

Inner Conflict of Modern Man: A Study of Raju the Protagonist in *The Guide*

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Abstract

Modernity has defined the widened horizon of scientific developments and new inventions. It has paved the way to resonate the facts behind every accidental event and consequently human being becomes slave to machine and devices of today. People are in a vicious circle to develop an authentic identity in relation with his or her state of life in the atrocities of the world.. Regarding struggles of today, there are many challenges and inner-struggles in the emerging world society namely: uncertainties, frustrations, distress, tensions, anxieties, anguish, fear, alienation, infidelity, misunderstanding and delusion. This presentation briefly introduces the inner struggle of the protagonist Raju and portrays the process of transformation of the self through the path of spiritual conversion.

Key words: *Tradition and Modernity, Inner-conflict, Infidelity and Self Deception, Spiritual Conversion.*

Introduction

R.K. Narayan is one of the prolific writers in the post-colonial English literature in India. Postcolonial writings aim at regaining patriotic feeling, reviving the ethnic cultures, traditions, beliefs, languages etc. R.K. Narayan tries to indentify the struggle of transition in the life of the people of India after the independence. As a postcolonial writer R.K. Narayan has extracted many events in *The Guide* from the emerging world society. It tells story of many people metaphorically the struggle of inculcating the value of a rich tradition and culture they lived. Raju the protagonist of the novel is an archetype of a modern man, who is impeccably affected by the modernity in the frame of an orthodox family. In this novel, R. K.

Narayan presents the story of Raju as a radical spiritual conversion of a modern man. Self abnegation becomes a means to ecstasy of spiritual peace, though the eventful carrier has remained for his self gratifications. Different situations have made him to transform the identity of a tour guide to a spiritual guide, which is not personally interested to be inculcated or adapted.

Struggle of Modernity

The post-colonial writing typically manifests about a period of transition in contrast to the plurality of culture and traditions. R.K. Narayan tries to unveil the mask of conservatism and modernism in presenting Raju with his attitude towards all the tourists that they are the representatives of the modern society. Narayan propagates the mission of a modern man to impart the modern trends without losing the identity of indigenous culture and traditions. The struggle to inculcate the identity of a modern woman, age and cultural engulf, attitude of Raju as a modern man towards mother and Rosie are divergent predicaments of modernity and traditions. The attitude of a traditional mother is a symbol of implication of the challenges of modern-mother. R.K. N's attempt is to expose the disparities of culture, attitude, customs and valuable traditions. The novel envisages the readers to dispose and accept the process of change of tradition with a critical mind. A change of attitude of a shop keeper in the personality of Raju, a change of internal disposition while serving people for monetary reward, a change of external manifestation of personality to deal with mother, wedded Rosie, and village people; and also presents inner struggle of human being in acting various roles in life. The whole characteristic features are the challenges of modern man to undergo. For example Raju is so particular to please the tourist as they wish, find out job suitably to be free, pretending to be a lover to a wedded woman, craving after money and committing forgery, traitor of lover, mask of decency etc... These are the practical struggles of a modern man in the global village.

