Rosie: A Lady with two shades in

R. K. Narayan’s

‘The Guide’

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Abstract

‘The Guide’, an Indo-Anglican fiction, is a work of all times by R.K. Narayan, which holds boatload of themes in its cloak. Among them, there is a theme of conflict between conventional and unconventional. But the motive of my research paper is to study this theme in the light of the character of Rosie, whose life moves forward with mixture of traditional and modern gears from under cover dancer to a professional one. She rises from a typical Indian wife to a self-dependent woman who doesn’t even spare the man to whom she loved very truly but in return he stung her hard work. Her desires, dilemmas and decisions can happen only to an Indian woman. She may seem ahead of her time but certainly contemporary in 2017. This article is an attempt to show that in reality she is just like our diverse Indian culture which conceives both tradition and modernity.

Keywords: Conservative, Modernity, New Woman, Tradition, Karma, Snake.

R.K. Narayan, a renowned and prolific writer of India got the highest honor Sahitya Akademi Award of the nation for his magnum-opus „The Guide“. Narayan was a keen observer of human behavior and society. He mingled these conflicts in his novel. He is also placed in the category of „Regional Writers“ by many critics for dealing with the natural beauties of Malgudi. Narayan‟s this quality could be compared with some of internationally known major writers such as Thomas Hardy (depicting the region of Wessex County), William Wordsworth (the Lake District) and American novelist William Faulkner (Yoknapatawapha). These writers not only represented the nature of ecology but also nature of society. R.K. Narayan do the same with the help of Rosie‟s character in „The Guide.“

1958 novel „The Guide“ has introduced a new concept in a single character that is the mixture of conventional and unconventional hues. During those times, typical Indian woman was strictly confined within four walls of house, no matters whether she belonged to upper class or lowers one. But in Narayan‟s novel, we came across the „New Face‟ of Indian woman through the character of Rosie. She is partly tradition and partly modern. The tints of modernity always pushed her life forward but in the essence of tradition, she always pushed back a little. In her, we can see a woman trying desperately to free herself from the pigeonhole, at the same time allowing the doors of patriarchy to enclose her. In the diverse character of Rosie, Narayan has shown a woman
experiencing a conflict between a strong yearning for individual fulfillment and traditional norms. Narayan illustrates the Indian society which is deeply rooted in traditionalism, where women have been the major relentless victims of circumstances and conventions. In this text, Rosie character is entrapped in Indian conventional society but with her rebellious attitude she made her own path with full pride and dignity which represents a liberated woman of post-independence India.

Initially, Rosie”s name came into limelight with a flash of modernity. As „Rosie” is typical English name but actually being a woman, she is typical Indian. Her stage name „Nalini” means „Lotus”, a flower belongs to Goddess Lakshmi. Rosie came out from a clan of temple dancers i.e. Devdasi which was not reputed at all but this girl set a strong platform for this neglected clan by getting higher education in Economics and later on getting married to a reputed scholar Marco who was an archaeologist by profession which is a sign of modernity that she went against the gusts of wind of traditions. After her marriage, the most defiant act comes when she commit adultery, which constitutes a crucial stage in her life. It is very necessary to understand the nature of her marital relationship with Marco which enforces her to make extra marital relationship with Raju, her guide. Rosie chose to marry Marco to get status and respect of wife whereas Marco being a typical Indian male wanted a subservient faithful wife like a servant.

Here comes the question of tradition and modernity. Being a traditional Indian man, Marco found Rosie opposite to his expectations. So this conflict between tradition and modernity became the cause of disturbance in their relationship.

Basically, Rosie is not a character which flows from conventional to unconventional but sometimes she moved back and forth like a pendulum of the clock between these two ideologies. She left Marco just to pursue her passion of dance which shows her modernity but on reaching Raju”s house, she serves him in the absence of his mother like a typically Indian wife.

Externally, Rosie is a mixture of tradition and modern ways but internally, she is fully conservative. When she left Marco and stayed with Raju then too she was nostalgic about her husband and may be throughout her life. In the novel, she could not forget that she is a wife first which can be noticed during her conservation with Raju when she says, “After all, he is my husband. I have to respect him. I cannot leave him there.” (Narayan, 119)

Further she cries and says, “After all . . . After all . . . Is this right what I am doing? After all, he has been so good to me, given me comfort and freedom. What husband in the world would let his wife go and live in a hotel room by herself, a hundred miles away?” (Narayan, 120)

This conversation of Rosie with Raju proves that Rosie is purely an Indian housewife from his heart. This gives us a sign of traditionalism in Rosie”s character. Rosie”s craze for Indian classical dance takes her into the boundaries of orthodox society. When she first steps in Malgudi, she asks Raju about Cobra Dance as “Can you show me a cobra-a king cobra it must be-which can dance to the music of a flute?” (Narayan, 64) This kind of processions reminds us about rural and conservative recreation prevailed during those days in India and she was keenly in that to enjoy.
As Raju takes interest in Rosie, Marco leaves her. Marco again shows the attitude of a typical Indian husband. Rosie and Raju fall in love to each other. Raju appreciated her passion of dancing. When Rosie becomes an eminent dancer, Raju comes on the terms of exploiting her finances. In a sense, he uses Rosie for his income which she doesn’t like at all. Instead of Raju’s exploitation, she took a broad view of life. It looks that she believes in the proverb „as you sow so shall you reap.” Raju made money and ditched Rosie by forging her signature but she didn’t overreact as she had a keen interest in „Karma”-a typical Indian belief. She came out of the fetters of an indifferent husband whose imagination has fixed with „dead and decaying things” of archaeology despite „the things that lived and moved and swung their limbs” and an exploitative lover who all among was not „doing the right things.” This is the face of a new woman. She is able to surpass the temptations of money, power and pelf. Overall, she is a woman of strong and stable mind.

By throwing both Marco and Raju from her life, Rosie strongly defies the well-defined place of woman in the Indian society where a woman is never allowed to go on her own way, but is made to remain a puppet. An inner strength, until unseen and undiscovered by herself, leads her to soar so far out of Marco’s and even Raju’s reach that neither Raju nor Marco can control her. Raju at last comprehends her,

I knew I was growing jealous of her self-reliance. But I know that she would never stop dancing. She would not be able to stop. She would go from strength to strength. I knew, looking at the way she was going about her business that she would manage-whether I was inside the bars or outside, whether her husband approved it or not. Neither Marco nor I had any place in her life, which had its own sustaining vitality and which she herself had underestimated all along. (Narayan, 222-223)

The journey of Rosie from a dependent housewife to a self-made woman resembles her to an image of a snake. Even Raju’s mother called her „serpent girl” but here she resembles to a snake which generally sloughs off its old skin and is reborn. Same did Rosie with her identity. She moved through the rifts of tradition and modernity and get filtered as a true lady. Thus, Rosie is a best blend of conventional and unconventional-a lady with two shades.

Reference