

Shailesh Ranjan
Assistant Professor,
Dept. of English,
Maharaja College, Ara.

.....
B.A Part III (English-Hons) Paper VII Indian Writing in English
.....

R.K.Narayan
The Guide

.....
About the Author : R.K.Narayan is one of the great novelists of Indian English Literature. He was born on October 10, 1906 in Madras in the family of a school master. His full name was Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayan. He emerged on the literary surface of India as a novelist with the publication of 'Swami and Friends' in 1935. As a novelist, he rose one glorious achievement to another and became a novelist of world fame. In 1964 Narayan was awarded the glorious 'Padma Bhusan'. The honorary degree of D.Litt. was conferred on him by Leeds University, England in 1967. He received the Sahitya Akademi award for his novel "The Guide" in 1960. In 1985, he was nominated to the Rajya Sabha. Regarding his great success as a novelist, Harish Raizad writes :

"The secret of R.K.Narayan's great success and high distinction lies in the complete aesthetic satisfaction he provides to his readers. He interprets Indian life purely from the 'art for art's sake' point of view, maintaining complete objectivity and perfect impartiality. He is the most artistic of Indian writers in English and presents people as they are without any personal bias and from the objective heights of a luminous temperament."

List of main Characters in 'The Guide' :

- **Raju** : The main character of the novel , a guide, lover of Rosie,
- **Rosie** : wife of Marco , a good classical dancer of Bharat Natayam, beloved of Raju.
- **Marco** : Husband of Rosie who comes from Madras to study cave painting
- **Gaffur** : Driver of Raju , friend of Raju in Malgudi.
- **Velan** : a villager to whom Raju tells his past life.
- **Velan's Sister** : a minor character,
- **Mani**: Raju's secretary when Rosie became a good dancer. The only person who visits Raju in prison. He annoys Raju when he accidentally tells Rosie about Marco's book.
- **Raju's mother** :
- **Raju's uncle** :

Theme of the novel "The Guide" :

The central theme of the novel 'The Guide' is the transformation of Raju from a tourist guide to the spiritual guide. The novel has two stories – one in which Raju's life of tourist guide and his relationship with Rosie is described, another part presents his relation with villagers as a holy person. Both the stories move side by side. The novelist tries to present a character who transforms from a sinner to a saint. The novel begins with Raju sitting beside the temple and meeting the villager named, Velan, who mistakes him for a holy man. Later he tells him about his past life as a guide, as a lover of Rosie, and as a prisoner or culprit. Apart from the central theme of transformation, the novel also points out the feminine sensibility of Rosie who controls her inner desire of dancing like cobra. But after the encouragement of Raju she resumes her career as a dancer and becomes an interpreter of Bharat Natya, the classic dance of India. The

novel also focuses upon the theme of marital relationship through the relationship between Marco and Rosie. Marco and Rosie are husband and wife but their nature are pole aparts. Marco one the one side likes to busy himself in study of books and ancient monuments , cave paintings etc , where as Rosie, his wife is interested in dancing. They always quarrel with each other. At last they begin to live separately. Marco abandons Rosie in Malgudi and returns to Madras. R.K.Narayan also presents the theme of faithfulness versus betray in the novel. Rosie is not loyal with her husband, Marco. Raju betrays Rosie by forging her signature for a package of her jewels and for which he earns a two years prison award. Later he betrays villagers with his spiritual talks and becomes a saint so that he may get food easily.

Thus, R.K.Narayan has presented different themes in his novel 'The Guide'. He presents the realistic image of the society.

Character sketch of Raju

.....

Raju, who is also known as the passive character, is one of the most memorable characters ever been presented by R.K.Narayan. R.K.Narayan is one of the leading figures in Indo-Anglican fiction. In the novel 'The Guide' he has presented Raju as the central figure. In the words of Paul Vergheese : " He is one of the most complex characters of Narayan. In him we find the craftiness, dishonesty and credulity of Margayya, the flashy bombast of Mr. Sampath, the adventurousness of Mali in 'The Vendor of Sweets', the romantic excess of Sriram in 'Waiting for the Mahatma' and the mystical learning of Chandran in 'The Bachelor of Arts' and Srinivas in 'Mr. Sampath'."

