

THE GUIDE: THE AUTHENTICITY AND CHARACTERIZATION

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A brilliant storyteller R.K. Narayan adopted a technique in *The Guide* which can be regarded as a peculiar mix of two kinds of technique. The first part of Raju's life was narrated by the protagonist himself while the later half of his life was narrated by the novelist. Thus it can be said that there was a combination of the first person and third person narration. The mixture of the two techniques had not impaired the flow of the narrative but it had affected the plot construction. In spite of the immense success of R.K. Narayan as a narrator in *The Guide*, he had not been able to provide it with a sound structure. The most remarkable excellence of R.K. Narayan in *The Guide* lies in his ability as a storyteller. From the very beginning to the end of the novel he was able to hold the attention of the reader and once the reader had started reading it, he cannot give it up without completing it. The combination of the two types of narration had enabled the novelist to juxtapose the past and the present. The division of this technique was artistically sound. In the first person narrative there was not much scope for authoritential comments but in the third person narrative the author made suitable comments on the events, situations and characters. This type of narrative divides Raju into two selves - the average and the extraordinary.

In his childhood Raju witnessed Malgudi's development. He spent his entire childhood on the railway platforms. Narayan had shown the mental and physical growth of Raju. With the growth of Malgudi in the novel we find two judges. The first one was an embodiment of law who put Raju behind bars for his crime of forgery. Another judge was Velan who forgives him in spite of knowing all the truth about his life. Velan seems to be very lenient with Raju. We can say that it was Velan who gave a second chance to Raju to live a better life. Everyone in the village had blind faith on Raju and they respect him next to God. Although through the novel we find that Raju was a bad man but when it came to save the life of poor villagers he kept fast and he was full of excitement when rain came. This single event shows that Raju's thought and personality is now matured. 16

With this he no more remained a lover of Rosie, a guide or a fake swami but he became a Mahatma who sacrificed his life for others. We can also compare the beginning and the end of the novel. In the opening chapters of the novel we find Raju sitting and posing as a saint. His life future and aim everything was uncertain after his release from jail. But after some time we see a great change in his attitude towards life. He fasted for twelve days for suffering humanity. In the beginning of the fast he wanted to run away from village but something stops him from doing so. So by the end of the novel we find a tremendous change in the character of Raju. 17

The most commendable aspect of R.K. Narayan's technique in *The Guide* was that he had adopted the artistic method of judicious selection and rejection. This was seen at its best in his treatment of the element of love and sex. R.K. Narayan knew that this aspect of the novel's theme was very interesting for the reader and he had introduced it with the masterly skill. After

the short but brisk romance with Rosie, Raju said that "he had returned nearly at midnight and despite Rosie's feeble go'lnight he had gently pushed her out and stepped in and locked the door on the world." Pg. 89.

R.K. Narayan never emphasizes on the narration of sexual life of his characters. With the above narration of Raju he closed the chapter of their love life. When Raju was narrating this he was sitting on the historic shrine and this makes him very happy. But very soon he realizes his position as swami and returns to reality.

However, Narayan had wisely refrained from describing in details of the bedroom. There was a scope to dilate on this point, much to the enjoyment of the common readers, at the same time to the anger of the cultivated readers. In this aspect of this technique R.K. Narayan can be contrasted with Somerset Maugham and D.H. Lawrence. Particular mention can be made of *Liza of Lambeth*, which was replete with the details of amorous affairs. Had Narayan not adopted this artistic principle of rejection, *the Guide* must have lost its appeal. Perhaps it would not be wrong to say that R.K. Narayan's use of irony in its diverse forms had enriched the novel in a remarkable manner. R.K. Narayan had adopted cinematic technique of flash back. It had rightly been remarked "with the snapshots taken in time, the novelist has created the impression of continuity of the narrative and also the continuity of the life." This technique made the novel compact and provided the reader with juxtaposed parallel scenes to highlight the irony of life. Perhaps this constituted the main factor of the appeal that the novel had for its reader as well as for its critics

The novel covers the whole life cycle of Raju's life. This cycle symbolizes the journey of common man from ignorance to knowledge, from selfish love to serve humanity and from materialistic life to sainthood. In the life of Raju, Narayan had shown all the pleasures and miseries of a human life. He had done all this in an artistic manner but the greatest lapse of the novel was that Raju had narrated his whole life in one single night-"and he felt his throat smarting with the continuous talk all night."Pg.232

It was unbelievable that while Raju was narrating his story it was the fourth day of his fast and he became very weak and frustrated but in spite of all this he narrated the whole story in one night. But in spite of all this we cannot say that the novel is weak in its narrative. 18

