

R.K.Narayan's *Swami and Friends*: A Critical Hollering

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Abstract—Narayan's *Swami and Friends* (1935) luminously portrays its child protagonist Swaminathan's adventures in soul making, his skirmishes with his little comrades and reconciliations in his soupy school, his contact with the experienced adult world vis-à-vis apparently apolitical, shallow and banal *Swami and Friends* (1935) also postulates encoded political and cultural resistance so strategically camouflaged by Narayan's narrative devise. Narayan's Anti-colonial propaganda, his aversion to fundamentalism and authoritarianism, his earnest desire to bring the subaltern narrative into our mainstream narrative give him a special place in literary world. Kudos to the Nietzschean Will to Power of the common inhabitants of Malgudi and the little urchins of Albert Mission School that they dared to join the protest march against the hegemony of their white colonial masters. Swami much like Ishaan of Aamir Khan's *Taare Zameen Par* (2007) used to shudder at the very thought of his monotonous school where his wings of freedom used to be crushed under the fatal mill of the authoritarian and strict teachers except D.Pillai who was famous among the students. Swaminathan's hybrid identity, Rajam's Europeanized existence, overlapping associations of tradition and modernity, class struggle, Centre/Periphery, Self/Other, Master/Slave dichotomy in *Swami and Friends* (1935) actually celebrate Narayan's deep concern for our pluralistic and multicultural Indian identity where Narayan has also given space to the subaltern existence like Rajam's family cook who was insulted and undervalued by Rajam only because Rajam belonged to the centre of a power structure. In this paper I would like to investigate in which way Narayan has pointed out the various agathokakological entities of human life through the artistic representation of his characters, his celebration of India's heterogeneous identity, class struggle, the marginalized and peripheralized existence of subaltern voices, politics of colonial masters' Self and the muted Other in an unequal power structure where a very limited number of people actually get access to the resources, ambivalence, hybrid identity etc. with reference to *Swami and Friends* (1935).

Keywords—Ambivalence, Agathokakological; Anti-colonial; Authoritarianism; Subaltern; Resistance; Heterogeneous

INTRODUCTION

Beat me, hate me
You can never break me
Will me, thrill me
You can never kill me
Jew me, sue me
Everybody do me
Kick me, kick me
Don't you black or white me
—"They Don't Care About Us" (Michael Jackson)

Like Twain, Ngugi wa Thiong'o has said that a true decolonization of the mind cannot take place until the issue of the forms and norms of the colonizer's language is resolved. In this effort Ngugi has currently given up writing in English. However, in 1938, the Indian novelist Raja Rao adopted Twain's solution — a solution that both Narayan and Anaya use effectively. In his preface to his novel *Kanthapura*, Raja Rao wrote, "one has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own....We are all instinctively bilingual, many of us writing in our own language and in English. We cannot write like the English. We should not. We cannot write only as

Indians. The tempo of our Indian life must be infused into our English expression even as the tempo of American or Irish life has gone into the making of theirs"(vii). *Swami and Friends* in its alteration of Standard English and Indian English asks for careful attention to those passages that our students might consider "strange" or "ungrammatical." This is particularly useful in composition courses. Once students get the effectiveness of language variation, they can feel freer about expressing themselves in their "personal" voice. They can also see the ways in which languages come in contact, evolve, and develop. This is a particularly powerful teaching tool because it is the final step in showing the cousinship of the shared experience globally.

—"Teaching R.K.Narayan's "Swami and Friends"
(Jussawalla 223)

Ye dharti apni hay ("this land is our land")

—Lagaan (Gowariker)

Let Every Indian spit on England, and the quantity of saliva will be enough to drown England...