His Early life : Raju was borned and brought up in a lower middle class family, in a neglected corner of Malgudi. His father was a small shop keeper. Raju as a child saw Malgudi station taking shape. He enjoyed moving with railway workers and was removed from the school from learning their foul language. His father admitted Raju to another school where the teacher was extremely poor, abusive and tortured by his wife; that was not a school in any case. After the death of his father Raju had to sit at his father's new shop. So, His education had been irregular and desultory. All his knowledge had come from life and from scraps and newspaper and magazines and old books which were brought to him for sale.

As a Guide : From a stall keeper, Raju gradually drifted into playing the role of a tourist guide. As a guide, he was very successful. In Malgudi area, Raju was the most popular guide and known as Railway Raju. He knew his customers by their faces, shows them places of their

interest . As a tourist guide, he knew all places where exactly a particular thing could be obtained. He took Gaffur for taking visitor to interested places.

Relationship with Marco and Rosie : Marco, a distinguished writer, came to Malgudi with his wife Rosie from Madras. As Raju saw Rosie coming down from the train he lost his sense. He does not like Marco and calls him “a hateful fellow”. But he was attracted by the charming figure of Rosie. He showed her King Cobra. Although Marco and Rosie were husband and wife but their nature were totally apart. Marco had not tried to fulfill the desires of Rosie. It was Raju who entertains her. In due course of entertaining her, a physical and spiritual relationship established between them. In the later part of the novel we find that Rosie left her house and began to live with Raju. Raju also left his family members to fulfill her desire. He was very wit careful about Rosie’s whims, vagaries, sentiments, tastes and temperaments.

A Kind hearted Man : Raju is a kind hearted man. It is his kindness for Rosie that makes him her lover. It was his kindness for the villagers that makes him a forced sadhu. He acts as a teacher or prisoner and helps the authorities to maintain discipline. His attitude is constructive. He is without malice and feeling of revenge. He himself did not snatch Rosie away from Marco; she herself come to him, and it was out of his good nature that he did not reject her. After his release from Jail , he has no feeling of revenge against Marco. It was his kindness that he did not take food for eleven days to bring rain for the people of Mangla village.

A Cunning Person : In this novel, R.K.Narayan has presented Raju as a cunning person. It is shown in different parts of the novel. In the beginning of the novel we find that he attracts tourists with his cunning nature. His cunningness is also seen when he wanted to keep the famous dancer Nalini under his control. Further he signs the fake signature of Rosie due to which

he had to go to prison. At last he becomes saint so that he may get food easily from villagers and begins to speak like saints on different topics of life , death or god. So he is a rogue person. He increases his beard to look as a real saint.

Raju as a passive character : Raju’s career from a railway guide to a Mahatma brings out the truth of the statement that, “Raju never did anything ; things always happened to him. His entire career illustrates the drift of a passive character from one role to another. He becomes a tourist guide not as a result of his choice, planning or intention but almost by chance and accident. His second role as the manager of a dancer also come upon him quite by accident. After his earlier affair with Rosie, he had settled down again to his old way of life. He would have got over his disappointment if Rosie herself had not come again into his life. He found himself acting as Rosie’s business manager and publicity agent without making any conscious plan about it. At last, Raju himself does not wish to e a holy person, but circumstances force him to adopt the path of a sadhu. He wants to tell the villagers of his shady past, of his story in the jail but he could not.

.....XXXXXXXXXXXXX.....

Character Sketch of Rosie

.....

Rosie, who is also known as 'Nalini' and 'the snake woman', is one of the most favourite characters in the character gallery of R.K.Narayan. She is the central female character of the novel "The Guide". R.K.Narayan, one of the greatest Anglo-Indian writers, has portrayed her in such a complex manner who leaves her husband and makes relation with another person, Raju, only to fulfill her desire but on the other hand she keeps a place in her heart for the love of her husband.