The chief characters of the novel are Raju, Rosie and Marco was the products of Hindu culture coming down to us for generations. Raju was born and brought up in Malgudi, a very small town of south India. Whatever knowledge he had, he gathered from news papers, magazines and reading old books. He had a very helpful nature and was practical in life. He took life as it came. He was not at all an orthodox kind of person but at the same time we cannot call him a rebellion or a revolutionary. He flouted the suggestion of his mother that he should marry Lalitha, a girl from the village. He considered that this kind of proposal was outdated and he wanted to marry the girl of his heart. Later, we find him emotionally involved in the illegitimate love affair with the wife of Marco; an act certainly not in keeping with the Indian values. He also gave up the business of his father and became a tourist guide, a new profession wonderfully suited to his nature. This was a remarkable change seen in the attitude of Raju who adopts a new profession of his liking thereby discarding the traditional views of society.

Raju was a rogue but there were some qualities and attraction in his character which attracted everyone including Marco. He loves and loved by everyone who comes in contact with him. His carefree and helpful nature made him an admirable personality. He never indulged in fight or criticized anyone. He had aesthetic sense and something of a touch of a poet in him. He called Rosie "a divine creature, an angel a vision, a rainbow and a woman of golden touch". He

feels frustrated when he thinks that Marco neglects Rosie who is an embodiment of love and beauty. He thinks that Marco belongs to some other planet who has no feeling of love for his lovely wife. He has full sympathy with Rosie and holds the view that Marco must be punished and sent to prison for the crime of neglecting his wife. 19

After his release from the jail, Raju finds shelter in the shrine where he was taken for a saint by Velan and others. When the drought hit the countryside, he was forced to undertake a fast much against his will. He surrendered himself completely to the circumstances and Raju dies a ruined man, not because he wanted to die but circumstances so conspired that the only alternative before him was to become an unwilling martyr.

Raju was a model prisoner in the jail. He helped in maintaining law and order in the jail. His attitude towards life had changed. He had no hatred for Rosie or Marco. He loved Rosie but tried to snatch her away from the arms of Marco. Although in front of the judge he never admitted his crime but from the inside of his heart he knew his crime and felt guilty for it. 20 While hiding the letter of Marco in his pocket he had felt like keeping dynamite or like hiding a corpse.

Raju had an attractive character, his tenderness; passionate love for Rosie attracted everyone. Despite of all his evil deeds we cannot call him an evil character because he had some traits of a hero. He never went to school to have formal education but he had good knowledge of many things. He helped Rosie in becoming a world renowned dancer and in the end sacrificed his life for the suffering humanity. 21

In every step of the novel we find that Raju was commenting about Marco's indulgence in the sculptures and neglecting his wife. He seemed to be very critical in this matter and other cultural activities but by the end of the novel we find him bowing his head before the cultural pressures of the country.

Raju, Rosie and Marco, the three major characters of the novel are so interrelated with one another that without one we cannot think of the other. Both Marco and Rosie are cases of extreme types. Marco was whole heartedly and single mindedly devoted to scholastic pursuits, Rosie was wholly devoted to dancing. In her life nothing mattered more than her love for dance. They were abstractions of their ambitions.

Marco is portrayed as a broad minded and cultured in the sense that he accepts Rosie, a dancing class girl as his wife. But he plays only lip service to the castles society that is slowly, very slowly taking shape before him. A woman is not a gadget by any chance is evidently revealed in the character of Rosie who is replete with desires and sprits and hence there are problems in the married life of Rosie and Marco.

The only character that appears to be rational and unyielding to the circumstances is Marco. He devotes his life to the study of cave paintings. He seeks Raju's help for doing so which he accepts readily guiding to the caves. It is quite obvious that Marco was aware of Rosie's love affair with Raju who skipped his food and everything for her company. However, Marco appeared quite undisturbed, fully absorbed in his studies. He never rebuked Rosie for what she was doing. This appears to be a calculated step on his part.

Marco was like an oasis in the dessert of Malgudi. This was natural, for he hailed from the metropolitan city of India. He was different from the locals and yokels of Malgudi. But he too was an eccentric in the sense that he remained wedded to the study of paintings of the caves, forgetting Rosie's need altogether. This had resulted in family disorder culminating in Marco's parting away from Rosie. Marco and Rosie, though artistic in their individual spheres, were not at all happy in their marriage. Lack of understanding was the major cause for them to be

miserable in life. Marco left Rosie behind while leaving Malgudi giving her full freedom to choose her future and himself preferred to live alone.

