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## MAPPING MALGUDI: AN IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS OF R.K. NARAYAN'S 'THE GUIDE' AND ITS CINEMATIC ADAPTATION AS A REFLECTION OF NATION-SPACE

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### ABSTRACT

This critical study delves into the intricate interplay of literary and cinematic representations of R.K. Narayan's iconic novel, "The Guide" (1958), within the nation-space of Malgudi. Through a comprehensive analysis, it examines how the transition from page to screen influences and reflects the socio-cultural dynamics of a burgeoning post-colonial India. The study explores themes of identity, spirituality, and social transformation in both the written and cinematic narrative, shedding light on how the cinematic adaptation captures the essence of Malgudi as a microcosm of the larger Indian society.

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## INTRODUCTION

R.K. Narayan's literary realm, the fictitious town of Malgudi, has long been celebrated as an emblematic space encapsulating the quintessential Indian experience. In the tapestry of his narratives, Malgudi emerges as a vibrant microcosm of the nation itself, replete with multifaceted characters and profound socio-cultural insights. "The Guide," published in 1958, stands as one of Narayan's most acclaimed works and a testament to his ability to blend intricate storytelling with a deep exploration of human nature and societal evolution. The allure of "The Guide" lies not only in its compelling narrative but also in its vivid portrayal of the fictional town of Malgudi. The novel's protagonist, Raju, is a complex character whose journey, from a tour guide to a spiritual guide, reflects the intricate layers of identity, spirituality, and social transformation in the post-independence era of India. R.K. Narayan's evocative prose paints a rich tapestry of the town, offering readers a vivid window into the customs, traditions, and daily lives of Malgudi's inhabitants.

However, the allure of Narayan's Malgudi extends beyond the confines of the written page. This paper embarks on a critical exploration of how "The Guide" transitioned from the realm of literature to the silver screen, and how this cinematic adaptation both influenced and reflected the socio-cultural dynamics of a changing India. The synergy between literature and film is a dynamic one, often characterized by a continuous exchange of ideas, themes, and artistic expression. In the context of "The Guide," this dynamic exchange becomes a lens through which we can examine the complexities of nation-space and its reflection in both written and visual narratives. The cinematic adaptation of "The Guide" has its own distinct charm. Directed by Vijay Anand and released in 1965, the film masterfully captures the essence of Narayan's Malgudi. It provides a unique opportunity to study how the transition from the written word to the moving image can either enhance or alter the narrative's socio-cultural context. The portrayal of the same characters, settings, and themes in a different medium offers a nuanced perspective on the construction of nation-space. This paper seeks to explore this nuanced perspective. We aim to analyze how the cinematic adaptation of "The Guide" manages to resonate with the cultural and societal backdrop of a post-

colonial India, and how it brings forth the essence of Malgudi as a mirror to the larger Indian society. By focusing on key themes such as identity, spirituality, and social transformation, this study seeks to shed light on how Malgudi, both in literature and film, becomes a reflection of the evolving nation-space in the mid-20th century. In the pages that follow, we will journey through the intricate narrative of "The Guide," examining its literary and cinematic manifestations, and uncovering the unique ways in which this tale encapsulates the multifaceted nature of India's post-independence journey. As we navigate the textured landscapes of Malgudi, we will discern how R.K. Narayan's written words and Vijay Anand's visual storytelling converge and diverge, ultimately presenting us with a holistic understanding of Malgudi as the nation-space – a space that breathes life into the tapestry of Indian identity, spirituality, and societal metamorphosis.

**Significance of the Study:** The study of R.K. Narayan's "The Guide" and its cinematic adaptation, particularly in the context of Malgudi as the nation-space, holds significant importance for several reasons:

1. **Cultural Exploration:** This research delves into the cultural nuances and socio-cultural dynamics of post-independence India. By dissecting the literary and cinematic portrayals of Malgudi, it provides insights into how culture, tradition, and societal values were represented and transformed during a crucial period in Indian history.
2. **Literature-to-Film Transition:** The study offers a unique opportunity to examine how a literary work evolves when adapted to cinema. It sheds light on the challenges and creative choices made during the adaptation process, revealing how narrative elements are translated to a different medium, making it a valuable resource for scholars and filmmakers alike.
3. **National Identity and Space:** By exploring the concept of "nation-space" within the context of Malgudi, the study contributes to the discourse on how literature and cinema contribute to the construction and representation of national identity. It helps in understanding how the microcosm of a fictional town can mirror and comment on the larger nation.
4. **Social Transformation:** "The Guide" and its cinematic adaptation provide a lens through which to examine the social transformation that took place in India during the mid-20th century. The characters and events in both versions reflect the changing values and societal norms of the time, making it a valuable resource for social historians.
5. **Comparative Analysis:** A comparative analysis of the novel and the film enables scholars to explore the strengths and limitations of different narrative mediums. This, in turn, contributes to a deeper understanding of the creative processes involved in storytelling and the impact of these choices on the audience.
6. **Artistic and Cinematic Analysis:** For film scholars and enthusiasts, this study offers an opportunity to dissect the cinematic techniques employed in the adaptation, such as camera work, direction, and performance. It provides insight into how the visual medium can enhance or alter the narrative.
7. **Contemporary Relevance:** The themes of identity, spirituality, and social transformation explored in "The Guide" and its cinematic adaptation remain relevant in the contemporary context, making this study a valuable resource for those interested in how literature and film continue to shape and reflect societal discussions and values.
8. **Literary and Cultural Legacy:** R.K. Narayan's works, including "The Guide," have left a lasting legacy in Indian literature. This study contributes to the understanding and appreciation of Narayan's contributions to literature and cinema, preserving his work for future generations.

The study of "The Guide" and its cinematic adaptation within the framework of Malgudi as a nation-space offers a multifaceted exploration of literature, cinema, culture, and societal transformation. It enriches our understanding of how art reflects and shapes the

identity of a nation and its people, making it a significant and relevant area of research.

**Analysis of R.K. Narayan's 'the guide' and its cinematic adaptation as a reflection of nation-space:** In the realm of postcolonial literature, Timothy Brennan's observations shed light on the multifaceted nature of the nation, encompassing both the modern nation-state and a more ancient and elusive concept, the "natio" – a notion linked to local communities, a sense of belonging, and domesticity (Brennan, 2019: 45). Within R.K. Narayan's literary repertoire, the representation of this "natio" acquires a geographical outline through the imaginative construct of "Malgudi" – a fictional town that encapsulates the author's vision of a local society while simultaneously serving as a microcosm of the nation. Narayan's choice of setting, Malgudi, was deliberate and strategic. Had he anchored his narratives in a real, tangible town or village, his portrayal of the nation might have been constrained by the historical and geographical limitations of that locale. Real places, bound by historical context and physical boundaries, could potentially restrict the author's ability to present a broader perspective on the reality he perceived. Conversely, the imaginary space of Malgudi, unrestricted by the confines of reality, allowed Narayan to depict his perception of reality on a canvas that extended far beyond mere topography and history. In the dynamic interplay between place and space, Malgudi emerges as a "nation-space" characterized by notions of freedom and mobility (Huddard, 2005: 43). Malgudi is not static; rather, it lives, evolves, and transforms from one novel to the next, spanning from the early thirties to the early nineties (Hariprasanna, 2018: 23). This evolution signifies a passage of time that not only affects the geography of the place but also shapes the social, political, and cultural contours of the society in Narayan's narratives, as his characters engage in their own human drama (Hariprasanna, 2018: 23). Narayan's creation of Malgudi as a nation-space, unburdened by the constraints of historical and geographical reality, offers a rich and expansive canvas for the exploration of both local and national themes, fostering a dynamic backdrop for his literary explorations.

