

## The Technique of Double Narration of R. K. Narayan's *The Guide*

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### Abstract

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*R. K. Narayan is one of the three important Indian novelists in English. Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao are the other two important novelists. Narayan's novels deal with the life of average middle class man is very important. He looks at common life with a sense of realist humour. He criticizes with gentle irony the middle class hypocrisy. He looks at life with a curious interest. He is detached observe of our ordinary interest. The Guide attempts at reviving the ethnic cultures, traditions, beliefs and languages. He writes about a cross- section of the Indian society. His characters are drawn from a wide variety of situations. They are not rich, they are also not poor. They came from the typical middle class situations. They are also resourceful. They have enough common sense; they are keen observers of life. Their qualities are unfailing, strenuous hard work. They have a teeming sense of life. They are always hopeful participants in life. They are all born optimists. Narayan has employed a double narrative techniques, he uses the narrative techniques with purpose. He uses flash-back narrative technique. This makes Raju estimate his own personality. In this narration of past life, Raju shows enough honesty and sincerity. He portrays himself with great boldness. The Guide is one of Narayan's most interesting and popular works and is told in a series of flashbacks. In this novel Raju is the narrator of his past and points out his feelings from memory. Through flash black, Raju continues with the story of his past. The laying of the railway track finally completes and a railway station is established at Malgudi. The reminiscence of Raju makes the novel more realistic. The flashback technique arouses the curiosity and the interest of the reader. It also proves Narayan's skill as a born story teller. Narayan uses the interesting technique of a varied narrative perspective. The story shifts back and forth between first and third person narrative; at times it is Raju, the main character speaking, and at other times the story is told from the point of view of an omniscient narrator. The author also utilizes cinematic elements and flashback techniques.*

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### Introduction

The term Indo-Anglian refers to Indians using the medium of the English language to write their literary work. As K. R. S. Iyengar points out the real beginning of Indo-Anglian fiction may be traced to the work of Bankimchandra chatterge who wrote a novel *Rajmohan's Wife* in English. Later, the novels of Rabindranath Tagore better known for his *Geetangili*. It is a great philosophical work originally written in Bengali and later translated into English. The Indo- Anglian novel emerged in its glory with Mulk Raj Anand and R. K. Narayan. These two men were carried by the Indo- Anglian novel to great heights. While Mulk Raj Anand is a north Indian, R. K. Narayan is a south Indian, whose mother tongue is Tamil. R. K. Narayan too has mastered the English language and his novels too belong to the first rank.

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His first novel called *Swamy and Friends* appeared in 1935. In this novel the setting was an imaginary south Indian town called Malgudi. Later this imaginary town also served as a setting for a few other novels by Narayan, so that Malgudi became well known to novel readers in Indian. Narayan's novels have been translated into several Indian and foreign languages. He has won admirers in England and the United States of America. He is chiefly a writer of tragic-comedies of mischance and misdirection. *The English Teacher* is the best novel of Narayan. He presents smiles and tears together.

R. K. Narayan is one of the three important Indian novelists in English. Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao are the other two important novelists. Narayan's novels deal with the life of average middle class man is very important. He looks at common life with a sense of realistic humour. He criticizes with gentle irony the middle class hypocrisy. He looks at life with a curious interest. He is detached observer of our ordinary interest. *The Guide* is one of Narayan's most interesting and popular works and is told in a series of flashbacks. In this novel Raju is the narrator of his past and points out his feelings from memory. Through flash back, Raju continues with the story of his past. The laying of the railway track finally completes and a railway station is established at Malgudi. The reminiscence of Raju makes the novel more realistic. The flashback technique arouses the curiosity and the interest of the reader. It also proves Narayan's skill as a born story teller.

The story of *The Guide* develops along a bewildering succession of time shifts. Since Narayan was in touch with South Indian film industry he could apply cinematic techniques of jump out, flash back, flash forward and montage in his plot construction. Thus the novel has an episodic structure rather than the linear plot of the more usual kind of novel, where the story moves in a singly cohesive curve from the beginning through the middle to the end. The unconventional plot of *The Guide* circles freely in time and space, both within and between chapters, moving from the past to the present and back again, and from Malgudi to the Mempi Hills to Mangal in a seemingly random way (Sen 15).

