



Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

B. A. DEPARTMENT MATERIAL

CLASS: -S. Y. B. A. Semester -4

SUBJECT: - MAIN PAPER- 8

Malgudi (Place)

One of the things most commonly associated with R.K. Narayan is Malgudi, the Indian town where he set many of his novels and short stories. Malgudi is not a real place, but has attained fame and nostalgic approbation over the decades; in fact, as the *New Yorker* claims, it “put modern Indian fiction on the map.” We will look at Narayan’s creation to better understand [The Guide](#).

Malgudi is bustling but not overly crowded; it is full of scooter-riding boys and rickshaws, hotels with European food, and small and large shops selling all manner of wares. Scholar M. Parvathi writes, “With each of the works of R.K. Narayan, Malgudi unfolds new vistas of life. A simple, innocent and conservative society undergoes fast changes because of the incursions of the modern civilization. From a sleepy, silent and small town atmosphere on the bank of river Sarayu to a fast developing metropolitan ethos with modern streets, banking corporations, talkies and smuggler’s den, and even a circus, Malgudi marks a movement in time. The movement not only affects the geography of the place, but also the social and cultural milieu.” It is, Charles Nicholl writes, “trapped in a dusty miasma of daily preoccupations in which pre- and post-independence are only hazily distinguishable. Narayan is sometimes called the Indian Chekhov: a master of the inconsequential and its hidden depths.” Fellow Indian novelist V.S. Naipaul sees Narayan’s work as full of “stasis” and as more “fable” than realistic, but admires how Narayan was interested in “the lesser life that goes on below: small men, small schemes, big talk, limited means.”

Narayan’s friend and novelist Graham Greene loved Malgudi, and once wrote, “Whom next shall I meet in Malgudi? That is the thought that comes to me when I close a novel of Mr. Narayan’s. I do not wait for another novel. I wait to go out of my door into those loved and shabby streets and see with excitement and a certainty of pleasure a stranger approaching, past the bank, the cinema, the haircutting saloon, a stranger who will greet me I know with some unexpected and revealing phrase that will open a door on to yet another human existence.”

Many journalists and scholars have endeavored to find the “real” Malgudi—i.e., the place that so inspired Narayan. For a *National Geographic* article, writer Zac O’Yeah visited and ruminated on places like Bengaluru, Agumbe, and Mysore, but ultimately concluded, “I realise that perhaps in the end, Malgudi is both a geographical space and a state of mind, a place where we can all go to if we find the right door to step through.” Narayan himself said something similar in his introduction to [Malgudi Days](#): “I am often asked, ‘Where is Malgudi?’ All I can say is that it is imaginary and not to be found on any map (although the University of Chicago Press has published a literary atlas with a map of India indicating the location of Malgudi). If I explain that Malgudi is a small town in South India, I shall only be expressing a half-truth, for the characteristics of Malgudi seem to me universal.”

Character List



Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

B. A. DEPARTMENT MATERIAL

CLASS: -S. Y. B. A. Semester -4

SUBJECT: - MAIN PAPER- 8

Raju

Raju is the protagonist of the story. He was born in a fictional town named Malgudi, belongs to a lower-middle-class family, and lives with his mother after his father died when Raju was young. Raju was very smart and savvy in how he grew his father's shop, then moving into being a famous and respected tour guide known as "Railway Raju." He loves talking and traveling to new places; he is intuitive about his customers' needs and makes himself indispensable.

Raju begins having an affair with Rosie, the wife of his client Marco, and becomes obsessively in love with her. This love for her causes him to behave greedily and selfishly, even when he and Rosie are together in Marco's absence. He thinks of her as property and does care about anything but himself, though he dedicates his time to furthering her dancing career. His desire for money is absolute and he relishes the power he attains by being the famous dancer Nalini's (Rosie's changed name) manager and lover. This greed eventually leads to the demise of his relationship, time in jail, and exile from Malgudi.

