

Dharma and Polity Through the Character of Raju in R.K Naraayan's "The Guide"

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Abstract

Dharma is a distinct quality that leads one to explore knowledge. In the novel 'The Guide', there are characters who reflect the concept of *Dharma* in a true sense of words. So, *Dharma* is a key concept. In the Western countries, the concept of *Dharma* is taken as a religion which appears to be a limited and incomplete as compared to the Indian concept of *Dharma*. *Dharma* indeed signifies patterns of behaviour considered to be accord of *Rta* that makes life in the universal possible. It includes duties, law, conduct, virtues and right way of life. R. K Narayana is a classical author in Indian fiction. Narayan is a true Indian both in spirits and thoughts. He has always been claimed as a novelist par excellence. Incidentally little has been written on how Narayan incorporates the profoundest Indian thoughts, philosophies and spiritualism in general and theory of *Karma* in particular in his novels. He is widely known for his lucid and natural writing style, often compared to William Faulkner. Most of his works show his deep interest in *Hindu* Religion and Myth. He does not modify or revise the myths through their symbolic representation.

"To be a good writer anywhere, you must have roots - both in Religion and family.

I have these things."(Stephen Graubart)

As a great writer, he translated and published shortened prose versions of the two great Indian epics, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* and a few *Hindu* mythical tales in Gods, Demons and others. His familiarity of Indian classical literature, philosophy, religion and ethics permeates his writing but a simple man that he was; he does not unnecessarily burden his readers with discourses on abstract philosophy and metaphysics. As an English writer, he depicted *Dharma* spirituality and ethics or the concept of religion in his novels. Through *The Guide*, we have come to know how a fraudulent tourist guide, *Raju* playing the central role as a saint. Theoretically, morally, honorably, legally and ethically a tourist guide is not preferred to misguide the tourists. *Raju* changed his life from an ordinary guide to a sage and unfolds the concept of *Dharma*, finally realized his self and sacrificed his life for the sake of *Dharma* and Polity. The present paper deals with the role of *dharma* in 'The Guide' through *Raju*. The concept of *dharma* found in Indian philosophy is artistically incorporated in the 'The Guide'. He himself mentioned that there is "a nucleus of absolute truth in all my novels." He reveals this truth in different ways with the aim to regenerate the consciousness of *malgudains*. In one of his interview Narayan told that one should have root in the family and religion or *Dharam*. William wash praise Narayan for embodying this pure concept of *dharma* in his novels. The thoughtful concept of *dharma* with sincerity is deeply found in 'The Guide'

R.K. Narayan has given a true common image of India through in 'The Guide' The central character, *Raju*, goes to the *Mangala* village on the *Sarayu* River and he stays in a temple on the sea shore. There he meets *Velan*. *Raju* narrates his past life as a successful tourist guide 'Railway *Raju*' and a rail road station food seller. *Raju*, the tourist guide is initially entrapped in the illusory world when the materialistic *Charvaka* philosophy guides and governs his life. *Raju* has been described as a spiritual martyr, one who finds himself in a insecure situation on account of the misunderstanding of a village idiot. Martyrdom is thus imposed upon him under certain unavoidable circumstances. But a close study of *Raju's* actions, thoughts and behaviour significantly indicates a change in *Raju*. The sacrifice of *Raju* followed by the rains in *Mangla* village could very well be treated as a justification of Indian philosophy and its various paradigms.

Once *Raju*, as a tourist, guide happened to meet Marco and Rosie. Marco concentrated more on other worldly affairs and gives less attention towards his gorgeous wife Rosie. *Raju* helped both Marco and Rosie to recognize her desire of becoming a dancer. *Raju* becomes very close to her. He was much impressed by *Rosie*. He ignored his friend Gaffur's warning and even his mother's advice. He turned a hard of hearing even to the voice of his own soul.

The only truth in my existence was *Rosie*. All my psychological powers were now turned to keep her within my reach, and keep her cheery all the time, neither of which was at all easy. I would deliberately have kept at her side all the occasion, as a sort of scrounger. His over associate with a married lady becomes a serious burden to his tragedy. *Raju* helped *Rosie* in making her dreams come true. *Rosie* became a professional dancer. *Raju* forged her signature and mailed the document for which he was caught and sent to jail for two years.

After coming out of the jail he has been accepted as a saint of *Mangala*. The villagers approached *Raju* to undertake a fast to please the rain God and this made him to confess his past life to *Velan*. Even after listening to the past life of *Raju*, *Velan* continued to acknowledge him as *Swami*; he took *Raju's* confession as a mark of humility and godliness. He persuaded *Raju* for a fast and *Raju* finally agreed to fast 'If by avoiding food I should

help the trees bloom, and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly?’ and that became his final decision. He slowly changed himself without his knowledge as a real sage. Sharan comments that:

In the course of his ordeals, he changes himself thoroughly and accepts the challenges of reality. He plays his role of a holy man with a ring of sincerity and embraces death at the end of the novel. Thus, ‘Railway Raju’, the guide becomes a ‘spiritual guide’ and all his imperfection and impersonation turn into a real act of self-sacrifice.

Raju has no other way but to undergo the fast though reluctantly he gained power to undertake the fast for real and through this power he sacrificed. After the twelve day *Raju*’s physical condition was very poor. He bows his head for prayer and said to Velan, ‘Velan it’s raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet, up legs –He sagged down. Thus the *swami Raju*’s was dedicated to the betterment for the poor people of the *Mangala* as a divine saint.

It is true that R.K. Narayan has depicted that Indian belief and feelings can be articulated in foreign language without demanding to reproduce the native speakers of English. He gave his characters Indian thoughts and expressed it in his scenes and backgrounds. Indian culture and tradition is rich and it is not easy to summarize through few situations or characters. But Narayan made it exuberant and all his characters share Indianness. A close reading of the novel explores that *Raju* is not very bad person. Though he made affairs with Rosie, a married woman, his heart warns him of being in an Indian society and he is not at ease and peace. In his own words he establishes his fear: ‘My thoughts dwelt on her golden touch. A part of my mind went on saying. ‘No, no. It is not right. Marco is her husband, remember. It’s not to be thought of.’ Rosie, besides her modern – type relationship with *Raju*, regards Marco as her husband. *Raju*’s mother is portrayed as a woman born and bred up in an orthodox, conservative class of Indians.

Conclusion

Thus, to conclude this paper it can be said that the concept of dharma has been clearly visible in the novel the guide through character of *Raju*. It can be said that the concept of *dharam* has been explored through description at great length by the selected novelists. In the selected Indian-Writing fiction, divine figures have been found to influence other people. They bring peace and stability to a troubled situation. They love all people, good and bad alike, and pray for their well-being. Some of them are pseudo-spiritual. They only offer their ‘personality’ not their spirituality.

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