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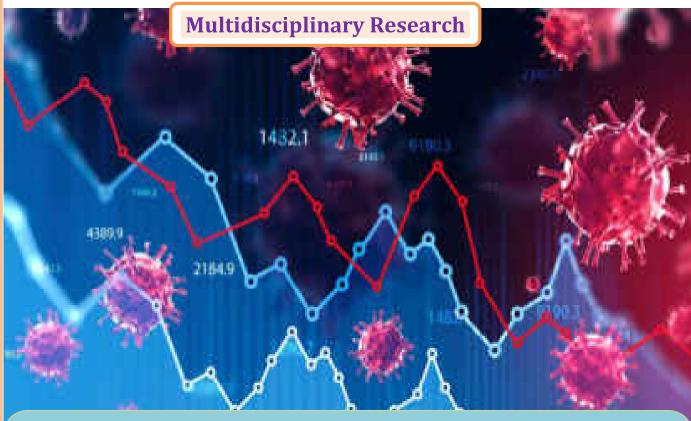
INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH FELLOWS ASSOCIATION'S

# RESEARCH JOURNEY

**International E-Research Journal** 

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December 2020 Special Issue 256 (C)



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Chief Editor: Dr. Dhanraj T. Dhangar

#### **Executive Editors:**

Dr. B. D. Rupnar, Dr. P. P. Pangrikar Mr. S.S. Nagare Mr. Ranjeet Pagore,



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# Releastic Approach in R. K. Narayan's Novel 'The Guide'

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#### Abstract:

The purpose of this paper is to give an introduction to R.K. Exposing the 'Realistic Approach' in R. K. Narayan's novel 'The Guide'. This was a much praised novel by Narayan. The guide is considered as many of his best work. He is very familiar with your realistic themes and concepts. His style is simple, realistic and poignant. R. K. Narayan always reveals reality in his themes so, readers who can relate them too. The story is quite simple. The present article examines realistic situations, characters, places and languages, involved in this novel by the author.

Keywords: Realistic, India, The Guide, religious Family Relations, Customs, Socio-Econo

#### **Introduction:**

The Guide (1958) shows its writer's use of the issue of illusion and reality in the portraits of the major characters in it. The novel focuses on the life-story of the protagonist Raju who is presented as a tourist guide. The present and the past life of the protagonist is story line of the novel. The major part of the story covers Raju's recollection of his past life up to Velan. This major part of the novel is covered in Chapter II, III, V, VII, VIII, IX, and X. The novel is set in the imaginary locale Malgudi which the novelist presents as the real place. Malgudi is the illusion of reality and the novelist tries to objectify it. The narrative of the novel describes the progress of the protagonist from illusion to reality. Raju's career graph from his boyhood through his maturity as a railway guide, his consequent show-business with appearance and role playing, his moral laxity in his affair with Rosie and his incarnation include the issue of illusion and reality.

The novel combines both the first and the third person narration. Present action is narrated by the third person narrator and the past action is narrated by Raju to rustic villagers who mistake him as a Yogi with divine power. The time scheme of the novel is confusing in the beginning and it is sometimes difficult to find the narrator or the addressee. The mixed narration is device as the third person narrator provides personal insights and background information which prepare the reader to accept the transformation and individuality of the character. Narayan is satirical while describing the events and the characters in the novel. His superb use of illusion and reality or real and unreal makes the novelist unique among other writers. In this case Yadav and Sinha say that the "combination of the real and the unreal separates him from other Indian novelists".

The novel describes three phases in Raju's life: His position as a tourist guide-'Railway Raju'-his adventure with the dancer Rosie and her husband Marco; and finally his life at the village, Mangala. He does not settle down with a family life. The remarkable and recurrent features in Raju's life are many; his gregarious nature and his love of public attention; the complex co-existence of the mundane and transcendent-'self deception and sincerity,' and finally his concern for the welfare of those whom he serves with his pretense and ambiguities.

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Raju begins as the son of an ordinary shopkeeper who must occasionally tend his father's shop. He is happy in this business and enjoys the position as a salesman in meeting a variety of people. He takes over another profession as a Railway Guide when the railways come to Malgudi. The place has also attained the status of urbanization. People do recognize Raju as Railway Raju; he tell of himself:

I came to be called Railway Raju. Perfect strangers, having heard of my name, began to ask for me when their train arrived at Malgudi railway station.

He has attained fame among the tourists who would say that they are lucky if they get Raju as guide. At first he starts as a part-time guide and full-time shopkeeper but later he becomes full-time guide and part-time shopkeeper:

In a few months I was a seasoned guide. I had viewed myself as an amateur guide and a professional shopman, but now gradually I began to think of myself as a part-time shopkeeper and a full-time tourist guide.

