

Feminine Sensibility and Self-Discovery in R.K Narayan's *The Guide*

Garima Sharma¹, Research Scholar, Department of English, Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut (India) gs311097@gmail.com

Geeta Sharma², Research Scholar, Department of English, Chaudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut (India) sharmageeta12102001@gmail.com

Article Received: 18/08/2023

Article Revised:26/09/2023

Article Accepted:28/09/2023

Published Online:29/09/2023

DOI:10.47311/IJOES.2023.5.09.128

Abstract: Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanswami was a forerunner in the development of the canon of Indian English fiction. Malgudi is a typical south Indian town, similar to Thomas Hardy's Wessex and William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County. Narayan's works depict the different aspects of Indian middle-class life. The novels *The Dark Room* and *The Guide* by R. K. Narayan depict the oppression and suppression of women in Indian culture. It is regrettable that women have not been granted equal freedom to men since those days. The goal of this paper is to investigate the turmoil suffered by the female character Rosie in the novel *The Guide*, and this research paper is to highlight Rosie's miserable state throughout the novel. *The Guide* was initially published in 1958 and, like many of Narayan's previous works, got the Sahitya Academy Award in 1961.

Keyword: Feminine Sensibility, Rosie, self-discovery, subjugation, confinement, hybridity.

R.K Narayan is well-known for his famous series of books such as *English Teacher*, *Vendor of Sweets*, *Financial Expert*, *Man Eater of Malgudi*, *Waiting for Mahatma*, and others. He is also well recognized for his short stories such as "A Horse and Two Goats," "Under the Banyan Tree," and "An Astrologers Day," which leave readers with the aesthetic pleasure and satisfaction of having read a fine narrative. His works fully portray typical South Indian middle-class family life. Narayan was more than a fiction writer. He is also a critic and proponent of women's rights, which were prominently featured in *The Dark Room*. Sashi Tharoor is a model. R.K Narayan's works were compared to those of Jane Austen, an early nineteenth-century novelist of English middle-class ethos and mores. Narayan received the Padma Vibhushan and the Sahitya Akademi Award. R.K. Narayan's greatest work, *The*

Guide, was released in 1958. Its magnificence is recognized by the Sahitya Akademi Award. The film *The Guide* is a combination of philosophy, fiction, and supernatural aspects, as well as moral beliefs. Dev Anand and Waheeda Rehman, both former Bollywood stars, had key roles in the film "Guide." The story of the Guide is about a guy named Raju, also known as Railway Raju, who is the protagonist of the novel yet is not a dominant figure. His change from sinner to saint represents a soul's growth from basic inclinations to spiritual evolution. In his brilliant colors, he embodies the fight and desire for life. Marco, an archaeologist, is the other male-dominant character. His love of antiques and antique beauties entirely blinds him to the beauty and dignity of modern life. His indifference to the present and devotion exclusively to the past rendered his personality an ancient anachronism with the rhythm of the present moment.

The novel *The Guide's* main female character is Rosie. She is one of the well-known female characters played by Narayan in his different works. Rosie, on the other hand, is a lady who yearns to fulfill her suppressed, if not oppressed, desire to become a dancing superstar. The novel's premise revolves mostly around the budding romance between Rosie and the protagonist, Raju. As a result, her function is critical to a clear understanding and study of the reasons and forces that control the complex human nature presented in this work by the author. Rosie is a member of the socially despised caste of temple dancers; she is intelligent, having earned a postgraduate degree in Economics. Her Mother, a ballerina, wants her to live a socially acceptable life.

As a result, she is married to a wealthy bachelor who lives in a large, sprawling mansion in Madras. Marriage occurs as a result of matrimonial advertising, regardless of mutual appropriateness or unsuitability of the partner's interests and preferences. Her name, Rosie, may imply that she is not Native American. But, in actuality, she is a full-fledged Indian, complete with a saree and long hair. Her Indianness is further verified by her ability to do traditional classical Bharatanatyam dance. Raju describes Rosie to Velan in these Words; "Don't imagine on hearing her name that she wore a short skirt or cropped her hair, she looked just the orthodox dancer she was she wore saree of bright hues and gold lace, had curly hair which she braided and be flowered, wore diamond earrings and heavy gold necklace." Rosie has a striking physical appearance. She is not flashy, yet she makes an indelible mark on anyone's mind. Raju, upon first seeing her at the Malgudi train station, feels self-conscious and ashamed as she exits the railway compartment. He describes her graceful personality like this: "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 sparked, the complexion not white but dusky, which made her one-half visible – as if you saw her through a film of tender coconut juice." Like Raju, Rosie has a multifaceted personality. This is to be anticipated from a character who progresses from a devadasi to an M.A. in Economics, to a housewife, to a lady who is rejected by her husband for adultery but yet becomes a successful professional dancer while regretting her failed marriage.

