

## R. K. Narayan's "The Guide": Social Picture of India



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### ABSTRACT

The huge success and overwhelming popularity of R K Narayan in India and abroad is not an accidental one. Who does not know, even those who take little interest in literature, about the film "Guide" which is based on his famous novel "The Guide". At the interval of few decades, the Indian-cine producers made "Guide" twice and every time the audience clapped in praise for the characters like Raju & Rosie. Even the Doordarshan, having the largest number of its viewers, telecasts the serial – "The Malgudi Days" which is from Narayan's work. Narayan is an expert in understanding the Indian sensibility. Every reader of Narayan sees his own picture in many of his characters.

### INTRODUCTION

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Ayyar Narayanswami shortened the name to R. K. Narayan on the advice of his friend Graham Greene. R. K. Narayan, one of the Indo-Anglian fiction writers was born on October 10, 1906 in Madras (now Chennai). After completing Bachelor Degree, he started to write the short stories for newspaper and magazines. In this way his literary career began. R. K. Narayan's works include 14 novels, over 200 short stories, a memoir, 2 travel books, innumerable essays and 2 plays. Right from his first novel "Swami and Friends (1935) to his last published work "Grandmother's Tale (1992), which in many ways reinforced the concerns and motifs of his writing in his long career – themes like exile and return, education (in the widest sense of the term), woman and her status in the society, myths and the ancient Indian past tradition and modernity, Malgudi and its culture, appearance and reality. This earns him name and fame. He won several awards including the Sahitya Academy Award (1958), the Padma Bhushan (1964), the A C Benson Medal by the Royal Society of Literature (1980) and the Padma Vibhushan (2000). So, R K Narayan is identified as the most distinguished Indian novelists writing in English.

"The Guide" is one of the most popular novels of R K Narayan. It is also the first novel in English to have won the Sahitya Academy Award, and a popular but deplorable film version of it has been made. Moreover, "The

Guide” amply demonstrates that Narayan’s comedy is profoundly Indian, because it is firmly focused on the social and cultural tradition.

Narayan through his novel “The Guide” represents a middle class section of Indian society where life is steeped in consciousness. India is totally dependent on agriculture. He describes here the problem of the country depending on agriculture and agriculture depending on monsoon. If monsoon is not sufficient then this worsen the condition of agriculture leading to the unavoidable famine, deficiency of water, vanishing cattle, hording by traders unrest, penance, pujas and sacrifices to please the God of Rain.

We find Rosie representing modern Indian rituals of Devdasis that still existing in our society. She marries with Marco only to set herself free from that stratum of Indian society. Raju’s mother wanted that Raju should marry her brother’s daughter in a traditional manner. Raju’s father wanted that Raju should run his shop near railway station. Rosie once again wanted to set his career in dancing but her husband refuse to do so. These happenings indicate that Indian people are quite sticking to their old beliefs and they don’t want to accept the new beliefs.

The three main characters – Raju, Rosie and Marco represent the real picture of our society. The journey of Raju from a mere guide to a great saint is not an ordinary journey. Raju, the protagonist of this novel belongs to a normal middle-class family. His father is a small shopkeeper and mother, a traditional bound old woman. They have a small house opposite the Malgudi station. The railway gives him privilege of running a shop at the railway-station, which ultimately comes to be managed by Raju. After the death of his father, his life takes a turn and takes upon himself the job of guiding tourists.

Raju’s life takes another dramatic turn, when he meets a couple – Rosie and Marco. The husband, Marco is wholeheartedly and single-mindedly devoted to scholarly pursuits, and the wife Rosie is devoted to dancing which Marco doesn’t like. He lacks the warmth that husband and wife need to make a congenial couple. He can be called unsuccessful husband. Raju cleverly and slyly worms his way into Rosie’s heart by giving her what her husband always denied – the sheer delight of life. Both Rosie and Raju fall in love with each other. When Marco comes to know this close relation between the two, he leaves his wife Rosie. Then she comes to Raju and lives with him as a wife. With the help of Raju, Rosie achieves her ambition to be a great dancer. She gets name, fame and money. In between Marco sends a form for Rosie’s signature to get a jewelry box released from the bank for being sent later to her. Raju intercepts the letter and in a moment of devilish envy and possessiveness, forges her signature and sends it back. He waits anxiously for an insured parcel and gets a warrant of arrest instead. Rosie, on knowing the whole painful truth, is bewildered and stunned. Raju is sentenced to two years’ imprisonment.

Raju, after his release from jail looks like a saint and wanders down aimlessly to the temple. The people of that place call him Swami and compel him to do fast for rain. He keeps fast sincerely and the end comes on the eleventh day. “For the first time in his life he was making an earnest effort, for the first time he was learning the thrill of full application, outside money and love; for the first time he was doing something in which he was not personally interested.

## CONCUSSION

All these happenings of the story depict the real picture of the time and realistic portrayal of Indian scenario. Overall R. K. Narayan has focused on deteriorating family relation, religious nature of Indian society and different problems of Indian society like drought, blind faith on Sadhu, superstitious nature of Indian people.

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