

Malgudi Station as a junction of Indian Vedantic philosophy (Karma, Maya, Kama, Moksha, Artha, Ahamkar and Vedic Ashramas)

Ramen Goswami

Magadh University, Bodhgaya (Department of English)

Submitted: 05-06-2021

Revised: 18-06-2021

Accepted: 20-06-2021

ABSTRACT: The Guide (1958) is R. K. Narayan's most popular novel. It is also the first work of fiction in English to have won the first Sahitya Akademi Award in 1961. The Guide sufficiently presents India from its root with its perpetual faith in religion (God and kindness). According to K. R. S. Iyenger "The Guide is an advance on the earlier novels" (14) O. P. Mathur is of the view that the novel displays and treats the East-West theme on the more important point of the comatose and bland, the profound and complete manipulation of the Western mode of life and ethics upon the long-established Indian society. (15) Narayan has characteristically introduced the concept of attaining 'Moksha' or salvation in this novel. Hindu philosophy considers three stages of life during which a seeker attains 'Moksha' or emancipation. These stages are – committing offence, contrite and attaining self-realization. Raju, hero of the novel, passes from these three stages in order to reach deliverance from the world and unity with the Almighty.

Keywords: ashrama, moksha, Hindu philosophy, guide, philosopher, purvaraga, lover, kama, artha, moha, materialistic, culture, maya, dharma, lobha, shanty (peace) Malgudi, Yogi, spirituality

I. INTRODUCTION:

Narayan portrays Raju, the guide, who lives his life in the blueprint foretold by Maharshi Manu in 'Manu Smriti'. This map of life encompasses four stages – 'Brahmacharya Ashrama', 'Grihastha Ashrama', 'Vanaprastha Ashrama' and 'Sanyastha Ashrama'. It is through these four stages that Narayan presents a steady progress and alteration in Raju's character. Raju commits serious sins, repents for his malevolent deeds and ultimately achieves self-realization.

Brahmacharya Ashrama : Primarily, in his first stage of Brahmacharya Ashrama, Raju is a faithful, dutiful and honest son of his parents. His mother frequently narrates the story of 'Devaka', and his father gives him basic education on the 'pyol'.

During his infancy Raju has been brought up in a devout surroundings, which influences him towards the end. "I washed myself at the wall, smeared holy ash on my forehead, stood before the framed pictures of gods hanging high up on the wall, and recited all kinds of sacred verse in a loud, ringing tone" (18) (p. 11) Raju's childhood has been conventional and strict. His 'stern disciplinarian' father does not present him education in the fashionable Albert Mission School because the ideology of this organization do not meet with the Hindu morals. His father says: "I don't want to send my boy there; it seems they try to convert our boys into Christians and are all the time insulting our Gods." (p. 25)

Grihastha Ashrama : It is during his Grihastha Ashrama that man finds himself wholly bound by the household and economic bondages. It is here that man commits sins and welcomes all obstacles in his path of salvation. But a true seeker of deliverance succeeds in keeping himself away from all hindrances and progresses towards his goal. After the death of his father, Raju leads the life of Grihastha Ashrama. He takes over the charge of his family and opens a stationary shop at the railway station keeping in view the students of the recently started Albert Mission College. This bookselling business not only provides financial stability to Raju but also awakens in him the desire for reading. "During the intervals between trains, when the platform became quiet, there was nothing more pleasing than picking up a bundle of assorted books and lounging in my seat and reading....I read stuff that pricked up a noble thought, a philosophy that appealed." (p. 49)