Raju's profession as the tourist guide and his childhood fall in the phase of reality. Narayan describes how in traditional society that Raju has grown up with certain response to that society:

I washed myself at the wall, smeared holy ash on my forehead, stood before the framed pictures of gods hanging high up on the wall, and recited all kinds of sacred verse in a loud, ringing tone.

The world of Raju at this stage is traditional and real. It is a world where even the daybreak is associated with a kinship between human life and the pure, untarnished natural world:

An eccentric cockerel in the neighbourhood announced the daybreak when probably it felt that we had slept long enough. It let out a shattering cry which made my father jump from his bed and wake me up.

The description of Raju's education makes the novel more realistic in handling the traditional atmosphere. Raju receives his education from his father on the *pyol* of his house; it seems an indigenous method of teaching and learning. Raju is reluctant to learn from his father and looks fervently for a break but his father sets him to task:

He wrote the first two letters on each side of my slate at a time. I had to go over the contours of the letters with my pencil endlessly until they became bloated and distorted beyond recognition. From time to time my father snatched the slate from my hand, looked at it, glared at me, and said, 'What a mess! You will never prosper in life if you disfigure the sacred letters of the alphabet'.

In this traditional but real world of Raju comes the railway which is symptomatic of emerging social as well as individual change. Raju's traditional world gives way to this modern world of engine. It is the world which brings along all the possibilities and illusion of life too. Railway stands for a means of transportation of the alien culture which brings with modernity, hybridity, element of change and other connotations of mobility. What is important here to note is that the later life of illusion of Raju has its source in this change. Mukhopadhyay observes that "the establishment of railway with its lures of mobility and change...evokes in Raju an instinctive negotiation of the transition from the old traditional reality of living to the emerging pattern of change in behavioral norms".

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We mark the change in Raju; the change is professional though. From the shopkeeper to the guide is the change. It is not the outward change only but it also brings the inner change in him. It is a change from reality to illusion. Raju himself tell us about change in him:

The growing spirit of urbanization and cosmopolitan growth enter into the traditional-ridden life of Malgudi with certain repercussions. This brings change in Raju. This change in him accounts for his quick-changing of roles and identity after he has stepped out of the traditional values. After Raju's retires from his profession the son takes over the business of the father and then the railway guide. Before he takes up the vocation of a guide, a note of dissatisfaction is traceable in him when he is busy with handling the railway stall:

Though my father thought very highly of our shop, I could not share his view. Selling bread and biscuits and accepting money in exchange seemed to me a tame occupation. I always felt that I was too good for the task.

After his father's sudden death, Raju with his mother's consent, winds up the hut-shop and whole-heartedly concentrates on the enrichment of the railway stall by developing new lines so as to vending of magazines and newspapers and school books. Interestingly, this business also breeds in Raju enlightenment:

Up to this point of the story, there is no complication in Raju's life. He changes his role from the shop-keeper to the tourist guide and then the story takes a new mode. He meets Rosie and everything about Raju is changed.

At the outset of the story we read Raju's retrospective analysis of his past life. He tell its casual implications to Velan that "My troubles would not have started (Raju said in the course of narrating his life-story to this man who was called Velan at a later stage) but for Rosie". Even before he meets Rosie, it is in Raju's nature that he takes other people's troubles on his own. The narrator tells in this regard that "It was in his nature to get involved in other people's interests and activities. 'Otherwise,' Raju often reflected, 'I should have grown up like a thousand other normal persons, without worries in life.'. Later Raju confesses to Velan that a major defect in his nature has been his lack of judgment and the lack of ordinary character in his own estimate. All these characteristics contribute to in making of Railway Raju.

The novel's chapter five opens with Raju's retrospective summing up of the new order in his identity: Railway Raju. The tourists enquire about the attractive spots in Malgudi to Raju who thinks that he has not given sufficient thought to the subject. But instead of revealing his ignorance of some spots mentioned by any tourist, he likes to hide it and just overcomes the matter:

I never said, 'I don't know.' Not in my nature, I suppose. If I had had the inclination to say, 'I don't know what you are talking about,' my life would have taken a different turn. Instead, I said, 'Oh, yes, a fascinating place. Haven't you seen it? You must find the time to visit it, otherwise your whole trip here would be waste.' I am sorry I said it, an utter piece of falsehood. It was not because I wanted to utter a falsehood, but only because I wanted to be pleasant.

This urge on the part of Raju is surely an offshoot of modernity and it moulds his career in his professional as well as personal orbit. The basic impulse in Raju is to play the role of a mentor, a guide to others so as to satisfy his instinct for self-esteem.



