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FROM REPUTATION TO REPENTANCE: AN ANALYSIS OF R.K. NARAYAN'S *THE GUIDE*

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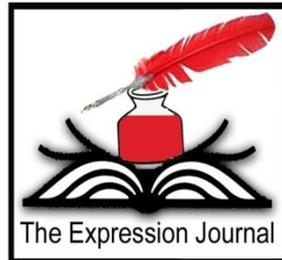
Abstract

There are many Indian writers who have enriched Indian Writing in English through their great works. Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao and R.K. Narayan's names come at the forefront whenever one tries to talk about any aspect of Indian fiction. In this context, R.K. Narayan is a prominent figure who has written his novels encompassing various themes which are very close to human hearts. He is one of the top-most writers from India. His novels have been written on many touching themes and this is the reason that his some of his novels have been adopted in the form of movies also. His novel *The Guide* was published in 1958. This novel has won the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1961. This novel became very popular and there will be hardly any Indian scholar of English literature who has not heard about this novel. In this paper, I have tried to shed light on the character of Raju, the guide, who gets deviated from the path of his life. He gets reputation in his life and then he has to repent over his decision. He was a path shower for others but he falls in love with a married woman and thus, loses everything.

Keywords

Indian Writing in English, Novels, R.K. Narayan, Malgudi, *The Guide*, Class Difference, Protest, Incompatible Marriage, Conjugal Relationships.

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R. K. Narayan's novel *The Guide* sheds light on the adverse effects of modern life. This novel can be praised for the uniqueness in "depicting the ironies of modern Indian life" (Gilra 36) as well as "social tradition in which the comic and the sad not sharply marked of one from the other" (Walsh 136). Like other novels of R. K. Narayan, this novel also has Malgudi as a fictional locale. C.D. Narasimhaiah comments that R. K. Narayan's novels revolve around the fictional locale of Malgudi:

He has scarcely stirred out of Malgudi nor has his characters; and if by ill-luck they do stray out of the Municipal limits of Malgudi they invariably come back, sadder and wiser—such is the spirit of place, Malgudi the microcosm of traditional Indian society. (Narasimhaiah 136)

The Guide gives many messages to human beings. Mutual relationships play an important role in human life. It narrates how human beings start thinking differently about the same person in different situations. The proverb "Familiarity breeds contempt" proves true in this novel. The novel delineates that greed makes a person blind. Human beings' excessive love for money can put someone into danger. In this novel, Raju is the main character who is known as a "railway guide" but later he turns into a "swami" coincidentally. Thus, the novel is about Raju's transformation from a tourist guide into a swami.

Raju runs his father's shop and he sells old magazines at the railway station. After his father's death, the responsibility to run the family comes on his shoulders. He knows well about 60 nearby places as a tourist. He finds this profession very lucrative and this profession makes him a successful guide.

Raju is not satisfied with his life without getting good education that's why he takes loan and studies so that he may live his life without any problem. Through this novel, RK Narayan has shed light on the problems of those people who cannot get their education properly. His occupation as a tourist guide also gives him much recognition. He hands over his book selling shop to a person and devotes his full time as a tourist guide. When he tries to regain it, he finds that he has lost the chance of getting back his shop.

It is a general concept that a person should know the limitations of his profession. He should not cross the boundaries of the profession. In this novel, Raju crosses his limits as he does not remain loyal to his clients and he wants to gain something more which does not come under the periphery of his profession.

When Marco and Rosie come to visit tourist places, Raju intervenes in their conjugal relationships. Marco is a great scholar and an archaeologist has come to India for his research work on the caves. Rosie has her master's degree in Economics. She belongs to a dancers' family. Rosie also knew her status that's why she says to Raju, "We (Dev Dasis) are viewed as public women. We are not considered civilized" (75). Marco gets impressed by Rosie's beauty and he buys her in the name of marriage and after his marriage, he takes the least interest in her. He remains busy in the caves leaving Rosie alone in the hotel. When Raju comes to know that things are not going well between husband and wife, he take advantage of this situation. Rosie is extremely beautiful and he falls in love with her.

When Rosie's husband Marco did not pay his attention to Rosie, Rosie would remain in tension and one day she decides to kill herself by poisoning but unexpectedly, Raju comes and saves her life. Since that day Rosie was feeling that she is alive only due to Raju's efforts. Thus, Rosie and Marco is a couple having no love for each other as Ram Dial also writes, "There is no love in the relationship between Marco and Rosie right from the beginning. When you marry a person purely on the basis of objective reasons, the question of free will and love does not arise. (Dial 72)

When Marco remains busy in his research work, Raju develops intimacy with Rosie and tries to convince her that he can keep her happy. Rosie also commits the mistake of having physical relationships with Raju through she knew it well that she is a married woman. When Marco comes to know about their relationship, he starts quarrelling with her and ultimately leaves her alone and catches his flight for Chennai. His departing words are, "I am trying to forget even the earlier fact that I ever took a wife. I want to get out of here. You are free to get out and do what you please" (134).

