



MARITAL DISHARMONY IN R. K. NARAYAN'S THE GUIDE

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ABSTRACT

Rasipuram krishnaswamy Iyer Narayanswami shortened R. K. Narayan was born on the 10th October, 1906. He is a versatile writer. He has given a new direction to the art of fiction writing. He is among the three pillars of Indian Writing in English. He was born in a Brahmin family who were the worshippers of Siva and Vishnu. He is well-known Indian English novelist. His novels grapple with contemporary themes. His novel The Guide is a novel which deals with the woman's identity in Indian culture. The novel is filmed. The film is also popular. R. K Narayan's women characters break the image of traditional woman. These women are fearless and challenge the men. Narayan presents traditional woman with modern sophisticated manners. His women characters like Rosie, in the Guide, Savitri in, The Dark Room, Daisy, in The Painter of signs present western ideas and rebel when they know that they are instrument in the hands of men. The man-woman relationship is always a theme of discussion. The Indian Woman plays subordinate role in Indian society. Man has given her a secondary place.

Keywords: marital disharmony, identity crisis, myth, relationship, quest, rebellion, subversion, culture, moral values.

INTRODUCTION

R.K. Narayan is a very popular Indian fiction writer. He spent his life in the city of Mysore in south India. His huge qualitative publications made him popular. The themes of his works are Indian Myths, man-woman relationship, marital disharmony etc. *The Guide (1958)* is his famous novel. He describes Indian village life. His fictitious place Malgudi is a typical Indian village. The happenings in Malgudi are found everywhere in India. The place presents Pre-

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independent as well as post independent India. Malgudi is itself a magical name. The magic of Indian life and Malgudi is found in Narayan's fiction. Malgudi appears as character in R. K. Narayan's novels. His Indian sensibility has been shaped by myths in Indian literature.

"He was a sensitive storyteller of the world he exclusively created and concentrated in fictional South Indian town Malgudi. Malgudi is his Casterbridge. It was a land of fantasy." (Mehta pp 19-20)

The Guide is also based on the theme of a robber becomes a saint. In India saint is neither born nor made he simply happens. The Guide is a story of Ratnakar (Valya) becomes Valmik Rishi (sage). R. K. Narayan is a Hindu writer. He has presented Hindu religion and its sources in his literature. Hindu culture is the base of his literature. While presenting Hindu culture, he does not forget to present the characters like Gaffur and Marco respectively.

"Born a Hindu, he grew up in a Hindu family, and he has imbibed Hindu culture of which he has a profound knowledge." (Krishnan x) He must have heard many of the stories of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata in his childhood from his grandmother and mother and other older relatives. The influence of the epics on him was so strong that he strongly believed that, "characters in the epics are prototypes and moulds in which humanity is cast and remain valid for all time." (Narayan GDO 9)

Raju is the corrupt tourist guide lives in Malgudi. He is an ordinary drop out from school, gifted with the face reading. As a clever reader of human psyche, he does not take more time to know the marital disharmony between Marco and Rosie. He seduces Rosie. He helps the tourists who come to Malgudi. He robs money from them and makes his livelihood. This picture is very common at Hindu pilgrimage places. The tourist guides take advantages of innocent pilgrims who believe in religion and exploited by such corrupt people. The guides are found everywhere in India. Raju is a typical Indian guide found in the pilgrims and tourist places of India. In his later life, he becomes the tragic character. He lives luxurious life. He takes an advantage of Rosie. He is dominant. He subverts Rosie and spends her money. The novel presents the theme of marriage. R. K. Narayan presents the picture of Indian woman and marital disharmony in the Novel *The Guide*. The institution of Marriage is the central feature of all those forms of human society which are known to us. It is a bond and it shackles the Indian woman in age-old traditions.



“Marriage is the deepest, as well as the most problematic of all relations. Marriage in India, is an important social institution. It is considered as the most essential part of human life” (Suneel p, 123)

Narayan’s women reject the place of husband as god. We have seen from very ancient times that the place of Indian women is within threshold. She has served her family children and husband. The time has changed and with running time family is disintegrated. The effect of the changing life style has fallen on the man-woman relationship. Marriages are broken. The divorces are taking places in India. The extra marital relationship causes marital disharmony in the young couples’ life. The major reason for the disintegration of family is rampant promiscuity in sexual relation. The family is crumbling and it is a demand of time to re-define marriage. The new definition of marriage postulates complete sexual freedom. The financial freedom is another aspect of feminism. She wants economic freedom. Marriage appears like a contract rather than a living vibrant emotional relationship. Rosie gives every right to Raju. Rosie is live beauty and Marco finds pleasure in dead caves. He does not care for her as well he is not interested in her dance. The art of dancing is her hidden property. The age-old institution of marriage and family is under stress in modern life.

