



THE CHARACTER OF ROSIE IN R. K. NARAYAN’S THE GUIDE-LIBERATION OF AN ARTIST

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ABSTRACT:

Present paper is a study on the positive and negative traits of the leading character, Rosy in R.K. Narayan’s ‘The Guide’ which can be termed as a story ahead of time. She is quite opposite to the typical, orthodox Indian woman of those days, who prefers to be, though by choice or not, conservative and remains in the shadow of their husbands. She is a character who stands tall in the novel, with her strong reluctance to accept the firmly implanted culture of patriarchy. She is an extremely bold, independent and strong-willed woman as well an artist. The characteristics of her determination and resolution can be noticed during various stages of her life.

KEYWORDS: Trait, Ordinary, Virtue, Liberation, Conflict, Stigma.

INTRODUCTION

The Guide was published in 1959 by R. K. Narayan, Narayan was a master of the ‘clear glass’ style long before that term of art was invented. "Since the death of Evelyn Waugh," declared Greene, "Narayan is then Ove list I most admire in the English language." It was no small praise from one of the great writers of the twentieth century. The setting of R.K. Narayan’s novel, The Guide, as in most of his novels, is Malgudi, a fictional town in Southern India. The novelist presents the socio-cultural setting and thereby the ethos of South India. The social organization of the villagers from Mangal represents a distinct culture. The villagers took Raju as a ‘yogi’ Thus the social setting in the form of the overall culture and the collective unconscious controls the destiny of the hero. The plot construction of The Guide has been designed after the fashion of the fictitious biography. This is a life history of the hero who grows up into manhood and gets involved in a love-affair with another man’s wife. Raju, the central character, grows up near a railway station, and becomes a shopkeeper, and then a resourceful tourist guide. He meets Rosie, a beautiful dancer, and her husband, whom Raju nicknames Marco, because the man dresses in a thick jacket and helmet as if undertaking an expedition, like Marco Polo. Marco is a scholar and an archeologist, who is more interested in his research than in his young wife Rosie. Rosie and Marco engage Raju’s services as a tourist guide, and he takes them to sightseeing. She wants to see a king cobra dancing; Marco wants to study cave paintings. Rosie and Marco quarrel constantly, and Marco remains cold and aloof toward Rosie. While Marco is away studying cave paintings, Raju falls in love with Rosie. When Marco discovers that Raju and Rosie have become lovers, Marco abandons her and returns to Madras. Marco accepted Rosie as a member of the family. He was just an impractical and absolutely helpless man. He married Rosie out of desire to have someone care for his practical life but his choice was wrong. The girl herself was a dreamer. However, Raju gave up all his routine jobs in order to be of service to them. At Peak House he was in entire charge of Marco’s all affairs. Gaffur’s car was permanently engaged for Marco. Joseph looked after Marco’s needs at the hotel and Raju spends much of his time looking after Marco and Rosie. Marco paid him his daily rate also allowed to look after his ‘routine jobs’.

Raju is more interested in Rosie than her husband. Gaffur is not happy with Raju because he does not like that, he should get involved with her. While going back to the hotel, Gaffur says to Raju that an old, uneducated wife is better than the new type of girl. Raju is obsessed with thoughts of Rosie. He is now spending more money on being looking very smart. His shop is being managed by the boy. Raju’s mother always warns him to keep eye on that boy. Then Raju went over to the shop and checked the accounts. The boy informed him that the two tourists who were interested in sightseeing went away disappointed. The boy always called him ‘Rajusir’. Raju did not care for his own mother, the shop and his bank balance. The only reality in his life and consciousness is Rosie. The man at the desk and the boys at the hotel were watchful about Raju’s arrival and departure in Room No. 28.

It is difficult to Raju to understand Rosie’s mind. She allowed him to make love to her husband on the hill. She would say, ‘After all, he is my husband. I have to am doing After all; he has been so good to me, given me comfort and freedom. What husband in the world would let his wife go and live in a hotel room by herself, a hundred miles away?’ Again, she says, ‘As a good man he may not mind, but is it not a wife’s duty to guard and help her husband, whatever the way in which he deals with her?’ Raju is now in a confused mood. He feels that Marco would come down the hills and take her away. He asks Rosie, ‘Why don’t you stay up with him, then?’ She tells that he sits up all night writing and all day he is in the cave.