The intricate spatio-temporal landscape of Malgudi finds its most compelling exploration when observed through the cultural prism of 'local color,' a term that encapsulates "the detailed representation of the setting, encompassing the distinct dialect, customs, attire, and the unique modes of thought and emotion specific to a particular region, akin to Hardy's Wessex or Rudyard Kipling's portrayal of India" (Abrams, 2019: 145). These elements entice readers to perceive the fictional text as a narrative deeply immersed in regionalism. Through the inclusion of regional cultural elements in the narrative's backdrop, 'local color' transforms it into an engaging canvas for characters rooted in a particular community or cultural group. Much like Thomas Hardy's evocative rendering of Wessex and Arnold Bennett's portrayal of the five towns, where these towns represent real places such as Turnhill, Bursley, Hanbridge, Knype, and Longshaw, Malgudi in R.K. Narayan's narratives vividly embodies the regional attributes of a typical South Indian town. It is virtually inconceivable to engage in a discourse on R.K. Narayan's literary art without recognizing the indispensable role played by Malgudi. In "The Guide," Malgudi serves as a conduit that bridges the rural and the urban, the colonial and the postcolonial eras, and the 'natio' with the modern nation-state. This dynamic setting functions as a stage where a complex interplay of historical, cultural, and societal elements unfolds, enriching the depth and complexity of Narayan's storytelling. In 1965, R.K. Narayan's celebrated novel, "The Guide" (1958), underwent a cinematic adaptation through a collaborative effort involving both Indian and American filmmakers. Notably, Nobel laureate Pearl S. Buck took on the task of crafting the screenplay for the English version of the film, titled "Guide." The renowned Bollywood actor, Dev Anand, assumed the role of producer for both the English and Hindi versions of the film. Despite "Guide" achieving historic significance in the annals of Indian cinema, it garnered its fair share of criticism, particularly concerning its departure from the original text in the matter of representing the 'regional' aspects. This article aims to dissect and analyze the disparities between the written and cinematic versions by juxtaposing and contrasting the regional elements within the two renditions. Additionally, I intend to unravel

the underlying factors responsible for the deviations found in the film adaptation. By shedding light on these discrepancies, this analysis seeks to provide a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between literature and film and the challenges posed when bringing a regional narrative to the cinematic medium. In the cinematic context, the term 'location' refers to the physical properties or places, whether indoors or outdoors, used for filming outside the controlled environment of studios or sets. The selection of locations outside studios is often made to enhance the film's authenticity and realism (Dirks, 2016: www.filmsite.org). "Guide," filmed in Eastman color, undeniably presented a realistic and authentic representation of its chosen location. However, it's crucial to note that the location and the local color depicted in the film significantly diverged from R.K. Narayan's original portrayal in the book "The Guide" (1958).

While the narrative in the book unfolds in the fictional town of Malgudi, the film adaptation transplants the story to Udaipur, a town situated in the Rajasthan region. R.K. Narayan's autobiography, "My Days," reveals that he vehemently objected to the omission of Malgudi from the screenplay. However, his protests fell on deaf ears, with the filmmakers justifying the change by citing that, "For wide-screen purposes, and that in color, Jaipur offers an ideal background" (Narayan, 1996: 197). In his autobiography, Narayan expresses his disappointment, remarking that "By abolishing Malgudi, they had discarded my own values in milieu and human characteristics" (Narayan, 1996: 197). In his essay, "Misguided Guide," he reflects, "This was a shock. I had never visualized my story in that part of India... My story takes place in South India, in Malgudi, an imaginary town known to thousands of my readers all over the world" (Narayan, 1988: 209). He further clarifies, "[I]t is South India in costume, tone, and contents. Although the whole country is one, there are diversities, and one has to be faithful in delineating them" (Narayan, 1988: 210). This departure of the film from the novel's original setting in Malgudi to Udaipur reflects a significant departure from Narayan's vision, highlighting the challenges and complexities of adapting literary works to the cinematic medium while maintaining fidelity to the author's intended 'local color.' While the printed text aimed to emphasize the rich tapestry of cultural diversity within the nation, the adapted version conspicuously spotlighted the filmmakers' concerted efforts to portray 'unity in diversity.' It is particularly in the exploration of the theme of 'unity in diversity' that the film adaptation has veered away from fidelity to the source text.