“Nor can a person find his identity in the family-nor that institution is breaking up” (McReynolds 203)

Marco and Rosie’s relationship is also based on such bond. Marco though intelligent avoids Rosie’s talent as well as her hunger of sex. Rosie is a gorgeous and impressive character. The marriage institution is the centre of society. It is the deepest and most complex relationship. It is the foundation of the family. Hindu marriage is sacred bond between husband and wife. The husband and wife are bound in permanent relationship for the physical, social and spiritual purposes of sexual pleasure, procreation and observance of ‘dharma’. The marriage of Rosie and Marco in Narayan’s *The Guide* is a total failure. There is no mutual sharing. Marco is not interested in Rosie. Rosie is emotionally hungry. He is complete contrast to Rosie. He always desires to stay alone in the caves. Rosie is potential of dance. “Will you permit to dance? Promptly came his reply with scowl, the old face was coming back. Why?” (Narayan, Guide 147) She is modern and her potential could not be hidden. Rosie gets wider canvas in the novel. She marries Marco, rich old bachelor. She attains the dignity by marrying him. The relationship with Marco may be the sole source of her status but mutual instability floats throughout the novel. William Walsh aptly remarks:

“The complex association of sincerity and self deception is indeed the organizing theme of The Guide: how these conditions grow out of one another, how they co-exist, disagree supplant, and in the long run re-attract one



another. To put it like this is probably unduly perhaps savagely abstract about a novel remarkable for the way in which the structural conception is thoroughly incorporated into the tissue of the characters and play of events".
(p -115)

Rosie is a different from Marco. Their interests are different. She could not live with Marco for more time. She finds Raju a perfect match for satisfying her physical needs. The women have changed their life style in modern India Rosie is not exception to that she also switches from traditional role to modern:

"This new equation of traditional man-woman roles spells a refreshing break from the mythological image of Indian women. These women veer away from their time-worn function of bolstering the male ego by sublimation, debasement of self assumption of mask of adoring subservience" (George 203)

Rosie belongs to Devdasi families i.e. the dancers. The devdasi families are traditionally dedicated to the temples. She breaks the orthodox customs and obtains an M. A. degree in Economics. She swallows the insults. She has accepted Marco as her husband for money and social acceptance. The relationship does not long last as it was not based on spiritual love. They always quarrel. They disagree almost on every subject. Marco remains enclosed. He callously neglects her. Rosie's financial dependence and cultured conditioning forces her to remain silent sufferer in the beginning. Marco often insults her;

"You are here because I'm not a ruffian. But you are not my wife. You are a woman who will go to bed with anyone. That flatters your antics. That is all"
(p152)

When she becomes independent she leaves Marco and accepts Raju. She also gives freedom to Raju in the beginning but when she realizes that Raju is cheating her. She even does not like it. Raju tells Velan about her social position:

"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 anyone of thousand names we have in our country. She chose to call herself Rosie. Don't imagine on hearing her name that she wore a skirt or cropped her hair. She looked just the orthodox dancer that she was." (Narayan 9)

She is a rebellious woman. She has broken the traditions of Devdasi and married Marco. She is a modern girl with modern sophisticated manners. She is not dominated by Raju as well as



Marco. Both of them are ruined in her passions. She tries to be modern but at last she remains traditional. Rosie earned a fame and a new name Nalini. She performs various shows in towns of Indian cities of South India. She realizes that it was her fault she made adultery. The life with Marco was not bad one. She surrenders her body to Raju but the other moment she kicks Raju. She appears to be a matured woman and sometimes she appears as a child. She is a more dreamer. These features of woman are the reasons of the marital disharmony. She regrets for it. But there was no use. Marco has left her. Narayan presents traditional India with a mixture of western culture.

“Narayan’s aim is not to plead for the ancient or the modern values but (to show) how the indigenous values are being corroded under the heavy impact of the western culture” (Singh 53)

Thus the modern culture has a broad scope for human expression. The suppression of self is potentially made free. The modern society has a scope of gender equality and liberty. This causes to break the age-old shackles and fetters. Rosie has an impact of Modern culture. She is an educated woman and dares to break the traditional rule made by an orthodox society.

She marries Marco by responding a matrimonial advertisement. Their marriage becomes failure as there is nothing common in them. Both belong to different arts. Marco is an intelligent, person. He is interested in dead things while Rosie was a live beauty before him. He enjoys the beauty of Mempi caves. He calls Rosie ‘street acrobatics’ and she calls his archaeological studies ‘a ruin collecting activity’ There is no love and passion in Marco. He does not forget to acknowledge Raju when he completes his research. She is emotionally hungry. Raju does everything for her. Raju loves her and she surrender’s to Raju. The affair is detected and Marco leaves her. Raju helps her and she performs her art first in local school. Later she performs her art in public. Raju transforms her into celebrity. The mechanical life makes her sad and she remembers Marco. She feels guilty. Raju is arrested in the charge of forgery. She remains cool when Raju goes from her life. She blames his Karma. Raju is called yogi after his imprisonment. She spares enormous money to fight Raju’s Case. After Raju’s imprisonment she leaves Malgudi and handles performances herself. R. K. Narayan has presented an image of Indian woman in new natural way.



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