*The Guide* divided into two parts, narrates Raju's childhood, love affair, imprisonment in the first part and growth into a swamy in the second part. Though the streams move simultaneously, the first part is set in Malgudi. Raju's past and the second part is set in Mangla, Raju's present. While Raju's past in Malgudi is narrated by Raju himself, his present in Mangla is narrated by the author. R.K. Narayan is a novelist of common people and common situations. His plot of *The Guide* is built of material and incidents that are neither extra-ordinary nor heroic. *The Guide* is a story of Raju's romance, his greed for money, his sin and repentance. It is also the story of everyman's growth from the ordinary to extra- ordinary, from the railway guide to the spiritual guide. In Narayan's plot there is a mixture of the comic and serious, the real and the fantastic.

Narayan's novels show Indian society negotiating the complex terrain of the modern. Malgudi, in that sense, becomes a laboratory where various possibilities and positions are tried. *The Guide*, undoubtedly Narayan's best-known novel, as a narrative of modern India . . . is about the nature of an ancient Indian institution, that of the guru, which indeed has no exact English counterpart. R. K. Narayan's use of slightly lighter, slightly more frivolous and certainly more ambiguous word, "Guide," is therefore telling. (174) Narayan's has a gift of sketching pen pictures that bring scenes and characters vividly to life without taking recourse to ornate or excessive description. Narayan's simplicity of language conceals a sophisticated level of art. Narayan handles language like an immensely flexible tool that effortlessly conveys both the specific as well as symbolic and the universal. The tone of *The Guide* is quite and subdued. Thus the use of flashback, common lifestyle, comedy, language and the double perspective, Raju's and the novelist's make the novel fresh stimulating, provocative and interesting.

Another technique Narayan uses is imagery and symbolism which is rooted in Indian culture but has universal appeal. At the end of the story, where Raju is drowning, his eyes engrossed towards the mountains as a brilliant sun rises and villagers look on. By juxtaposing the simple background of the Indian village at sunrise with the suicide scene, Narayan effectively communicates Raju's death as an image of hope, consistent with the Indian belief in death and rebirth.

Rosie, Velan, Raju's mother and uncle, Gaffur, the driver, Joseph, the steward of the bungalow where Marco stayed are all characters exhibiting the traditional Indian culture and ethos. Raju and Marco, on the contrary, bear features of Western or Modern culture and manners. Thus the conflict between tradition and modernity or influence of one over the other is evident in the behaviour and conversation of these characters throughout the novel. Some such situations where postcolonial elements are visible in the characters are portrayed below: It was customary or traditional among the Hindus to bow low and touch the feet of elders and venerable persons. But Raju, after his release from the prison, and sitting lonely on the river steps, did not allow the villager, Velan to do so. To quote from the text: "Velan rose, bowed low, and tried to touch Raju's feet. Raju recoiled at the attempt. 'I'll not permit anyone to do this. God alone is entitled to such a prostration. He will destroy us if we attempt to usurp His rights'" (Narayan16).

When Marco deserted Rosie and took train to Madras, she came to Raju's house for shelter. Seeing her coming to the house alone in the evening, Raju's mother was wonderstruck. The very first question she asked was, 'Who has come with you, Rosie?' Rosie blushed, hesitated and looked at me. I moved a couple of steps backward in order that she might see me only dimly and not in all raggedness. I replied, 'I think she has come alone, mother.' My mother was amazed. 'Girls today! How courageous you are! In our day we wouldn't go to the street corner without an escort. And I have been to the market only once in my life, when Raju's father was alive.' (Narayan141) The difference in attitude, as well as the temperament is seen here. Raju's mother is a traditional Hindu woman who is denied public exposure. She is prohibited and hence afraid to go out alone, whereas Rosie is a modern woman. The western influence is evident in her attitude, behaviour and temperament. She is not all afraid to go out alone. From the social point of view *The Guide* not only depicts Indian society, its customs, traditions, culture, ostentations, superstitions and religious faith, but also presents a conflict between the traditional and modern values which are symbolised by Raju's mother and his maternal uncle on the one hand and by Raju and Rosie on the other. In such conflict old values have to give place to new values and thus Raju's mother leaves her home for Raju and Rosie. "The novel also presents a conflict between the Eastern and Western culture and synthesises the two through their assimilation which has been symbolised by Rosie's transformation in to Nalini. Like Anand, Narayan points out that one has to go to the West in order to come back to the East" (Yadav 28).