In his article titled "Screening the Nation: Guide and the (Re) Production of India," Niladri R. Chatterjee observes that the film serves a "didactic function" (Chatterjee, 2018: 145) in its cinematic representation of the nation. Numerous instances in the film, such as Raju's proficiency in speaking various Indian languages and Rosie's mastery of diverse Indian dance forms, indicate that the primary concern of the filmmakers was to illustrate "a culturally diverse but politically united India" (Chatterjee, 2018: 133). Chatterjee explains that in 1965, India experienced significant events, including the anti-Hindi agitations in South India against the imposition of Hindi as the national language and the outbreak of the second Indo-Pakistan War. These events had raised concerns about the "linguistic and territorial identity" of India (Chatterjee, 2018: 135). The film's references to various cities and states within the nation, showcasing their culinary and aesthetic traditions, were strategic choices to underscore the nationalist ideal of unity in diversity. However, in this representation, the emphasis on 'diversity' sometimes appeared to be overshadowed by the filmmakers' mission of projecting the ideal of 'unity.' The choice of the exotic backdrop of Rajasthan served as a suitable alternative to the Alpine settings in Kashmir, where many outdoor scenes for the Bombay film industry were typically shot at the time (Chatterjee, 2018: 137). Given that Indian writing in English was not as widely read in the 1960s as it is today, many people were unfamiliar with Malgudi and Narayan's vision in the printed narrative. This lack of familiarity also contributed to the widespread appreciation for the film. In a conversation with Tad Danielewski, the director of the English version of the film, R.K. Narayan emphasized the importance of adhering to his prescribed geography and sociology for the adaptation of his work. He insisted on maintaining what he referred to as the "inner veracities" of his literary world. This term,

"inner veracities," alluded to the cultural essence of specific communities or social groups that were a recurring theme in almost all of his literary works. These veracities were the hallmark of the cultural and human geography within his imaginative setting. In Narayan's fictional realm, the place, its inhabitants, and their distinctive cultural attributes converged to create a layered tapestry of socio-cultural identity. Narayan urged the filmmakers to locate Malgudi in any South Indian town that resonated with the geographical and cultural descriptions of Malgudi in his book. The topography of Malgudi was inspired by real locations, including the banks of the River Kaveri, the Gopalswami Hill, and Nanjangud, a small town. Narayan disclosed that he had taken the film crew to these specific spots, explaining, "I showed them the river steps and a small shrine shaded by a banyan tree on the banks of the Kaveri, which was the exact location around which I wrote 'The Guide'... In the summer, when the river dried up, they could easily film the drought scenes there" (Narayan, 1988: 208). He also led the filmmaking team to the base of the Gopalswami Hill. At the hill's summit stood an old bungalow that he had christened "Peak House" in his novel. Providing further insights into the genuine locations that inspired the spatial conception of Malgudi in "The Guide," he recounted: "I took them to the quaint town of Nanjangud, with its charming shops offering sweets, toys, and ribbons. Here, a lively crowd of pilgrims gathered to take ritual baths in the sacred waters of the Kabini, which meandered through the town. The atmosphere around the temple was vibrant and colorful, and in a matter of weeks, it would swell exponentially as people from the surrounding villages converged to partake in the annual festival—akin to the bustling crowd described in the closing pages of my novel" (Narayan, 1988: 208).

Narayan held high hopes that these real locations would serve as ready-made sets for the film. However, his optimism was shattered when the American director informed him of their decision to exclude both Malgudi as a 'location' and its cultural essence from the film. The interdependence of 'location' and 'culture' becomes evident, as culture functions much like a language, and location provides the framework for this language. Although "The Guide" is penned in English, the customs, practices, and cultural norms of the people in Malgudi and Mangal (the village where Raju becomes a Swami) serve as codes of the vernacular within the narrative. These cultural norms cannot be discussed without being rooted in Malgudi. Simultaneously, analyzing the significance of Malgudi as a location in the book necessitates a reference to the cultural characteristics of its inhabitants. The cultural distinctiveness of the Hindu community in South India is introduced early in the novel. Velan, a villager, informs Raju that his daughter is married to his own sister's son (6). Marriages between cousins are prevalent among South Indian Hindus, but it's a taboo for North Indian Hindus. The film, which portrays the location and culture of North India, omits any mention of such a marriage by the villager. Changes are made in every minor detail to erase the local color of Narayan's novel. In the film, the villager's name is altered from Velan to Bhola, and the village's name is changed from Mangal to Rampuri. Both Bhola and Rampuri carry a familiarity to North Indians, unlike 'Velan' and 'Mangal,' which are typical South Indian names. 'Velan' is another name for Lord Murugan, the God of warfare in Hindu mythology, widely revered in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, and the Philippines. In West Bengal, Odisha, and Maharashtra, he is known as "Kartikeya." 'Bhola' is another name for Lord Shiva, a major Hindu deity worshipped across India. The term 'Rampuri,' meaning the abode of Lord Rama, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, is emblematic of North Indian culture. In Hindi cinema, characters and places named after Lord Rama are frequently encountered. Consequently, the cultural nuances in the source text, rooted in South Indian ethos, were transplanted to the North Indian setting to create a quintessential "pan-Indian" backdrop for contemporary Hindi cinema.