—Swami and Friends (Narayan 41)

Amidst Shashi Tharoor's "Exasperating Farrago Of Distortions" tweet (@ShashiTharoor) or when Brexit is short for "British exit" which would predictably flush

catastrophic dysfunction to the financial fluidity of the global economy creating a very adverse situation for jobless youths or when the primetime political debates on national media have become a high decibel *tu tu main main* (“I am no less than you”) or when consumerism operating in postmodern capitalism is mercilessly killing innocence and is creating dry burnt out cinders then *Swami and Friends* (1935) leaves us with a mixed feeling, transporting us back to the times when things were simpler and easier. As Shreya Thapliyal in her 10 October, 2018, *The Statesman*, article, “Remembering RK Narayan — The Malgudi Man” observes:

“Most people’s first brush with RK Narayan’s writing came with Swami and Friends. And they would recall how Swami and Friends would transport them to a world so different yet so similar. Swaminathan’s life, his friends, the fear of his father — all of them would resonate with every child in the class.”

(Thapliyal)

In this connection I would like to draw the readers’ attention to Sandeep Narayanan’s article entitled as “The nostalgia inducing ‘Malgudi Days’: When Swami was my friend too” published on *The News Minute* where Narayanan observes:

Narayan had a way of creating simple, relatable characters that one could easily fall in love with, and his ability to vividly create the world of Malgudi in our minds was nothing short of genius.

(Narayanan)

Childhood is brilliantly celebrated in *Swami and Friends* (1935) and Narayan has emphatically sketched the beauty and serenity of nature much like a painter. Narayan’s power of the imagination like that of wine is able to fuse a series of neighboring and overlapping areas which move progressively from nature to culture (Barry 246): ‘the wilderness’, ‘the scenic sublime’, ‘the countryside’ and ‘the domestic picturesque’. Peepul branches, gentle blow of wind, the twittering birds, stream of the Sarayu, Swaminathan’s haunted and hallucinatory imagination when he lost the way is reminiscent of Derridean hauntology (the paradoxical state of the spectre, which is neither being, or non-being), moonlit night, scattered leaves — these all are the transcendental signifiers and much like the iconic scene in Satyajit Ray’s *Pather Panchali* (1955) where Durga and Apu crouch amid fields of towering kash (“Saccharum spontaneum is a grass native to the Indian Subcontinent. It is a perennial grass, growing up to three meters in height, with spreading rhizomatous roots”) grass watching a train rumble past towards the city (“Pather Panchali the train scene” 00:00:00-00:03:55) Narayan’s nature painting embellished by his powerful imagination is an example of Kantian sublime as it begets a feeling of awe and inexpressible joy in our minds. Despite Shashi Tharoor’s harsh dismissal of *Swami and Friends* (1935) as apolitical, shallow, and banal (Tharoor)

I would like to investigate in which way the encoded political and cultural resistance so strategically camouflaged in this text can be decoded with textual and theoretical experimentation vis-à-vis how Narayan’s Anti-colonial propaganda, Swaminathan’s resistance to the clubs and cucumber sandwiches culture, issue of species superiority, politics behind cricket and colonialism, hegemonic power politics, childhood skirmishes, Hegelian Master/Slave, Self/Other, Centre/Periphery dichotomy are also torched in this text.

Feroza Jussawalla in her scholarly article “Cricket and Colonialism: From *Swami and Friends* to *Lagaan*” observes:

“In Swami’s bildungsroman, this “being lost” is the great moment of his self-awareness as Indian. The hero’s coming to an awareness of himself as belonging to a specific nation is an important component in Martin Swales’s definition of the bildungsroman. In Signs Taken for Wonders, Franco Moretti feels that the hero of a bildungsroman comes to his moment of awareness when he feels integrated with his context and “finds his peace there” (231). It is precisely when he feels integrated into his Indian family and gives up trying to be British that Swami finds peace. Swami and Narayan both affirm Indianness. Contrarily, in Lagaan, the cricket match is also a devise that affirms nationalism, not by turning one’s back on it, but by excelling at it and beating the colonizer, albeit in a makeshift Indian way.” (115)

Bhabha in his *The Location of Culture* (1994) defines “colonial mimicry” as being “almost the same but not quite” or “almost the same but not white” (89):

Mimicry is thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which appropriates the Other as it visualizes power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance and poses an immanent threat to both ‘normalized’ knowledges and disciplinary powers. (86)