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The new world in which Raju enters as a guide is a world of quick money-making and in it, Raju believes, the prompt transaction of assignments and not in the observance of factual fidelity:

I gave statistics out of my head. I mentioned a relic as belonging to the twentieth century before Christ or the thirteenth century after Christ, according to the mood of the hour.

Raju thinks his country's culture as commodity to make profit on without any concern for values. He has made this new trade as his profession leaving his ancestral occupation. When his mother chides him for neglecting his shop, Raju defends his new vocation on the ground of cosmopolitan virtues. He tells his mother:

Do you know how well known I am? People come asking for me from Bombay, Madras, and other places, hundreds of miles away. They call me Railway Raju...It is something to become so famous, isn't it, instead of handing out matches and tobacco?

Raju slowly learns to take in his stride the whole space of Malgudi as a cultural commodity to be on sale for outsiders. We see this in his reminiscence:

Malgudi with its scenic and mythic aspects becomes in Raju's vision an elastic space for cultural multiplicity. Though he is out to ferret Malgudi's culture, he consciously favors severance with his own cultural roots in tradition. Raju neglects his own tradition and his mother's plan for his traditional marriage with a girl. This is indicative of his growing space in him to appropriate the new order of living ushered by modernity in the form of a guide.

Raju's new role of a guide tempts him to follow illusions in the form of his over-confidence, self-esteem, showmanship, excessive concern for others and his lack of ordinary character, thirst for money and power, distinction and affluence. His deliberate deviation from his culture breeds in him illusions. Mukhopadhyay's comment again is applicable here; he says that "Raju's intentional deviation from the standards of indigenous culture and tradition breeds a self-delusion in him". Raju follows illusions of modernity neglecting his traditional self and lacking his ordinary character. It results in the serious trial of self-deception in the form of his infatuation for Rosie, a married tourist girl who comes to Malgudi with her husband Marco. The novelist describes their meeting in a matter-of –fact mode yet the element of self-deception becomes prominent in the image of king cobra. It is subhuman creature which has a bewitching capacity of its terrible beauty.

The fact that the first sight of Rosie has bewitched Raju becomes symbolic when Rosie's innocent affinity for a king cobra endears hr to Raju without any plausible reason. Raju expresses his feeling:

It is interesting to note that initially there is no misgiving in Raju about his feelings for a married lady or their propriety; his optical impression of Rosie is an illusory being which turns out as a self-delusion: +

Raju's momentous impression of Rosie's instinctive response to the dance of a king cobra once again brings out the depth of his attraction for Rosie that casts a limiting effect on his power of judgment. He observes, "She stretched out her arm slightly 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". Raju has no knowledge of dance of any kind yet he poses like a connoisseur of the dance. He creates illusions of things

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around him. This arises from his infatuation to Rosie; it leads him to a self-deception. Raju's mother warns her son of the snake woman when she comes to know his affair with her but he neglects it:

> She said, 'They are probably from Burma, people who worship snakes...I had a cousin living in Burma once and he told me about the snake women there.'

> Don't talk nonsense, Mother. She is a good girl, not a snake-worshipper. She is a dancer, I think.'

> 'Oh, dancer! Maybe, but don't have anything to do with these dancing women. They are all a bad sort'.

Raju's closeness with Rosie is facilitated by his nature but more by the rift between husband and wife-between Marco and Rosie. Rosie is a lively wife and a promising dancer; on the other hand Marco is an uninteresting academician. Raju flatters Rosie and that flattery drags her to him and he cleverly capitalizes this situation. The description of Raju's trip to Peak House with the couple and their stay for the night to watch prowling games is strewn with flashes of Raju's romantic passion for Rosie and the charm she has begun to cast over him. His description to Velan later on accounts for his passion and desire for Rosie. A simple touch of Rosie at dinner table seems to enkindle Raju's passion:

> Oh, that touch made my head reel for a moment. I didn't see anything clearly. Everything disappeared into a sweet, dark haze, as under chloroform. My memory dwelt on the touch all through the dinner: I was not aware what we were eating or what they were saying...I was only conscious of her soft movements. My thoughts dwelt on her golden touch.

Raju's accompaniment to Marco and Rosie gives him an occasion to have knowledge of Rosie's loneliness and her devdasi origin which in turn he uses to be sympathetic to her neglected self and talent.

As a sympathizer Raju wins Rosie's confidence but it is at the cost of further ensnaring by self-deception or illusions. Marco's retirement to the Memphi caves for his study of sculptures for weeks leaves Rosie completely in charge of Raju. Similarly Rosie's decision to come back to Malgudi offers Raju more scope to pursue his goal. A whole day he spend with her making her happy with common pleasures that she did not get after her marriage with Marco. The day-long proximity with Rosie and her fascinating looks create carnal desire in Raju. In a fit of passion he leads Rosie to her hotel suit at about midnight:

> She opened the door, passed in, and hesitated, leaving the door half open. She stood looking at me for a moment, as on the first.