Another substantial deviation is observed in the portrayal of Rosie's art—her dance. In the book, Rosie is a trained Bharatnatyam dancer, a classical Indian dance form with its origins in Tamil culture. In ancient times, this dance was known as *dasiyattam* as it was performed by *devadasis* (maid servants of God) in South Indian

temples (Soneji, 2006, 2013, <http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/indian-classical-dance/>). The book explicitly mentions that Rosie hailed from a matrilinear family of temple dancers, who were often viewed as "public women" (Narayan, 1958: 84). She explains to Raju that women from her background are not considered "respectable" in society (Narayan, 1958: 84). Despite holding a university degree in Economics, she couldn't escape the social stigma attached to her 'class identity' (Narayan, 1958: 85). She had married Marco, an archaeologist, as a strategic move to attain the respectable status of a 'wife' in society. For her, marriage was a truce to elevate her social standing. In the book, Narayan is explicit about the limited scope of Rosie's shows and performances, which are confined to the geographical boundaries of South India. In Chapter 9 of the book, Raju notes, "Our engagements took us to all corners of South India, with Cape Comorin at one end and the border of Bombay at the other, and from coast to coast" (Narayan, 1958: 191). However, in the film adaptation, Waheeda Rahman, portraying Rosie, is not depicted as a Bharatnatyam dancer. The dance sequences in the film are presented as typical Bollywood performances, featuring a troupe of dancers accompanying Rosie during her stage shows. Rosie's changing costumes reflect various Indian dance forms such as Kathak, Bharatnatyam, Manipuri, and folk traditions. These dance performances are choreographed to popular soundtracks from the film. Another notable deviation is that the film showcases Rosie's dance performances taking place both in India and abroad. Regarding the disparity in Rosie's professional status, Narayan expressed his thoughts: "I did not expect the heroine, the dancer, to be more than a local star, but the film heroine became a national figure whose engagements caused her to travel up and down hundreds of miles each day in a Boeing 707, autographing, posing for photographers, emerging from five-star hotels and palatial neon-lit theaters" (Narayan, 1996: 197). This comment underscores the significant transformation of Rosie's character from a local star to a national icon, leading a glamorous and jet-setting life in the film adaptation.

Narayan's portrayal of Rosie as a local star in the book may have been a deliberate choice aimed at justifying her efforts to redefine the status of Bharatnatyam dance and Bharatnatyam dancers in South Indian society. It's plausible that he wanted his readers to reevaluate their preconceived notions about devadasis and their dance form. This reevaluation was necessary because, during the colonial period, the somewhat ambiguous social status of devadasis (i.e., unmarried women dedicated to temples) had caused the art form to fall into disrepute in the eyes of both the Victorian ruling elite and the emerging Indian middle class (Soneji, 2006, 2013, [www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/indian-classical-dance/](http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/indian-classical-dance/)). It can be argued that by emphasizing these local elements, Narayan sought to counter and challenge the one-dimensional portrayal of Indian culture prevalent in mainstream Hindi cinema. By the 1960s, Hindi cinema had already established itself as the most popular form of public culture in India. The deviations in the film adaptation hindered the author's attempt to foreground the 'local' within the global context of cultural representation. Additional deviations in the film, including variations in dress code and food habits of the characters, underscore the politics involved in representing the diverse regional cultures within a culturally rich nation. As discussed earlier in reference to Niladri R. Chatterjee's article, these deviations can be viewed as an effort to suppress the regional group that had raised objections against the government's proposal to make 'Hindi' (the language spoken by the majority population in North India) the official language of the nation. Consequently, the political implications of these deviations suggest that they were deliberate manipulations of the cultural codes presented in the printed text.

