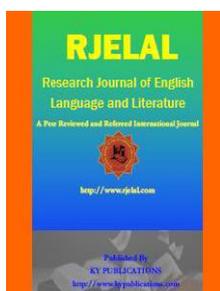




## AN OASIS OF ANTICIPATION IN THE BARREN LAND OF ROOTLESSNESS : SEARCH FOR IDENTITY IN R.K. NARAYAN'S *THE GUIDE*

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### ABSTRACT

Identity is based on race, religion, ethnicity, culture, language and people separate themselves from other groups and create their observation and dignity in who they are. However individuals may possess more than one cultural individuality as a consequence of social activity and their wish for belonging to a definite community. Identity in creative works may refer to the writer's embracement of new culture and language as means of presentation following a flight from his nation of origin to another country. At last the pattern of migrant works has grown with the exploration of the issues of migration, banishment and creation of new individuality in immigrants. Also it could be linked with the continuous use of pen names by writers as an effort to disguise their origin or gender.

Normally women writers choose to define themselves under male pseudonyms so that their writings can be published and similarly accepted within community. Of course authors use pen names to obtain a greater impression by discovering more artistic pseudonyms, R.K. Narayan evaluates characters on various levels of emotions and feelings. He gives importance to identity which characters observe perfectly in his works.

**Keywords :** Race, Religion, Ethnicity, Culture, Immigrants,

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In the works of R.K. Narayan, the chief characters commonly set out on a quest for identity in maintaining with definite philosophical- cultural suppositions which shape the ground of his socio-religious inheritance and his psycho-ethical ambience. The truth is that Narayan himself is committed to definite views of the Indian tradition which can be suitably presented to hide the socio-economic sources of human dilemmas :

Raju's mother, at the beginning, was full of sympathy for Rosie, changes her attitude completely when she learns that she

belongs to dancing girl class and has come to their house to perfect her dancing.

(Kantak 76)

In the novel, *The Guide*, the main protagonist, Raju is fixed in actuality in Malgudi during his childhood days. Raju does not go to school but studies magazines and books from his shop on the platform of Malgudi station. He advances his knowledge and information about the world. Raju becomes a tourist guide and all travellers prefer to be instructed by him because of his fame and talent as a guide. He reserves his hold

over actuality so long as he remains to perform his duty completely. But after meeting Rosie, Raju falls in love with her. Raju starts to live in the world of imagination. Rosie has the skill of dance which is appreciated by Raju and disliked by her husband Marco. Rosie leaves her husband's company. Rosie with Raju's help becomes famous as a renowned dancer. Raju realizes that Rosie still has respect for her husband Marco.

It's the great thing about Hindu wives. They don't adulterate."

"Never?"

About as often as you pick up a pound note in the street. The best kind is never. They just couldn't.

(Brown 253)

Raju commits forgery and is imprisoned. But when comes out of jail, he does not have any place to go. He stays in a discarded temple where he is received as a saint. Now Raju starts living a new life and his quest for actuality simulates a spiritual extent. Sainthood is enforced upon him and he gets himself wandering over a tender tightrope extending between the twin poles of deceptive quackery and spiritual deliverance from sin. The more Raju gets himself engaged in the atrociousness of his making, the more he finds himself carrying towards the requirement to change his false sainthood into a real one. The drought in the village drives Raju mercilessly into adopting the role of divine martyr for which he had not thought himself. But once he is caught into frolicking this part, he gets that there is no turning back on it. Reluctantly, he plays it till the essential conclusion to which it must finally lead. Fasting to bring rain, Raju collapses in the water with his ceasing statement that it's raining in the hills because he can feel it arriving under his feet and up his legs. Readers are surprised, whether it is really raining or is it only an imagination or a state of hallucination, which is the most likely, result of Raju's psychological situation at that particular point of time.

The conclusion of the novel, *The Guide* has been greatly appreciated by many critics. The final part of the novel is essential because it is a matter of faith and belief in divine power, saints and miracles even to the sceptical and interrogating mind. This

informs the Indian sensibility. Raju represents India, and its surprising faith and strength.

Raju's demise, seen meaningfully, signifies that the individual by giving his life in water fetches rain to his countrymen and his death by water is actually not demise by a means of self-realization and self-purification.