Colonial masters strategically played cricket in order to showcase their racial superiority and their special talent but this very egotistical hubris can also be shattered when the so-called superior white sahibs are beaten by brown coloured Bhuvan and his teammates. In Ashutosh Gowariker’s *Lagaan* (2001), in Arun Roy’s *Egaro* (2011) where the barefooted natives challenged the hubristic and megalomaniac booted whites in a football match, Sourav Ganguly’s historic shirt waving at Lord’s (“Ganguly vs Flintoff The Epic Revenge at LORDS” 00:00:27-00:00:29) or pumped up Yuvraj Singh’s six sixes in a row at

Kingsmead in Durban after smashing Stuart Broad (“Yuvraj Singh 6 Balls 6 Sixes Against Stuart Broad T20 Worldcup HD” 00:00:13-00:05:00) — in all these instances white colonial masters were beaten by the unconquerable spirit and skyrocketed self-confidence of the natives. These victories carried away by the non-white natives actually celebrate the idea of their cemented and indefatigable love for their own motherland besides rendering a deep political meaning because these victories from the sides of the non-whites also postulate the prowess of the colonized Other who are prejudiced as powerless, snake charmers, recalcitrant, barbaric, exotic, languorous. Feroza Jussawalla in the previously mentioned article further observes:

Swami's recalcitrance to play the game is a subconscious recalcitrance, not a deliberate one and as such not one that "coheres" colonial power. In Lagaan, the game is a revolt, not even a nonviolent passive resistance. It is one man's, Bhuvan's, absolute resistance to colonial power, a defiant, "I'll show you," which he is able to solidify by gaining support from the more recalcitrant villagers. Therefore, unlike what Homi Bhabha quotes from Benedict Anderson, at least in these two instances cricket is not a colonial mimicry which reflects "the inner compatibility of empire and nation" (Bhabha 87) (116)

Narayan's Swaminathan much like Ishaan of Aamir Khan's *Taare Zameen Par* (2007) used to shudder “at the very thought of school; that dismal yellow building; the fire eyed Vedanayagam, his class teacher; and the Head-master with his thin long cane...” (Narayan 3) This monotonous classroom reminds me of Mr. Gradgrind's “monotonous vault of a schoolroom” (Dickens 5) in *Hard Times* (1854) which only believes in the valorisation of hard facts and total elimination of anything that can fall under the heading of ‘fancy’ and imagination. Mr. Gradgrind, Swami's Headmaster, Tiwari Sir of *Taare Zameen Par* (2007) or Viru Sahastrabudhhe of Rajkumar Hirani's blockbuster *3 Idiots* (2009) are the poster boys of uncompromising authoritarianism and they all are strict disciplinarian by nature. In *Taare Zameen Par* (2007), an 8-year-old dyslexic child Ishaan though hails excellently in art but he cuts a very sorry figure in exams until or unless the spirited, caring and affectionate new art teacher called Ram Shankar Nikumbh joins the boarding school and helps Ishaan in overcoming his loopholes. But there were no one like Ram Shankar Nikumbh in Swami's Albert Mission School except D. Pillai who was famous among the little urchins for his good sense of humour and kindness. Swami's father who is also a member of a European tennis club is a prototype of all Indian middleclass father figures who belong to the centre of a power structure as far as the distribution of power in a family is concerned and much like Ishaan's father

Nandkishore Awasthi, Swami's father is also authoritarian and a strict disciplinarian by nature — both these father figures like to fan hegemonic power relations upon the other members of the family and both of them actually take all the important decisions of their family while the emotions and opinions of the others are sidelined and crushed under the fatal mill of their phallogocentric monopoly. Sadistic Mr Ebenezer's diatribes consisting of abusive and derogatory terms for the Hindu Gods and through Ebenezer, Narayan focuses our attention on the prevalence of bigotry, fanaticism and intolerance in the name of religion:

‘Oh, wretched idiots!’ The teacher said, clinching his fists, Why do you worship dirty, lifeless, wooden idols and stone images? Can they talk? No. Can they see? No. Can they bless you? No. Can they take you to Heaven? Why? Because they have no life. What did your gods do when Mohammed of Gazni smashed them to pieces, trod upon them, and constructed out of them steps for his lavatory? (Narayan 2)

Blatantly prejudiced against Hindu idolatry Mr Ebenezer further lambasts his hatred with fresh salvo for Lord Krishna:

“Did our Jesus go gadding about with dancing girls like your Krishna? Did our Jesus go about stealing butter like that archscoundrel Krishna”? Did our Jesus practise dark tricks on those around him?’

(Narayan 2)

Rajkumar Hirani's secular movie *PK* (2014) teaches us to be tolerant, respectful towards other religions by airing the message of dissent in democracy which is a healthy practice in order to perambulate the idea of India which is pluralistic, secular and heterogeneous. Even when Narayan was a schoolboy in Lutheran Mission School the scripture classes were mostly devoted to abusing and lampooning the Hindu Gods and violent abuses were heaped on idol-worshippers as a prelude to venerate Jesus. From *My Days* (1974) we come to know that converted teachers used to hate the non-Christian students which actually dismantle the secular fabric of India and if a particular religion is overinvested or overemphasized then obviously it is death knell for democracy:

The scripture classes were mostly devoted to attacking and lampooning the Hindu Gods, and violent abuses were heaped on idol-worshippers as a prelude to glorify Jesus. Among the non-Christians in our class I was the only Brahmin boy, and received special attention; the whole class could turn in my direction when the teacher said that Brahmins claiming to be vegetarian ate fish and meat in secret, in a sneaky way

and are responsible for the soaring price of those commodities.

(Narayan 12)

P.S.Sundaram observes in his book *R.K.Narayan*:

There is hardly any ragging in our schools and the dreadful tyrants are not senior boys as is Tom Brown's School Days or Stalky & Co: but the teachers and the headmaster Ebenezer's denunciation of Krishna were not uncommon in missionary school half a century ago, though now-a-days Christian teachers are likely to be much more tactful. (28)

Swaminathan's father who is authoritarian and strict disciplinarian by nature inflicts hegemonic power politics upon his family. The whole novel seems to me a boys' club though it cannot be denied that Narayan has given some space to both Swami's old doting granny and his mother. In a typical patriarchal society phallus is in the centre and women, marginalized voices are pushed at the periphery. Swami's father appears to me as a poster boy of masculine hegemony, conservatism, prudish mentality and a worshipper of "phallogocentrism" (Derrida's term for the masculine power at the origin of the Law). His palilalia which concentrates upon his son Swami's sticking to "definite order that Swaminathan should stay at home and do school homework" (Narayan 23-24) also hints at his inner psyche which is constantly grooming a fear psychosis that if Swami fails to safeguard the old traditional values or if he fails to bag a suitable position in Civil Service like him after shielding colonial principles he will be castrated, effeminized and will be tagged as Other by the existing dominant power structure which runs a police state and the surveilling colonial forces always like to punish its bad subjects by applying stringently various Althusserian Repressive State Apparatus while good subjects eat the fig in galore after carrying coals to Newcastle.

The Whole narrative of *Swami and Friends* (1935) is anchored in an ambivalent attitude towards colonization. This novel is not politically innocent and as John Thieme observes in his "The Double Making of R.K.Narayan" that the novel offers "a subversive response to the colonial ethic and to the educational curriculum that was one of its lynch-pins" (180). Swami's granny illustrates Narayan's subtle strategy of formulating a porous zone between the private and the public space. These overlapping associations between modernity and tradition which are symbolically portrayed by her old belongings and "the ill-ventilated dark passage between the front hall and the dining room" (Narayan 19) celebrate in-between identity — our Indian identity and the hybrid identity imposed upon us by the white colonials. Granny's story of Harischandra channelizes the ides of India's rich oral culture superseded by European written culture which is always presented as a source of estrangement and bewilderment. Swaminathan's Indian Self cannot equate

itself with the imposed and alien foreign culture and as a result he could not get Andersen's Fairy Tales to his satisfaction. As Hager Ben Driss in his scholarly article "Acts of Ambivalence: Political Resistance / Resisting Politics in R.K.Narayan's *Swami and Friends*" observes:

The role of the native intercessor is assigned to Rajam, Swami's newly arrived friend, who speaks "very good English, 'exactly like a "European"' ; which meant that few in the school could make out what he said" (Swami 12). Narayan's ironic use of inverted comma in this sentence is quite significant. By encapsulating the second phrase of the sentence in single commas, and further encasing "European" in double quotation marks, he shows the double estrangement of a newly rising Indian elite, a hybrid caste, as Thomas Babington Macaulay would characterize in his 1835 "Minute on Indian Education," as "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect" (par.30). The sly criticism directed towards Macaulay's linguistic and cultural program is elicited through the unpleasant character of Rajam. "[D]ressed like 'a European boy'" (Swami 182), Rajam epitomizes the cultural transvestite, estranged both from his Indian culture and the European set. He is represented as a character who is neither fully Indian nor authentically English; he haunts the text and informs its gesture of resistance. An incarnation of a Western genre, Swami and Friends narrates a story of filiation. In a deviant maneuver of resistance, Narayan writes an India of his own. (83-84)

Rajam, the Westernized boy because of the virtue of being the son of a powerful Superintendent of Police always enjoys special attention and better to say a special status in the eyes of others. David Cecil observes:

...To Swami, Rajam appears a demigod as Steerforth appears to David. Again, Mr. And Miss Murdstone are nothing short of ogres to David's immature intelligence, as is the son of the tanga driver to Swami

(Cecil 48).

In the big face off between Rajam and Mani, Mani's indigenous wooden clubs looked stupid and worthless in front of Rajam's phallic European gun and Narayan's mastery and craftsmanship in storytelling brilliantly merges these overlapping associations of tradition symbolically portrayed by clubs while gun symbolizes

modern European weaponry. Rajam belongs to the centre of a power structure and he had tried to inflict upon his subaltern family cook in front of his comrades a kind of Hegelian Master/Slave dialectic. Powerful/hegemonic people always try to belittle and mock the powerless in pursuit of sadistic pleasure:

"You dirty ass, take it away, don't put it there."
"Where am I to put it, Raju?" asked the cook.
Rajam burst out: 'you rascal, you scoundrel, you talk back to me?'
(Narayan 12)

As Raymond Williams defines hegemony in *Culture and Materialism* (1980):

It thus constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the society, a sense of absolute because experienced reality beyond which it is very difficult for most members of the society, to move in most areas of their lives" (38).

Rajam belongs to the category of "haves" while his cook belongs to "have nots" (Marx in Wen 74) category. Swaminathan deserves our kudos because even though he is a child and hardly understands the complex frenzy of political hullabaloo but he dared to join the protest march against the colonial forces. Authoritarian and oppressive schooling systems and their hyperactive teachers in their mission to beat, twist, punish or to flog the innocent urchins also focused their camera lens on that education policy which would create the safe custodian, protector and defender of British colonialism. Descartian principle of Mind-Body relationship is very much prominent here where society is getting much more utilitarian or body centric while Swami giving a challenge to the utilitarian and rigorous aspect of life is returning to mind or imagination either by seeking idyllic boyish adventures or his lethargy in action can be judged as his strategic attempt to sabotage the industrious colonial mechanism. Swami's nebula of emotions finally busted and he dared to call his claustrophobic school "dirty school" (Narayan 48) after getting severely flogged and caned by the callous headmaster. Swami did not want to be a perfect product of British monopolized political economy and throughout his days in his school he was forced to remain as a muted existence under the rigorous authoritarian doctrines of his teachers. Much like Gradgrind Swami's headmaster seeks to produce a Platonic ideal Republic where freedom of students is forbidden and anyone found challenging or trying to destereotype the existing authoritarianism and rigorous education policy will be ostracized and rusticated much like Swaminathan. This empirical system of education leads us back to the empirical philosopher John Locke's *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) where tabula rasa becomes the motto of him, i.e. after seeing the ray of life the mind of the child appears like a white sheet, i.e. innocence. Authoritarian and stringent teachers of Swami's schools except D.Pillai are