These deviations not only contribute to the growing list of cultural distinctions between the film text and the printed text but also prompt an examination of the dress code and food habits of a community in terms of Saussurian concepts of 'langue' and 'parole.' In "The Guide," the specific garments worn by the main characters and the particular selection of food items mentioned by the author function as 'parole' in the structural analysis of the cultural language of South India. In the book, Raju is depicted wearing a dhoti and jibba, which is the typical dress code for men in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. However, in the

film, Dev Anand, portraying the role of Raju, is consistently seen in Western attire, which was fashionable during that era. He carries himself with his customary style, often slinging his folded coat over his shoulder. These differences make it challenging to connect him with Narayan's portrayal of Raju in terms of appearance and demeanor. Regarding the representation of food habits, Narayan's book includes the names of popular South Indian dishes such as idli and dosa. In the first chapter of the book, Narayan not only describes Raju's aversion to having fruit for breakfast but also highlights his preference for starting the day with coffee and idli (Narayan, 1958: 18). However, in the film, Raju is portrayed consuming chapatti and curry, which are staple food items in North India. This deliberate choice by the filmmakers aims to represent the local cultural elements of North India in the film. In South India, coffee is generally preferred over tea, and Narayan underscores this regional preference by providing an elaborate description of the ceremonious advertising and campaigning of the Tea Board at Mangal. "The Tea Propaganda Board opened a large tea stall, and its posters, featuring green tea plantations along the slopes of blue mountains, were plastered all around the temple wall. (People drank too much coffee and too little tea in these parts.) It had set up a tea bar and served free tea in porcelain cups all day" (Narayan, 1958: 239).

In the film, when beverages are served, it is insured that tea is the featured item, rather than coffee, to align with the preference for tea in North India. These deviations in the film are made with the sole intention of shifting the narrative's location and culture from South India to North India. In the film, a significant portion of screen time is dedicated to showcasing images of the landscapes, roads, and towns of Rajasthan. This approach to representing the locale or physical backdrop in the film aligns with the narrative's theme, as it tells the story of a tourist guide. However, this emphasis on depicting the landscapes of Rajasthan does not adequately explain the shift in the story's location from South India to North India. To understand this change, we must delve into the realm of cross-cultural encounters. "Guide" was, after all, a collaborative effort involving both Indian and American filmmakers, primarily intended to present an Indian story with an entirely Indian cast to Western audiences. Their goal was to portray on screen the 'spectacular' India described in travelogues and history books. Featuring the historical architecture, culture, and ethnoscape of Udaipur, Chittor, and Jaipur was deemed ideal for this purpose. During the iconic soundtrack "aajphirjeenykitamannahai" ("I wish to live once again"), Raju, Rosie, and the other tourists embark on camel rides. On their journey to Chittor, a popular tourist destination in Rajasthan, they encounter women dressed in traditional ghagra-choli attire, carrying colorful clay pots on their heads. These scenes foreground a picturesque representation of rural India, with its association with the heat and dust of villages.

Additionally, in the English version of the film, the director includes a symbolic fight between two tigers to represent the rivalry between Raju and Marco. These elements collectively contribute to the ethnoscape of India, aligning with stereotypical representations found in Western travel literature. Furthermore, the film features royal palaces and forts through various types of shots and reverse shots, enhancing the historical significance of the location in a visually spectacular manner. In the film, the function of location is primarily technical, serving the filmmaker's goal of presenting the mise-en-scène as a spectacle. In contrast to the film, the book effectively utilizes its location to explore significant themes. In "The Guide," R.K. Narayan employs the setting as a powerful metaphor for charting the transition of a nation and society from tradition to modernity. According to C.D. Narasimhaiah, the novel's setting not only serves as a backdrop for the evolving phases the characters go through but also authentically reflects the transition in the agricultural economy (Narasimhaiah, 2018: 126). Narasimhaiah suggests that the changes in the spatio-temporal setting parallel the transformation of Raju's character from a state of innocence to a state of experience (Narasimhaiah, 2018: 126). Before the advent of railways, Malgudi was a small town where people led rural lives. Raju's father operated a small shop where villagers gathered to discuss agricultural matters and ongoing disputes. At home, they raised a pair of buffaloes for milk and dung. In the mornings, Raju engaged in sacred rituals,