R. K. Narayan portrays a South-Indian conservative society in the village, Mangal. Though the contact of Western culture brought many changes in the village, castes and traditional occupations continue to exist. Marriages are still arranged. Astrology is accepted there, washing the feet before visiting a temple or a saint as a ritual of purification, pulling the temple chariot along the streets on festive days, smearing holy ash on the forehead, reciting all kinds of sacred verse, consulting an astrologer for auspicious or sacred time, lighting the lamp in the god's niche, reading the *Bhagavadgita* are some of the minor rituals appearing in the novel. Touching the feet of the saint, making offerings in kind or prostrating before god, are other ritualistic forms. Raju's fasting to appease the rain gods and bring rain to save the people is the most significant ritual in the novel. The people of the village had a clear idea of the fasting ritual and it is reflected through Velan's words. "Velan gave a very clear account of what the saviour was expected to do—stand in knee-deep water, look to the skies, and utter the prayer line for two weeks completely fasting during the period—and lo, the rains would come down, provided the man who performed it was a pure soul, was a great soul" (Narayan 109). Narayan's novels were written in a bi-cultural perspective. The clash between the ancient Indian traditions and values on the one side and modern western values on the other side was visible in many novels. The three major characters in *The Guide* were concerned with the revival of indigenous Indian art forms.

Narayan writes about a cross- section of the Indian society. His characters are drawn from a wide variety of situations. They are not rich, they are also not poor. They came from the typical middle class situations. They are also resourceful.

They have enough common sense; they are keen observers of life. Their qualities are unflinching, strenuous hard work. They have a teeming sense of life. They are always hopeful participants in life. They are all born optimists. They are great hard workers in life. If everything else fails in life, their resourcefulness and unflinching hope in bright future-lead them on in their lives. For them, living in life is important. Narayan creates all his characters in Malgudi; it is an imaginary small town. It is a growing semi-urban centre. *The Guide* is a very important novel of R. K. Narayan. It is at the height of his success as a novelist. Narayan employs the flash-back narrative technique in *The Guide*. The narrative technique is method of telling the story. Here there are two kinds of narration: the flash back, story told by the hero, Raju himself and the second method, in which the writer tells the story of Raju, *The Guide* in the first method the story begins in the past and comes to the present. In the second method, it begins in the present and goes into the future. Both these methods are fused in the end of the novel, when Raju sacrifices his life for the sake of the people of the village.

In the first method, the novel begins in the retrospective past. Here Raju begins telling his story, after his release from the jail. He is sitting in a very pensive mood. He vacantly looks at Velan, the villagers who meet him. Velan mistakes him for a Swamy, in spite of Raju repeated reminders to him that he is not Swamy at all. Raju tells his past life in a moment of intense self-analysis. From the present, the novel goes back to Raju's past life. *The Guide* whole novel revolves around Raju; he is both symbolically and in real life a guide. He guides people to their destinations in Malgudi, when they get down rightly from the train Malgudi. He is a young man by nature. He is helpful. He helps everybody unhesitatingly. He is a born optimist. He is always cheerful. Raju is a resourceful and extremely helpful young man. He is having a small shop on the railway platform of Malgudi. Everybody admired his resourcefulness. He had social relations with everybody.

Everybody liked him for his readily helpful nature. He helped anybody, whoever sought his help. Whoever got down at the Malgudi railway station was helped by Raju. He was popular on the railway platform in Malgudi. Raju's life took an almost irretrievable turn with the entrance of Rosie into his life. One day, Marco Polo and Rosie got down at the Malgudi station. Marco Polo was a famous archaeologist. He came to Malgudi to make a historical study of the caves of Malgudi. Rosie was his charming wife. She was the modest woman; Raju took them to the caves and showed them, as he did with everybody. Rosie was greatly interested in dance.