Tourist guide: As a simple man, Raju with his better and original information, strategies and exploratory nature grows up to be an imaginative, inventive, unusual, modern young man and becomes a tourist guide. This job suits his temperament since he has an inherent curiosity to know about people and places. Raju, philosopher in mask at this period of his life guides the tourists to the sceneries of Malgudi, presents documents about

the antique geography of events in Malgudi. For his recognition and dexterity tourists prefer him as a guide. Like an skilled guide, he remarks before the visitors: "It must be the source of Saryu mentioned in the mythical stories of goddess Parvathi jumping into the fire; the carving on one of the pillars of the shrine actually shows the goddess plunging into the fire and water arising from the spot etc..." (p.57) Raju's popularity as a tourist guide is widespread. People from various places contact him for his supervision. "Do you know how well I am? People come asking for me from Bombay, Madras and other places, hundreds of miles away. They call me Railway Raju and have told me that even in Lucknow there are persons who are familiar with my name." (p.59)

Railway Raju : The enthusiasm for new knowledge creates Raju into a diverse type of Narayan's idol. The search for information adds knowledge to the sparkling qualities of the hero. This impending for awareness of new things transforms an ordinary Raju into a 'Railway Raju'. (p. 55)

Raju as a true son: Raju is a adorable son, a true comrade, a wonderful guide and a reputable citizen of Malgudi so long as he follows the customs, social and moral values and customs of the town. His exciting activity to increase his model of Artha(money) from his family shop to railway shop and then to the occupation of tourist guide is appreciated by all the people of Malgudi, as well as his conventional mother.

Kama and Purvaraga : Indian philosophy describes the achievement of self-realization in every way of life Raju is trapped by the attractive maya (webs) of Artha and Kama and commits sins which expel him from achieving self-realization. The arrival of the couple from Madras summons the misleading or Mayik phase of the protagonist's life. Raju, on the edge of his youth is fascinated towards the "lovely and elegant" (p. 65) lady named Rosie at first momentary look (Purvaraga). The attractive individuality of this post – graduate girl from Madras University who belongs to the devdasi family stirs the internal emotions of Raju. Her first facade on the railway station awakens the senses of Raju's mind who compares her to a film artist at the very first peek. He says, "I gave some excuse and sent them off to the hotel, and stayed back to run home and tidy up my appearance." (p. 65) Thus, he desires to change his look to create a centre of attention on Rosie later. In the Indian mythological background, the arrow of Kama Deva (19), the God of Love attacks on Raju. Raju's bodily revolution coincides with his inner renovation. He fulfils Rosie's require to see a cobra

dance; he engages a clerk from municipal office to reach the house of snake charmer and reaches there with this woman. This expedition brings Raju and Rosie in a nearer relationship and a warm tie.

Lover: Raju's function changes from a guide to a devotee or lover and later when Rosie becomes a stage dancer he becomes her director, instructor, coordinator and negotiator removed from his mother and rebuffed by his uncle. Raju contemplates to market the dance performances of Rosie. "My activities suddenly multiplied. The Union function was the start. Rocket – like, she soared. Her name became public property. It was not necessary to elaborate or introduce her to the public now.... I became known because I went about with her." (p. 182) He has no time to think over or probe into his deeds and thoughts. His wild approach to life takes him thousand miles away from stark reality. The Indian Charvaka money-orientated philosophy is fully working in his life. The protagonist's social dilemma related to his dream of position and status lead him towards the materialistic world, but Raju ignores the quintessence of Hindu culture. He commits the fundamental Hindu error of falling into the ensnare of Maya. Thus, it is in this world of maya that Raju commits the sins for which he regrets later during his jail life. Indian philosophy give plans the ways to enjoy Artha and Kama within exact restrictions and within definite rules and policy i.e. Dharma. Raju exceeds all limits and commits the blunder to possess anything that comes across his way of life.