reciting religious rites and memorizing the Tamil alphabet and numbers under his father's guidance. The introduction of railways symbolized the intrusion of colonialism into this idyllic rural setting. The impact of colonial intervention in Malgudi had both positive and negative aspects. The railways connected Malgudi to the outside world, ushering in a wave of modernity and urbanization. This transformation expanded the one-dimensional rural setting of Malgudi into a multi-dimensional one. Raju described this evolution in the following way: "Malgudi, I said, had many things to offer, historically, scenically, from the point of view of modern developments... or if one came as a pilgrim, I could take him to a dozen temples all over the district within a radius of fifty miles; I could find holy waters for him to bathe in all along the course of the Sarayu, starting, of course, with its source on Mempi peaks" (Narayan, 1958: 62).

This rich exploration of the changing landscape and its historical, scenic, and modern dimensions is a central element in the book's narrative, highlighting the intricate interplay between location and societal transformation. The introduction of railways also brought with it the perversions of modern urban life into the rural society of Malgudi. During his childhood, Raju absorbed profane language from the men who were involved in laying down the railway tracks. As a guide, he often embellished facts to make them more engaging for the tourists, resorting to various manipulations. Later, he faced arrest on charges of forgery. Following his release from jail, he embarked on a journey to a village called Mangal. It is in Mangal that his character undergoes a transformation. Much like Malgudi, Mangal is an imaginary setting that symbolizes an underdeveloped nation in the Third World. The village faces a myriad of problems, such as the absence of schools, post offices, and medical facilities. These challenges persistently hinder the nation's progress even after gaining independence from foreign rule. Both Malgudi and Mangal embody R.K. Narayan's vision of the nation, a vision that occasionally carries a touch of irony. On one hand, these places serve as sites of pilgrimage, where faith can potentially transform a picaro into a Mahatma (a great soul). On the other hand, they become centers of exhibition and commerce, attracting both street vendors and government officials.

For instance, the health inspector, clad in khaki, zealously sprayed DDT across every inch of space and encouraged people to undergo inoculations against diseases like cholera and malaria. After addressing health concerns, he screened several Government of India films showcasing various projects, river valleys, and speeches by ministers. At the periphery, a man had set up a gambling booth with a dartboard on a pole, along with a makeshift merry-go-round that emitted a constant whining sound throughout the day. Peddlers of various items roamed in and out, selling balloons, reed whistles, and sweets (Narayan, 1958: 239-240). This vivid depiction underscores the complex dynamics of these locales and their significance in reflecting the broader issues of an evolving nation, ranging from the challenges of development to the fusion of tradition and modernity. The juxtaposition of the activities of government officials and peddlers in Mangal provides us with an opportunity to view the setting as a postmodernist text, blurring the distinctions between the high and the low. This juxtaposition further reinforces the irony inherent in Narayan's vision of the nation. In a place where essential infrastructure such as dams, bridges, or health centers is conspicuously absent, the exhibition of these elements in documentary films can be seen as part of the government's strategy to secure votes by disseminating information about national developments. This multifaceted perspective employed by Narayan in examining the nation turns the regional setting in the book into a space that fluctuates in time, assuming the dimensions of a Bakhtinian chronotope, a complex matrix of time and space (Bhattacharya, 2010: 28).

In the film adaptation, the focus shifts away from Raju's childhood and the impact of railways. The character of Raju the Guide takes center stage, reflecting the prevalent trend of hero-worship in commercial cinema. This elevation of Raju's character overshadows the larger issues concerning the nation, government, and the

conditions of the people. While the film's narrative is adapted from Narayan's novel, the author's nuanced perspectives on the nation are downplayed by the filmmakers. It appears that the filmmakers strategically used the name of a Sahitya Akademi Award-winning author as a veneer to coat their melodramatic screenplay with an aesthetic touch. In this context, the author of the original printed text becomes just another commodity within the consumerist realm of commercial filmmaking. His fame and viewpoints can be auctioned and appropriated as dictated by the terms and conditions of the media market. James Martin underscores the importance of spatial location not only in shaping shared experiences and customs that form identities but also in providing a "position" from which resistance can be mounted against power, inequality, and oppression (Martin, 2005: 98). The omission of the regional setting and milieu from "The Guide" not only results in the exclusion of Narayan's vision of the nation from the film but also erases his protocols of resistance as a postcolonial author. By emphasizing the exotic and the oriental in the mise-en-scene, the filmmakers cater to their commercial interests. Simultaneously, by erasing the evolving trend of representing the nation in Indian writing in English, they diminish both the aesthetic and ethical value of what has been referred to as the celebration of the "glocal" in recent postcolonial criticism. It remains to be explored whether any member of the Indian crew objected to this type of commercialization. However, the manipulation of the socio-cultural identities of the characters on the silver screen reveals how cultural imperialism operated during the making of this film. This manipulation illustrates the extent to which the oppressive aspects of neo-colonial discourse influenced the thoughts and actions of the so-called post-colonial subjects.