At first look, Rosie's contradicting motivation is difficult to comprehend. She appears to be both cautious and forceful at the same time. She is childlike in the pursuit of her heart's

wishes without regard for the consequences and a lady of the world in the way she conducts her job after her divorce from Raju. She can be ignorant and obstinate, and she may be chastised for being careless in her personal connections. She is completely dedicated to her craft, but she is also well-versed in its traditional roots. She defies the traditional Hindu view of what a woman should be, yet she also has an exceedingly conservative temperament. Like Raju, Rosie demonstrates the complexities of human nature. Raju names Rosie's husband Marco after the adventurer Marco Polo. This moniker comes to mind since he is similar to a space traveler. He disregards his wife's desires and tastes.

He intends to publish a book about his topic. William Walsh comments on his personality as one who is "A queer old abstraction of a man" He is completely unconcerned with his wife's desires and hobbies. He craves alone and loneliness so that he may focus on his studies without being interrupted by his wife. Rosie and Marco have very opposite hobbies and preferences. She has a lifelong passion for dance. Her veins tingle just thinking about it.

However, Marco is allergic to it. He dismisses it as "street acrobatics" rather than an art form. When she begs Raju to show her a king cobra because she enjoys seeing him dance to the sound of a flute, her husband mocks her, saying, "Your interests are morbid." Rosie, on the other hand, is bored in his presence since he is usually occupied silently writing, researching, or understanding murals and sculptures on cave and temple walls. She despises his strange fascination with cold, lifeless stones. While responding to Raju's question about her own interests, she makes an oblique allusion to her husband's interest. She remarks that her interest lies in anything except "cold, old stone walls." As a result, the woman and husband have completely different interests.

As a result, she leads a dissatisfied, miserable, and unsatisfied existence; they frequently quarrel. Their relationship is described by Rosie to Raju. She says: "When we are alone and start talking, we argue and quarrel over everything. We don't agree on most matters, and then he leaves me alone and comes back, and we are alright, that's all." Rosie enters Raju's life through the train that transports tourists to Malgudi. The unique quality of Rosie's Westernised name also declares her as an outsider in Malgudi's customary milieu. Raju wonders – "Why did she call herself Rosie? She did not come from a foreign land. She was just an Indian who should have done well with Devi, Meena, Lalitha, or any of the thousand names we have in our country." The narrative emphasizes Rosie's non-traditional name as a symbol of her social hybridity. She is from a caste and a class that is outside the purview of established patriarchal Hindu culture. When Raju's Mother queries her, she is unable to disclose her father's name or find her social identification.

She says – "I belong to a family traditionally dedicated to the temples as a dancer." And there is no illusion as to how devadasis are regarded – "We are viewed as public women" We are not considered respectable; we are not considered civilized." Raju's Mother echoes the conventional wisdom when she warns her son, "Don't have anything to do with these dancing women."

They are all a bad sort." Raju's uncle says – "Are you of our caste? No. Our class? No..... After all, you are a dancing girl. We don't admit them in our families. Understand?" It is stunning that they entirely disregard Rosie's other identity as an educated lady with an M.A. degree in their bigotry. Raju is clearly living in a fool's paradise when he confidently informs Rosie, "All that narrow notion may have been true in the past, but it's different now." Things have shifted.

Today, there is no caste or class. Raju's deft manoeuvrings cost Rosie her life. The events that follow result in the disastrous breakdown of Rosie and Marco's wife-husband relationship. During their stay in Malgudi, Rosie resides at the Ananda Bhawan Hotel in town, while Marco stays at the top home in the Mempi hills, where he studies antique paintings. Rosie pays him a visit every other day to ensure that he is not having any problems with food or other necessities. Rosie's absence from her husband, along with her displeasure with her marriage, comes in handy for clever, crafty, and corrupt Raju. She is instantly drawn to him as he supports her intense desire to become a Bharatanatyam dancer. She falls into his lustful traps and becomes an infidel to her husband.

