

THE MAJOR ROLE OF MINOR BOYS IN R.K.NARAYAN'S NOVEL THE 'GUIDE'

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Abstract:

R.K. Narayan is one among the trio of Indian novel in English. He was honored by the Sahitya Academy award, the prestigious one for literature in India. The novel 'the guide' was published in 1958. After failures, and half success, the Guide was the successful novel for him. Malgudi, in the novel, is a created semi urban town in South Indian region by R.K. Narayan. He generalizes through his characters that bad, or evil actions yield evil fruits and good actions the good fruits. Narayan's language in this novel is direct, clear as crystal and concise. His vocabulary is ordinary, day to day, and simple and semi urban and middle class. The protagonist of the novel is Raju, popularly known as 'Railway Raju.' This novel covers the story of Raju's life from birth to death. The chief characters of the novel are Raju, Rosie and Marco, and Velan. Raju begins his career as a stall-keeper at the railway station in Malgudi. Later he becomes a tourist guide. One day a couple, Rosie and Marco, comes to Malgudi. Raju receives them and guides them. After some days, a sort of relation or intimacy is developed between raju and rosie. Due to this relation, her husband departs from her to madras. Then she becomes the mistress of raju. As she is fond of dance, Raju launches her as a dancer. In the course of time, he becomes greedy and forges her signature which costs him a two-year sentence. After coming out from the jail, he reaches Mangala where he becomes swami and performs a penance. In this novel, there are four other boy characters which influence his journey. One is the shepherd boy, at Malgudi, who complains against Raju. Another one is the porter's son who helps in shop keeping. The third one is the shepherd boy of Mangala who gives hope for food. The fourth one is the brother of velan who totally turns his life. Each one of these four boys play a remarkable role.

Keywords: Superstitions, Hierocracy, Tourists, Penance, the shepherd boy of Malgudi, the Porter's son, the shepherd boy of Mangala, Velan's brother.

Introduction:

K.R.Narayan was born in 1906 and died in 1992. In the words of K.R.Srinivasalyenger, he is one of the big three's of the Indian novel in English. He was

honored by the Sahitya Academy Award in 1960 for his work 'The Guide' which was published in 1958. He has written fifteen novels and about One hundred and fifty short stories. Though the earlier books were failure and half success, Narayan has reached in The Guide the full maturity of his powers."

Malgudi is the location for most of his novel. Malgudi is Narayan's brain child. He is compared to William Faulkner who also created, such fictional town in his works. R.K. Narayan succeeded in making English graceful. His genius is remarkable for neutrality and objectivity.

R.K. Narayan's view point is realistic. He executes irony to criticise satirically the hypocrisy and superstitious beliefs of the middle class. His subject ranges between heaven and earth, explores morale and comprises utmost important events in the lives of people. Being a detached observer, he detests even the minute things in the life of his characters but sympathises them. He generalizes through his characters that bad, or evil actions yield evil fruits and good actions the good fruits. His fiction covers different aspects of life and significant experiences. He mocks at superstitious beliefs in traditions and conventions on one hand and emphasises importance of traditional values and conventions on the other hand.

As sociologists said, "Man is a social animal," Narayan analyses what does and does not make the man an animal. In the guide, he makes us realize the fact that man should not crave for illegal money. He records the people's every minute reactions as the behavior is the result of mutual reaction among or between people. In the novel, when there is a drought and famine, their reaction is typically Indian.

The celebrated novel of R.K. Narayan, the Guide is an autobiography of Raju. The protagonist of the novel is Raju, who is popularly known as 'Railway Raju'. The setting of the novel is at the fictional town Malgudi which was set in the south Indian region. There are universal themes and Indian images in this novel which acknowledged him universally. The title of the novel, The Guide is justified by depicting the career of the protagonist, Raju from railway guide to tourist guide, to a dancer's guide, to a prisoners' guide and to a spiritual guide.

This novel covers the life story of Raju from birth to death. Narayan planned this novel into eleven chapters. The novel ranges to 247 pages. As usual the first chapter is introductory and descriptive in nature. The second chapter recollects the past how the railway track is built at Malgudi, what makes him go to Pyol School and then to the board high school. In the last chapter, fifteen pages are devoted to describe twelve days penance to bring rain down. Narayan's language in this novel is direct, clear as crystal and concise. His vocabulary is ordinary, day to day, simple and semi urban and middle class. When Velan said, "I have a problem sir," Raju told, "So has every one" (page 15).

