



R.K. Narayan's The Guide and Indian Women

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Abstract

There is a wide range of experiences and difficulties that Indian women confront, and they are reflected in the characters. Narayan's portrayal of Indian women transcends clichés by showing them to be complicated human beings with unique wants and needs. He investigates how cultural norms, familial expectations, and social forces shape women's lives and restrict their freedom of choice. Narayan recognizes, however, that they are strong and capable of overcoming these restrictions. An additional topic explored in *The Guide* is the effect of sexuality on Indian women. Rosie's character is both admired and condemned by the community as she questions established moral norms and tests the limits of her own sexual autonomy. The novel's greater topic of women's liberty and self-expression is bolstered by its examination of female sexuality and its consequences.

Key words: - Indian women, Marriage, dependent, dominant

Introduction

R. K. Narayan has a place of prominence all by himself in the world of Indo-English literature. On many levels, he is in a league of his own and cannot be compared to anybody else. He avoids dramatic circumstances in favour of the mundane humour that is characteristic of the lives of individuals who belong to the middle class in South India. Even from the outside, he seems to be nothing more than an ordinary person who might be any one of the millions of educated men living in South India. Even from the inside, he looks to be nothing more than an ordinary guy. And yet, in spite of the fact that he had nothing about him that was especially noteworthy, this humble person pushed his way up to become one of the best, if not the greatest Indo-English novelist of all time. Even though he is famous and travels the globe, he still finds time to create books about the lives of the simple, unpolished people that inhabit Malgudi, the hamlet that serves as his fantasy. These novels are set in the village that serves as his inspiration. The book that he wrote, "The Guide," was turned into a successful film. If his wit and humour are what gained him a permanent spot in the galaxy of Indo-English writers, then the Dickensian variety of humorous characters he has developed has only helped to expand his popularity. In other words, his appeal has been increased by his wit and humour.

It is crucial because Rosie travels to Malgudi through the railways, which injects a dash of modernity into the culture of Malgudi, which is otherwise traditional and unchanging. Her name, which has been westernised, comes from odd roots, which is another indicator of the social hybridity she has. Raju use to wonder –

“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. (Narayan,9)”

her unique style of life is not confined to only her pseudonym in any manner, shape, or form. Her ancestors have a long history of working in temples, namely in dance-related professions known as



Devdasis, and she herself hails from that tradition of performers. These ladies are considered to be of a lower social level by the majority of people in society. In spite of this, she goes on to get a degree that is not only unconventional but also on the verge of becoming revolutionary; this degree is a Master of Arts in Economics. In point of fact, Rosie reads historical literature on dance, such as Bharat Muni's *Natya Shastra*, and she even pays a pundit to decipher the old Sanskrit lines for her. This is all in an effort to improve her dancing. She finds further motivation and ideas for her artwork in the ancient Indian epics *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. As a consequence of this, we have arrived at the realisation that Rosie is not only knowledgeable in a variety of academic topics but also has the capability to combine her education with her creative practise, much like a person who has received an appropriate level of education would do. She eventually weds a person who has an extensive education and seems to have an open mind. To tell you the truth, his major objective is to build a name for himself as a man who is forward-thinking and accepting of other viewpoints. Even though she professes her desire to pursue a profession in dance on several occasions, he never gives Rosie any credit for her dancing ability and completely ignores her great desire to do so. Rosie, like any other real artist, regards dancing not only as her passion but also as her calling; it is her way of interacting with God. Rosie perceives dance in this way because it is her vocation. The criticism that Marco levels at her paintings is something that she will never be able to take calmly in her stride.

As a direct consequence of this, Rosie arrives to the realisation that she does not choose to continue being married to her official husband and instead starts living with an additional man called Raju. Even in today's India, relationships of this kind are not encouraged in a big way; nonetheless, in 1958, Rosie, or maybe it is more appropriate to say that Narayan, had the courage to seek such a partnership. It is a country of the *Sita-Savitris*, which are the mythology that Narayan has used in this storey as well. In this culture, virtuous wives are expected to overlook any and all transgressions committed by their husbands, and they must also do an *agnipariksha* to prove that they are spiritually and physically clean. Rosie, on the other hand, presents an alternative course of action.