Moha leads to Nemesis: His obstinate nature (moha and lobha) results in his ruin who has already trespassed the border line of Malgudian social command and moral values. Subsequently his downfall is about to happen. He ignores his mother and uncle, cheats his acquaintances, develops illegal relationship with Rosie, a wife of another person, Marco, misappropriates the money, cheats the people of Malgudi and forges the sign of Rosie. The code of nemesis operates and the penalty of wrong actions is certainly to be delivered. Raju becomes a jailbird not because of some heavenly outfit, but as a logical result of difference from moral responsibility. Raju destroys the social norms and commits infidelity while getting involved with Marco's wife. Consequently, the nemesis falls on him. The appointment of a star lawyer from Madras can not modify Raju's evil fate. The Malgudi court punishes him for two years of incarceration. Raju is tainted in the eyes of his much-loved Nalini, his cronies like the police commissioner and principally his mother. The remarks of his orthodox mother conjecture the holiness of the moral and ethical values in Malgudi:

“She said to me, what a shame you have brought on yourself and all known to you! I used to think that the worst that could happen to you might be death, as when you had that pneumonia for weeks; but I now wish that rather than survive and go through this ...”(p. 231)

Karma: This short span of deceptive world shatters Raju. He realizes his fault and blunder, which forces him to take to sainthood after the finishing point of the penal complex. The Indian vision of life is marked by the lack of unpleasantness at the face of calamity in the life of people; there is neither uproar against injustice, nor a railing against God. Karma (deeds) induces in an Indian a temper of receiving and thoughtful as he knows that there is no dim fate overriding the universe. One moves by one's actions. Karma is inner essence to the Indian philosophy. Raju, the practical person accepts his guilt loaded subsistence in the jail, learns to acclimatize the condition and time and acquires a positive new aspect here. He works ceaselessly on a vegetable plot of land in the backyard of the superintendent's residence growing brinjals, beans and green cabbages. This surely indicates his energy and trust on life accepting life as it comes in its stride. He says: “I loved every piece of work, the blue sky and sunshine, and the shade of the house in which I sat and worked, the feel of cold water; it produced in me a luxurious sensation. Oh, it seemed to be so good to be alive and feeling all this; the smell of freshly turned earth filled me with the greatest delight.” (pp. 227-228)

Vanaprastha Ashrama' and 'Sanyastha Ashrama : It is in prison that Raju starts contrite his ill activities. According to Hindu philosophy, Moksha can be pursued if man realizes his ill deeds and attempts to dirt-free his mind and soul of all problems. Disinterest from the fabric world and honest efforts to repair the sins could win him the religious height. Raju too realizes this and like a true hunter detaches himself from all worldly ties and moves towards the correct path of self-realization. Raju's years in jail is a fine instance of a Sanyasi, he likes the jail life and wants to “stay in this prison permanently”. (p. 228) They often refer to him as “Vadhyar – that is educator.” Raju, the “model prisoner” (p. 226) is transferred to the superintendent's office as a personal maid enjoying his self-confidence. Mani, past secretary of Raju, is his only visitor in the prison; all other associates and kith and kin seem to have forgotten him. Mani tells him the information of Rosie's disappearance from Malgudi. But Raju maintains poise at this information, which reinforces his inner alteration. There is a huge alteration between Raju who was guarding her memory enviously and the Raju who

receives the report of her departure in a peaceful manner. In jail, Raju realizes the empty space and blankness of worldly association. All his communal illusions, natural fancies and physical attachments fade away due to the new extraordinary change of place confronting him with the intangible realities of life. It is through this jail term that he enters into Vanaprastha Ashrama first and after that into Sanyastha Ashrama when he comes to Mangla rural community. There is some vagueness in the initial picture of Raju's life in Mangla village, but it can securely be concluded that the repudiation of Raju is simply in agreement with his views, ideas and sentiments which have germinated and nourished due to his introspection in the prison. Raju has distanced himself from public attachments and social ring of urban Malgudi. Now his false impression is of a higher order i.e. the illusion linked with the circle of birth and death. The predicament is clearly visible in Raju's discussion with Velan on his arrival in the village temple: “A woman once went wailing to the great Buddha, clasping her dead baby to her bosom. The Buddha said, ‘Go into every home in this city and find one where death is unknown; if you find such a place, fetch a handful of mustard from there, and then I'll teach you how to conquer death.’” (p. 15) Thus, to overcome death is the only motto of the protagonist who has previously realized the uselessness of the material world and unexciting relationships. He desires to interweave his self with the ultimate Atman which is the final ideal of all the Indian philosophical systems manifoldly termed as Moksha, ecstasy, final realism, Brahman etc. So Raju's renunciation can be called as Satvik in chase of this supreme conforming to the sayings in the Bhagwad Gita.