This novel, the guide, be classified among the classics of all time literature. Actually, the story begins at the ancient deserted temple near the river Sarayu in the village called Mangala. There Raju, the protagonist, be mistaken as a saint by the innocent but

faithful villager named Velan. The story depicts Raju as a tourist guide at first, financial guide at middle and the spiritual guide at the end of his life. Narayan structures the financial up and down falls in the life of the guide Raju like tidal waves.

Narayan leaves Raju, like a common human being, to the freedom of childhood, lets him experiences the youthful love, and allows him to teach philosophy. Thus, he presents the Hindu idealistic orderly life by transforming Raju from egotist to humble.

Major Characters of The Novel:

The chief characters of the novel are Raju, Rosie and Marco, and Velan. Raju begins his career as a stall-keeper at the railway station in Malgudi. Apart from his father's business, he starts to sell magazines and journals to the passengers and old books to the students. In his leisure time, by going through the journals, magazines, and books, he acquires sound knowledge. Out of curiosity he acquires knowledge regarding the geographical area around Malgudi. So, he becomes resourceful. Having a resourceful, helpful, and cheerful nature, in the beginning, he helps the Visitors who come to Malgudi. Visitors enquire for Raju as he provides the information regarding Malgudi and its scenes, and sights. When visitors enquire him of the distances and historical spots there, he never says that he does not know. His fame spreads and tourists who came to Malgudi enquire for him. There is a notion among the visitors. They say to new visitors that if they can get a chance to be guided by Raju, they will know all the details and will visit all the places there (page 9). Thus, he is called, 'Railway Raju'. Soon he becomes himself as a full-fledged tourist guide. But later he feels that it is a fate (page 10).

One day a couple, Rosie and Marco, comes to Malgudi. Raju receives them and guides them. Marco is a researcher studying paintings on frescos near Malgudi. They stay in hotel and Gaffur, the taxi driver uses to drive Marco from hotel to caves. Rosie seeks the assistance of Raju for visiting cobra, attending acrobatics and for dancing. He becomes the guide to Rosie.

Raju told himself "my troubles would not have started but for Rosie"(page 9). This task of guiding Rosie turns and influences his life greatly. After some days, a sort of relation or intimacy is developed between Raju and Rosie. Rosie later discloses the fact to Marco, her husband. Due to this disclosure, her husband departs from her to Madras. Rosie comes to Raju and she starts to perform dance. While she performs dances he manages accounts. Thus, he becomes financial guide to Rosie. He launches Rosie as a dancer. By organising dance programmes, they use to earn money. Being greedy Raju forges the signature of Rosie. Later, he is arrested on the account of economic crime. The complaint is made by Marco Polo. Rosie is first stunned. Then she decides to go back to Madras. Raju finally lands in jail for forgery. Thus, Raju goes to jail and spends two years in jail. Like a withered leaf that drifts away with the wind, Raju is led astray by the series of self-deceptions.

R. K. Narayan's depiction of a variety of female characters that differ among themselves in their thoughts, beliefs, habits, and conduct proves there is the conflict

between tradition and modernity in novel "The Guide." There are three female characters in the novel the Guide, and they are Rosie, Raju's mother and sister of Velan who play prominent role in the novel. Rosie is the main female character in the novel. Rosie is fond of dance but her husband denies her artistic skill by calling as the street acrobatics. Being neglected by husband, she falls in the trap of Raju. Later their relation is disclosed to Marco when Rosie confesses her extra-marital affair with Raju. Then Marco breaks up with Rosie and leaves for Madras.

She may be mistaken as the English by name, but she is purely Indian. Her devotion to the traditional Indian classical dance proves it. Raju's mother thinks that she is modern, but she holds traditional values.

When Raju's forgery is revealed, Rosie breaks up the relationship with Raju. Rosie is totally upset with his fraudulent acts, and forgeries.

After Raju is sentenced, she manages her performances independently to earn money to pay for the lawyer's fee. Later she leaves Malgudi and goes to Madras.

