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Malgudi as a Representative Town for the Portrayal of Freedom Struggle in R. K. Narayan's Novels

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R.K. Narayan is a most famous personality in the world of literature. He saw the rainy days of India during pre-colonial India. He experienced that tough time of country through live stories of Indians. Indian took challenge to protest against the British rule. Narayan expresses the unforgettable experiences of freedom struggle in his writing. Influence of Mahatma Gandhi on the Indian National Movement, Role of commoners in Indian freedom struggle, contribution of women in freedom fight and English as an agent during independence are studied in various novels of Narayan. Malgudi as an imaginary town of Narayan's novels represents the various activities of freedom fight. The revolutionaries of Indian freedom struggle promote their appreciable contributions in the freedom fight through the various male and female characters of novels.

Introduction

Indian freedom struggle is the greatest revolt against the British government. The Europeans came here for business to make their economy strong. After sometime, they interfered in the social, economical and political matters of country. They were started to play politics with Indian. Indian were failed to recognize their actual motive behind that. Many writers took initiative to aware the public regarding independence through writing. R.K. Narayan is one of them. He is a versatile writer to be promoting domestic, patriotic, ritualistic and spiritualistic issues of society in his writing. An issue of portrayal of freedom struggle finds in his realistic novels. Influence of the Mahatma on the Indian National Movement is one of these objectives of study.

Malgudi is a great platform to be leading the activities of freedom struggle. Mahatma Gandhi was a great man to motivate the Indian peoples for freedom fight. R.K. Narayan introduces the Mahatma as a great freedom fighter in Indian English writing. He was started to write during pre-colonial India. *Swami and Friends (1935)*, the first novel represents the contribution of Mahatma Gandhi in freedom struggle. The students of Malgudi started to contribute in the boycott of foreign goods during pre-colonial India. Swami with his friends involved themselves completely in the protest without knowing the purpose of possession. They were influenced by the Gandhian thought like others Malgudians. Those days were so horrible for the innocent children of Malgudi. R. K. Narayan writes:

The evening's programme closed with a bonfire of foreign cloth. It was already dark. Suddenly the darkness was lit up by a red glare. A fire was lighted. A couple of boys wearing Gandhi caps went round begging people to burn their foreign cloth. Coats and caps and upper cloth came whizzing through the air and fell with a high, thickening the

air with smoke and a burnt smell. People moved about like dim shadows in the red glare. Swaminathan was watching the scene with little shivers of joy going down his spine (Narayan 112).

Non-violence, charkha and truth were the powerful weapons of the Mahatma against the Britishers. Swami as a student of Albert Mission School has protested the British rule. He was not belonged to the patriotic family but he was totally influenced by the Mahatma during pre-colonial era. He was not known much more about freedom fight but he started to participate in Indian freedom struggle. "I won't go to school", Swaminathan said, greatly relieved at this unexpected solution to his cap problem" (Narayan 113).

Waiting for the Mahatma (1955) a most popular novel of Narayan is fully devoted to the Mahatma. Sriram and Bharati are the patriotic characters of novel. They were influenced by Gandhian thoughts in various situations of life. Sriram as a common young man involves himself in the activities of freedom fight without any patriotic concern. He falls in love with a follower of the Mahatma. She is Bharati most beautiful girl of novel. Bharati looks a great follower of the Mahatma. "Who do you think you are talking to, that girl supporting the Mahatma is familiar to me. I am going to know her, but don't ask me her name. She came with a collection box one day in the market. . . ." (Narayan 34).

Sriram wanted to her in any cost so he took a decision to be becoming a member of the camp of the Mahatma. He recognizes the power of truth, non-violence and spinning wheel under supervision of Bharati. The Mahatma introduces these all symbolic things like:

No good, more enough. I like to see more vigour in your arms, more rhythm, more spirit. It must be like the drum- beats of the non-violent soldiers marching on to cut the chains that bind Mother India. I want to hear the great beat. I like to see all arms upraised, and clapping. There is nothing to be ashamed of in it. I want to see unity in it. I want you all to do it with a single mind (Narayan 26-27).