It also results in his being mistaken as a holy man. In the privacy of his own mind, Raju still tends toward selfishness and impatience, but the more time he spends with the villagers, the more he grows in character. Arguably, by the end of the novel, as a result of his fasting and praying, he achieves enlightenment and truly does become a holy man.

Raju's Mother

Raju's mother is a traditional Indian woman. She is the only one who takes care of Raju when her husband dies. She is a positive woman who is generally friendly to everyone. She permits Rosie to live with them even after she realizes that Rosie is married and belongs to a low-class dancer caste. However, she is a woman who also gossips and worries about her son's choices, especially after he begins neglecting his finances. She asks her older brother, Raju's uncle, to come help but ends up going to live with him once Raju's intransigence asserts itself. Her relationship with Raju never really recovers; she remains sad and disappointed in what he's done to his life. She does visit him in jail.

Rosie

Rosie is the daughter of a dancer and therefore belongs to a lower caste. She did not marry Marco out of love but because of his social status. Though she is fond of dancing, she sets it aside when married to Marco because he does not approve. Their marriage is not very pleasant and Rosie begins to have an affair with Raju. When Marco finds out, he abandons her. She then moves in with Raju and his mother and, with Raju's urging, takes up her dancing again. With her meticulous work and Raju's business acumen, she becomes a household name (she actually changes her name to Nalini). She and Raju become immensely rich.

Rosie is a woman of independent thought and ambition. At times she appears to be mature, but at others she behaves like a child. She is prone to dreaming and does not care very much about material things. After Raju's entanglement with the law and her coming to terms with his real



Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

B. A. DEPARTMENT MATERIAL

CLASS: -S. Y. B. A. Semester -4

SUBJECT: - MAIN PAPER- 8

character, she decides to pay their debts and leave him. She lives alone, prosperous and successful.

Marco

Marco is Rosie's husband. He does not seem to like her very much unless she is being quiet and pliable, but when he married her he was clear on not having any caste expectations. He gives her what she wants most of the time but refuses to let her continue with dancing once they married. What drives him as a scholar is his interest in the history, culture, and art of South India. Raju is his guide to caves in the Malgudi area where he finds fodder for the book he is writing, but his time in Malgudi ends in a dramatic fashion when he finds out Rosie and Raju were having an affair. He refuses to have anything to do with Rosie and leaves town without her. At the end of the novel, he publishes his book to great acclaim but decides to trap Raju by sending a legal document that only Rosie can sign, knowing Raju will most likely forge it.

Velan

Velan is a faithful, fervent man who believes in Raju's holiness and spends a great deal of time with him. He encourages other villagers to visit the Swami and soon Raju is rarely ever alone again. Though Raju confesses to him that he is not indeed a holy man and has done many bad things in his life, Velan still chooses to revere him and believe Raju's fast will cure the drought. It is Velan's unwavering faith that gives Raju the power he needs to try the fast for real.

Velan's Sister

Velan's half-sister is a minor character but she plays a major role in Raju's life as a saint. It was she who makes Raju popular in the village by accepting the proposal of the groom that Velan chose for her. This transformation surprises Velan and confirms to him that Raju is a holy man. The sister spreads news of Raju's power throughout the village as well.

Gaffur

Gaffur is a chauffeur in Malgudi and friend of Raju's (at least until Raju alienates him by focusing everything on Rosie and begging Gaffur for money to jumpstart her dance career). He is a decent man with common sense and is wary of Raju's involvement with Rosie, knowing it will not end well.

Velan's Brother

A rather unintelligent and useless young man, his main job is to drive cattle and he rarely engages himself in other, more highbrow activities such as seeing the Swami. However, he comes to Raju when the village is embroiled in fighting during the famine. When he relays this information to Raju, Raju tells him to tell Velan and the others he will not eat until they stop fighting. When the brother relays the message, he implies that the Swami will not eat until the rains come, thus beginning (against his will and wishes) Raju's fasting.



Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

B. A. DEPARTMENT MATERIAL

CLASS: -S. Y. B. A. Semester -4

SUBJECT: - MAIN PAPER- 8

Raju's Father

A friendly and loquacious man, he runs a small shop in Malgudi. He loves spending hours and hours talking about the townspeople's various affairs to the chagrin of his wife who wishes he would come home to eat and sleep. He is given proprietorship of a larger shop once the railway station is built, but turns it over to Raju because he misses conversing with his friends. He dies when Raju is a young man, leaving him with a decent bank account and half of the house.

Joseph

Joseph is the caretaker at Peak House whose modesty, efficiency, and surreptitiousness inure him to Marco. Joseph admires Marco but dislikes Rosie, thinking she is disruptive. He is very dedicated to his job and his clients.

Raju's Uncle

A tall, imperious man, he is the eldest brother in the family and manages all of the financial and interpersonal affairs. Wealthy and powerful, he doesn't often visit his sister but she calls on him to help knock sense into Raju. The uncle tries, but finds his nephew immature and intransigent. He focuses on ousting Rosie, but this does not work either. Finally, he returns home and brings his sister with him.

The Sait

The Sait is a former friend of Raju's who is also his creditor. Raju owes the Sait a great deal of money and his laissez-faire attitude about it earns him the Sait's ire. The Sait takes Raju to court and threatens to take the house, which Raju later sells.

Raju's Lawyer

A bona fide celebrity, Raju books him for his forgery trial even though he is very expensive. The lawyer is savvy at spinning his tales, and manages to get Raju only two years instead of seven.

Malone

A pink-cheeked American documentary filmmaker, Malone seeks to film Raju-as-holy-man in his fasting and praying rituals. He is energetic, exuberant, and dedicated to his craft.

Mani

Mani is Raju's secretary once he becomes rich from Rosie's dancing. Mani is kind and well-intentioned, but annoys Raju when he accidentally tells Rosie about Marco's book. He is the only person to visit Raju in jail but is flustered by his former employer's delight in prison life.

Themes



Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

B. A. DEPARTMENT MATERIAL

CLASS: -S. Y. B. A. Semester -4

SUBJECT: - MAIN PAPER- 8

Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy is one of the major themes of the novel. [Raju](#) is a hypocritical character from the very beginning of his life. As a tour guide, he misinforms the tourists at will as if he has no sense of right or wrong. His words turn normal old buildings into ancient works of architecture and downgrade amazing feats of history. He makes stories out of thin air as he pleases while a tour guide. He helps [Rosie](#) only for his own interest and in the end poses as a swami as yet another example of his charlatan nature. According to the Hindu principle of karma, however, Raju eventually reaps the punishments due. He loses his power and money and is forced into a position where he has to fast and nearly die. He seems to learn that hypocrisy is morally corroding and will eventually catch up with a person.

Dishonesty

The protagonist, Raju, has always been a dishonest character. As a child, he eats the green peppermints from his father's shop even though he was strictly forbidden to. Growing up, he becomes a tour guide who misinforms and misguides his tourists to get more money out of them. He misleads Rosie into falling in love with him by telling her all the things she wanted to hear, all for his own interest in getting her into bed. He gets a two-year prison sentence for forgery. Coming out of prison, he poses as a sage at a ruined shrine far away from the locality. Even as he fasts, he eats a stack of food hidden away in an aluminum pot on the very first day. Dishonesty is embedded in Raju's very marrow, and it is not until the end of the novel that he has to come to terms with it.

Materialism

Raju is a highly materialistic character, as he only hankers after money and does not at all value any emotion or feeling. He tricks people to extract money out of them and that is all that matters to him. He lacks all sense of morality or religion and that permits him to solely care about worldly things without hesitation. For him, money means more than people and he feels like a failure if he is not earning the maximum amount of it. Finally his actions lead him to a place where money is no longer attainable, and he has to orient himself to this new reality. Narayan suggests that money does not, after all, bring happiness and that a person should be careful about how much they value it over other things.

