# Chapter 16
# New Perspectives on the Annals of R.K. Narayan:
## Reflections and Ruminations

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## ABSTRACT

*This chapter aims to examine new perspectives on the annals of R. K. Narayan, with specific emphasis on Malgudi Days. It primarily attempts to examine how modern television/media has changed dramatically ever since Malgudi Days was first aired on Indian television during the eighties, what the viewers' expectations from television entertainment are today, how television viewers perceive the difference in television broadcasts since the 1980s until the present date. To this end, the author employs online reviews to assess the impact on viewers' choices through a number of paradigms, such as star ratings, the nature of the review content, the number of reviews, and the source of review.*

## INTRODUCTION

R. K. Narayan is among the most widely read and well-known Indian novelists of all time. He is often associated with the American writer William Faulkner—both explore the conflict between the personalities of characters arising out of conventional demands (Oliver, 2001). Their works are rooted in sensitive humanism, extolling the charm and vivacity of daily life. Narayan's first book, *Swami and Friends*, and the following one, *The Bachelor of Arts*, located in Malgudi's enchanting fictional territory, are only two of his twelve novels based there. Illustrating the genesis of Malgudi (see Figure 1), Narayan evokes:

*I remember waking up with name Malgudi on Vijaydasami day, the day on which initiation of learning is celebrated… Malgudi was an earth-shaking discovery for me, because I had no mind for facts and things like that, which would be necessary in writing about Malgudi or any real place. I first pictured not my town but just the railway station which was a small platform with a banyan tree, a station master, and*
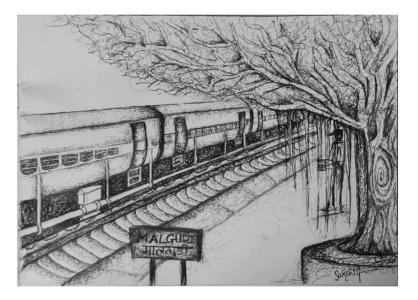
*two trains a day, one coming and one going. On Vijaydasami, I sat down and wrote the first sentence about my town: The train had just arrived at Malgudi station. (Putatunda, 2012, p. 104).*

Malgudi's imaginary world is, therefore, a reflection of the classic Indian community or a town filled with kaleidoscopic hues. The place is imbued with Indian sense and sensitivity.

*Figure 1. Genesis of Malgudi*
Source: Gupta, 2020



Narayan's writings prove the novel's remarkable longevity as a typical cultural form, long after its partial replacement by more recent styles of literature (Allen & Walder, 1995). His narratives depict real and authentic scenes that give a sense of the true meaning of life. Very few Indian authors have the penchant and the style to express themselves the way Narayan did. Narayan's creative visualization brought to fore the real side of Indian tradition, which otherwise is hard to understand for the layman. An excerpt from *Swami and Friends* asserts that: "To Swaminathan, existence in the classroom was possible only because he could watch the toddlers of the infant standard falling over one another, and through the window on the left see the 12:30 mail gliding over the embankment, booming and rattling while passing over the Sarayu Bridge" (Biswas, 2019, p. 127). These and many such vivid depictions run through the mental imagery of any school child of Swami's age, but are rarely articulated or explained by contemporary researchers. How often do we find students being attentive in the class? Barring a few, most of them are lost in their own worlds—pondering what their fellows may be doing, marvelling at who comes late to the class, what welcome address the late comers would receive upon arriving at the eleventh-hour, what the reactions of their fellows would be, how poised or timid the teacher is, when the school bell would ring indicating that the class is over, and so forth. Narayan is one of those atypical authors who has detailed the psyche of a school child as observed in *Swami and Friends.* Like any schoolboy, Swami spends his day coping with schoolwork, lessons, being a mischief-maker with his

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