

# A Glance in the Characters of 'Raju' and 'Rosie' in R. K. Narayan's 'The Guide'

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**Abstract** – Present paper is a study on the positive and negative traits of the two leading characters, Raju and Rosie in R.K. Narayan's 'The Guide' which can be termed as a story ahead of time. It has characters with a modern attitude with conventional background. They both represent the traditional and modern outlook of the society and go through a gradual but balanced change as a consequence of small events that happen in their lives as in the case of any ordinary man. Both of them have got their shortcomings and at the same time strong values. Though they happened to yield or succumb under the pressure of circumstances, they do hold innate good qualities. This research examines both the positive and negative traits of Raju and Rosie with more emphasis on the merits.

**Key Words:** Trait, Ordinary, Virtue

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## INTRODUCTION

R. K. Narayan's novels mark the beginning of modernism in Indian literature in English. It is an epoch of modern characters with contemporary outlook deviating from their traditional barriers. Modern characters lack grandeur, embellishments unlike the characters in the ancient literature. His characters are more human than superhuman and more ordinary than the extraordinary. There is an outstanding balance in their regular physical and mental traits with the extraordinary struggle in their day today life. As Pragati Ghosh has rightly commented, "The mainspring of Narayan's fictional art is abiding, humane and responsible interest in varieties of people, especially the vast majority of the average and the ordinary, and in the limitless possibilities of their lives." Different facets of human nature are represented in Narayan's characters which are neither good nor bad. As Narayan himself belonged to the middle class, his characters (people of Malgudi) also belonged to the middle or lower middle class. It was quite natural for him to portray authentic or original version of these ordinary people as characters in his novels. Though average but these characters had an extraordinary zeal for life. There is a balanced approach while writing about the positive and negative traits of these characters which help them to make a connection with the readers. They seem to wary, struggle or succumb in the beginning but come out victorious and enjoy a special place in the hearts of readers by the end. We will examine the characters of Raju and Rosie in the light of Narayan's philosophy of ordinary people who either fight or surrender but the tale of their struggle makes it worth reading.

## RAJU

Raju, the protagonist is full of follies and virtues like any common man. Narayan's portrayal of his character is an attempt to define a regular man's struggle and achievements. There are certain shades in the character of Raju and he has his own strengths and weaknesses. His never giving up attitude is the most striking feature in his character. He is the one who encouraged and motivated Rosie to pursue her career as a dancer. It is with his support and planning that she attained that height and position in the society which she could not have dreamed without him by her side. Raju is an example of a free-spirited man who does not hold back under the pressure of the culture and society. He is a dreamer and an entrepreneur with avision. When railways came to Malgudi, he realized that trading old books would be a growing business in future as there was a huge inflow of students in Malgudi from the nearby villages and cities. He knew how to make more profits as he recalls, 'I bargained hard, showed indifference while buying and solicitude while selling.' (Narayan, 52)

He is a true lover who loved Rosie from the core of his heart. He gave up his family, business and social status for her. When Rosie appeared at his door after she was abandoned by Marco, he welcomed her whole-heartedly in his house and life. His undying love for Rosie proves that he was not a conventional type of lover who gives up on his beloved under the pressure of family and society. He confronted his uncle when he tried to bully Rosie and asked her to leave the house, 'At

this a big sob burst from her. I was completely maddened by it. I flew at my uncle and knocked the cup out of his hand, shouting, "Get out of this house." (136) He also had an excellent eye for talent which Marco did not have. Raju recognized Rosie's extraordinary talent in dance when he watched her dance moves for the first time.

"She stretched out her armslightly and swayed it in imitation of the movement; she swayed her whole body to the rhythm—for just a second, but that was sufficient to tell me what she was, the greatest dancer of the century." (65) Raju was a young man with a progressive vision compared to other young people of those times.

He followed his passion of being a guide rather than running the family's traditionalshop which he inherited. He believed in following his own dreams. He never discouraged or judged Rosie for her interest in dance. Instead, he was the one behind her extraordinary success.

Raju's character has some weaknesses too. To pursue his career as a guide, he compromised on his father's shop and left it to be taken care by a small boy which eventually led to financial losses and cancellation of his license to run the shop. He also proves to be a rebel by not following the norms of the society by falling in love with a married woman. It is his rebellious nature which led to his tragic end. Also, his irresponsible nature forced his mother to spend her old age far from her own house at the mercy of her brother. His indifference becomes apparent when she writes a letter to him and asks him to get her old house back which was built by her husband, he did not pay much attention to her request which he regretted later:

"I felt a regret at the rift that had developed between me and my mother. She occasionally wrote me a postcard, and I sent her small sums of money now and then, dashing off a few lines to say I was well. She often asked when I'd get back the house for her—well, that involved a big sum and I told myself I'd attend to it as soon as I had some time. Anyway, what was the hurry?" (164)

He also developed some bad habits like gambling and drinking alcohol which further complicated his life. After Rosie got success in her dancing career, Raju became her manager and took care of all her appointments and finances. There was a lot of money at his disposal which made him arrogant and blind with power. He treated common people, small artists and poets as if they were inferior to him and did not deserve his attention and time.