Marco Polo was a serious sort of a scholar, for him, his scholarship was very important. Nothing interested him more than his scholarship. He also did not like Rosie giving public performances of her dance. Rosie felt naturally frustrated in her husband's company. She was hopelessly looking at some opportunity to show her dancing skills to the world. Raju was giving patient company to Rosie. He did not have any evil intention of separating from Marco Polo. But gradually, they come close to each other. Rosie and Raju were gradually deciding to live independently. Rosie started giving public performances of her dance. She becomes very popular as a dancer. Everybody attended her dance. Raju naturally becomes her manager. He was fixing her dance programmes and looking after her financial arrangements. Both of them become very popular. As money and wide popularity come Raju's way, he somehow renders to develop some interest in visiting clubs and gaining some influence in society. He was quite happy, only unhappy thing for him was that he was separated from his mother. Rosie was separated from Marco Polo. Raju and Rosie start living together. He becomes her dance manager.

When everything appeared to be going well for both Rosie and Raju the most disastrous thing happened to him. One day, Raju got a registered letter from a bank, for Rosie's signature. It was letter from Marco Polo. Rosie should sign that letter for redeeming some gold ornaments from the bank. Raju did not tell about that letter to Rosie. He waited for two days, finally in a moment of impulsive action; he forged the signature of Rosie and sent back the letter to the bank. He was hoping that he would get the gold ornaments by registered post. He was waiting, he was enquiring in the Post Office, hopefully.

But quite shockingly, while he was attending the dance programme of Rosie, he was arrested on the charges of forgery. The complaint was made by Marco Polo. Rosie was first stunned; she decided to go back to Marco Polo. Thus Raju went to jail and Rosie joined to Marco Polo. This is end of the Raju's first story. Rosie somehow arranged for the bail of Raju because he was sort of 'a guide' to everybody who went to see the Elephantine Caves near Malgudi. He might not have been greatly educated and fully knowledgeable, but he was certainly and warm in his dealings with the tourists, who visited Elephantine Caves. But his courteous manner and welcome intimacy for the strangers always attracted everybody. This is the end of the Raju's first story, up to this point, Raju tells his story to Velan. It is a flash-back manner.

In the present, Raju is now waiting; he is still undecided about his future course of action. He has grown beard and looking deeply pensive. He is in meditative mood. This is the second part of the narration. This part of Raju's story is told by the novelist. Velan thinks that Raju is a Swamy. From now onwards, the novelist tells us the story of Raju as the Swamyji. Raju has become a Swamy. First, he protests and tells the villagers that he is not a Swamyji. But, resourceful that he is readily accepted to play the role of a Swamy. Velan worshipped Raju. All the villagers are greatly benefited by his resourceful advice. Raju become very popular. He becomes their prophet. He starts enjoy himself in the new role.

After sometimes, there was a famine, people were dying of starvation. Velan appeared to Raju to do something for getting rains. First Raju did not take his role of a Swamy seriously. People begin pray to Raju to do penance for rains. They believe that he is a true Swamy. They believe him to be their rescuer. Then he was deeply touched by the love and hope of people to him. Raju feels embarrassed. His moral conscience is touched for first time; he decides to sacrifice his life to a noble cause. He believes in altruism. He agrees to do penance for their sake. He prayed for the rains, after three days of penance, the rains come. There were floods of water in the river Sarayu and Raju sank and fell down in the Sarayu. The rains do come and thus the drought is ended. Finally, Raju becomes their real rescuer. This is the second part of the novel.