trying to impose upon the students a kind of Master/Slave dialectic vindicating and robbing the tenderness, generosity and freedom of the children by giving them a kind of materialistic education. Agamben's *Potentialities* (1999) shows a difference between potential and actual where actual is very much empirical and potentiality moves one from absence to presence and Narayan here tries to condemn the education policy which is based upon rigorous and strict school mechanism which only likes to promote empirical and scientific knowledge controlled and regulated by colonial principles. William in his essay "The School That I Would Like" emphasizes the relationship between teachers and students which is informal giving much more emphasis upon the students' freedom of expression but in Swami's schools the boys are strictly monitored, controlled and regulated by their strict disciplinarian headmaster in a very formal manner. In Tagore's "Tota Kahini" the bird becomes the victim of this kind of claustrophobic education policy and Swami's situation is like the caged parrot in the sense that like the parrot Swami also likes to flap his wings in search of freedom but the stringent and authoritarian systems whether represented by his autocratic father figure in his house or by the strict headmaster in his school always get their sadistic pleasures in cutting Swami's wings of freedom short and force Swami to always maintain certain orders and principles. As Pankaj Mishra in a chapter entitled as "R.K.Narayan" observes:

Narayan's dislike for the kind of education Swami and Chandran receive had hardened into conviction by now: the system of education churns out 'clerks for business and administrative officers,' and reduces India to a 'nation of morons'.(198)

Swaminathan appears to me as a mouthpiece of Swadeshi and Boycott movement because he had burnt his British cap. Police which is obviously a RSA factor charged lathi and some blows went over him. Swami's hybrid identity loves Englishness but not wholeheartedly. His isolated and I would like to say alienated existence when he lost the way symbolically posits the view that human beings are cast into an alien universe; no inherent truth, value, or meaning and fruitless search for purpose (Camus in Abrams 1). *Swami and Friends* (1935) navigates and propels the idea of heterogeneous Indian identity in the sense that people belonging to various pyramids of power relations in our society have been detailed here with Narayan's vivid representation and artistic wisdom. From Rajam and his SP father who belong to the centre of a power structure to the bullock cart driver Ranga or the subaltern cook who are subjects and peripheralized/marginalized voices and they belong to "[n]on hegemonic groups or classes." (Gramsci xiv) It actually celebrates Narayan's earnest attempt to bring the subaltern narrative into our mainstream narrative. The British government arrests Gauri Sankar, a well-known political leader of Bombay and as a result the little students

of Albert Mission School join the protest march with thousands of other citizens of Malgudi in order to showcase their unity and solidarity sloganeering “Gandhi ki jai, Bharat Mata ki jai” (Narayan 97) and indulge in “hooliganism, howling, jeering and hooting” (Narayan 98). Kudos to their Nietzschean Will to Power that despite the tyrannical and oppressive British monopoly they dared to revolt against the tyrannical oppression of their white masters. But it is undoubtedly a fact that the dying, subjugated, and marginalized situation of women in phallogocentric Indian society highlights the loopholes of Mother India mythology as a bourgeois ideological construct. (Morton 40)

Trisha Gupta in her 28 October, 2018, *Hindustan Times*, article, “60 Years of RK Narayan’s *The Guide* : A Tale ahead of its time” describes Malgudi as “...the sleepy South Indian town that Narayan had dreamt up as a setting for his fiction.” (Gupta) Narayan’s Malgudi or Lamming’s Creighton’s village serve as metaphors of their own country. Malgudi is imaginary, like Hardy’s Wessex or William Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha. As Pankaj Mishra in the previously mentioned chapter further observes:

...Malgudi, the colonial district town with its post-office and bank and middle-class suburb and small roadside shops and low-caste slums and missionary school and government bungalows — is the new world of urbanising India that Swami is expected, in the way Narayan was, to find his place. But Swami is essentially anarchic and it is his great restlessness within this restricted world and premonitions of the drabness that awaits him which make for that unique mix of ‘sadness and beauty’ that Graham Green — who helped publish the book — spoke of.” (196)

Furthering this critical observation I would like to draw the readers’ attention to Krishna Sen’s arguments about Malgudi in her seminal book *Critical Essays on R K Narayan’s The Guide* : With an introduction to Narayan’s Novels :

Malgudi may be said to be situated metaphorically at the intersection of the real and supra-rational, of physical space and time and mythic space and time. From this perspective one may extrapolate Bakhtin’s terminology (since Bakhtin recognised historic, but not mythic time), and say that the Malgudi environment takes on the attributes of a ‘chronotope’... (153)

Giordano Nanni in *The Colonisation of Time: Rituals, Routine and Resistance in the British Empire* had coined terms like “empire time” and “local” or “native” time. In *Swami and Friends* (1935) “empire time” is in a tussle with “local” or “native” time. As Malreddy Pavan Kumar argues that Narayan’s “fabulist localism” (560) can be

made out as an example of “provincialized modernity” (Chakravarty 1-36). Throughout the novel Swami is accused of being complacent and lazy lacking industriousness and seeking boyish pleasures. Such an attitude was, according to Frantz Fanon, misconstrued in colonial discourse as passivity when it was essentially ingredient of “the conscious sabotage of the colonial machine” (237-238)

CONCLUSION

R.K.Narayan who brought a small little delightful town called Malgudi and its varied characters to life deserves our kudos because with a true journalist’s eye he has vividly portrayed the various agathokakological entities of human life through the artistic representation of his characters who have become the mirror of our society and much like Wordsworth Narayan is at his best in celebrating the charms and magic of childhood vis-à-vis the encoded political, Anti-colonial propaganda, class struggle, Centre/Periphery dichotomy or the beauty of nature so profoundly sketched with minute attention prove Narayan to be a worshipper of India’s heterogeneous and multicultural identity. The bright-eyed boy Manjunath Nayakar who played the role of Swami in Shankar Nag’s popular TV serial *Malgudi Days* 28 years ago is now a PR consultant in Bengaluru. Swami’s adventure in soul making, his contact with the experienced adult world, little fights and reconciliations, his peripatetic nature egregiously narrated by Narayan’s artistic vision, his envies for his newly born little brother who is still in the Lacanian Imaginary or Pre-Oedipal or Pre-Linguistic stage and hardly understands politics, colonialism or the biggies like Hobbs, Bradman, Duleep or Tate but relies the peaceful lap of his mother, boyish adventures or misadventures, twisting of ears, exam pressures, granny’s lap as the safest place in the world — all these are mirabile dictu even in the 21st century. Swami much like Stephen of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916) positions himself in the universe:

*Tamil Tamil
W.S.Swaminathan
1st form A Section
Albert Mission School
Malgudi
South I ndia
Asia*

(Narayan 62)

Despite being an inhabitant of Malgudi Swaminathan is celebrating the concept called *vasudhaiva kutumbakam* (the world is my family) after mentioning his continent Asia’s name on the paper’s flap — this symbolically propagates the union of separate identity with totality or wholeness. Kipling’s children play out the Great Game of Imperialism or Golding’s children play out the imperial game of power but Narayan’s children fight even though their harmless fights have nothing to do with the preparation of the Civil Service. Abira Dhar in her 13 March, 2018, *The Quint*, article, “Lost and Found: The

Boy who played Swami in ‘Malgudi Days’” rightly observes:

R K Narayan died on 13th May 2001, at the age of 94 in Chennai, but his works will continue to live on forever, whether through books, television series or artists like Manjunath Nayakar who will always have stories to tell us.

(Dhar)

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