A comprehensive examination of Bollywood's popular films reveals a recurring pattern in which regional cultures and characters are often portrayed as objects of ridicule in mainstream Hindi cinema. It is conceivable that this mindset among the Indian members of the production team contributed to the omission of the South Indian milieu from the film adaptation. In the cinematic interpretation of R.K. Narayan's novel "The Guide," the most significant loss is the removal of Narayan's socio-cultural perspective on the nation and its people. In a multi-ethnic nation like India, a regional backdrop allows an author to depict the socio-economic conditions of the citizens in a distinctive manner. For example, consider trying to visualize Satyajit Ray's film "Pather Panchali" (1955), adapted from the works of Bibhutibhusan Bandopadhyay, set in a milieu different from the one depicted in the book. The portrayal of the locale is frequently overlooked in film appreciation but becomes a critical element when conducting a thorough analysis of the film "Guide" because it underscores how the South Indian community and culture are "Othered" by both Indians and foreigners. The deviation in the representation of the locale in the film, whether motivated by commercial interests or cultural biases, underscores the risk of incurring an irreparable loss in the process of adapting a printed text into a film script. Even half a century after the adaptation, the source text and its cinematic version continue to raise pertinent questions. The issues of cultural diversity that had posed challenges to the nation's unity on the eve of Indian Independence persist in complicating the discourse on national integrity. With the establishment of four new states in the Indian republic, it has become evident that diverse cultures require acknowledgment through the proper representation of their distinctiveness. From this perspective, it can be argued that "Malgudi" initiated a debate on the inadequate representation of a specific section of the Indian population in Bollywood films. The film adaptation, while emphasizing idealistic patriotic themes, has overlooked the post-colonial reality embedded in Narayan's Malgudi. Considering the spatial significance of this imaginary place, one can hope for another adaptation in which the story of Raju the Guide is set in Malgudi.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the cinematic adaptation of R.K. Narayan's novel "The Guide" presents a stark departure from the rich regional and cultural tapestry that defines the book. While the film Guide achieved commercial success, it did so at the expense of erasing the author's

nuanced socio-cultural outlook and the distinctive milieu of South India. This loss, stemming from both commercial interests and cultural biases, underscores the challenges and limitations of adapting a printed text into a film. The cinematic choice to shift the story from Narayan's beloved Malgudi to Rajasthan reflects the prevailing tendency in Bollywood to marginalize and caricature regional cultures. This not only deprived the film of the depth and authenticity that a regional backdrop could have provided but also perpetuated the longstanding trend of belittling regional identities in Indian cinema. The literary work "The Guide" is a thought-provoking exploration of cultural diversity within the framework of a united India, while the film adaptation veers towards the idealistic and fails to capture the post-colonial realities embedded in Narayan's narrative. The ongoing discourse on cultural diversity and regional representation in India suggests that the issues that loomed large on the eve of Independence still demand attention and recognition. As the nation continues to evolve, it becomes increasingly vital to acknowledge the distinctiveness of various cultures and communities. In the context of this ongoing dialogue, "Malgudi" serves as a pivotal reference point, highlighting the complexities of representing regional identities and the ever-relevant question of what is lost when the local is overshadowed by commercial interests and broader cultural biases. In the future, there is hope for a cinematic adaptation that returns the story of Raju the Guide to its rightful South Indian milieu, thereby celebrating the cultural diversity that is an integral part of India's identity. Such an adaptation could bridge the gap between literature and cinema, paying homage to R.K. Narayan's vision and promoting a more inclusive representation of the diverse narratives that make up the tapestry of the nation.

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