- 'Shall I go away?' I asked in whisper.
- 'Ye, Good night,' she said feebly.
- 'May I not come in?' I asked...

'No, no. Go away,' she said. But on an impulse I gentle pushed her out of the way, and stepped in and locked the door on the world.

Raju's love with Rosie is just illusion and it is not love in its normal meaning. It is debauchery, in the traditional sense, in the name of love. His affair with is satiety of lust and an instance of adultery. That Raju has fallen from the norms of traditional morality is contextualized in terms of his brief exchanges with his mother and Gaffur, the taxi driver. During his busy schedule for the day Raju comes home only to change, to wash and to arrange for another set of



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dress for the next day. Raju has no time for his mother's information and enquiries. When his mother senses some waywardness in him, she asks him questions. Raju has no courage to face her and has not answers to her questions:

'Becoming a dandy?' she said, surveying me. 'Why are you always on the run now?' I gave her some excuse and started out again.

Gaffur is another person to warn Raju of the latter's affair with Rosie. Raju tells, "Gaffur warned me when he got me alone for a moment outside the store, 'She is married woman, remember". But Raju is not in a position to act on Gaffur's advice. On the contrary Raju silences Gaffur by saying that "You are unhealthy-minded, Gaffur. She is like a sister to me,' I said, and tried to shut him up". The close friend Gaffur becomes disturbing presence in his outing with Rosie. He says, "I had dismissed the car at the cinema. I did not want Gaffur to watch my movements". This deliberate abnegation of the traditional code of behavior is a deviation from traditional culture. Now he is the guide of a single family once he was the railway guide. Raju is a role player and he uses it in this profession. He shows Rosie that he cares more of her dancing. He proves helpful even to Marco by doing work for him and arranging things for him.

Raju wins Marco's confidence by providing services and the later being the impractical scholar does not believe practical affairs of life. "Marco was just impractical, an absolutely helpless man," Raju tells and he adds "All practical affairs of life seemed impossible to him." Once Marco's confidence is won, Raju misappropriates his trust by furthering his affair with Rosie:

He never stinted any expense as long as a voucher was available...He paid me my daily rate and also let me look after my 'routine jobs.' My so-called routine jobs now sounded big, but actually reduced themselves to keeping Rosie company and amusing her.

Though such is the state, Raju cannot suppress his feeling of self-deception. He tells that "I was in as abnormal state of mind"

Rosie never shows in the story any quality of higher love that can inculcate a sublimating effect in the character of her lover. Raju's passion for Rosie dooms him to community indifference and above all a spiritual dryness. From this arises his moral degradation. Later in the narrative he confesses it to Velan:

This type of mental unrest in Raju shows reactions in conformity with the law of psychology in the form of a recompensative urge. This urge is noticed when he makes desperate efforts to make himself more and more attractive to Rosie by spending more for his dresses and her cosmetics.

The Westernized individualism, which comes with the railway, grips on Raju in the form of his passion for Rosie. There is steady rise in his expenses and he manages it from his father's saving. Raju recognizes Rosie as the only reality in his life but this is the illusion that springs from his infatuation to her. What is reality now seems to him "a dream"-his mother is a figure out of dream. He confesses that "to me she was a figure out of a dream, mumbling vague sounds". At this stage of the novel Raju shows his desire to escape from the state of affairs:

Sometimes I heartily wished that the man would descend from his heights, take her, and clear out of the place. That would at least end whole uncertain business once for all and help me to return to my platform duties.

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Raju's longing for the old way of life suggests his desire to return to the tradition. In other words, Raju is caught between the tradition and the modernity. But this will not last so long; the thought of Rosie dominates his nostalgia and he thinks of her dancing career.

#### **Conclusion:**

The Guide also shows its writer's use of the issue of illusion and reality in the portraits of the major characters in it. The novel focuses on the life-story of the protagonist Raju who is presented as a tourist guide. The present and the past life of the protagonist is story line of the novel. The major part of the story covers Raju's recollection of his past life up to Velan. The novel is set in the imaginary locale Malgudi which the novelist presents as the real place. Malgudi is the illusion of reality and the novelist tries to objectify it. The narrative of the novel describes the progress of the protagonist from illusion to reality. Raju's career graph from his boyhood through his maturity as a railway guide, his consequent show-business with appearance and role playing, his moral laxity in his affair with Rosie and his incarnation include the issue of illusion and reality.

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