During one of her visits to the summit home, she breaks down emotionally as a result of Marco's persistent grilling and confesses to Raju about her adulterous romance. This betrayal of nuptial trust causes irreparable damage to their husband-wife relationship. She feels repentant for her error and promises to give up her interest in dancing forever, as well as her total allegiance to him in the future. For thirty days, she follows him up and down the Peak home to the caverns. Marco seldom talks to her. He repels her whenever she attempts to assist him in any way. He refuses to forgive her. The last schism occurs when Marco leaves her at the Malgudi station at the time of departure for Madras, assuring her that he only has one ticket for himself. Rosie is obliged to go to Raju's place in these conditions. Marco bears a greater share of the culpability for this calamity. His impenetrable self-contentedness and lack of adaptation, despite his wife's sincere, honest apologies, are mostly to blame for this awful state of affairs. Rosie's involvement with Raju after Marco abandons her leads to her moral demise. Raju grants Rosie's wish to witness a king cobra dance.

Raju narrates the scene in which Rosie watches the king cobra dance: "The whole thing repelled me, but it seemed to fascinate the girl. She watched it swaying with the rap test attention. She stretched out her arm slightly and swayed it in imitation of the movement; she swayed her body to the rhythm for just a second....." Raju takes her on a tour of the city, stopping at a movie, a market, a restaurant, and the Sarayu River. He continually pushes her to dance in order to pique her interest and promises his full cooperation in making her an exceptional dancer one day. "What a darling!" she exclaims to him, impressed by his promises. "You've given me a new lease on life." Her sometimes introspective and melancholy moods, even during Raju's caresses and love-making, reveal that she is not a morally debased lady. She has sincerity in her heart for her husband. She openly acknowledges to Raju the good gestures of her husband in giving comfort in a hotel, saying: "After all – after all this right what I am doing? After all, he has been so good to me, giving me comfort and freedom; which husband in the world would let his wife go and live in a hotel

by herself a hundred miles away?" Rosie's outstanding characteristic is her candor in admitting her past errors; she does not resort to deception. She does not forget her husband, even after becoming a brilliant dancer. She cares about his wonderful qualities. This is clear in her ecstatic responses to the great reviews of Marco's book, *The Cultural History of South India*. After reading the great reviews in the *Illustrated Weekly*, she rushes downstairs to Raju and expresses her wish to purchase a copy of the book. Raju has already gotten one copy, but she keeps it hidden for fear of turning against Marco. She becomes quite irritated after discovering Raju's deceptive behavior. Raju reminds her of Marco's brutal deed of abandoning her alone at the train station.

She honestly admits her guilt in the entire episode and thanks Marco for his patient and peaceful approach toward her. She says, "I do, and I deserve nothing less. Any other husband would have throttled me then and there. He tolerated my company for nearly a month, even after knowing what I had done?" Rosie has an artist's heart, which makes her vulnerable to unexpected outbursts of passion and excitement when she sees the Peak House's gorgeous natural surroundings. She is thrilled when she sees vegetation, grass, and natural creatures. She jumps like a kid in delight, expressing an innocent heart full of warmth and vibrancy of life.

The emotions suppressed in her heart by her husband's cold indifference get welled up into demonstrative expression when she is taken around the city by Raju to different places, A cinema house, Sarayu river, and sub-urban stores; her joyous exuberance is described thus: "She behaved like a baby –excited thrilled, appreciative of everything – This was perhaps the first time that she was seeing the world. She was in ecstasies." Rosie is, by temperament, a genuine artist. Dance courses through her veins. She is completely committed to it. In the Malgudi hotel, she follows a strict regimen of dancing rehearsals beginning at 5 a.m. and lasting until 8 a.m., followed by two hours of study of ancient works of art, such as Bharat Muni's *Natya Shastra*. She eventually becomes an exceptional classical dancer via pure dedication and hard practice. She goes by the name Nalini. She puts forth dance performances around India. Her commitments are three months in advance. She receives a lot of attention and makes a lot of money, which is completely controlled by Raju, who spends it on his own whims in theatrics. Rosie's disposition and habits are modest. Her love of traditional Indian classical dancing demonstrates her admiration for and connection to Indian society's traditional cultural trappings. She wants to be a successful dancer since she is educated and gifted. She wishes to develop her skills to its maximum potential.

Such a frantic lifestyle, despite the glitz, showmanship, and promise of money and social prominence, irritates her. She tells Raju, "I am tired of all this circus existence." Raju retorts to her that it is her own choice to become a dancer. She replies, "Not the circus life. I visualized it as something different. It is all gone with that old house of yours." The same sentiment of exasperation and disillusionment is given expression in these words. "I feel like one of those parrots in a cage taken around village fairs, or a performing monkey" Rosie's simplicity, modesty, and capacity for adaptability to circumstances are illustrated in her behaviour at Raju's house. After finishing her dancing rehearsals, she assists Raju's Mother with household duties such as sweeping, cleaning, and scouring of kitchenware. The Mother