Sriram has become a true follower of the Mahatma after some time. He proved himself as a best revolutionary to do many task of independence. Bharati must proud of him one time to see a fabulous performance of him. Gandhian thoughts changed the mind set of many persons with his initiative steps for independence. Bharati and Sriram are live examples of those persons. Sriram feels:

He was very proud of wearing cloth made with his own hand. Bharati had taught him how to insert the cotton thread, how to turn the wheel, and how to spin. Gandhiji had presented him with a spinning wheel in one of the villages with the explanation: This is the key to your future (Narayan 96).

Jagan is a character of *The Vendor of Sweets (1967)* represents as a great follower of the Mahatma like Sriram, Bharati and Swami. Jagan is a non-violent personality during his life span. He doesn't harm any human beings to fulfill his worldly desires. "I do not like to think that a living creature should have its throat cut for the comfort of my feet" (Narayan 09). As a responsible citizen of Malgudi, Jagan boycotted the foreign goods under direction of Bapuji. He refused to take a study in Non- Cooperation Movement against the British government. "I had to leave the college when Gandhi ordered us to non-cooperate. I spent the best of my student years

in prison” (Narayan 27). Many youngsters were taken decision to show their protest against the Britishers to leave their schools and colleges. “Feeling heroic, his reminiscent mood slurring over the fact that he had failed several times in the B.A., had ceased to attend the college, and had begun to take his examinations as a private candidate, long before the call of Gandhi”(Narayan 27).

Malgudi as a representative town to the portrayal of freedom struggle highlights the contribution of commoners as the greatest freedom fighters of India. The East India Company employed many Indian to run their administrative system smoothly. It was impossible to call the employees from Britain so the Britishers decided to employ the Indian peoples in the company. The Britishers appointed Indian for the post of clerk for official purposes. Indian employees were humiliated in every step by the British government. They worked hard but didn't get good salary for that. The Britishers were hurt their religious beliefs. The religious belief was one of the most reasons of rebellion against the British government. Commoners were the cross- sections of society were contributed devotionally in Indian freedom fight. R.K. Narayan promotes the various personalities to be contributing in the activities of freedom fight. These are teachers, students, vendors, social- workers, spyos, villagers and employees. Ramani is an employee of the Engladia Insurance Company in *The Dark Room (1938)*. This company represents a western organization that time. R. K. Narayan introduces:

The Engladia Insurance Company is a big one, I admit, but it is not the only insurance Company in the world. Before I took charge, Malgudi District was not giving them even ten rupees' worth of policies a year, and now ten lakhs of business is passing through my hands every year(Narayan 13).

Ramani got a good position in the organization of Britishers. Indians were gotten opportunities to understand the politics and the policies of the British government. Indian couldn't get freedom without contribution of common peoples. Ramani didn't do anything special for the independence of nation but it shows the growing reputation of Indian among the Britishers. “Ramani was self-made. He hadn't waited for anybody's help or advice. If he had waited for other people to tell him what to do he might have earned a B.A. and become now a clerk in an office or a lawyer with a miserable practice” (Narayan 109).

Waiting for the Mahatma (1955) shows the contribution of common peoples in Indian freedom struggle. All great freedom fighters were the common peoples of India but they become famous with the supports of commoners. Like Mahatma Gandhi is a great freedom fighter but he was gotten freedom with the great contribution of commoners. He motivated commoners boycott the foreign goods, follow non- violent activity, power of spinning wheel and magic of truth. Commoners followed him with his great principles of freedom struggle. “A lot of familiar characters, such as an old teacher of his and the pawnbroker in Market Road, made themselves unrecognized by wearing white Khaddar caps. They felt it was the right dress to wear on this occasion” (Narayan 26).

Sriram and Gopad were commoners of nation but they contributed devotionally in the freedom fight. They were the characters of novels not get much popularity like others freedom fighters in the world of freedom struggle. But they represent the remarkable cooperation of commoners through the writing of Narayan. Gopad says patriotically:

You are welcome here. We are all person who have to live like soldiers in a camp. We are indeed soldiers in our fight to eject the British from our land. We are all prepared to sacrifice our lives for the task. We sleep here on the bare floor because the major part of our lives we shall have to spend in jail, where we won't be given such a comfortable bed unless we are A or B class prisoners. We are not important enough to be classified as A or B, and you had better get used to it all; and we are always prepared to be beaten by the police, lathi-charged, dragged to the jail, or even shot: my father died ten years ago facing a policeman's gun (Narayan 75).