The most notable aspect of Rosie's character is undoubtedly the passion with which she approaches the dance art form. After she has become a Devdasi, she will get training on how to use it in a professional setting. However, it is clear that there is something for Rosie that is far more important to her than any potential for financial gain associated with dance. In the earlier phases, it is her plan for achieving a state of sanctity on a spiritual level, and in the later stages, it is her approach for gaining an independent identity for herself. Cobra is the moniker that is given to the dancer Rosie, which is also the name of a kind of snake. The following is the storey that Raju delivers during the time when Rosie is seeing the dancing king cobra:

“The whole thing repelled me, but it seemed to fascinate the girl. She watched it swaying with the rapt 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... (Narayan, 68)”

when Rosie has already established a reputation for herself as a dancer, she performs a performance called the snake dance, which is her most spectacular routine and the one that she believes to be her masterpiece. In addition, there is a second interpretation of the snake that pertains to dancers in the nation of India. According to Hindu mythology, the naga also serves as a depiction of Shiva-Nataraja, also called the Cosmic Dancer. Rosie makes a vow to the god to protect her artwork, and she harbours



a secret desire to one day have a bronze statue of Nataraja, the god of dancers, in her home. Nataraja is the god whose primal dance is responsible for the vibrations that set the worlds in motion. Rosie's commitment to the god is a part of her fantasy. Rosie does her snake dance to the rhythm of an ancient hymn that calls and worships Shiva. Shiva is represented by the mythical Snake that Rosie conjures up via the movement of her undulating motions throughout her dance. The mythical snake that is claimed to reside in Shiva's hair, as well as on the wrist of Parvati, Shiva's wife, and in the ever-radiant residence of the gods, which is situated in Kailash. It is also stated that the serpent wraps itself around Parvati's wrist. This is a song that celebrates the snake and draws attention to the mysterious side of it. It is a song that elevates the cobra from its position as a reptile native to the underworld and turns it into a graceful creature that serves as an ornament for the gods. Rosie, like the cobra, is a member of a subculture or other social group that is stigmatised; nonetheless, she is able to get closer to the gods via her dancing, which she views as the most authentic form of devotion. In this manner, "the mystical representation of the cobra that is associated with Shiva, which is the snake, is tied to Rosie herself. Even Raju is forced to admit it: I could say with all candour that as I saw her perform, my mind was free, for once, from any sexual conceptions that had been previously implanted there. She was nothing more than a whole and total abstraction to me. (Narayan,125)

Rosie, who is also known by her stage name Nalini, becomes a Bharat Natyam dancer of international acclaim in a very short period of time. Rosie's accomplishment of becoming a genuinely appreciated and recognised BharatNatyam dancer, of successfully pursuing her craft, and of transforming herself into a woman who has found her own way in the world is a revolution in and of itself. This accomplishment of Rosie's is a revolution in and of itself since she lives in a nation in which women are still subjected to harassment and questioning at their places of employment just because they are women.

In spite of all that has taken place, she maintains a core component of her character that is traditional. To begin, she does not have genuine respect for her own Devdasi clan, and she always maintains a controlled demeanour regardless of what is said about them in public, despite the fact that we are supposed to be public women. We are not regarded in a respectable manner, nor are people of the opinion that we are culturally savvy. As a woman with a large degree of education, she should have made an effort to enhance the reputation of her family in the community or educate others about the discriminating practises of the Devdasis (Narayan, 84). Alternatively, she may have taught others about the practises of the Devdasis. In point of fact, Gayatri Chakroborty Spivac has accused Narayan of making Rosie the protagonist of a romantic tragicomedy rather than illuminating the negative aspects of the Devdasi system through the circumstances of her life. This accusation was made in reference to the novel *Devdasi*, which Narayan wrote. (3) Rosie has had to carry the burden of her failed marriage with her throughout her whole life. This is the third time it has happened. To begin, it would seem that Rosie has some extremely antiquated beliefs about the nature of the bond that exists between a husband and wife as well as the position that women occupy in society. This is particularly the case when it comes to the role that women play in society. She never ceases to express her gratitude to Marco for marrying her regardless of who she was or where she was from, and she does it very often. She repeated many times that in the end, in the end, he is my husband. (Narayan, 201) And it is far more desirable for one to end their life on the front porch of their own home. In addition to this, she feels an ongoing sense of guilt for betraying his trust, as shown by the fact that she said, I realised I had done a huge sin, as can be observed in the previous sentence. (Narayan, 150) Even after many years, when she becomes