Narayan wrote many symbolic expressions in the novel *The Guide*. For example the temple's influence on the democratic consciousness is so profound and efficacious that it results in the ultimate transformation of Raju. It enables the establishment of the identity of the mask and the man. The second symbol of the village, Mangal as well as Malgudi signifies native strength, continuity of tradition, the ecology of a whole race with its inescapable influence on the individual consciousness and elemental determinism of individual destiny. . . . Thirdly Malgudi is the symbol of modern India caught in the throes of change under the impact of western civilization. Its faith and resilience are effectively affirmative of the root of a changing tradition. . . . Lastly Narayan's invention of Mempi Hills is paralleled in his creation of Sarayu River, thereby completing the image of a whole country as a structural symbol for the Universe itself. (170-171)

The coming of the Railway to Malgudi is symbolically the impact of the transformation of a simple, agricultural community to an urban society. The high values of life give way to the modern ways and their attendant evils. Raju who grew up in a decent home has now picked up terms of abuse from the Railway men, and his father's words 'Just my misfortune!' sound ominous in the light of the impending disaster. "The Railway meant the undoing of Raju and his old mother—a small shop keeper's son becomes a Railway guide who starts living by his wits and runs into Rosie and Marco, two tourists, gets emotionally entangled, neglects his old, honest means of making a living, and brings ruin upon himself as well as a married woman" (Narasimhaiah132). In *The Guide* one finds a clash between castes, classes and their old values on the one hand and the weakening modern social and moral structure on the other. Marco only paid lip-service to a casteless, conventionless society that was slowly taking shape before him by advertising for a good-looking educated young lady regardless of caste.

Old prejudices die hard and Marco for all his erudition looked upon dancing as just street acrobatics and he killed Rosie's instinct for life and love of art by denying her both of them (Narasimhaiah132).

Narayan's treatment of the English language in the novel is Indian in its restraint, particularly where sex is concerned. Sex, though pervasive in the novel, is implicit always. Even when Raju decides to enter Rosie's room and stay alone with her for the night how characteristically Indian and different he is from his western counterpart! He 'stepped in and locked the door on the world.' "The only time it is explicit, the utmost he has permitted himself on such an occasion is: Marco, the kill-joy is walking towards the cave swinging his cane and hugging his portfolio and Raju snaps: "If he could show half the warmth of that hug elsewhere!" (Narasimhaiah 144-145). Narayan is acclaimed as a Regional or Social novelist. The locale of *The Guide* is the small town of Malgudi where Raju has his home, the village Mangal from where Velan hails, and Madras and other big cities where Rosie is invited to dance. As most of the Indians live in rural and semi-urban areas, the locale of the novel is almost the microcosm of India. The world in *The Guide* is "structured along simple binaries—Malgudi and Mangal, the town and the village, urban sophistication versus rural simplicity, modernity versus tradition, cynicism versus faith" (Sen 86).

In the novel *The Guide*, Narayan seemed to be particularly fascinated by the ubiquitous presence of swamys and saints, gurus and guides, charlatans and philistines, cobras and concubines in India's colourful society. With his characteristic humour he was able to capture the spectrum of Indian life, with its superstitions and hypocrisies, its beliefs and follies, its intricacies and vitalities, its rigidities and flexibilities. The action of the novel proceeded in two distinct streams, presenting two different aspects of Indian culture. Malgudi, a miniature of India, presented the rich traditions of classical dances by Rosie-Nalini and the breath-taking paintings that embellish Marco Polo's *The Cultural History of South India*. Mangal, the neighbour town village presented the spiritual dimension of Indian culture, presented through Raju's growth into a celebrated Swamy. "Thus Raju, Rosie and Marco Polo become temporal symbols of India's cultural ethos" (Goyal 143). While Marco Polo's aspiration sought their fulfillment in unearthing the buried treasures of India's rich cultural past, Rosie's longing sought satisfaction in the creative channels of classical dancing in the midst of an ever-present, live audience. Raju was all the time dreaming of an elusive future till a time came when he was irrevocably committed to a definite future by undertaking a fast in the hope of appeasing the rain-god. "While Marco is cultural historian of the past, Rosie is a cultural ambassador of the present, and Raju is a cultural prophet of the future" (Goyal 143).