कार्यमित्येव यत्कर्म नियतं क्रियतेऽर्जुन ।

सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा फलं चैव स त्यागः सात्त्विको मतः ॥

(XVIII/9)

(A approved duty which is performed only because it has to be performed, giving up affection and fruit, that alone has been documented as the Satvik form of repudiation).

“By the Winds sent forth in swift succession, and ten storming on with a tempest's force, and the rain spreading winds, separating one from another, by those who bring down the reminder, to excuse some and warn others: that which you have been promised shall be fulfilled”—452(AL-MURSALAT)

Shanti(peace) from Ahamkar(pride): Raju at last succeeds in obtaining an composure and coolness of temper and is not excessively bothered by the memories of his past. This calm and impartial

approach bears a appearance to a yogic posture. “Raju said with a philosophical weariness, ‘Such things are common in life. One should not let oneself be bothered unduly by anything.’” (p. 16) Thus, the domineering and egoistical or Ahankari nature of Raju is totally destroyed. This change from the self – ego to God is a optimistic step in the method of his growth and self – realization. He is one in spiritual union with God who has sunken the ego with this ultimate Ego. “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.’ He felt he was attaining the stature of a saint.” (p. 16) His suggestion to the villagers is to offer everything to God. He majestically placed the basket of food at the feet of the image of God and said: “It’s His first. Let the offering go to Him, first; and we will eat the remnant. By giving to God, do you know how it multiplies, rather that divides?” (p. 18)

Spiritual guide: The position of Raju also changes in the village and his residence is a spiritual center for the villagers. Raju no doubt tries his best to accomplish the desires and wishes of his pupils. He grows a beard and chanted loudly the Bhagwad Gita, which increases his saintly status both privately and apparently. “He came to be called Swami by his congregation, and where he lived was called the Temple. It was passing into common parlance. ‘The Swami said this or that’ or ‘I am on my way to the Temple’. People loved this place so much that they lime washed its walls and drew red bands on them.” (p. 91) Raju, acquiring universality in his character, discerns the similar Atman in all. This unhurried and steady development highlights the Indian philosophical code of universality or cosmopolitanism. His authority in the village is limitless. He not only chants holy verses or mantras and converses on philosophy, but he even comes to the phase of prescribing remedy to the villagers. Even people bring to him their disputes and quarrels over the separation of family property. Raju has been described a “spiritual martyr” (26) who finds himself by chance involved through the misinterpretation of a village idiot in undertaking a fast to satisfy the god of rain. Initially, Raju is not prepared for such action, he feels spellbound but later, he resolves to attach to it. He acknowledges his boundaries to Velan and as a result declines the ridiculous strain of villagers for undertaking the fasting. It can be opined that Raju is far away from false impression now. He narrates to Velan the truthful story of his life in a frantic effort to detonate the myth about himself. This act of

revealing his past reinforces the outlook that Raju has understood the epitome of the Indian belief and values. He says, “If by avoiding food I should help the trees, bloom and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly? (pp. 237-238) Raju who has enjoyed all types of material pleasures, now separates himself from this fabric world, decreases all social ties and ends up a saint who wishes the well-being of all villagers of Mangla. Originally, Raju does not wish to continue with his function of a saint. Sainthood is thus push upon him. But later, he performs fast to gratify the God of rain. He sacrifices his personal life for the villagers. The conference of Raju, now a Swami with James J. Malone, a Californian film producer, bears the echoes from the Bhagwad Gita. Raju is at the present a Nishkam Yogi:

“Let us chat. Okay? Tell me (J. J. Malone), how do you like it here?”

