

ENDING IN R.K NARAYAN'S NOVEL : THE GUIDE

DR. NIRMAL BOORA,
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH,
GOVT. P.G COLLEGE,
HISAR, HARYANA
EMAIL: NIRMALBOORAAUGUST20@GMAIL.COM

ABSTRACT

By making a detailed analysis of the different aspects of some of the major novels of RK Narayan in general and *The Guide* in particular, we can say with a certain amount of confidence and conviction that a clear and complete understanding of the novelists' design and his vision is solely and squarely dependant on the two conspicuous dimensions of his art: (a) The sociocultural, economic and spiritual milieu of MALGUDI which is to be seen and studied itself as HERO of almost all his novels, because it grows and develops from a vague and small village of MALGUDI.

(b) The second dimension is the deliberately designed and thematically integral OPEN ENDING in his novels where the various forces of the society of MALGUDI repeatedly keep on impinging on the character and career of the central characters, so as to transform them into the most vibrant and dynamic human beings, who in turn also influence the social matrix of MALGUDI, thus in its course this reciprocal interaction also addresses the various issues and problems raised by the novelist. It also leaves quite a few issues unaddressed and unresolved completely at the mercy of the critical acumen and taste of the readers themselves to be explored and interpreted the way they like.

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Narayan popularly known as RK Narayan, endowed with an excellent talent, is unquestionably one of the outstanding Indo Anglian novelists. He is well acquainted with Eastern and Western ideals and mode of life. He has written many novels and short stories. They are concerned with various themes and concepts which are of universal appeal. The major **themes** of his novels are **Hunger and Degradation, East-West encounter, Human Relationships, Love and Sex, Family Relationships, Abject conditions of the Down Trodden Indians, Individual Identity, Indianness, Realism and Idealism, Love and Hate Relationship** and other such themes depicting the Indian society in its true colours. He has achieved a worldwide distinction as a significant Indo English Novelist.

The present study is an attempt to explore the theme of **Ending in the novels of RK Narayan with the special reference to *The Guide***.

Primarily, our main concern is to study the types of endings in literature and particularly the ending in Narayan's novels. What type of ending we find in his novels and why the writer chooses different types of endings in his novels. The subject matter, the theme, circumstances presented in a novel and other all such aspects of a novel lead the writer to end his artistic creation in such a way that must be suitable to all the contents of his novel which also affect the ending of a novel.

RK Narayan is unusual among Indian authors writing in English in such a way that he has stayed contentedly in his own country, venturing abroad only rarely. He rarely addresses political issues or tries to explore the cutting edge of the fiction. He is

traditional teller of tales, a creator of realistic fiction which is often gentle, humorous and warm rather than hard-hitting or profound. Almost all of his writings are set in the fictional city of MALGUDI and are narrowly focused on the lives of relatively humble individuals, neither extremely poor nor very rich.

The Guide is one of his most interesting books, which begins as a comic look at the life of a rogue, but evolves into something quite different. In the first chapter of the novel Narayan chooses such an unusual way to introduce us to Raju, the protagonist. An 'Anna' is a very small coin. A maharaja is a traditional Indian prince. After the barber announces that Raju looks like a maharaja, the narrative takes an abrupt turn into the past. The incident of the villager who has come to consult with him in the next paragraph happened long ago. Narayan complicates the narrative flow by glancing forward to a time when he will tell this villager named Velan, his life story, which brings him Rosie, who will be introduced in the novel later. He then abruptly springs back into the distant past to briefly tell the story of his childhood and then returns to Velan and his problem.

RK Narayan's portrayal of the main female character, Rosie in the novel as a dancer, is really beautiful. Traditional Indian temple dancers were dedicated to dancing for Gods particularly Krishna. However they also traditionally supported themselves through prostitution and temple dancing was eventually suppressed. Modern classical dancers are often highly respectable women who practice the art out of devotion to dance rather than religion. In *The Guide* RK Narayan portrays both negative and positive images of such dancers. Narayan has depicted in the novel the central character's interests and dislikings. Raju does not like to study and is interested in something else and that is why he starts running a business at an early stage of his life. So the question what attracts Raju more than his lessons is also to be studied and its answer can be related to the ups and downs in Raju's life. The ending of the novel is based on the nature and thinking of the characters in the novel. Velan wants to treat Raju as a saint, in fact he is not a saint but posing as a saint and this leads him to fast as a saint and make people believe Raju as holy man. In first chapter another flashback returns us to his childhood for a few pages. Raju's childhood is again mentioned in second chapter. Recitation allowed is the traditional method of education. What kind of school he attends is shown here. In third chapter his childhood is reiterated again. Raju is exposed to fraud early in his life. What effect it had on him and the ending of the novel is also important to be studied. Next Raju's thoughts and behaviour during the negotiation with the school master are also described in the chapter. Raju's own exceedingly informal education provides background for the next scene where he teaches the children. What effects do the villagers belief in him have on Raju ? are some of the main issues in the novel which altogether affect the ending of the novel. Fifth chapter is related to Raju's youth and how he becomes a guide and what kind of guide he is ? What sort of technique does he use ? Narayan has introduced Rosie in a casual manner in the story. It is shown how Raju's passion for Rosie develops. The development is also related to the end of the novel.