Rosie first appears in the novel at Malgudi Railway station where she has come with her husband, Marco, from Madras. She is such a charming woman that Raju, the Guide lost his sense. In the words of Raju – "The moment she got down from the train I wished I had hidden myself somewhere. She was not very glamorous, if that is what you expect, but she did have a figure, a slight and slender one, beautifully fashioned, eyes that sparkled, a complexion, not white but dusky, which made her only half visible as if you saw her through a film of tender coconut juice."

Rosie is the daughter of a devdasi. Her community did not enjoy status in society although dedicated to temple gods. They were public women; it was always difficult for a devdasi to get a husband of some standing position. She marries Marco not out of love but out of reverence of his social and intellectual status. Marco marries her only on this condition that she will leave dance forever.

Love for dancing : Rosie is fond of dancing. Dancing is in her blood and spirit. She loves dancing more than her husband, more than Raju and more than any other thing in her life. Her

madness for dancing is shown at the time when she sees the dancing of cobra. She watches it swaying with rapt attention. She stretches out her arm slightly and sways it in imitation of the movement. She sways her whole body to the rhythm for just a second. Later she becomes a good dancer, Nalini.

As a Snake woman : In the novel, Rosie is also portrayed as a snake woman. She is a snake woman, partly because Raju calls her a snake woman during his last phase of life, and partly because she is fond of cobras. The writer has also introduced her as snake woman. When she enters in the novel, she asks the guide Raju – “Can you show me a cobra – a king cobra it must be, which can dance to the music of a flute?” And when she sees, she herself behaves like a cobra. Later when she enters in the house of Raju, the peace of the house destroys. Raju surrenders himself before her charmness and his mother leaves the house.

Difference with Marco : Rosie and Marco are husband and wife. But their natures are pole apart. Marco likes books, ruins, old buildings. He is a scholar. On the other hand, Rosie belongs to devdasi class of the society. She likes dance, worldly things. Marco is a cool and undesirable person who married Rosie on this condition that she will leave dancing forever. They have no respect for each other feelings. When Marco knows about Rosie’s affairs, he rebuffs her – “But you are not my wife. You are a woman who will go to bed with anyone that flatters your antics.”

Relation with Raju : More than a guide, Raju is the lover of Rosie. He enters in her life when she was disappointed from her husband. After abandon of her husband, Rosie begins to live in the house of Raju. It is Raju who transforms her from a simple woman to a famous dancer named Nalini. He leaves his work of tourist guide and takes loan from different sources to fulfil the desire of Rosie. He even does not care the hard words of his mother and uncle who left the house

due to his behaviour. Rosie, too, follow his advices. Rosie gives him all the physical desire. Raju helps her to be a good dancer. Later he works as an assistant of her. The love between Raju and Rosie is also seen at the time of legal activity in which Raju is prisoned for two years. Raju betrays Rosie by forging signature of her for a package of jewel only. In spite of it Rosie bears the heavy cost of lawyer to save him. She works hard to free Raju from this crime. So,the relationship between Raju and Rosie is above anything.

As a complex character: R.K.Narayan has presented Rosie as a complex character. It can be seen at many places in the novel. Sometimes she surrenders her body to Raju so that he can make love to her, but the other moment she would remember her husband and would like to kick Raju away.

Not a bad woman : Rosie is not a bad woman in the novel. Although she leaves the house of her husband and begin to live with Raju, yet she could not forget her husband. Her goodness is also seen when Raju becomes a convict for forgery. At this time Rosie tries her best to prove Raju an innocent person. She begins to work hard to pay the heavy fees of the solicitor. Even after Raju's imprisonment she does not return to her husband. This shows that she is not a bad woman.

Thus Rosie is one of the most interesting characters of Indo-Anglican novels. In the beginning she is ready to leave anyone for dance but later on she is ready to work in the house of Raju. It is not right to call her a snake woman.

.....XXXXXXXXXX.....