“I am doing only what I have to do; that’s all. My likes and dislikes do not count.”

“Can fasting abolish all wars and bring peace?”

“Yes.”

“Have you always been a Yogi?”

“Yes, more or less.” (p. 244)

From Vogi to yogi: Raju is a Yogi in the sense he always promotes the happiness, tastes and likings of others by sacrificing his own ambitions and desires. He promotes the investigation of Marco, the dancing capabilities of Rosie, the welfare of the jail-mates and the villagers, and in the conclusion sacrifices his life for the true and universal cause of humankind. He performs all these actions in a disciple and servile frame of mind. Thus, Raju gains clarity of thought and action on the path of Moksha. Gaining total control over intellect is within his reach now. Acquiring control over the five senses is the most thorny part in the life of a human being on the path to reaching Moksha. But it is an objective not unattainable. Raju in the closing stages of life lives with complete manage over his senses and lives not for himself, but for the villagers of Mangla. The society of Malgudi in The Guide is spiritual, conventional and God fearing intrinsically believing in the moral principles of the Indian philosophy. The people of Malgudi does not fully endorse of Rosie’s dancing performances, Raju’s mother dislikes a snake worshipper or a dancing girl, Macro’s bitter observations on this act of dancing, substitutes the customary Malgudian curved of mind. The country folk of Mangla village are more loyal, blameless and honest. These people distinguish the miracles, the migratory changes, heavenly order, the fluke of festivals in the reminiscence of gods etc.

Society forced Raju towards Sainthood (Sadhu):

The urban and rustic society of Malgudi is strongly religious. It does not believe in an abstract or dried out religion but grooms its trust in a living, lively religion. These people believe Raju as a saint or spiritual master. Velan reaffirms his faith in Raju after listening to the anecdote of his preceding life. The people of Malgudi do not subscribe to the attitude that once sinned is sinned everlastingly; on the contrary, they accumulate proper chance for the spiritual survival of all.

II. CONCLUSION:

Rosie is a beautiful, stylish woman; Raju is wondered by her attraction from the very first day of her arrival to Malgudi. She has an innate passion for dancing, as she reaches Malgudi, her first question to Raju on the railway platform is, “Can you show me a cobra – a king cobra it must be – which can dance to the music of a flute?” (p. 64). Her attachment to dancing parallels Macro’s worship for history. She wants to attain the excellence in the art of dancing. Like Raju, she is also on an expedition for self. Rosie epitomizes an Indian woman oscillating between custom and modernity. She is a woman in evolution who can neither completely break from tradition nor accept modernity. Narayan presents her as a woman with deep reliance in the established Indian values governed by the Indian moral code. She tries her best to gain the compassion and clemency of her husband. In spite of his unresponsive attitude, she addresses him reverentially and regards herself guilty of neglecting her wifely duties and responsibilities. Rosie realizes the deficiency of Marco, when she was at the zenith of her career. She repents and says, “After all, after all, he is my husband.” (p. 201) R. K. Narayan has very creatively portrayed the Indian rational ideas in this novel. The Vedantic beliefs of self – realization, the idea of Maya, lack of knowledge or Avidya, the ideal of Niskama Karma or deed without affection, the values of principled systems and the result of its violation, the search for antique culture, traditions and customs, the hypothesis of Karma or deed, the four ideals of Purushartha and other Hindu ideas such as austere decontamination, yoga, abandonment, cyclic sequence of life and death – all philosophical ideas are methodically merged in this novel.

REFERENCES:

- [1]. Gods, Demons and Others, New York, Viking Press, 1964
- [2]. Malgudi Days, Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 1943
- [3]. The Guide, Madras, Higginbothams, London: Methuen & New York: Viking Press, 1958 rpt. Mysore: Indian Thought Publications, 2007
- [4]. Bhagwad Gita: Gorakhpur, Gita Press, publication 1987
- [5]. The Quran: Goodword Books, Deli NCR, publication 2009