Many of the structural devices and thematic concerns of the Hindu epics and *puranas* are displayed in *The Guide*. In having a rogue as the hero, there is an element of the folk tale also. Krishna Sen is of opinion that we have the idyllic opening scene, the dramatic dialogue format, the layered narrative, the multilateral structure compressing time shifts and interwoven digressions, and the final penance for a divine boon to save humanity. Some elements have been parodied or ironically subverted by bringing them from the mythic past to the imperfect present, elements such as the guru being superior to the *shishya*, or the dialogue leading spiritual illumination (22). Another indigenous pattern working through the novel is the linear progression or *varnasrama*, or the Hindu belief in the four stages of the ideal life—student, house holder, recluse and ascetic (*brahmacharya*, *garhasthya*, *vanaprastha* and *sansyasa*).

This pattern, too, is parodied. Raju is successively a 'student' preparing for life in the platform vendor and Railway Raju phases, a 'house holder' and man of affairs in his illegal union with Rosie and as her corrupt business manager, a 'recluse' during his days in prison, and an 'ascetic' in his role as the fake guru. Raju's fasting for the rain, the denouement in the novel, is a travesty, reminiscent of the story of the sage-king Bhagirath who conducted severe penance to bring down the goddess Ganga. This story is found in both the *Ramayana* and the *Mahapurana* (Sen 24).

The entire ritual by Raju may or may not have brought rain, but it did help bring peace to the strife-torn Mangal and turn the community back to religion. Thus *The Guide* can be triumphantly called a Hindu novel. “The denouement is neither a rejection nor a defense of the Hindu faith—it gestures towards the complexity of life, in which there are no simple solutions. It is this ambiguous and open-ended denouement that raises the novel far above the level of a mere moral fable, or a story with a simplistic happy ending” (Sen 25).

Socially the novel brought out the transition in India from an old-fashioned way of life to a modern and urbanized one, and the character groupings roughly corresponded to these two areas. Raju’s parents and uncle, and the old school master represented tradition, orthodoxy, hierarchy and conservative values. The peripheral character who was crucial to the progress of the plot was Velan. His personality was not drawn in detail, nor was it required. Velan would not be a credible character in a western setting. Velan was the sole person responsible for the final plight of Raju. But Velan’s contribution was not merely to oppress Raju. It was he who built Raju up into a ‘saint,’ and it was Velan’s unshakable faith that finally enabled Raju to rise above himself. “Velan is a catalyst for Raju’s apotheosis” (Sen 71)

The characters in *The Guide* can be reduced to symbolic meanings. Velan represents the psychological reality of the rural ethos. He is the spiritual guide of Raju, the professional guide. Raju remains professional even in his mask. Raju, Velan and Rosie are the central characters in the novel. According to U. P. Sinha from his essay, “Patterns of Myth and Reality in “The Guide”: Complex Craft of Fiction”: Their implicative or metaphoric roles in the novel make a *mythic triangle* which is a triangle with three points, one indicating the height of spiritual-cum-moral triumph. The point indicating the low, the deep is represented by Rosie, and the vertical one is represented by Velan. The third point at the level, which seems to be vertical but is not obviously so, represents Raju. The first two points act upon this one so that the whole triangle becomes mythical—man facing two opposite-worlds; facing always with very little chance of a smooth and painless arrival here or there. (80)

One can interpret the character portrayal in the novel in terms of *gunas*. In the words of Rama Nair, “*Gunas* can presuppose the question of basic predisposition called Samskaras and fate (Karma). . . . In Hindu thought, a mental or physical act is called *Karma*. *Karma* is the sum-total of a man’s past actions, in the present and the previous lives, which determines his life now. One can achieve liberation only through spiritual self-realization” (44). In Hindu philosophy names of individuals do not matter. One’s individuality and character are determined by his actions. The names of central characters in *The Guide* are not individualistic. They are vague and impersonal. The reader is never told either Raju’s or Marco’s real name. Raju’s spiritual triumph at the end of the novel is a reaffirmation of the *static* potential that is innate in every individual. The same critical frame work can be applied to Rosie’s character also.

*The Guide* ended in a way which is very typical of an Indian story. In a typical Indian story, the main character narrated his own story to an acquaintance overnight and by the time he concluded, the cock crowed. In this traditional way of story-telling, the story-teller, Raju, held the listener. Thus Narayan achieved a supreme triumph through this narration. To quote C. D. Narasimhaiah from his essay, “R. K. Narayan’s ‘*The Guide*,’” “It is not surprising when we know that at all times Narayan writes not merely with an intense social awareness of his own age but with the past of India in his bones. Thanks to him our social sympathies are broadened and our moral being considerably heightened” (198).

