

The Theme Of Infidelity In R.K Naryan's 'The Guide'

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Abstract

Modernity has affected personal life and relationship at great extent. It has been depicted differently by various writers through their writings to make the society aware about its consequences and inferences. But lust for anything is always very lethal. Indian culture and Indian Marriage institution both are very strong and indisputable it has been proved by many research and it gives and brings new strength in life also. But a sleek line of disloyalty and doubt destroys everything. Infidelity is unbearable even then one crosses the limit and tries to confine other it is very strange predicament of human nature.

Indian writing in English is the mirror of Indian tradition and cultural. All the novelists of this genre have tried to depict the traditional and cultural aspects of Indian life by their own way. Among them Narayan enjoys the supreme place. His novels are the reflection of the changing Indian society and present the microcosmic India. Novels of Narayan are the exact picture of Indian society and characters are replica of the real people. He is a very minute observer of the society and has presented the most realistic pictures charged with gentle irony and light humor. His approach to the subject matter is very deep and penetrating, always marked with intellectual inspiration and his artistic excellence lies in authentic exploration also. The conflict between tradition and modernity finds itself projected in the context of marriage.

Marital fidelity is one of the most discussed problems of modern India and Indian families. Although in Indian mythology, in great scriptures and in epics a woman has been highly regarded and worshipped. Despite it, a woman doesn't have that place in Indian families as she should have. A woman is still tormented, badly treated and sexually insulted even if we have progressed and pretend to follow new and modern

culture but the position of Indian woman has not much changed. Narayan has also felt it in Indian society of his time.

Modernity has not affected the life but relationships also. It has given wings to all. Like male, female also wants to fly high. Man that pretends to be modern doesn't accept when the very woman talks about equality and modernity. If we talk about Indian woman and her concept of traditional values and marital relationship is different from that of the western woman. Longing for self fulfillment and self expression are western concepts. Modern Indian woman, who belongs to the transition period from tradition to modernity, imbibes the western ideas and seeks to starve toward individual happiness even at the cost of marital harmony.

Marriage between two persons with the same cultural and traditional background, difference in temperaments and attitude might lead to alienation and detachment. Desire for self identity, especially in woman, might lead to clash of personality and breaking up of the age old institution of marriage as in 'The Guide'. Narayan chooses to deal with the theme of separation between husband and wife in the context of temperamental incompatibility and

attitudinal difference. The difference between expectation and reality proves too much for the two highly ambitious individuals. When the hope of marital harmony and happiness appears to be an illusion; their separation becomes essential. As in 'The Guide' Rosie and Marco get detached because of behavioral and temperamental incompatibility. The alienation between Rosie and Marco seems to be the result of unequal equation between the couples. Marriage is not something concerned with only two individuals but a bond that should be made strong by family traditions, spiritual and cultural ethos. As M.K. Naik says, "*What destroys the marriage is not incompatibility and temperament but an unbridgeable gulf between two cultural ethos.*"¹

Rosie-Marco relationship in 'The Guide' is strained because they live on different planes. Rosie is devoted to the art of dancing while Marco looks at it as mere street acrobatics. He is obsessed with his archaeological surveys and studies. He is unable to recognize the physical urges and emotional aspirations of his talented and charming wife. Rosie, a Devdasi by birth and upbringing, has great passion for dance, becomes a caged bird and her instinct for freedom, spontaneity and self expression is suppressed. Her longings and ambitions are dismissed by Marco as a foolish woman's sentiments. Marco is more interested in the carving on the walls, stones figures and caves rather to be interested in his beautiful wife Rosie and in her aspirations. Raju feels surprise and is admirably right when he comments that "*dead and decaying things seem to unloosen his tongue and fire his imagination, rather than things that lived and moved and swing their limbs.*"²

Marco's passion for his art and Raju's attention to Rosie gives birth to infidelity. Overwhelmed with Raju's care and gratefulness Rosie confesses, '*even if I have seven rebirths, I won't be able to repay my debt to you.*'³ If Rosie yields to Raju, it is not just to satisfy her physical passion but desire for companionship and

communication brings her close to Raju. Her obsession for dance and encouragement and appreciation of her talent brings Rosie and Raju closer to each other.