Narayan sanctions of India's saints and miracle-men, in spite of their false pretension and dishonesty is apparently seen with Raju. When Raju breakdown at the end, his demise really defines a triumph for obscurantist ritualism and superstitious innocence but some critics believe it is purifying and redeeming. The critical interrogation that critics do not hesitate to ponder over and the reply is: except Raju, no one feels that it is raining in the hills. Moreover, what he feels touching up his legs is clearly the cold water in which he is standing and it has no relation with the rain whatsoever. Raju seems to be in a level of delirious deception as he is about to drown to his demise. The illustration about Raju's ceasing provided by the critics is far-fetched and wrong but is in notorious indifference of all textual testimony. To make a rogue equal, like Raju to the soul of the nation is nothing but violent probable jump of insane imagination. The development of Raju's personality through various level creates it obvious that he is an ease-loving hedonist who desires to amuse completely the results of social parasitism.

R. K. Narayan has provided sufficient indications and forthright opinions on Raju's personality. In the beginning of the novel, when Raju is received to be a saint by an ignorant villager, Velan, he gets to his highest pleasure that he is being given food without having to labour for it. Raju's mental status is narrated by the novelist. Raju has not taught himself to create a living out of difficult labour. Food is coming without his asking. He thinks that in other places he will not be getting food without labour. Only in jail he was getting food. There is no other place to go. But he soon accepts that he has to pay price for it. He has to frolick the role. There is no escape from it. But playing this role of saint is not very claiming and provided to Raju's dexterity, it can be play rather quietly. The meaning of sainthood appeared to be in one's talent to say

bewildering announcements. Until, one attempts, how can one understand what one can or cannot act? He inquired. Raju does not take long to understand the techniques of his recently taken profession: Raju soon felt that his divine level would be developed if he grew a beard and long hair. A close-haired saint was an irregular when the severe drought comes in the village and famine follows, condition is tensed and villagers come to blow over profiteering by the village shopman when villagers go for Raju's instruction in this connection, his opinion discloses his cruel and rude demeanour to the problems connected. Raju believes that the perfect thing for villagers would be to blow each other brains out. That would save them from being concerned about the drought:

Cattle were unable to yield milk; they lacked the energy to drag the plough the furrows; flock of sheep were beginning to look scurvy and piebald, with their pelvic bones sticking out.

(Walsh 7)

And yet Raju does not know any scruple of conscience in dominating these ignorant people by making them offer him delicious food. He discusses with them about his food needs with serious mood so that the villagers received it as a divine requirement something of the person's inner control to protect his spirit in form and his realization with the supreme authority. Raju gets himself caught in very hard conditions when wrong narration of his suggestion to the villagers is illustrated to mean that he will adopt a fast to placate the rain-gods. He now observed the great wickedness of his own production.

Raju informs Velan the entire tale of his life, not so much to be free from, the ideal glory of sainthood as to get out of the catch of fasting into which he has fallen. During his description he accepts how he attempted to monopolise Rosie who had come as a wife of Marco as if she was his property. He also informs him how he committed forgery and was imprisoned for that. But all this disorder on Raju's role does not upset Velan the least. Raju starts to realize that Velan has become his affliction. Velan will not leave him alone. He will finish him before his realization where he is.

Ultimately Raju attempts to create a virtue of inevitability and decides to offer a judicial examination to the people's faith that his fasting for twelve days will fetch the rains. He starts to believe in the energy of his errand so much so that he potentially becomes a victim to false impression when in the agony of demise he utters that it has begun raining in the hills. The misinstructed and misguiding guide arrives at the final part of his lire protected with great splendour.

The typical norm of R. K. Narayan reflects in his novel *The Guide*. Raju's connection with actuality is broken when he is caught in the unactuality of Rosie's world. He reaches his command over actuality in a peculiar manner, when he is compelled to play the part of a saint. But even his sainthood is vulgarly loud practice in social parasitism and as far as it carries out his material requirements it reserves its actuality for him. But when he is needed to act the fasting supposedly wrathful strength his action adopts an aura of unactuality. His unwilling acceptance of fasting for rains transforms him into a champion and blows up his ego into a great bubble. He does not actually understand what is happening and his mouthing of insanities is accepted by ignorant fools to be intense profundities. His demise comes as perfect riddance from his deception. For once the acceptance of life culminates in death. But the philosophy of acceptance still remains legal through a mark of doubt has been connected to it.

Narayan's protagonist however, does not appear to attempt to know the nature of this actual world or change it to fetch it closer to his heart's wishes. Instead he seems to take things as they are.