"Sometimes I observed how big a crowd waited for me outside, through the glass window in the hall, and I made a strategic exit through a side door, straight on to the garage, and from there dashed to the gate,

while the visitors looked on helplessly. I felt vastly superior to everyone." (147)

Raju deceived poor residents of Mangla village by falsely presenting himself as a saint. He was a liar and hypocrite with a criminal background. When he got respect and honor from the villagers, he kept acting as their 'Swami'. He did not care for those poor people and wanted to shout on them for their idiocy by saying 'Get out, all of you, and leave me alone, I am not the man to save you. No power on earth can save you if you are doomed. Why do you bother me with all this fasting and austerity?' (178) He also tried to fake fasting by keeping some food in the kitchen and ate it without getting noticed by the people.

## ROSIE

R.K.Narayan has given a very progressive or modern outlook to the character of Rosie. 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 extremely bold, independent and strong willed. The characteristics of her determination and resolution can be noticed during various stages of her life.

Being from a family of temple dancers, she breached the social custom and broke the chains of bondage tied around the women of her caste or family that existed to complete her Masters in Economics. During those days, very few girls from such families used to go for higher studies. It shows her determination to be a woman of substance in the society. Another area of her tradition defying or modern aspect of her character is that she didn't follow the age old practice of matching the horoscopes of groom and bridegroom before getting married. (Waney) She says; "I had photographed clutching the scroll of the University citation in one hand, and sent it to the advertiser. Well, we met, he examined me and my certificate, we went to a registrar and got married." (77)

The author has tried to portray her character with a lot of compassion and concern because a woman who had her master's degree had to face miserable treatment from her husband. She had always aspired to become a famous dancer, but, Marco, her husband never supported or encouraged her to follow her dream of becoming a renowned classical dancer. Marco represents a male dominated society, who thinks women are treated as objects and he considers his passion for studying or researching about temple painting and drawings is something esthetic and he tries to ridicule her by comparing her talent to street acrobatics. He says when asked whether she could dance, 'Oh! You

want to rival me, is that it? This is a branch of learning, not street- acrobatics". An acrobat on a trapeze goes on doing the same thing all his life; well, your dance is like that. What is there intelligent or creative in it?'(121). Rosie is here depicted as the epitome of patience and perseverance. She doesn't react here, but instead she does her best to adjust with her husband. She thinks she can change him and eventually she would be able to pursue her dream of becoming a classical dancer. She continues to be a dedicated and obedient wife even though Marco wants her to be just like a puppet, who can't have an identity for herself. He doesn't take into consideration the qualification she has, but treats her just like any of the illiterate women in the society. At the same time, Rosie displays tremendous tolerance and kept her positive spirit up in spite of Marco being so impolite and unrelenting for so many days. What happens as a consequence of his hard hearted and merciless gesture is the immense courage and fearlessness of a woman on the face of a huge setback or unexpected turn of events in her life. Any woman of her nature would become devastated and clueless when her husband leaves her all of a sudden leaving her in such predicament. However, Rosie stays calm, but, at the same time determined. She takes a brave decision to face life with courage and determination.

Another area of Rosie's character trait sketched by the author is the love and dedication for her art. It can be observed from her commitment in doing a lot of detailed learning by reading a lot of ancient books on dance, in spite of Raju's mother's strong opposition. She achieves her dream of becoming an acclaimed dancer with the support of Raju as a result of her sedulous practice and hard work. Later, even when she comes to know about the fraudulent deeds of Raju, she remains modest and committed. She expresses her willingness to pay the lawyer to get Raju out of the criminal case. So, it can be clearly observed that Rosie evolves herself to become a strong and indomitable woman with her sheer commitment and self-assurance.

R. K. Narayan also depicts the negative or rather the immoral side of Rosie in the novel. It is when she is tricked by Raju for his own benefits. Raju tries to exploit the discontentment of her relationship with Marco and she goes against the moral values of a married woman. Later, she ends up with extra marital relationship with Raju which is inappropriate. She finds solace in the words of Raju, who encourages her to perform and gives unwavering support to achieve her dream of becoming a distinguished dancer. However, even during her intense moments with Raju, she speaks about the dignity and good nature of her husband.

"She started crying. "After all . . . After all . . . Is this right what I 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?"(102)

So, though we can see some negative traits in her character, Rosie is the personification of firmness and endurance. She is successful in dealing with all the highs and lows of her life with her unique ability of adaptability.

## CONCLUSION

It should be observed that the protagonists of the novel, Raju and Rosie are a true reflection of typical people with extraordinary determination, along with human instinct of yielding at times of weaknesses. It is quite evident that Raju isn't a straight forward individual or a person who is free of deceit and Rosie isn't an exemplary wife. However, we do observe, as we travel along their journey of ups and downs, there is plenty of goodness and virtues in both of them. Both of them have to be analyzed with pity and compassion as everyone in this universe has both merits and shortcomings.

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