Transformation

When Raju finishes telling his life story to [Velan](#), Raju expects him to snap, but as a blind follower Velan takes it in stride and as merely Raju's past. The fact that Raju guesses that Velan would stop believing in him and yet pours his heart out to him shows some sort of growth in his character. At the very end, out of extreme hunger Raju starts to fast sincerely and avoid all thoughts regarding food and bodily suffering. This helps him concentrate and that ends his hunger.

When the doctors and the government go all out to save him, Raju goes out to perform his daily routine of climbing down the steps to the river with the help of two men on both sides. He stands in the knee deep water and faces the mountain muttering his prayer while Velan and the other



Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

B. A. DEPARTMENT MATERIAL

CLASS: -S. Y. B. A. Semester -4

SUBJECT: - MAIN PAPER- 8

man continues to hold him and he says, "Velan, it's raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my legs," and he sags down. Here the water can mean purity and rain may literally be on its way but there is no way to know for sure as the author ends it just like that. Regardless of what exactly happens, Narayan suggests that even the most trickster of men can be redeemed.

Rosie is another character in the novel who goes through a transformation. Her change of name marks her transformation. Named Rosie, she is a wife longing for a husband's love and attention, a passionate dancer waiting on her husband's approval. Later, though, she becomes a renowned dancer named Nalini, a mature independent woman who chooses to live alone peacefully.

Past and Present

The Guide shows the intersection of past and present in numerous ways. First, there is the coming of the railroad and the railway station, which changes jobs, communication, travel, and more. Second, Rosie is a dancer in the classical manner but it is the conditions of modernity that allow her fame to spread as it does. Her dance, even though it is classical in theme, is also juxtaposed against Marco's focus on "dead and decaying things." Rosie's sexuality and independence are fully of the modern moment while Marco's paternalism is of the past. As critic John Thieme writes, Marco is "resistant to any suggestion that the classical and the contemporary may be related" even when he sees the dancing motif on the cave walls. Third, there is a confluence of past and present when the ancient temple is unearthed by the receding waters in the present-day drought, which serves "as a metonym for the notion of an archeologically layered India, albeit one in which the different strata were coming to exist contiguously rather than in a temporal sequence, since an ancient infrastructure was now present on the surface."

Karma

Though he's not violent or "evil," Raju is without a doubt an amoral, obnoxious, and self-interested character. He's a hypocrite and a liar, a charlatan and a greedy, materialistic person. He uses other people to make himself feel good and to make him money. He ignores his obligations, his family, and his community to pursue what he wants. However, Narayan doesn't allow Raju to continue on like this forever. He shows how Raju's greed leads him to lose Rosie, his money, and his influence and land in jail. And more than that, he has Raju's gig as a holy man result in a real act of redemption and transformation. Karma catches up with all of us eventually, Narayan suggests.

Feminism

Narayan is certainly not a "feminist" writer but his character Rosie is a notable one in terms of what contemporary feminists were advocating for. Rosie is an educated woman who makes her own choices. First, she chooses a conventional path of getting married, but she does this so she can free herself from caste limitations. She does her best to retain her selfhood in a miserable, patriarchal marriage, and though she is at her lowest point when she allows Raju to manipulate her into a sexual relationship that she is unsure is the right thing, she eventually lets this become



Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

B. A. DEPARTMENT MATERIAL

CLASS: -S. Y. B. A. Semester -4

SUBJECT: - MAIN PAPER- 8

a springboard to attaining her great dream of becoming a dancer. And in the end, of course, she takes care of herself by getting rid of Raju and all other baggage and living her life as she sees fit. She is not a perfect feminine heroine, but she is a remarkably modern woman.

✚ The Guide Symbols, Allegory and Motifs

Symbol: Water

At the very end of the narrative, water becomes the symbol of purification. When Raju gets down to his spot in the water to perform his morning prayer for the last time in the novel, all too weak but sincere, suddenly he says that he can feel “it’s raining in the hills, I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my legs.” This moment apparently marks his transformation and purification. The water is the symbol of purification here as Raju leaves his dishonest past behind. The water washes away the impurities of his soul.