Narayan presents the torture of traditional Hindu wife, Rosie who gains power to walk out of her dominated husband. She is greatly vexed that in the present social structure she cannot maintain for herself alone. So she takes Raju's help and with her extreme passion for dance she becomes successful and famous. But a realization has come at the end of the novel that she is an Indian wife who pays respect to her husband. But at the same time, she realizes that her own desires and passion have no purpose inside the parameters of her husband's desire and supremacy. And she herself is an object of pride. Her independent identity is a matter of great importance

for her. She leaves the company of her husband as a gesture of revolt against what she might legitimately interpret as an infringement of her husband who is involved in discovering the old and decayed buildings. Narayan's Rosie is a modern woman who is on a lookout for her independent human individuality because she does not desire to remain content with her status as a mere slave to her husband. Our modern Rosie is completely free from the blind tradition, when she realizes that her search for freedom and personal dignity will definitely lead her to her own world of independence because she believes in her fate and hard labour.

Rosie's journey from submissive wife to her rebellious leaving of her husband Marco's home, to search for the purpose of life, to her realization of freedom are significant parts of quest for Rosie's identity in the novel, *The Guide*.

Rosie is not only the female protagonist of the novel but the guiding soul of its theme. In numerous parts she reminds us Ibsen's Nora who protests against being treated as a doll by her husband, Marco. Rosie's quest for identity starts in the house of her husband. And this house becomes the center of revolt against her husband's tyrannical demeanour. But in Marco's home there is no love and mutual understanding in the novel, *The Guide*. Rosie seeks release and Raju helps her in getting emancipation. At the end of the novel she is equally powerful and successful, perhaps even more so.

*The Guide* is charged with an intensity that comes only from a deeply-felt observation. There is a need to know the purpose of life and death, which according to Narayan dwells in the realization that life and death are only two different conditions of existence. One is worldly and the other is divine. Narayan informs us that when he was able to fix an eternal sharing with his dead spouse. Narayan concludes the meaning of death, that is, only disappearing point of physical structure.

Narayan's concern is to present characters in search for individuality as the final destination of life. For Narayan, the interrogation of human entity and individuality seems to hinge on a full understanding of person's totality of connection in the world as well as beyond it. The otherworldly dimension of man's individuality undertakes genuine

importance for Narayan because he had gained in his own context a peculiar power and solace to meet his daily struggle for life after his wife's demise and his attachment with her in a sort of telepathic observation. The fear of his experience of his spouse's physical demise was changed into a kind of divine pride when he was informed by his wife that she existed in a finer and more polished state of chaste divine existence. This not only assisted him to bear his extreme loss with equanimity but also filled up again his sagging creative essentiality with a new and exuberant vigour.

Rosie's decision to do something on her own provides a new lease of life. Rosie is able to retain a hold over herself even when she lives with Raju. She is happy with her skill of dance and its various performances. Rosie creates her peace with her circumstances. But things receive a dramatic turn when she takes a message about Raju's forgery and his imprisonment. Rosie undergoes an absolutely new experience there which changes her attitude to life and death. After some time she is able to establish contact with Raju in the village Mangala. When Raju goes to jail, she is haunted by the actuality of loneliness and separation from her lover. Rosie knows to devote her time to self-advancement and to search for a harmonious existence. Narayan's female protagonist Rosie has been reconciled to life. In this connection, she attains satisfaction through the intellectual refreshment after labour of an otherworldly existence, which gives her postponement from her unappeased isolation.

Narayan was fascinated by Hindu religion and philosophical tradition. Narayan had also completed the typical structural norm of incidents that he introduced in all his works:

Like the various scenes Narayan portrays his characters only with the help of the fewest strokes of the pen. He possesses a rare psychological insight into the human mind and character. He has mastery over the analysis of the internal workings of the mind of the woman.

(Raizada 126)

The characters, in this norm, are originally and purposefully engaged in the pursuit of some

aspect of social actuality. But gradually they find themselves drawn into a range of agilities that seem to appertain to the region of the strange and fallacious. After understanding the worthlessness of this illusive world or after achieving new perceptions into the essential qualities of actuality from their conflicts with this world, they come back to the world of their former activity. The novel, thus concludes with a favourable reception of the world as it endures, because Raju's knowledge assists him to overcome limitations about real world. The ultimate meaning of his quest for identity and of non-involvement and withdrawal is yielded to Raju when his mind starts to telescope history of his life. The relation ending to this kind of experience is the acceptance of the attitude of an unstained non-activity, complete yield and total action.

