

R. K. Narayan is a great Anglo-Indian writer.

He is the most artistic of the Indians writing in English.

Unlike Mulk Raj Anand, he writes with the sole aim of giving aesthetic satisfaction and does not take art as a medium of propaganda. However, his literary works reveal his deep insight into the recesses of Indian life and reflect its subtle peculiarities.

The Guide, Swami and Friends, The Dark Room and Waiting for the Mahatma are his marvels of English fiction. The critics have charged him for being a regional novelist for the background of his novels are essentially Indian. Here, in the Guide, he realistically presents, though in a satirical vein, a number of problems and traits of Indian society. Let us see this novel in a brief.

The whole of the novel revolves round the character of Raju, a South Indian youth, who is faced with different situations and circumstances. It is through his reaction to these situations that Narayan <sup>focuses</sup> ~~throws~~ light on different traits of life. That is why we discern a number of themes minutely dealt in the novel. Raju, an ordinary son of middle class family, works as a professional guide and enjoys a peaceful life in Malgudi. His meeting with a married couple, Marco and Rosie, lands him in a new situation and brings up trials in his life. Marco, a rich and educated man of high society, marries Rosie, a devdasi girl, also educated. This marriage is unconventional. Marco's indifference to Rosie's emotional needs makes Raju her lover, at the same time, shows traditional contempt for devdasi origin.

Rosie is deserted and comes to live with Raju.

Raju's living with Rosie, a married woman, is considered immoral and against established norms of social life. That is why Raju's mother and his uncle, along with Raju's friends, contemptuously react and strongly condemn them. This act of Raju is so objectionable that his widow mother leaves her only son.

in her old age.

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Raju succeeds in making Rasie a great stage artist Malini. He manages her shows as well as her accounts. They earn lot of money, respect and position. But, Raju begins to lead luxurious life. He becomes selfishly greedy and commits forgery that lands him to jail. Here Narayan hints at some basic truths of life that we often realise. If provided with chance, a young man proves to be too weak to restrain his physical lust. But, as immoral thoughts and actions never go unpunished, Raju is sent to jail. A conflict between tradition and modernity is also at play. The modern life, that commercialises even social relation, is not easily acceptable for it creates disorder and chaos in Indian society.

When Raju comes out from the jail he has nowhere to go and no means of livelihood. He finds a lonely temple and happens to meet a rustic villager, Velan. Velan is impressed by his appearance and consults him on some personal problems under the impression that Raju is a spiritual figure. Soon the ignorant villagers throng around him with all devotion and reverence. But, Raju is quite quite alive to the situation and tries to escape from. He reveals his real identity to Velan but of no avail. Finally, he is virtually "compelled to observe fast for rain that he performs like a true saint.

Here, Narayan lashes at the age long superstitious beliefs of Indian people. It is because of this that the religious minded people of Mangla take Raju, a fraud, as a helioman of spiritual power. The most pathetic aspect of this fact is that our innocent people feel spiritually satisfied when they are willingly cheated by Swami.

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like Raju.

However, Narayan does fail to pin point the truth that chances and circumstances play vital roles in moulding character and in upliftment of human soul. Raju dies ~~as well~~ as a real swami with an elevated soul, when he becomes seriously true and honest to the expectation and faith of the villagers. Besides there, Narayan also shows that real problems of Indian society are poverty and ignorance. Superstition can be removed only when people are educated. Until education spreads, scholars like Marco will get unjust treatment and pretenders like Raju will go on being accepted as swami.