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Rosie asks him whether he is also like her husband not interested in her dancing. Raju replies, 'I will do anything for you. I will give my life to see you dance. Tell me what to do. I will do it for you'. This remark delighted her. She gets a bronze image of Nataraja, the god of dancers. At five in the morning, she would start her practice and continue for three hours. She would then spend an hour or two in studying the Natyashastra of Bharatmuni. Raju is not really interested in her music and dancing but keep up the false face. Rosie tells him so many things about the dance and says, 'What a darling. You are giving a new lease of life'.

The character of Rosie is symbolic of a state of conflict. She is a person struggling between traditional norms and the desire for liberation. Rosie belongs to a family of Devadasis, women dedicated to a life of being temple dancers. She challenges her socially stigmatized identity by acquiring a university degree in economics. Her decision to marry Marco, a man of academic interests, is primarily motivated by a desire to step out of the Devadasi fold. However, a part of her nature remains intensely orthodox. She tries to conform to a marital life of patriarchal hypocrisy, indifference, and apathy to maintain social respectability. She jeopardizes her marriage for a romantic encounter with the disarming Raju, only to regret it later. She holds herself responsible for her failed marriage.

Rosie defies cultural traditions and moves in with Raju to fulfill her physical and creative desires. Their relationship falls apart due to his greedy, exploitative, and possessive nature. Eventually, Rosie discovers her potential for self-reliance. She realizes that the core strength of her life lies in her craft. Rosie is more than just a good-looking dancer. She must be a great dancer, since she is able to get a job as a dancer and earn a wealthy income. Interestingly though, she doesn't care too much about the money. Raju does. To me, this allows Rosie to be an "artist." She dances because she loves it and because she is good at it. She doesn't do it for the money; it's simply a part of who she is.

Now Rosie starts a new phase of her career. As a public dancer she has been christened as Nalini, a name that has significance, poetry, and universality. Raju becomes a man with a mission. He is on the road to become an impresario. He ceases to be the old Railway Raju. When the two men, the Secretary of Management Committee and the Treasurer came to Raju's house to watch Rosie's Bharat Natyam dancing. Rosie welcomes them with a smile. She had the genius in her. The people try to catch a glimpse of Rosie. She is so grateful to Raju for her success.

The most important aspect of Rosie's character is her pursuit of dance. As a Devdasi she learns to use it for professional gains. But for Rosie, as we can see, dance is far beyond any kind of material gains. At first it becomes her way to achieve spiritual sanctity which later becomes her means of gaining independent identity. Thus, within years Rosie alias Nalini becomes an extremely famous Bharat Natyam dancer. In a country where women are still harassed and questioned in their workplaces just for being women, this achievement of Rosie, to become a thoroughly welcomed and respected Bharat Natyam dancer, to successfully pursue her art, to transform herself into a self-made woman is a revolution in itself.

In spite of all these, one part of her remains essentially orthodox. First of all, she herself never really respects her own Devdasi clan and always calmly accepts what is publicly told about them- "we are viewed as public women. We are not considered respectable; we are not considered civilized." Gayatri Chakroborty Spivak has charged Narayan with making Rosie the heroine of a sentimental tragicomedy rather than exposing through her situation the evils of the Devdasi system. Again, Rosie keeps on carrying the burden of her failed marriage all her life. First of all, Rosie seems to have an extremely old-fashioned notions about the relationship between husband and wife and about the role of women in society. She constantly expresses her gratitude to Marco for having married her in spite of her background. We can also find her abiding sense of guilt at having betrayed his trust- "I realized I had committed an enormous sin." Even after many years, when she becomes a household name with her own identity, her unsympathetic and insulting husband's book remains very dear to her and she carries it all her life. (She knows very well her husband can never appreciate her art or womanhood. Then even her attitude towards the dominating and hard-hearted Marco remains one of submission and subservience). Moreover, her change of name from Rosie to Nalini is a hint of her wish to fit herself in that very conventional society which she challenges and leaves. Rosie, at the end, portrays a very strong character. She has the ability to come out of the clutches of indifferent and exploitative men. She breaks the unfair social rules that try to bind her and her art. Most of all she establishes her own identity through her art. Rosie is truly a precursor of this new age Indian women.



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