After coming out of jail, Raju reaches an old temple by the Sarayu River, near a village Mangala. A villager called Velan sees him first, and becomes a devotee of him. Soon devotees flock to him with their gifts and offerings. Villagers usually believe in Sadhus. They worship such people as Gurus or Mahatmas. The men of fraudulent and cheating natures can easily deceive those innocent villagers. In the novel The Guide, Raju is able to deceive them easily. They worship him, heap food, and other offerings to him contemplating as a saint. To survive, he tries to act as a true swami. He grows his beard up to his chest. To do meditation he holds a chain of prayer beads. His eyes shine with softness and compassion. The light of wisdom emanates from them (page 79). Raju ceremoniously places the basket of edibles at the feet of the image (page 19).

After sometimes, there is a famine in the village. During the famine, there is a fight between two groups though people are dying of starvation. Velan's brother informs that Raju won't eat anything until it is clear. People believe that Raju does penance for rains. They believe that he is a true saint and rescuer. Raju is expected to do the penance how he narrated earlier. The performer of the penance, doing fast, has to stand in knee-deep water. Then looking at sky, he has to utter the prayer line for two weeks. Being touched by the love, and hope of the people, he decides to sacrifice his life to a noble cause. Now Raju has to fast accidentally for 12 days in order to bring rains. On the last day of penance, Raju opened his eyes, looked about, and said, 'Velan, it's raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my legs.' He sagged down (Narayan 247).

The Minor Boy Characters and Their Role in The Novel The Guide

The boys of a young age is considered as minor. Among them are Raju the boy, cow shepherd of Malgudi, the Porter's son, another shepherd from Mangala, and the brother of velan. These four boys turn the life of Raju. By their roles, Raju is drifted away like a withered leaf by the wind. In his childhood, Raju played under the tamarind tree on a mound near his house. The construction of railway track was commenced. Because of the works of railway track, he lost his freedom to play under the tree.

R.K.Narayan depicts a common Indian boy who plays solo games and feels discomfort when interrupted by any situation. Raju spent all his time in the company of those working on the track listening to their talk and sharing their jokes (page 24). He picked up the new vocabulary from those workers which are not spoken in his house but of the workers.

One fine day a boy came near the mound grazing, his cows. There Raju plays solo games. "The boy had dared to step on the slope where I played", said Raju (page 25). It clears how possessive the children are for the things, and places they play. He began to have a sense of ownership of the railway (page 25). He frowned at and ordered the shepherd boy to get out from that place. That rude behaviour of Raju produced an unexpectedly violent effect on his father when the boy complained against Raju. This shepherd boy killed the childhood freedom of Raju. His complaint made Raju to go to Pyl School. Father of Raju said, "You will not be idle about picking up bad words any more" (page 26). Then his father admitted him in Pyl school. Thus, the shepherd boy turned the journey from playground to a Pyl school. If he hadn't complained against him, Raju wouldn't have lost his childhood freedom.

Another boy is Porter's son. He is both advantage and disadvantage to Raju. Throughout the role, he is helpful to Raju but not faithful to him it seems. When visitors came to Malgudi, Raju helped them to give resourceful information. Visitors from four corners of the country started to enquire for Raju. He became popular as railway Raju. First he acted as a seasoned guide. After some time he became part-time guide and part-time shop keeper. Finally, he became Full time guide. When he became full time guide, the Porter's son used to keep the shop in his absence.

Raju slowly neglected the shop which was his main source of income. He could not spare his time for accounts but for Rosie. The son of Porter tried his hand to guide some other visitors whom Raju couldn't attend. He thought that the boy was acting as a successor in his jobs one by one. The Porter's son asked Raju whether he might act as a guide in his absence. Then Raju questioned who would look after the shop. Then boy told that he had a cousin who could watch the shop. Everybody wish to develop in the life. So the Porter's son also wished to grow in his possible professional works in which he can survive. Here the boy worked for less pay. As the boy took the charge of the shop, Raju could assist Rosie leaving all the day-to-day responsibilities. He began to avoid the railway station. He did let the Porter's son meet the tourists. The boy had already attempted his hand at it before (page 144). Having no proper maintenance of the shop and prosperity in his

business, Raju was issued a notice demanding him to vacate the shop and to hand over it to the new contractor. Then he thought that this was resulted in as the boy misused the stock and recorded fraud details in accounts book. Then he got angry with the boy and slapped him on the cheek. Then the boy cried. Seeing his son crying, the porter came down on Raju and said, "This is what he gets for helping you!"(page 161). The porter said that it was not the boy who had ruined Raju but the saithan inside him which made him to talk like that. The porter meant that Rosie was saithan. If the boy had not taken the charge of the shop, he would not have left the shop and guided Rosie.