a household name with her own identity, the book that her uncaring and disrespectful husband wrote will always retain a special place in her heart, and she will carry it with her for the rest of her life. This will be the case even if she becomes a household name with her own identity. She is well aware that her partner is unable to appreciate either her profession or her femininity, yet she continues to be married to him nevertheless. Even with regard to her relationship with Marco, who is both domineering and harsh, she maintains an attitude that is subservient and obedient to him. In addition, the fact that she changed her name from Rosie to Nalini is an indication that she tried to fit in with the same conventional society that she eventually doubts and leaves from. Originally, her name was Nalini. The name Nalini is derived from the Sanskrit word for the lotus, which is the seat of the goddess Lakshmi. In Hindu mythology, it is said that Brahma achieves a state of profound concentration by lying down on a bed composed of lotus petals while doing his rituals. As a consequence of this, her name, which has been westernised to be Rosie, functions as a symbol of her situation of social marginalisation. However, Rosie is making an effort to symbolically achieve acceptance into the traditional community that has rejected her by changing her name to Nalini.

it is abundantly evident that Rosie is split between her dedication to dance, on the one hand, and the cultural expectations and values that are imposed upon her by the culture that she is surrounded by, on the other. Even Rosie has the potential to be regarded a direct result of the false patriarchal behaviour shown by Narayan. As I have said before, in order to know Rosie and the reasons behind her hesitation, one must take into account the many different difficulties that are related to her. This is necessary in order to understand Rosie. To begin, it is vital to bear in mind that she is only one of several key female characters that show up in Narayan. This is something that has to be kept in mind at all times. Therefore, in order for us to correctly realise the scenario that Rosie is in, we need to place her inside the collection of women that Narayan has constructed. Only then will we be able to fully understand the predicament that Rosie is in. In the book *The Dark Room*, which was published in 1938, the main character, Savitri, is a middle-class housewife who conforms her behaviour to the dictates of patriarchy. (4) In the movie *Mr. Sampanth* from 1949, Shanti, a widowed actress and dancer, becomes the mistress of Sampanth, who wants to bring her recognition by casting her in a film. Shanti's signature was her purse made of cobra-hood complete with the spectacle-like mark. Sampanth's plan calls for her to star in a movie so that she may get popularity. (5) In many ways, including the mechanics of the storey, it seems that Shanti serves as a forerunner to the much more completely developed figure of Rosie. In contrast to Savitri, who is unable to establish herself in *The Dark Room* despite being abandoned by her husband, Rosie is able to establish herself in spite of the fact that she is able to support herself via her painting. The same thing happened with Shanti and Mr. Sampanth. Rosie is a symbol of the more independent women of that nation in an India that is slowly altering as a consequence of the influence of the west, and this transformation can be seen in India. Because of this, we are in a position to appreciate the responsibilities that were put on Narayan's shoulders, and we are able to fully observe his development as a writer and social reformer via the exploits of his heroines.

The past of Rosie is another aspect of her existence that is vital and important to the course of her life and the choices she makes. The memory of her time spent as a Devdasi in her youth continues to torment her, and it has a considerable effect on how she chooses to spend the rest of her life. She eventually weds Marco, and despite all of his faults, she continues to be grateful to him because he frees her from the shame of being from a devdasi family. This is due to the fact that he removed the stigma. Rosie's desire to serve food to her husband and Raju at the peak house during their happier days and to be the