Inner Conflict of a Modern Man

R .K. Narayan has dealt with many social problems regarding to inner conflict of modern man. A conflict between colonial and post colonial period, interactions and attitudes of traditional and modern man, concept of family and modern romanticism, paved the way to observe modernism as something abominable. The character of Raju is an ample evidence of inner struggles and disintegrated personalities of modern man. Inner conflict is a battle with in the self and the reason is inconsistency between the desire and experience. The change of Raju's attitude from a shop-keeper to a full-time tour guide is an exposition of his eccentric nature. Here experience contradicts desire that he wants to fly from the reality of life, which constrains him as a shop keeper and consequently the inner urge makes him to be a tourist-guide. This is typically his nature that he says "I should have grown up like a thousand other normal persons, without worries in life."⁽⁴⁾ As a tourist guide Raju is indignant in his service and profession. Here Narayan wants to conscientize that lack of commitment, selfishness, laziness are proximate impacts of modernity. Commitment and dedication are insidious projection of personal discipline which supposes to be the indissoluble values indelibly imprinted in human being. For example the protagonist is reluctant to show picnic-spots and frankly says "Don't imagine that I cared for elephants personally anything that interested my tourists, was also my interest. The question of my own preferences was secondary." (48) Raju's attraction towards a marriage woman Rosie is vulnerable and embarrassing which shows the limitedness of human being that one can't subside or overcome the struggle of gratification of the self. Dr Naik has raised a series of questions while highlighting the accidental events make progress in the life of Raju "it raises many disturbing questions about human motives and actions, compelling us to ponder problems such as appearance and reality, the man and the mask, end and the means". (16) Here R. K. N has introduced a trend contradicting the perennial value of the society about marital fidelity. Raju has committed a serious negligence to the values of truthfulness, justice and serenity of mind while allowing him to covet the wealth of Rosie. St John of the Cross in his writings *The Ascend of Mount*

Carmel he says “if a bird is tied up either with a small thread or a rope is equally imprisoned” (74).

Spiritual Asylum

In the novel *The Guide* R.K. Narayan demonstrates the unpredictable twist of life-events and destiny due to the situations and the complexity of everyday life. Raju has come across accidental changes which moulds him to a spiritual guide. The life of the protagonist has coupled with many changes and events- a man desirous of money, wealth, greedy, perverted, artificial in appearance, imprisoned for forgery, conversion in fortified wall, and rebirth of a new personality with spiritual motivation. Prof. S R Thakare in his article rightly says “In fact, Raju’s mistakes are those of men impelled by circumstances and are redeemed by his last act of martyrdom” (99). Therefore a change is solely depending on the one who observes and inculcates many elements such as social-situations, value-system, traditional-customs, religious-belief, ethnicity, education, behaviour-pattern and even accidental events etc... It is a dichotomy to the readers of the total life of Raju the protagonist. The guide tells the story of a modern man who has all the possibility of going astray, though the life is smooth with conduciveness and satisfaction. Therefore the fragile nature of man can’t identify or determine with a particular discipline and frame. Human being is beyond all expectation; and it will go to any extreme to find out its destiny and goal. Here a process of interiorizing is an important element in life and which transforms the being to the self actualization and satisfaction. Transformation in Raju is an inner journey of the self after the imprisonment in order to reach out the destiny of life which remains un-observed and un-identified. The accidental events makes him changed his entire personality. After the imprisonment he becomes a man of drastic change-his appearance, performance, attitude, behaviour and even the entire being is changed into a spiritual asylum.

Spiritual Conversion

R K Narayan unpredictably synchronizes the post-independent era as a time of revival and re-birth of Raju as spiritual guide. The post independent era is a time of revival of the country in all aspects and it has been in the process of developments to its destiny. Similarly as the protagonist might have undergone the dark night of the soul before conversion in the prison, the people of India have undergone a meticulous change and revival to discern their potential and destiny. India has a beautiful dawn to be prosperous and enthusiastic in new endeavour after the independence. India has also a spiritual heritage which can't be destroyed by the external forces or modernity. As the real man in Raju is appreciated by all the villages and follow the foot-steps, so the sublime richness of her spirituality is an attraction to all the people. R K N also presents the pre-requisites for spiritual enlightenment they are penance, fasting and detachment. Correlative terms like peace, non violence and non co-operations have been slogans of post colonial writers to build up the nation as a spiritual asylum for all the refugees.

Conclusion

The limited span of life has given to everybody not to be lazy, selfish, hard hearted, covetous, perverted and greedy but possibly to do something better. Better doing is not at all an isolated event of life but an impact of the potential productivity in each and every moment of life. The life of Raju leads all the readers to find out the smooth and destined ways and means to bless the people in fulfilling the entrusted obligation on the path of spiritual transformation.

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