Another minor boy character is the shepherd boy of Mangala. When Raju reached the old temple near river Sarayu in Mangala, a villager mistook him as a saint. Then Raju said to the villager, "I am here because I have nowhere else to go"(Page 9). Raju went away from malgudi so that nobody would recognise him. He tried at least to say, "I am not as great as you imagine" (page 9). But he couldn't say. The situations forced him to act as a saint.

Though there was enough raining in the first half of the year, there was no raining at the end of the year. At the time of famine, people did not visit the swami. All the villagers were busy with their fighting. Velan told a boy to enquire whether swami was at the temple. Raju saw a boy grazing, his sheep on the opposite bank (page 36). As there was no alternative for him to survive, he called the boy so that he might communicate his presence to the villagers. Raju said to the shepherd boy he was the new priest of this temple. Raju offered a plantain to the boy. Then the boy accepted the offer and took the plantain. Velan sent the boy to the temple to confirm the presence of swami at temple. This banana was also important because it worked out. The appearance of the boy at the temple was a great relief for his grief as Raju was waiting for food and fruits. If he hadn't come to the temple, Raju wouldn't have got relief.

Another minor character is Velan's brother. He is about twenty-one years old boy (page 101). In famine, the village shop man hiked the price of grocery which led to the fight between the customers and shop man. The quarrel between two people became the big fight between two groups in the village. When the shopkeeper attacked on the customer, the relatives of the customer came and involved in the issue. Then the relatives of customer also came and involved in the fight. Velan and his men also picked up axes and knives, and start out for the battle (page 99). Velan's brother came to swami and informed that Velan was wounded. Then Raju felt pity for Velan's condition. Raju suggested to velan's brother, "Tell your brother to apply turmeric to his wounds. It is no good; nobody should fight (page 100 and 102). He told the brother of velan thathe would not eat unless they are good. Then the boy went away. In the village, the elders were discussing rain, the fight in night and all the issues connected to it. The boy came and said to them, "the swami, the swami, doesn't want food any more. Don't take any food to him(page 104)." Then Velan and others visited swami respectfully. Velan revealed what people expected him to perform to bring rain down, and how to perform the penance for

twelve days. Raju surprised when he realised that his words were misinterpreted by Velan's brother. But he accepted to do penance because he got spiritual transformation. If the boy had not misinterpreted his words, Raju wouldn't have performed the twelve-day penance.

Conclusion:

In the novel 'The Guide' R.K. Narayan depicted the life of Raju from childhood to the end of his life. The narration moves from past to present and vice versa. In this novel, R.K. Narayan used a first person narrative technique in the narration of past and third person narrative technique in the present narration. Like other children, Raju too enjoyed the life playing solo games under the tamarind tree until the shepherd boy's complaint against his rude words, and behaviour to his father. When the works of railway track were commenced, he picked up some abusive vocabulary from the workers. The novelist didn't intend to prove that the language of the workers is abusive but to theorise how the vocabulary and language be developed from the people in the society. The complaint given by the shepherd boy turned the story. Though it killed the childhood freedom of Raju, it led to take the progressive step in his education career. Raju grew up as a shopkeeper at the railway station. The porter's son helped him. As the son of porter took the charge of the shop, Raju could become the full time guide which led him to become the financial guide of Rosie. Raju left the shop in the hands of the boy. Now shop is unsuccessful with no prosperity. So, he had to hand over the shop to the new contractor. The presence of another shepherd boy from Mangala gave life to Raju when he was starving for food. The brother of Velan misinterpreted the words of Raju and connected them to the rain instead of fight. That misinterpretation led to perform penance for twelve days. Thus, the minor boys contributed a lot to the plot of the novel, The Guide.

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