

**SHORT STORY TO
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**Title: *The Curious Case of
Mali's Manuscript***

THE CURIOUS CASE *of* MALI'S MANUSCRIPT

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When his nephew Mali is arrested for sedition over an outlandish manuscript, Radhakrishna Iyer finds himself embroiled in a tangled web of literary intrigue and familial duty.

As tensions mount and secrets unravel, Iyer must decide whether to forsake integrity or fight for the truth in Mali's audacious work.

In the modest town of Malgudi, nestled between the Sarayu River and the whispering hills, lived a man named **Radhakrishna Iyer**, a retired revenue inspector who wore his reticence like a shawl. He lived in a tiled-roof house on Kabir Lane, where the gulmohar tree shed its blossoms on his porch like an unsolicited tribute.

Every morning, he would read *The Hindu* with spectacles balanced precariously on his nose, underlining words with a red pencil. It was his way of staying **cognizant** of worldly affairs in his otherwise **mundane** retirement. But one Tuesday, a letter arrived that jolted him out of his **sedentary** existence.

It was from **Mali**, his estranged nephew, who had once absconded to Madras to become a writer. The letter, full of **hyperbole** and **self-aggrandizing** declarations, claimed that he had written a "literary revolution," a manuscript so powerful that publishers were fighting over it like jackals over a carcass.

Curious and a tad **incredulous**, Iyer boarded the noon train to Madras. On the journey, he

pondered the **ostensibly** noble ambitions of his nephew. The boy had always been a little too enamored with pipe dreams, once trying to start a matchmaking business for parrots.

He arrived at Mali's dingy room behind Mount Road and was greeted by the overpowering smell of ink, ambition, and instant noodles. The manuscript, bound in fraying twine, was ceremoniously handed over. The title read: "*Chronicles of a Crimson Mango*".

Iyer read it overnight under the pale glow of a table lamp. The narrative was **convoluted**, swinging between **philosophical ruminations** and **bizarre metaphors**. Characters spoke in cryptic parables, and the protagonist—a mango that attains sentience and joins the civil services—sounded more **hallucinatory** than profound.

He didn't sleep a wink.

The next morning, Iyer, out of both concern and a faint desire to salvage his family's intellectual repute, said diplomatically, "Mali, your ideas

are... audacious. But perhaps a bit of **tempering** would help their **coherence**."

Mali's face hardened. "You are **anachronistic**, uncle. You can't see genius if it bit you!"

Iyer left Madras that evening, despondent.

Weeks passed. One day, Malgudi's postman, who was also the town's unofficial gossip repository, delivered a letter with trembling hands. "It's from the police department in Madras," he whispered, clearly enjoying the suspense.

Inside was a **summons**. Mali had been **incarcerated** under charges of **plagiarism and sedition**.

"Sedition?" Iyer gasped, his heart pounding.

He rushed back to Madras. There, the inspector—a man with a **perennially cynical** face—handed over a sealed packet.

"We traced entire paragraphs to a banned radical pamphlet from the '60s," he explained. "Your nephew claims it was an 'intertextual homage.' We call it **intellectual theft**."

Mali, in his cell, looked unrepentant. “Uncle,” he said, “the government fears the power of ideas. I merely held a mirror to society.”

“More like a circus mirror,” Iyer muttered.

But something gnawed at him. He reread the manuscript, this time focusing not on its **turgid prose** but its **subtext**. Beneath the surface, between allegories of fruit and bureaucracy, lay scathing attacks on corruption, nepotism, and crony capitalism—subjects that made even seasoned columnists **circumspect**.

Iyer approached a lawyer. The courtroom battle was theatrical. The prosecutor called the manuscript “a **subversive** fruit salad.” The defense called it “a **seminal** work of post-colonial dissent.”

Eventually, the judge, a man known for quoting Shakespeare and scolding lawyers for grammatical errors, declared, “While the literary merit is... dubious, I find insufficient evidence to prove criminal intent. This court is not a literary critic.”

Mali was acquitted.

On the way back, he looked at Iyer and said with quiet defiance, “They called me absurd, but at least they read me.”

That night, back in Malgudi, as rain lashed the roof and frogs croaked like chorus singers, Iyer sat with the manuscript, pen in hand.

He corrected the grammar, restructured the sentences, and rewrote entire chapters. By dawn, it was a new book.

It was eventually published under both their names—**“A Mango’s Manifesto.”**

It sold exactly 13 copies.

But on a sleepy evening two years later, a man in Delhi read it and sent a letter. He was the editor of a small but fiercely respected literary magazine.

His note read:

“Dear Mr. Iyer and Mr. Mali,
Your work is flawed, fantastical—and absolutely fascinating. We’d like to serialize it in our next issue.

P.S. The mango made me weep.”

And for the first time in decades, Radhakrishna Iyer wept too—not out of shame or fear, but something softer.

Something dangerously close to **pride**.