Being from a family dedicated to the temple as dancer, Rosie obtains post graduation degree in Economics, she discards the conventions and enters in married life, tries hard to be a dutiful wife but it shocks her that her husband is more interested in the sculptures, stones and in caves than in his wife who is the living embodiment of these images. Even she never thinks of leaving her husband but '*follows him day after day, like a dog waiting on his grace.*'⁴ She is an open mind and heart lady that wants self respect and freedom even in the company of Raju she feels like one of those parrots in the cage taken around the village fares and realizes her fault and says, '*it is better to end one's life on his (Marco's) doorstep.*'⁵ This thinking corrects our opinion that she is not fiddle but carefulness of Raju and carelessness of Marco makes her move toward Raju. But a psychological conflict continues in her mind till the end. She confesses that she might be mistaken in her own judgment of him after all he had been kind to her. Her all consuming passion compels her to find an outlet and Raju conveniently uses it for his own benefit by acting as connoisseur of art.

Marco's portrayal as Raju has made is different from the assessment of Rosie. Raju observes him as hard hearted and self centered man, whereas Rosie never makes any remark against him. Only her indirect comments, When Raju asks her what is that interests her, she asserts '*anything except cold, old stone walls.*'⁶ Marco who keeps himself involve in the study of cave paintings forgets to perform his marital responsibility causes infidelity in the life of both. Even Rosie confesses later, '*any other husband would have throttled me then and there. He tolerated my company for nearly a month, even after knowing what I had done.*'⁷ It is quite possible that Marco is aware of Rosie's love affair with Raju who forgets his food and everything for her

company. As he comes from metropolitan city of India so his outlook is different from that of local and small town and remains busy with the study of painting inside the caves forgetting the basic need of Rosie and of married life. It results disharmony in their married life.

Marco is not portrayed as the villain of the novel. For Marco life is nothing but a serious intellectual pursuit. He fails to understand her wife's passionate attachment to the art of dancing. Rosie and Marco, though artists in their individual spheres, are not happy in marriage. Lack of understanding is the major issue that forces her to move in life toward someone otherwise she has love and care for him. It can be understood in her statement when Raju moves to her and tries to caress she suddenly frees herself and says 'No I cannot leave him.....After all he is my husband. I have to respect him.....After all he has been so good to me, given me comfort and freedom'.⁸ Even Raju who doesn't have good opinion of him for certain reasons at times speaks good about him, 'he was a good man completely preoccupied, probably a man with an abnormal capacity for trust'.⁹ Rosie's statement confirms Raju's observation correct, 'what husband in the world would let his wife go and live in a hotel room by herself a hundred miles away'.¹⁰ So fidelity which is the mainstay of husband and wife is found missing from the wedlock of the two, leads to the estrangement between them, is the polarity of attitude of towards life.

With the passage of time, Rosie comes to know about Raju and his deeds. As Raju becomes much greedy and makes forgery that sends him behind the bars. Som Dev rightly remarks, '*at first he grabs the wife of another person and then he grabs the money. The first unsettles him socially and the second sees him clapped into the prison*'.¹¹ She begins to lose her interest in him and in giving dancing performances for the sake of money. She reminds of her husband and wants to go back, the refrain after all he is my husband runs through her

mind during all the years of her separation from him. It is true that Raju '*stifles Rosie more callously than Marco had, if Marco's attempt to send her jewels back to her is in keeping with his nature, so is Rosie's guilty feeling with her nature. The same honesty and sincerity which makes her think of her folly again and again also prompt her to do her best to free Raju from the forgery case against him*'.¹²

One can see Indian ethos at work in the portrayal of the characters. In the portrayal of Rosie, Narayan takes care to show that Rosie's spirit is not tainted in spite of her infidelity to her husband. What Raju does, is the part of his own will. He realizes his mistakes and says '*no power on earth can save you, if you are doomed*'.¹³ '*what must happen, must happen, no power no earth or in heaven can change its course, just as no one can change the course of river*'.¹⁴ '*As matter of fact, what happens in the life of Rosie, Raju, and Marco, is the result of their own deeds. It is their inherent weakness or fault or the misdeed that has brought about catastrophe in the charcters*'.¹⁵

In the case of Marco-Rosie relationship, one can feel that no fair treatment is given to Marco. It is so because reader views and understands Marco through the eyes of Rosie and Raju. As Narayan hasn't given him any identity, it is Raju who names him as Marcopolo. It is also true that Marco fails to live up to her wife's expectation and desires. But one wonders why Rosie should complain after having walked into marriage with her eyes open. One should not feel surprise because '*Rosie is the representative of a new class of women, despite the hurdle, she establishes her own individuality but her inner being is not prepared to go on playing the traditional role of a suppressed Indian wife for the rest of her life*'.¹⁶

Concluding it, I would say that Rosie seems to enjoy the patronizing attitude of his creator, R.K. Narayan, while Marco and Raju don't. In the novel, the theme of husband wife alienation serves the artistic

purpose of sustaining the interest of the reader by proving human interest.

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