When one comes to the end of the novel he is threatened with so many unanswered questions. Is Raju a real saint or is he a fake? This question had puzzled most readers of the novel ever since its publication. Sally Appleton in the review titled “*The Ambiguous Man*,” which appeared in *Commonweal Magazine*, a few weeks after the novel’s publication, observes:

“The author must decide whether or not holiness will work . . . the author abandons the reader to choose arbitrarily whether or not, as Raju sinks into the muddy river bed, he is dying, whether or not, as the water rises to Raju’s knees, it rises because “it’s raining in the hills” or because Raju himself is sagging into it (cited in Pontes and Ezekiel 92)” (qtd. in Paranjape 176). It is not surprising that critics are divided on this question. C. D. Narasimhaiah considers Raju a transformed man in the end, a saint, whereas G. S. Balarama Gupta believes that Raju is a selfish swindler, an adroit actor, and a perfidious megalomaniac (Paranjape 177).

In the words of Paranjape: The question is not so much whether Raju is a willing saint or not because, like all of us, every one within the novel notices Raju’s reluctance, even his unfitness for gurudom. But does that really change who or what he ends up becoming? So what we have here is a real problem, one that leads us to the crux of Narayan’s artistry and to his relationship to Indian modernity. Because if Raju is a fake, Narayan is putting into doubt not just an individual but the institution of guru itself.” (177) It was the belief of village people of Mangal that it would rain and thus put an end to the drought if a true sanyasi did genuine fasting for twelve days. That was a belief prevalent among the Hindus as such in India. Whether the people had direct experience of the miracle or not, it did not lessen their faith in it. Narayan only wanted to portray those beliefs and rites prevailed among his people. He did not want to glorify or condemn such beliefs. There is no clear hint at the end of the novel whether it rained. Rather one has to doubt it based on the description of the topography. The narration of the last paragraph of novel is as follows: He got up feet. He had to be held by Velan and another on each side. In the profoundest silence the crowd followed at a solemn, silent pace. The eastern sky was red. Many in the camp were still sleeping. Raju could not walk, but, he insisted upon pulling himself along the same.

He panted with the effort. He went down the steps of the river, halting for breath on each step, and finally reached the basin of water. He stepped into it, shut his eyes, and turned towards the mountain, his lips muttering the prayer. Velan and another held him each by an arm. The morning Sun was out now; a great shaft of light illuminated the surroundings. It was difficult to hold Raju on his feet, as he had a tendency to flop down. They held him as if he were a baby. Raju opened his eyes, looked about, and said, ‘Velan, it’s raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my legs.’ He sagged down. (Narayan 247)

The description of the eastern sky as red and the apparition of the morning sun and the great shaft of light which illuminated the surroundings do not match with raining in the hills. The readers come across a series of endless questions. Does it really rain? Does Raju survive to see the miracle? Or does he die with the delusion that his sacrifice has paid off? The readers have to find out their own answers based on their beliefs and philosophy. In the words of Paranjape, “Are we people of faith, those who believe that the sacrifice of a well-intentioned individual can solve social problems, even change the course of natural events? Or are we modern, “scientific” people who refuse to yield to such superstitions? To frame the choices offered by the novel in an even more complex manner, do we *want* to believe even though we might be unable to?” (180)

Though Raju was a fake guru, on whom gurudom had been thrust, he seemed to grow in stature to fit its mantle. He was willing to sacrifice his life. Since the villagers believed that his fasting would bring rain he had no other alternative than continuing the fast to the twelfth day. Raju understood that he could not correct the villagers’ misconception about him. They considered him as a true sanyasi and hence his genuine fast would bring rain. Thus Raju was trapped. He had no existence other than a sanyasi’s. He could have saved himself as the doctors and Velan requested him to stop fasting. But once he stopped fasting what would the hundreds of people assembled there think about him? Wouldn’t it be a betrayal of faith laid on him by the people? So he might have thought that it was better and nobler to die a martyr than live an ignoble life, despised by others. Narayan wanted to tell the readers that there are many Raju’s or fake sanyasi’s in our society.