last to eat like a good housewife can easily be understood as her delight in having a regular home-life, an experience that is common enough for many women but one that is typically denied to the Devdasis. Rosie's desire to serve food to her husband and Raju at the peak house during their happier days and to be the last to eat like a good housewife. It is understandable that Rosie would want to be the last person to eat at the top home when things are going well for her family and that she would prefer to serve meals to her husband and Raju. The gratitude she feels toward Marco for marrying her in spite of her past is the only thing that will prevent her from getting over the fact that she was married off to an imbecile like Marco. This is the only thing that will prevent her from getting over the fact that she was married off. In his autobiography, *My Days*, Narayan makes a passing reference to the fact that Rosie's difficult personality and self-contradictory judgements are the result of her unique social upbringing at one point. This is something that Narayan has a strong conviction in being the case. (6) In this context, Krishna Sen makes the observation that Rosie's extraordinary combination of uncommon independence and creativity with profound conservatism and veneration for tradition could not have existed under any other circumstances other than as a temple dancer who has gained an entry into conventional social life. (Sen,60)

we need to bear in mind the cultural hegemony that is present in all patriarchal societies, especially with regard to Indian culture. The Marxist doctrine that gave birth to the concept of cultural hegemony was later popularised by the Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci. It refers to the ruling class of a culturally diverse society having dominance over that society. The ruling class will manipulate the culture of that society (the beliefs, perceptions, and values) in order for their ruling class to view looks like the universally valid dominant ideology that justifies the social, political, and economic status quo as natural and perpetual for everyone. Rather than being seen as artificial social constructs, the ruling class will view their ideology as the dominant ideology that justifies the social, political, and economic status quo. Gram (8) The identity of a child in India in the contemporary era is determined immediately after birth by a variety of characteristics, including their gender, religious affiliation, and social caste, amongst others. No matter how old the child gets, her main identity will continue to be that of a female if she is a girl. This will be the case no matter what. This state of affairs will continue to be true for the rest of her life. Since she was a little child, she has been schooled in all of the social mores and conventions that are required of her by society". This education has included teaching her how to behave in a manner that is fitting for a woman. In the same way that a colonised person under colonial rule, who after a certain period of time starts believing in his or her inferior position, the majority of girls in any patriarchal system becomes so immersed in their submissive roles that they think it is right, inevitable, beneficial, and justified for women. This is similar to how a colonised person under colonial rule starts believing in his or her inferior position after a certain period of time. This is comparable to the way in which a colonised individual living under colonial control eventually comes to believe that they are in a lower social position after a given amount of time has passed. In point of fact, women are the ones who impose such limitations on other women with more harshness than men do in modern-day India. This is the case even though men are the ones who live in India. Rosie is no exception. In spite of the fact that she has a great deal of information, an attitude that is forthright, a love for her profession, and an independent personality, she is unable to escape the constraints imposed on her by this patriarchal control.

Rosie presents herself to the audience in the conclusion as an extremely brave person. She has the ability to break out from the clutches of males who are both indifferent and predatory toward her. She refuses



to conform to the unfair standards of society, which, together with her employment, are an effort to enslave her. Her profession allows her to cultivate her own unique identity, which is the single most significant aspect of her life. As a consequence of this, she may be seen as the forerunner of the self-assured, hard-working Indian women of today who are also respectful of the traditions of their culture and appreciative of their heritage. They are able to successfully juggle the obligations associated with their career and those of their family. They do what is expected of them, but they are not hesitant to break with tradition and set whole new benchmarks if the custom seems to be impeding their own development in any manner. Rosie is a pioneer in each and every sense of the word when it comes to the Indian women of this new century.

it is possible to say that Narayan's compassion for women is a novelist's apolitical views on the plight of women in general and, more specifically, the traditional Hindu women, who are fettered to custom and cultural conventions. This is something that can be said because it is possible to say that Narayan's compassion for women is apolitical. Even though R. K. Narayan was born into a fairly conventional Brahmin family, he never shied away from illustrating the challenges that afflicted women both inside and outside of the confines of the family. He did this both in his novels and in his short stories. The author of the book examines the position of women in society during that specific era of history, specifically the pre-Independence era and the post-Independence period, in a manner that is extremely factual and in a style that can be described as as is, where is. The time period in question is the period of time before and after the United States declared its independence. In hindsight, a literary analysis of the primary novels written by R. K. Narayan through the lens of a feministic viewpoint would present a kaleidoscopic image of the predicament of the Indian woman as well as the growth of the notion of the Indian woman through the progression of time.

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