**The Metamorphosis of Raju in R . K Narayan's *The Guide***

The central theme of the novel The Guide by R.K Narayan is the transformation of Raju from his role as a tour guide to that of a spiritual guide. The title of the novel, The Guide, has a double meaning, and Raju is in a sense a double character. As a tour guide and lover, he is impulsive, unprincipled, and self-indulgent. After his imprisonment, and after his transformation as a holy man, he is careful, thoughtful, and self-disciplined.

The Guide opens with the release of the protagonist, Raju from prison and on his taking refuge in an old temple on the banks of the rive Sarayu. Unable to face the people of Malgudi, Raju hides himself to live in secrecy. Before his imprisonment he was a public figure and because of his brilliant wit he succeeded in playing several roles: a corrupt tourist guide, an adulterous lover and a theatrical impresario. Having live the life of an adventurer he eventually sacrifices his life as a saint, a new mahatma as the people around him say, for the welfare of a rural community.

Raju, the guide is fated to be a guide by chance and temperament. He becomes a tourist guide by chance when he is given charge of the railway shop, he buys papers and old books to wrap articles, he reads book and papers to while away his time, gathers information about Malgudi, never says “no”, gives false information, cheats the tourists successfully and becomes famous as a tourist guide. In fact he tells Velan “It was not because I wanted to utter a falsehood, but only because I wanted to be pleasant.”

His role as lover and stage manager is very appreciable. After his seduction of Rosie, he is dismissed by her because of her guilt and Marco’s knowledge about them. Though he is obsessed by her, he does not pursue her. Rosie comes to his house on her own as she has been deserted by Marco. His love for her motivates him to look after her physical and artistic needs. The storage of money and Rosie’s devotion to dance compels him to arrange a public performance for her. As a result of her success and complete dedication to her profession, he becomes her manager and arranges her business affairs. He lives on her, but also works hard for her Rosie more or les forces turn into accepting the role. Being a capable actor, he performs to role to perfection. Being an ignorant he does not understand the basics of dance, but he understands Rosie’s desire to be a dancer and thus financially he manages her affairs perfectly.

However Rosie’s obsession with dance results in alienation and loss of communication. Raju feels bewildered and best. His love, jealousy and possessiveness motivate him to hide. Marco’s book and copy Rosie’s signature. Basically he does not want her to realize Marco’s generosity. This choice of his, ironically leads to his imprisonment. In fact he is so used to playing roles that he does not realize the extent of his act.

When he is sitting bored and lonely near a dilapidated temple a villager called Velan comes and tells him his trouble. The simple peasant mistakes him for a “swami” because there is actually something saintly about Raju’s appearance. He is sitting on a granite slab. As the story open Velan gazes at Raju respectfully, chooses a sit two step bellow the slab. Impressed by the saintly appearance Velan is encouraged to unburden himself, looking for advice and guidance. Raju on the other hand is tempted to play the role of the swami because “it was in his nature to get involved in other people’s interest and activities”.

Raju satisfies the demand of villagers of Mangala. He feels disconcerted by the devotion of the peasants, who believes that a superior soul has come to live near their village. Ironically Raju’s old habit of offering guidance to others when he was a tourist guide asserts itself when he wants to be honest this time. The special attention of the villagers makes him “feel uncomfortable” and so he wonders if he could device somemeans of escape from the company.” His circle of devotees inevitably widens because he is believed to have worked a miracle on Velan’s stepsister. Consequently it becomes a daily practice of Velan and his fellow villagers to bring food for the swami and the result is that men, women and children come to have darshan of him large number.

The affection and devotion of the peasants transform Raju to such an extent that he assumes the role of a spiritual guide: “his bear now caressed his chest, his hair covered his back and around his neck he wore a necklace of prayer breads.” He even assures himself that he has become an authentic saint. Their devotion to him was unquestionable. As the narrator tells us Raju “felt moved by the recollection of the big crowd of women and children touching his feet. He felt moved by the thought of their gratitude.”

The unshakeable faith of the people of Mangala transforms Raju into an instrument of their will so that he feels naturally inclined to fast for their survival. When he is called upon to fast by his devotees, and thus to bring rains to the parched land, he realizes that, “he had worked himself into a position from which he could not get out.” He makes an attempt to confess to Velan all about his notorious past. But Velan’s rustic discipline towards him is so deep that he refuses to believe him.

Then Raju become aware about the fact that something has changed within himself: “ if by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom, and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly?” For the first time in his life he has making an earnest effort, for the first time he has learning the thrill of full application, outside money and love, for the first time he ha doing a thing in which he was not personally interested”. It reveals the spiritual achievement of Raju. He is aware that the whole countryside is now in a happy ferment because a great soul had agreed to go through the trial and he feels a moral duty not to insult the villager’s faith in him and so he becomes absorbed into communal archetype. As a “Saviour” he is expected “to stand in knee deep water to look the skies, and utter the payer lines for two weeks completely fasting during the period-and so the rains would come down provided the man who performed it was a pure soul. Was a great soul”

Thus Raju spends his days muttering prayers as a result of his indubitable liberation from his ego, and it is revealed by his words-“ I am only doing what I have to do; that is all. My likes and dislikes do not count”-until on the eleventh day when he collapses with the prophetic declaration that it is raining in the hills. The novel thus concludes “in the magnitude of his spiritual gain”.