Despite being so aware of the dangers of shamming such a serious thing as being a guru, Narayan actually came out in favour of the institution in the end. He was unable to show the villagers rejecting Raju, or Velan abusing and unmasking him. He did not want the novel to be a propaganda tract against superstitious villagers and unscrupulous charlatans. “*The Guide* is far from being an expose of phony god men exploiting the gullible masses. Narayan cannot make a pitch in favour of mechanization or development as the cure of all ills, including drought” (Paranjape 181).

Narayan did not endorse tradition in a loud or sententious manner. He did not reject or condemn it but rather created a space for that. He pointed out that in the struggle between tradition and modernity, tradition won though in a reluctant manner. Raju’s penance and his ultimate sacrifice were real no matter how painfully flawed his motives might have been earlier or how ineffectual their outcome. There was ample textual evidence to suggest that a gradual but sure alteration in Raju’s inner being did take place. “In other words, the irony strengthens the “Hindu” world view, not weakens it, though at first it appears as if the opposite is the case” (Paranjape 182).

### **Conclusion**

Narayan has employed a double narrative techniques, he uses the narrative technique with purpose. He uses flash-back narrative technique. This makes Raju estimate his own personality. In this narration of past life, Raju shows enough honesty and sincerity. He portrays himself with great boldness. His character changes from that of a good man to that of a stupid, who has taken away Marco Polo’s wife. Narayan dramatizes himself in a clear and realistic manner. He does not show any sentimentalism in telling about himself. He is a mere detached ironic observer of his own self. The narrative technique thus contrasts two kinds of worlds: the world of Raju, the assumed Swamy, and his mind shows the same unfailing resourcefulness even as a Swamy. Perhaps Raju’s character gives the qualities of resourcefulness and sturdy common sense make one’s life useful to him and everybody.

The Narrative technique of Narayan through Raju’s character undergoes a change are three levels. First, from that of a quiet, resourceful man to that of a guide to Rosie and Marco Polo, from that of guide to real life companion to Rosie from this stage to that of a prisoner and assumed Swamy and finally their rescuer. In these cases Raju displays a rare degree of resourcefulness and positively helpful nature. He has unfailing common sense. He is not mean to anybody. He is neither a sinner nor a virtuous man. He has a typical middle-class morality based on circumstance and necessities of life. Thus, Narayan dramatizes a real life, human life situation. Raju’s life and progression are realistically portrayed. It is on a human reality. It’s unmistakable moral conflicts and problems of life always appeal to our minds.

The story of *The Guide* develops along a bewildering succession of time shifts. He could apply cinematic techniques of jump out, flash back, flash forward and montage in his plot construction. Thus the novel has an episodic structure rather than the linear plot of the more usual kind of novel, where the story moves in a singly cohesive curve from the beginning through the middle to the end. The unconventional plot of *The Guide* circles freely in time and space, both within and between chapters, moving from the past to the present and back again, and from Malgudi to the Mempo Hills to Mangal in a seemingly random way (15). Modern European and American novels influenced the novelists of Indian Writing in English and Narayan was no exception. The picaresque narratives are evident in *The Guide*.

*The Guide* could be read as a “complex allegory satirizing the process by which gods and demy-gods came to be established within the religion, wherein through the century’s myths and stories came to be built around a man until he gradually attained the stature of a god and joined the ranks of celestial beings as a divine incarnation” (Sankaran 129). In this view *The Guide* would be a satire, albeit a gentle one, about the system of worship within Hinduism.

Raju was in a sense, the distillation of a type of character that had existed in Hindu mythology for nearly five centuries—‘the trickster sage.’ In Hindu mythology the sages and even the gods were shown to be fallible, and no one was considered perfect or lying so low as to be incapable of reaching great spiritual heights. Similarly in Hindu mythology transformation could occur to a person due to an outside agency without the volition of the person. “Raju would, in this light, be eminent ‘sage’ material” (Sankaran 135).

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