Srinivas as a commoner leads the activities of freedom fight through the press *Mr. Sampath (1949)*. *The Banner* is a paper of articles and events during pre- colonial India. Srinivas tries to aware the public for the humiliation of British government through the writing. Dramas, songs, poems, short- stories and articles were the great method to aware Indian people for freedom struggle. "The Banner has nothing special to note about any war, past or future. It is only concerned with the war that is always going on- between man's inside and outside. Till the forces are equalized the struggle will always go on" (Narayan 06).

Srinivas was never tolerated the humiliation of Indian by the Britishers. It is the office of Engladia Banking Corporation. Srinivas has observed the influence of the western culture on the employee of the corporation. The western style shows:

A peon in assort of white skirt (a relic of the East India Co. costume at Fort St. George) and a red band across his shoulder sat on a stool at the entrance. On the ground floor sat a number of typist and clerks, nosing into fat ledgers; uniformed attendants were moving about, carrying trays and file-boards. A bell kept ringing (Narayan 106).

Commoners were exploited for their dressing sense and less knowledge of English. Same things were happened in the office of Engladia Banking Corporation with the Indian employees. Srinivas has provoked that humiliation in a strong voice to prove himself as the freedom fighter of India.

This is not the India of East India Company days, remember, when you were looked upon as a sahib, when probably your grand-uncle had an escort of five elephants whenever he stirred out. Nowadays you have to give and take at ordinary human levels, do you understand? Forget for ever that god created Indians in order to provide clerks for the East India Company or their successors (Narayan 107).

Veeraswami and Chandran are two more characters of novel *The Bachelor of Arts (1937)* lead the awareness of Indian people through the writing. Veeraswami motivates Chandran to read an article 'The Aids to British Expansion in India'. Narayan writes:

Chandran was delighted. He had never met anyone who volunteered to address the association. On a fateful day, to an audience of thirty- five, Veeraswami read his paper. It was the most violent paper ever read before an association. It pilloried Great Britain before the Association, and ended by hoping that the British would be ousted from India by force (Narayan 45-46).

Man, woman and children were equally participated in Indian freedom struggle. Contribution of women in the freedom fight is unforgettable. Bharati looks a great woman freedom fighter in the

novel *Waiting for the Mahatma (1955)*. She is a great follower of the Mahatma. She decided to spend her life for independence. She is an inspiration of Indian women. Bharati wears Khaddar and spins the wheel also. She does:

She was clad in a sari of Khaddar, white home-spun, and he noticed how well it suited her. Before, he had felt that the wearing Khaddar was a fad that it was apparel fit only for cranks, but now he realized how lovely it could be. He paused for a moment to consider whether it was the wearer who was enriching the cloth or whether the material was good on itself (Narayan 31).

She gave her services to the activities of freedom fight. She was ready to face a challenge of British government in various ways. She was a strong lady as well as intelligent also. She took a step ahead in the revolt of the British rule. She was beautiful and charming but goal-oriented lady in the part of writing. Bharati appears:

I do whatever I am asked to do by the Sevek Sangh. Sometimes they ask me to go and teach people spinning and tell them about Mahatmaji's ideas. Sometimes they send me to villages and poor quarters. I meet them and talk to them and do a few things. I attend to Mahatmaji's needs (Narayan 59).

Bharati went to jail to send the Britishers outside from India. She doesn't hesitate to go to prison but she felt proud herself to do this. She says:

Don't let us quarrel. I will be gone in a moment. . . . I want to report myself before it strikes four. If they want to send me to The Central or some other jail they must have time to catch the evening train (Narayan 139).

Lack of awareness was the major cause of humiliation. Indian couldn't recognize the mentality of the Europeans with their arrival. They took them non-seriously. The Britishers introduced western education to the Indian students. They were opened many schools and colleges in the country. They were promoting English language and Christianity through education. Communication gap was the major problem among Indians. Indian started to go foreign to get higher education. They learnt English language to be overcoming from a barrier of communication. They were started to understand the foreign language as well as their politics in Indian affairs. R.K. Narayan introduces English language in various angles in his writing. English as an agent during freedom struggle finds in the novels of Narayan.