The next chapter is about Raju's being affected by his life as a holy man. What are the main effects of drought in the novel. Raju got the idea of threatening a

fast in order to stop the fighting. How is his threat transformed ? When Velan says, “We derive merit from watching your face” , he is alluding to eh Hindu belief in the darshan according to which witnessing holy objects or person is a spiritual blessing. Velan’s description of the proper procedures for Raju to follow are those used by the real holy men on whose story this novel is based. Sadhu: Holy Man. Why does not Raju run away ? At the end of the chapter we learn how Raju came to be telling Velan the story which makes up the rest of this novel.

The ending of the novel *The Guide* is based on some main points like What is the effect of Rosie’s dancing on Raju ? What are Marco’s attitude towards his wife Rosie ? What is it that has happened to change Rosie’s behaviour towards Raju ? Raju’s mother’s reactions to Rosie and how they change, What was Marco’s reaction to Rosie’s desire to dance ? What does Rosie mean by saying, “I thought that Othello was kindlier to Desdemona.” What does Raju’s mother think of the solution in dealing with problematic husbands ? What conflicting feelings does Raju’s mother have towards Rosie ? Raju’s success with Rosie and his troubles as a holy man in the village ? How does Raju react to Rosie’s success ? Which of Raju’s personality traits are manifested in prison ? , What effect does his incarceration have on Rosie / Nalini ? , How is Raju changed by his fast ? --

All these points are related to the type of ending that RK Narayan has adopted for his novel *The Guide*.

RK Narayan has merged a pattern of synthesis of the varied characters in their interpersonal relationships and with their sociocultural milieu of MALGUDI, and tried to opt for an ending suitable to the novel and its story. The terms of a logically viable and thematically inherent ending of the novel in which the life, career, dreams and ambitions as well as trials and tribulations of Raju are graphically traced and finally subsumed in an intriguing but revealing conclusions with Raju as Mahatma is shown (after the fast collapsing) at the end to achieve a final surrender for the welfare of humanity.

Raju spent quite a long life in village but one summer there was total failure of rains and people came to him with sad long faces and poured their worries to him. There was drought and famine in the village, their crops were drying and cattle were dying to lack of fodder. Thus the whole scene changed again as it had adverse effect on Raju also. Now, Raju decided to observe a fast and starve until rained. Again a ray of hope appeared on the faces of the villagers but it also did not bear any fruit as the drought increased in severity and cattle began to die in large numbers. The news of the great fast that Raju had observed spread and a detailed account of it was published in the newspapers. As a result the small town of Manglacame in lightweight. People came from all parts of the country to have a glimpse of this saint and Raju’s life had become important for the nation and it was be saved at all costs. In fact, the locale itself encourages him, “ to self-sacrifice.....and rid himself of worldly desires.”

Finally, Raju stepped in the river with the help of Velan, looked up at the mountains, uttered his prayers and said, “Velanit is raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my legs.” He sagged down.

At this crucial moment the novel is closed elusively leaving number of things in suspense. Thus the novel has an intriguing ending whether died or remained alive ? Whether is was really raining or merely the hallucination of the fasting man ? What happened after this and other such questions strike the readers a lot.

In this way we see that the ending of the novel is characterised by ambiguity. Some are the views that Raju dies at the end and becomes a martyr but Bhagvat S Goyalis of the view that he does not die but saved as he writes , “Even Raju’s sagging down does not indicate that he dies.” Moreover coming of rains is an issue which Narayn has knowingly kept in suspense so there can be no denying of the fact that end of the novel is a fine example of the effective use of open ending and all these questions are left unsolved for the readers to find their own answers in their own ways. Concluding the open ending opted for the novel *The Guide* is really superb and RK Narayan’s use of open ending is immaculate. The characters and the story of the novel altogether are neatly woven and taken towards such type of ending which is to a greater demand of the plot and the action shown in the novel no doubt satisfies the readers to a greater extent.

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