Rosie knew nobody there except Raju that's why she comes to Raju and seeks his help. Raju was feeling happy to see Rosie at his door because now he could love her the way he likes. Rosie knew it well that Raju can help her the most possible way that's why she happily stays at his home.

Raju lived with his widow mother and she was not happy that his son may keep a woman in their home without marriage. She did not like the way the people would look at Rosie. She protests, "You can't have a dancing girl in your house. Every morning with all that dancing and averting going on. It can't go on like this

for ever. What will people say?" (135). One Day Raju's maternal grandfather comes and he also objects on this issue. When Raju does not listen to them, his mother goes to her brother's house and Raju remains with Rosie in the house. He had never thought that due to Rosie, his mother would also leave him. Not only this, he had to fight with many people due to Rosie because they would pass their taunts either to Raju or Rosie.

Rosie did not belong to a well to do family. She was from a very humble background because Rosie's mother was a dancer. Marco did not like that his wife may take dancing as a profession because he thought that this work is only for the people having low status. He just expected her to behave like a decent wife and he said that dancing does not suit to a well-established respected family.

Raju comes to know her talent and he does not think like Rosie. He thinks that Rosie can touch the sky if she gets a suitable platform. When Raju instigates Rosie to dance, her sleeping passion arouses. Raju convinces her if she becomes a dancer, she will not be depended on anybody and she can create her own identity as a dancer. Then she will not be depended upon her husband Marco.

Initially she does not understand Raju advances as she was merely thinking that her husband does not pay any attention to her. The tourist guide Raju was well aware that he is seducing a married woman and he knew the adverse effects of this relationship that it is an immoral act to have a relationship with a married woman. He knows that he is not on a right track. He thinks, "A part of my mind went on say.' No, no. It is not right. Marco is her husband; remember it's not to be thought of" (69).

R.K. Narayan has depicted incompatible matches and compromise in marriage. In this novel Rosie and Marco's marriage remains unsuccessful because there is a class difference between them. Like Mulk Raj Anand, Narayan has taken this theme. Mulk Raj Anand always opposes the "exploitation of the poor by any class" (George 17). It is a psychological fact that everybody has a different mentality, aspirations and challenges in his life. Marco was not living his own life as he had devoted himself completely for this work. He was doing his duties as a husband but he was extremely devoted to his work. To some extent, he ignored his wife, her aspirations and dreams. This is the reason his wife Rosie does not come close to him.

Rosie wanted to live her life from a different perspective while Marco wanted to earn money and name through his research work. Whenever Rosie put her demand, Marco would neglect it and it mad Rosie angry.

The novel opens from the scene of Raju's bail from the jail. He had completed his two year jail time because he had done forged signatures of Rosie on a document and Rosie also did not give her witness that it were her own signatures just because by that time Rosie had come to know that Raju and Rosie are also poles apart and their temperaments also do not match. Raju does not want to go back to his house because by that time he had lost his attachment from the outside world. He finds that there is nobody close to him. That's why he decides to renounce the world. He wanted to go to a place where nobody knew him.

Raju reaches in a village Mangal where the village people consider him as a sadhu. They have faith on him. A village man Velan tells him that he has got a groom for his sister but his sister does not want to marry. Velan brings his sister to Raj and Raju gives a very philosophical advice to his sister, "What must happen, must happen; no power on earth or in heaven can change its course, just as no one can change the course of that river" (22)

This incident makes him famous and people start coming to him from this village and start giving him gifts also. Raju had never thought that he will face this kind of experience also in his life because he has never thought that people will call him a saintly figure. Raju tells Velan that he is not a sadhu and he is an ordinary man like them but these people do not rely on him and they start giving him all respect.

There is feminine in the village and one day a man Bhola by mistakes spread the rumour in the village that the swami will hold the fast for twelve days for the rain. In fact, Raju had no such intention. He was feeling hungry and wanted food but he somehow controls himself for the sake of their faith. His fast brings result and it rains but Raju was not conscious to see this miracle. Before tottering, he says to Velan, "It's raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my legs" (398). It is not clear in the novel whether Raju remains alive or he dies.

From the overall discussion, it is clear that though Raju was a guide by his profession but in fact, he gets misguided in his life. His work as a guide was Okay but his attachment with Rosie lands him into a big trouble. His mother leaves him and many people become his enemies. Ultimately, he goes to jail, becomes a swami and finally dies. According to Paul Varghese, "Raju's one of the most complex characters of Narayan" (84).

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