Symbol: Nataraja

The Nataraja statue comes up on various occasions in the novel and it symbolizes dancing as a holy thing, which contradicts the societal assumption that dancers are from a lower cast of the Hindu society. Nataraja or “the lord of dance” is a form of Hindu god; Shiva's dance is mostly destructive. This symbol marks Rosie’s rebellion against social traditions and norms through embracing her true calling of dancing. In the destructive mode, she breaks all the shackles and becomes free. She needs neither Marco nor Raju to live her life.

Symbol: Raju's Old Home

Rosie's discomfort with selling the old house and Raju's realization later that she seemed almost happier there even when she was being berated by his mother and uncle reveals the old house as a potent symbol of tradition, comfort, safety, and security. Outside that old house is where Raju begins to embrace even more devious patterns of behavior and lets his greed cloud his understanding of right and wrong. In the old home, his mother still had some sway, and the memory of his father did as well. Now, bereft of that connection to family and tradition, Raju is adrift.

Allegory: Sheep

Flocks of sheep grazing behind a shepherd outside the old shrine Raju chose to meditate in is the Narayan’s commentary that people also often do the same. Soon the villagers take Raju to be some divine sage and started flooding in and crowding in front of the shrine. They listen to what he has to say and never question him. The classic allegory of sheep and their shepherd, something that is ancient and part of numerous cultures, allows Narayan to suggest that people blindly follow others in the name of religion.



Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

B. A. DEPARTMENT MATERIAL

CLASS: -S. Y. B. A. Semester -4

SUBJECT: - MAIN PAPER- 8

Motif: Crocodile

The crocodile motif is very prominent throughout the novel. There is a subtle suggestion at one point of the narrative that Raju might be the mythical crocodile none had ever seen but all feared (the villagers believe it lives near the bank the old shrine was on, and Raju comes to occupy this shrine). Later, the crocodile motif develops further. There is the dead crocodile auguring the diminishing health of the society. There is then the crocodile's body revealing male and female jewelry in its belly in unequal amounts; it becomes clear that this crocodile could be the society that eats alive females more often than males, stripping them off their personalities and uniqueness. This is what happens to Rosie until she manages to free herself.

Metaphors and Similes

Metaphor: Cave

When Marco goes to visit the cave to probe for new archaeological discoveries, his wife Rosie falls in love with their tour guide Raju. The two lovers find ways to keep themselves away while Marco is busy in the cave. The cave here stands for ignorance and Marco remains in the darkness until it is too late. To an extent, Marco chooses to be in the cave in the same way he never quite understands his wife's mind. He is always in the darkness of his own choosing.

Simile: Parrot

Once Rosie gains fame through her dancing, she grows conscious of what really matters to her and what her life is like now. She states, "I feel like one of those parrots in a cage taken around village fairs" (160). With this simile, Rosie reveals that she believes she is not free—she was a parrot in cage built by Raju. Dancing stopped liberating her to some extent and she doesn't like that. Rosie flies away in the end, leaving behind her "caged parrot" life.

Metaphor: Raju as Bird

As Raju embraces his role as Swami, Narayan writes, "Raju felt he was growing wings. Shortly, he felt, he might float in the air and perch himself on the tower of an ancient temple" (14). This is in reference to the wise words he delivers to Velan, showing that he is beginning to feel the power of being listened to and revered. This is the same feeling he gets when tourists seek him out and praise him, and when he becomes famous for controlling Rosie's career. In this case, it is based on a false persona he has established for himself and comes across as ironic and amusing to the reader.