tolerates her despite her displeasure of her staying with Raju, which is against social decorum because a married woman's place is exclusively at her husband's side, no matter how unfair or unreasonable he is. Rosie is a well-meaning, accommodating lady, she knows. Rosie makes supper for Raju when his Mother leaves for her brother's place. She does not want them to hire a cook only to prepare supper for two people. Later on, when she is too busy staging public acts, she employs one. She is offended to learn that they spend two thousand rupees every month on herself. Raju's arrest on suspicion of forging of her signatures on a legal document is a setback to her trust. Despite this, she lives and promises Raju that she would do everything she can to get him exonerated in the case, despite the latter's terrible betrayal. She executes a ten-thousand-rupee bond for him. She organizes her performances on her own to make money to pay the lawyer's fee. Raju leaves Malgudi after being sentenced to prison, lives in Madras, and continues her performances around India. As a result, she survives life's ups and downs because to the innate power of her resilience and adaptability. Raju serves as Rosie's trainer and critic. He becomes her impresario when she becomes a skilled dancer. He has complete control over her. He is solely responsible for booking her shows and collecting the proceeds from her appearances. He is allergic to everyone who stays with her for an extended period of time. During her performances, he sits on the centre sofa and commands her to begin or end the act with a flick of his finger. He takes full advantage of her. He admits to having a monopoly over her.

He says "I had a monopoly of her and nobody had anything to do with her." He further elaborates his attitude by saying, "She is my property. This idea was beginning to take root in my mind." Rosie –Raju association reaches breaking point after the revelation of Raju's trickery and deceit. Rosie is completely disillusioned with him as a result of his fraudulent actions, which included wasting all of her money and faking her signatures on a court document issued by Marco for the release of her jewellery box, which was stored in the bank under their joint custody. Raju's parasitic inclinations are constantly on display in this section of the program.

In his comments regarding his choice to become a saint, the author emphasizes his predatory impulses. He says, "He has not trained himself to make a living out of hard work food was coming to him unasked now." Hence, he adopts sainthood. His penance for rains is forced upon him by circumstances. Making the most of a bad situation, he resolves to go through it honestly. For the first time in his life, he has decided to do anything other than for himself. The author comments, "... for the first time he was learning the thrill of full application outside money and love; for the first time he was doing a thing in which he was not personally interested." All of these details relentlessly expose Raju's complex, devious tactics while emphasizing Rosie's simple-mindedness and easy vulnerability. Her unsuspecting credulity in Raju becomes her hamartia. Rosie is driven to the point of parting ways with Raju by his undignified exposure. Nonetheless, she assures him of her full assistance until the resolution of the law suit against him.

She tells him: "It does not mean I'm not going to help. If I have to pawn my last possessions, I'll do it to save you from jail. But once it's over, leave me once and for all; that's all I ask. Forget me, Leave me to live or die, as I choose; that's all." Rosie's key virtue is her unqualified acknowledgement of her gratitude to Raju for past assistance, despite the eventual

humiliation of his selfish, devious actions. The Rosie-Raju relationship is based on the two's temperamental compatibility rather than a sensuous, passionate connection. William Walsh correctly underlines the identity of temperament, likes and dislikes as the foundation of their attraction to one another.

He says: "She and Raju are of a kind and they fall in love at once. Not that there is anything heady or tumultuous about their affair, which strikes one as being as much a crisis of nerves as of passion. Their relationship, both at the beginning and later when she breaks off with Marco and comes to live with Raju, appears to be much more of feeling than sensuality, a temperamental rather than a passionate union."

Secondly, this relationship exposes the self – seeking exploitative nature of Raju who is at focus in the novel.

Thirdly, it drives home the point how a failure in husband –wife relationship can be mischievously exploited by a third medium for nefarious purposes. Fourthly, Rosie reveals her thus far undiscovered potentiality for self –reliance. This fact is recognized by Raju when he realizes the truth that neither Marco nor he has any place in her life which has its own sustaining vitality and which she herself has underestimated all along. This self – discovery on the part of Rosie occurs after her separation both from Marco and Raju. R.K Narayan portrays Rosie as an independent woman who has commitment to her art. She focuses on her interests though her husband is Disregardful towards her interests. She is modest in temperament. Rosie rediscovers herself after her separation both from Marco and Raju.

References:

Narayan R K, The Guide, Indian Thought Publication. 1958

<https://joell.in/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/R-K-Narayan-Guide.pdf>

<https://www.internationaljournalsrsg.org/IJHSS/2015/Volume2-Issue5/IJHSS-V2I5P104.pdf>

Iyengar, K.R. Srinivasa. Indian Writing In English. New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1995

<http://data.conferenceworld.in/IETEOCTOBER2017/23.pdf>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Guide