The important circularity of human experience seems to be designed on the norm of the Hindu thought of history and is partially result of the acceptance that world does not develop, it only alters. On the calling of this philosophy, all mundane and material achievements seem to be very attractive and desirable but appear to impede man's spiritual development. Therefore, man is advised to be satisfied with whatever little he has and to attempt merely for self-advancement which is the final destination and aim of human life.

The fragile foundation of the novel's theme- Raju's infatuation for a woman, Rosie landing him in the midst of unknown experience and finally restoring him to his original self-credibility and conviction are the chief accidents in the novel's proceedings of the human inspiration and in its hold of the innate character of social pressures.

Narayan explores the features of evil, he observes as the expression of man's presumptuous intellectuality and of his desire for power over others and which he thinks to be self-destructive. In comparison to this he tends to commend of religious rituals as something better and genuine and the understanding of tradition as something praiseworthy leading finally to man's salvation :

He is one of the few writers in India who take their craft seriously, constantly striving to improve the instrument, pursuing it with a sense of dedication what may often seem

to be the mirage of technical perfections. There is a norm of excellence below which Narayan cannot possibly lower himself.

(Mehta 201)

Marco arrives to Malgudi with his wife, Rosie. He is an eccentric scholar. He is an archeologist. He has quest for identity. He tries to discover the old caves which, he understands and keeps wealth for him. Their gloom fetches a beam to his life, their gloominess gives breath to his life. He listens the music of life in the decayed caves. He is ready to surrender the content of life and even his wife, Rosie. For his quest to gain knowledge he discards the physical satisfaction.

Marco's sources of motivation lay deeply within him. He is always pre-occupied by his own views and opinions. He has, therefore, no deliberation to praise the qualities of others- even those of his spouse, Rosie. He is intensely in love with his work. He spends many hours, deep meditation in secluded place, these are his obsessions. Though to the society at large he seems to be uncivilized, he is the most civilized and cultured character presented in the novel. Just as Raju and Rosie he is also in love with his own work. Marco is the greatest follower of Indian culture. He believes in a life of serenity, acquiescence and inner happiness. The only lacking point in his life is the bond of marriage, like Rosie herself, he has quest for identity and wants to enjoy complete freedom, yet freedom, to be ruled absolutely by his own leaning and fondness. He has definitely the enthusiasm of research scholar.

In spite of the truth that he abandons his wife Rosie in a strange condition his personality has attained an air of solemnity and grandeur around it. His character is down-to-earth with the touch of fancy. Narayan is the champion in portraying his characters. There is neither incarnation of God, nor presence of villains. There are only men and women bone, blood, flesh, mind, heart and soul. Material appetites and worldly sensations are there. In Narayan's characters, we see morality, rationality, intellectuality and discipline:

Like Danial Defoe, he gives the minute details of every situation his hero has to pass through.

(Dutta 141)

Raju's adultery can never be considered as adultery. Marco's abandonment of his spouse is not desertion, it is to be taken as a deed of great analysis and an emblem of the philosophy which views female as a particular and a frugal reality in herself. Marco's works, in a sense, confirm the cause of female's emancipation. Marriage should not restrain the feelings of a female. It should not come as an obstacle in the path of her pursuits in business and accomplishment of her own desires and ambitions.

Narayan's characters suffer from obsessions, desires and hatreds or they fall into passivity, but they never deeply examine the causes of their emotions or try to will their feelings towards an effective purpose.

(Goyal 4)

Narayan's characters search their individuality and identity in this world and at the end of the novel, they establish their identity. All major characters, Raju, Rosie and Marco have the height of a common human being; they seem to excel it. They all have numerous shortcomings in them and various involvements but at the same time they have courage and strength to establish their identities.

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#### Appendix

Narayan's characters come from middle class but they are engaged in different occupations. They struggle hard to develop their status. The struggle to get the identity is the chief aim of their life. The main protagonists in Narayan's creative writings are scholar, teacher, film actor, dancer, financial expert, a fighter for freedom, guide and sweet vendor. But the most outstanding characteristic of these characters is that they are shown in Indian colour and they seem to appertain to a substantial human nature. They do not give up their struggle because of the hardships that come in their way of getting their destination. They are resolved to obtain success in their mission.