sister gave to put to the idol of the god in the temple, but the dacoit's came and looted him completely and one amongst them killed him. From then he is in the temple wandering as a spirit. He, himself had built the temple. Many people gathered for the function of "tower-over". The King, Vishnu Varma, the emperors of emperors often visited his temple or sent his minister for the annual festival of the temple. This made the narrator know about the actual age of Krishna Batter which is at least 500 years old. His wife, Seetha died four years ago of Krishna Batter. After Krishna Batter's death, no one cared of the temple. So, after his death, he became a spirit, looking himself in the temple and coming often outside the temple during nights. Now the narrator didn't know how to take the spirit out of Das's body. The idea he thought was very different from what usually people do in such cases, he asked Krishna Batter who was the person who he thinks loves him a lot and the only answer that came from him was his wife, Sita. The narrator made it seem like Krishna Batter is hallucinating that Sita is alive and is coming walking towards him and asking him to come along. Krishna Batter was confused in the beginning but was happy to see Sita after so long and he happily left Das's body. This made Das to come to his normal position. He lost all the humps and twists. But Das during driving made a dash forward and fell down in a heap. Next the narrator occupied the place of story teller for the remaining story. He took Das to the nearest cottage of the village and banged on the door. The door was opened after sometime. The narrator surprisingly saw the whole family of the cottage crowded out with lamps. Thus, the story ended abruptly. After some months later, again the narrator passed that way but no one was there that disturbing during the nights to that village. So, the narrator finally felt that the old fellow of the temple had really gone away with his good wife, instead of haunting the village. This story sustains the tone and tempo of the narrative mode. This story can be used as an example of the type of narrative technique which avoids descriptive elaboration. The action is carried forward as a breathless pace which seems extremely suitable to the incident being narrated. The Story narrated here by the spirit of the old man, Krishna Batter, may serve the function of an inset to the main narrative by the talkative man. The inset story tells how the man become a spirit and has been cursed to the haunt the area.

This is one of the simple stories I have read in a while. No much drama no exaggeration of the story to make it best seller as few authors do it now. The story is scary which gets goosebumps but clean without any blood shedding like it's shown in today's movies or novels.

This is one of R.K Narayan's works which was based on a concept of super natural powers. Now I will talk about another concept which teaches us about how to upbringing the children.

A Hero

Swaminathan (Swami) a young 9-year-old boy who lived in Malgudi with his parents and his grandmother. His father was a lawyer, his mother a homemaker. One day Swami was

running late for his cricket practice and was trying to skip breakfast and go to school for the practice. His mother caught him running to school skipping his breakfast. Made him eat his breakfast and while eating his father read an article in the newspaper which said that "A boy from Malgudi fought a tiger in a jungle and survived it". Reading this his father was very impressed and asked Swami his view about this. Swami thought the boy who fought the tiger is a heavy built, tall and a grown up, not someone who has Swami's personality. This rose an argument between Swami and his father which concluded that now Swami had to sleep in his father's office from now. Swami got scared in the beginning but as he had to show that he is a brave boy to his father he agreed to it. After he went to school, he couldn't take these thoughts out of his, he all day was thinking of giving some reason to his father. He was his grandmother's piece of heart, so his mother's. He thought that may be grandmother couldn't save him from this. He went home and asked his grandmother to save him from this, grandmother agreed and told that she would speak to his father. Father came home in the evening and asked Swami if he was ready for the challenge, he slowly asked his father his father if he could do it from 1st of next month? but father didn't agree, now came the turn of grandmother and his mother to convince his father, but both failed miserably. Swami went to bed early too so that he can act like he is all asleep, but this too didn't work. Now Swami had to sleep alone in his father's office room from that night only. Swami's father took him to his office room. Swami was scared that his father's office room may have scorpion's or snakes in it. His father laughed and told it doesn't have all this on his office room, he asked his father to keep a small light on or at least open the door so that the light from the hallway could fall inside a little. His father agreed that the door will be open for him but not the light. Swami couldn't do anything else than sleeping there all night. He tried sleeping there but he was so scared that he couldn't even sleep. There was a bench on which he was trying to sleep and even fell asleep but he just nightmares about a ghost on the banyan tree which his friend had told him about. Then he suddenly woke up and slept under the bench. While he was sleeping there, he heard a sound from his window, Swami got more scared now. He was trembling from fear, then he saw someone walking past the bench he didn't know what to do and bite that man's leg. That man started screaming loudly out of pain. Hearing the sound Swami's family came rushing to him and found out that a burglar broke into their house through the window. This act of Swami made him very famous in and around Malgudi, and made him a super hero of Malgudi. The police appreciate him and want him to join the police force but Swami wants to work as an Engine driver or Bus conductor. Appreciations shower on him. Swami shows his bravery and gets rid of fear. Humour and irony run throughout the story. This is another story of R K Narayan which happened in Malgudi. Here the author gives us the moral which says that human can do anything with courage. He further says that courage is everything, strength and age are not important.

Conclusion

Old Man of the Temple, the talkative man has shown interest of his narrative approach and suspense which is different from the other story A Hero. The suddenness and suspense were created by ghosts of dead persons long ago.

They enter the living body (Krishna Battar –Doss, a middle-aged driver) and made them straightaway as talk and do exactly the dead would have. In the Old Man of the Temple, the middle-aged driver, Das captured by the dead old man Krishna Battar and did how an old man speak, trebles. In The Hero, it was more of a moral story which taught us all that courage is only the most important thing than the age or anything else to fight the opponent. The abrupt beginning and ending in these stories create suspense, terror and horror in the minds of readers. This reminds us about the works of Stephen King (horror) and Mulk Raj Anand.

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