Simile: Raju as Actor

As time goes on and Raju remains the Swami to the villagers, he has to come to terms with the fact that he is actually an imposter. Narayan writes, "Raju felt like an actor who had come on the stage, and, while the audience waited, had no lines to utter or gestures to make" (37). He actually *is* an actor, and he doesn't have any real lines. He will have to improvise to curry favor



Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

B. A. DEPARTMENT MATERIAL

CLASS: -S. Y. B. A. Semester -4

SUBJECT: - MAIN PAPER- 8

with his audience, and as this is one of his particular skills, he does manage to continue his performance.

Metaphor: Fog

Raju alternates between delighting in his pithy, wise-sounding statements and his conviction that perhaps he is not actually doing the visitors a service: "He was dragging those innocent men deeper and deeper into the fog of unclear thoughts" (38). Just as he noticed Rosie wasn't happy but did nothing about it though, he continues to brush away these thoughts and remain the role of swami. It is too easy to stay in the ruins and be fed and cared for and revered

Irony

Situational Irony: The Title

Raju was a tour guide, tried guiding Rosie's career as a dancer, and posed as a sage who was supposed to guide people to spirituality. He as the title character/protagonist never quite succeeded in his responsibility; rather, he violated the definition of guidance. Ironically, Velan, a minor character, guides the protagonist to his transformation by designating him a sage, holding him accountable, and believing in him.

Situational Irony: Fasting

Raju telling the story of a swami who fasted for greater good is highly ironic since he finally has to fast himself. He had become used to telling stories, making up stories, and generally saying whatever sounded good to the people listening to him without ever thinking it might come back around to him. Indeed, it does karmically come back to him in the most dramatic fashion in that he has to become the very swami that he fabricated and nearly dies (or perhaps does die) in the process.

Verbal Irony: Raju's Intelligence

Raju hates school and does not finish it. He avoids education and scoffs at academics. His learning only comes from random books that filter into the railway station that he works at for a few years. Thus, it is amusing and ironic that Narayan writes, "The thing that had really bothered him was that he might sound too brilliant in everything he said" (24). Raju is far from being brilliant and he is mostly making up, fudging, or confusing the stories he tells to the gullible villagers.

Situational and Verbal Irony: Marco and Raju

Marco hires Raju to help him explore the caves so he can carry out his studies. On the way to them, Marco takes the lead even though Raju is the guide. Raju calls him out on this and says he is not a guide. The irony is subtle, but it is clearly present. Raju may be the official guide but he is clueless. He can take Marco to the caves but he neither knows what the markings within them truly mean (he grows very bored) nor does he have any idea how to guide himself through life.



Shree H. N. Shukla Group of Colleges

B. A. DEPARTMENT MATERIAL

CLASS: -S. Y. B. A. Semester -4

SUBJECT: - MAIN PAPER- 8

Imagery

Malgudi

Narayan's Malgudi is a significant fictional creation, and he takes pains in each of his novels to describe this place. In *The Guide* he writes of small shops, the new railway station, wagons and shopkeepers, and the bustling marketplace. It is this "panorama of life" (8) that enchants Raju.

The Railway

Narayan writes, "Our world was neatly divided into this side of the railway line and that side" (27). This is a simple but potent image that creates a sense of order and neatness belied by actual life. The railway station changes everything for Raju as it brings the tourists to town that give him his reputation, and, of course, brings Rosie and Marco into his life.

Peak House

Narayan describes the glory that is Peak House. He writes of the House's perching on the edge of a cliff looking out to a lush valley below, the glass wall, the wild life, the tall trees, the fecund vegetation, and more. This place conjures up the glory of India's natural surroundings and it is no wonder Marco is intellectually stimulated there.

Raju as Holy Man

Narayan writes of Raju, "His beard now caressed his chest, his hair covered his back, and round his neck he wore a necklace of prayer beads. His eyes shone with softness and compassion and light of wisdom emanated from them" (69). This is an uncanny and near stereotypical image of a holy man. It is all the more amusing and compelling because it is a reminder that Raju is all surface and appearance; he is not actually a holy man but if he looks like one and sounds like one then he can beguile people into thinking he is one.