Swami and Friends (1935), Swami was the student of Albert Mission School of Malgudi. Babu also joined the English School in *The Man Eater of Malgudi (1961)*. "My son, little Babu, went to Albert Mission School, and he felt quite adequately supplied with toys, books, sweet, and any other odds and ends he fancied (Narayan 1)."

Albert Mission College was providing the western education. The study was totally implemented by Macaulay. Sen is an organizer of public relations and the general arrangements at the temple. He always obeys his responsibilities and duties. Location of Albert Mission School locates:

He had managed to get a band of young volunteers from Albert Mission College and High School to assist him and run small errands; he had managed to erect a *pandal* with

coconut thatch and bamboo; he saw to the decorations, and kept a hold on the Municipal chairman by writing his speech for him (Narayan 134).

In *Swami and Friends* (1935), English was most important subject during pre-colonial India. Anyone felt proud to speak and write anything in English language. It had to become a fashionable language at that time. English language had made Indian aware to the independence of nation and smartness of the Britishers. Swami was taken admission on Albert Mission School of Malgudi to get the standard education. The Britishers started to humiliate Indian student for their language, colour and culture. But Indian must thank to English language to understand their actual motive to be introducing western education in schools and colleges of country. Swami faced many difficulties to learn English language during his study. Narayan describes:

He sat on his stool and shut his eyes to recollect what work he had for the day: first of course there was arithmetic-those five puzzles and loss; then there was English- he had to copy down a page from his English Lesson, and write dictionary meanings of difficult words; and then there was geography (Narayan 02).

In *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), Professor Brown a European was attended the debate of Chandran. But he was fully partial for Indian. His entry had shown the humiliation of Indian through culture, language and colour. Chandran was known the bad behaviour of the European. He suspects:

He looked at the speaker on the platform. He kept gazing at Professor Brown's pink face. Here he is, Chandran thought, pretending to press the bell and listen to the speeches, but really his thoughts are at the tennis-court and the card table in the English Club. He is here not out of love for us, but merely to keep up appearances (Narayan 05).

In *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955), Language was a big barrier of communication. Sriram reached the New Delhi station to the first glimpse of his beloved but he didn't get the opportunity to speak anything with the public. English had become the promotional product of pre-colonial India and post-colonial India. R.K. Narayan refers:

It was no use speaking to them: they seemed to live in a different world. He spoke Tamil and English, and they understood Hindi, Hindustani, Urdu or whatever it might be. He could now realize the significance of Bharati's insistence that he should learn Hindi (Narayan 234).

In *The English Teacher* (1946), Krishna was compelled to teach English literature by Gajapathy. But Krishna was not interested to deliver a lecture on the history of language. He was humiliated on the western school being an Indian. "It would be unwise: he was my senior in office, and he might give me an hour of extra work every day, or compel me to teach the history of language, of which I knew nothing" (Narayan 02). That kind of the humiliation promoted a revolt against the Britishers. English language was a catalyst during the freedom struggle through the various references of Narayan's novels. No doubt, the Britishers were promoted English language in the Indian education system to be merging western style and culture in Indian soul. But English language helped to aware Indian to get freedom from the British rule.

Conclusion

Malgudi is a great platform to lead freedom struggle in the world of Narayan. Narayan highlights the portrayal of freedom struggle in different stages. Pre- colonial India and post colonial India have delighted smartly in his novels. India had faced a lot of trouble during the British rule. That trouble had been finished by great freedom fighters of Indian freedom struggle. Influence of the Gandhian thought on the Indian National Movement promotes Malgudi as a representative town for the freedom fight. The East India Company had appointed Indian employees for the post of clerk. But the company didn't give necessary facilities to Indian employees. The British officers started to humiliate Indian workers. They were hurt their religious beliefs. Indian was protested against the British government and demand to get free their nation from them. The Mahatma motivated the public to avoid the foreign product with non- violence, truth and spinning wheel. Commoners were participated in the freedom struggle with great strength. They were teachers, students, villagers, vendors and social workers also. The children, men and women were contributing devotionally in the freedom fight. Men and women freedom fighters had displayed their presence through the various characters of novels. Sriram, Bharati, Swami, Veeraswami, Gopad, Chandran, Srinivas, Jagan and much more Indian freedom fighters are casted in the novels of Narayan. These characters highlight the role of English language to be aware Indian peoples during the British rule. Portrayal of freedom struggle must start from the place of Malgudi.

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