Rosie belonged to a family dedicated to the temple as dancers and yet she obtained an M.A. in Economics. Not only that she discarded the conventions and entered in matrimonial agreement with Marco. But to her utter shock, she discovered that he was more interested in the sculptured figures on the walls and stones in the caves, than in his wife who was a living embodiment of all these figures. Her position in his company was no better than that of a museum object. 22

Rosie was portrayed as a modern woman. Although she was a Devdasi girl but whenever life had given her the opportunity to make her future she grabbed it. She married Marco whom she thought would prove to be a loving and caring husband, was entirely wrong. Her conjugal life was a curse for her. She fell in love with Raju but unfortunately, he also ditched her. She was not at all a traditional woman who bore all the hatred and rejection of anyone. She wanted to establish her own identity and for getting this she worked really hard to become a famous dancer. 23

She was an ambitious lady and knew all ways to fulfill her desires. She was grateful to Raju who made her a national celebrity. She changed her name for the sake of Raju and also for her career. It was Raju who was responsible for her success as a dancer and at the same time for ruining her career. She worked day and night to save Raju from jail but Raju on the other hand was jealous of her. He held the view that she had done nothing to save him. But the fact was that she sold all her jewelry and assets for Raju. 24

Rosie had a very bitter experience at Raju's house. His mother was an orthodox lady and she never tolerated a Devdasi girl in her house. Rosie bore all kind of insult for Raju. She was not at all a timid or helpless woman. Whenever she got a chance she showed to the world that she had her own identity. Her life proved to be a real unfortunate one because she neither got love from Raju nor from her husband Marco.

R.K. Narayan is a moralist writer who writes his fiction about the common man belonging to middle class society, struggling for normal life. Almost all his characters have a submissive attitude. Narayan's major characters are the outcome of the tremendous impact of the Hindu culture. These characters are traditional human beings, stuck to their culture, their will power crippled under the weight. They do not control events but events control them. They appear to be helpless creatures torn by desires and look like a puppet in the hands of destiny.

As all the characters are presented in a very helpless situations it makes our belief confirm that everything on this earth is pre-planned and nothing is in the hands of human beings to change. Raju convinces the gullible masses by saying-"What must happen, must happen, no power on this earth can change its course, just as no one can change the course of the river." Pg. 22.

As a matter of fact whatever happens in the life of Raju, Rosie and Marco is the result of their own deeds. Raju become a prisoner not because of some divine agency, but as a logical deviation from his moral duties. What Raju does in the novel is due to his own will and not due to providence. Fate stands within the confines of his own doing and will.

The society as presented by Narayan in the novel is traditional and orthodox. People are illiterate and superstitious. They always look out for some divine power to solve their problem. As a result of this they mistook Raju - who is an ex- prisoner as a holy saint . When drought hit the country side they pray to God, people kept fast so that rain may come. It is all together a different matter that rain come. Even when Raju confesses about his illegitimate love affair with

Rosie and his subsequent conviction for forgery, society compels him to undertake total fast to the bitter end. The end is definitely obscure. It is curious that the irrefutable logic of the situation should evade a sensitive writer like Narayan. But the vagueness and obscurity are not the result of the artist in Narayan.

The temples and worshipper present a strange sight in India. Particularly in the places of pilgrimage we find a strange atmosphere. In the novel we find that there is an ex prisoner Raju finding asylum in the pillared hall in Mangla village. Men and women roam around the spirit of holy man. They do all this for the fake Raju, they waste their time energy money everything. In reality we also see many fake and hypocrite saints playing with the emotions and exploiting the gullible masses of rural India. They also exploit innocent women who come to have the "holy darshan" of these saints.

In *The Guide* we find both the unity of vision and tranquility of temperament. The tone of the novel is pitched at the middle level which we find in common man's life. There is little use of metaphor and simile in the novel. The actions that took place in the novel are those events which can take place in common man's life. The reactions of all these events are natural.

The orthodox Indian sentiment denies the spectacle of sex play and as an artistic writer Narayan has dealt with this in a very careful manner. Narayan remains contented with the psychological changes in Rosie, for her in the end get attracted towards her husband. Narayan in the novel never insisted to show the sexual side of the characters. Rather than doing this he exhibits to his readers the deeper shades of emotions caused by it.

Narayan has taken the radical view of the subject of marriage. Because of the lack of understanding and lot of bickering in the married life Rosie gets drawn towards Raju for emotional gratification. However, by the end of the novel we find that the husband of Rosie appears triumphant in seeing the seducer of his wife trapped behind the bars. There are some lapses in the story but we can say that in spite of all these *The Guide* holds the attention of the reader from the beginning to the end of the novel. Narayan has got an insight to look deep into the workings of human heart as well as his mind.

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