

# The Delineation of the Complicated Marital and Extra-Marital Affairs in R.K. Narayan's Novel THE GUIDE

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## **Abstract**

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami who is one of the most versatile and prolific novelists in the history of the Indian English Literature, has presented the typical Indian characters and the true Indian atmosphere to show the contemporary Indian society in his works. The most distinguished fact of his novel is that he has dealt with essentially the middle class characters and has created a fictional South Indian Malgudi town like Thomas Hardy's Wessex or William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County. His fictional world has projected an exploration of the conjugal relationship in the domestic world and the themes of marital and extra marital relationships have always been the focus of many literary works in the Indian English Literature. However, his novels are deeply rooted in customs, traditions, beliefs, and superstitions of the Indian society and are preoccupied with the theme of family relationship, East- West encounter, education etc. Here in this paper an attempt has been made to reveal his portrayal of marital and extra marital affairs and at the same time it also aims to find out the reasons of extra marital relationship. However, through this exploration, we can observe that he has vividly presented the contemporary scenario of the Indian society which always follows the stream of conventional and unconventional way of life.

**Keywords:** R.K. Narayan, marital relationship, Indian English Literature, fiction, etc.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

R.K. Narayan successfully delineates the different forms of marital and extra marital relationships in his novels. In *The English Teacher* (1945) he shows a happy marital relationship between Krishna, an English teacher and his wife Sushila. His love for his wife is so strong that he could communicate with her after her death. Similarly in *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), Chandaran leads a blissful married life with his wife Susila. But Narayan's two other novels *The Dark Room* (1938) and *The Guide* (1960) fall into a complex category. In *The Dark Room* we find an unhappy married life between Ramani and Savitri - a traditional Indian housewife while *The Guide* shows the traditional and unconventional aspects of the conjugal life.

Through the marital relationship between Raju's father and mother, R. K. Narayan has presented a typical happy Indian married life. They are traditional in their ways and upholders of the ancient way of life. Raju's father is an ideal husband who has built his house with his own hands and run a shop successfully for the welfare of his family. Similarly Raju's mother is a typical Indian housewife who considers her husband as a Pati Parameshwar. Like an ideal housewife she is helpful and critical towards her husband. She warns her husband about the idea of buying Jutka- 'Why should you have all this additional bother in this household...' (Narayan, 34). As they are both illiterate and there is no clash of interest, they are compatible to each other and they suggest a happy conjugal relationship.

The marital relationship between Marco and Rosie is not blissful as they are totally different from each other in spirit and attitude. Rosie notices that her husband is too much interested in books, papers, paintings and old art but she always seeks a 'real and live husband' (Narayan, 76). Rosie is a social girl who loves the company of the people and likes to dance in the open world whereas Marco is a diehard archeologist who likes to avoid the human world and lives in the lifeless ancient sculptures. So we realize the causes of his failure in conjugal relationship with her as he 'was just unpractical, an absolutely helpless man...' (Narayan, 72).

Marco, a man of great academic interests, is above the average tourists and he wanders not for site-seeing and fun but for research and discovery. Like Jagan in R. K. Narayan's *The Vendor of Sweets*, he has no time to spare with his wife and takes no interest in her and always away from the mundane activities of the world. Raju acclaims of Marco in relation to Rosie as 'monkey's picking up a rose garland' (Narayan, 63). He is totally absorbed in 'ruin collecting activities' (Narayan, 73) and interested in 'cold, old stone walls' (73). Seeing his excessive interest in ancient relics, Raju remarks - 'dead and decaying things seemed to loosen his tongue and fire his imagination rather than things that lived and moved and swing their limbs' (Narayan, 72).

Though Marco is a man of great academic interests, he never understands Rosie as a wife and as a human being and never tries to realize her interest and disinterest. While she asks Raju 'Can you show me a cobra..?' (Narayan, 57), he promptly replies 'We have other things to think of Rosie (Narayan, 58).' This statement suggests that he does not have minimum sense how to deal with a wife and he has no value for her request. She had a tremendous interest in dance which he considers as 'street acrobatics' (Narayan, 131). Moreover when she tells him that 'I have so many ideas I would like to try just as you are trying to...' (Narayan, 130), he sarcastically says 'I doubt if you can, it is more different than you imagine' (Narayan, 131).

Marco often forgets his duty as a husband towards his beautiful wife. They are unsuccessful husband and wife and it is not exaggerated to say that there is enough evidence in the text that there is no sexual communion between the married couple.

In chapter five, Raju says "Next morning I found the atmosphere once again blank and tense - all the vivacity of the previous evening was gone..." (Narayan, 70). It is also another reason that she begins to take interest in Raju and does not care in making sexual relationship with him.

Rosie marries Marco in order to gain high status in the society and respect as a wife from her husband While Marco wants a faithful wife like his servant Joseph. Like Raman in Anita Desai's novel *Where Shall We Go This Summer* (1975), Marco has a strong patriarchal mind set up in which there is no respect for her freedom of expression and her ability to carry on her dance. It is easily understandable about the nature of their conjugal relationship which compels her to break the marital relationship and create an extra marital affair.

The different attitudes and spirits between Marco and Rosie bring a catastrophic end in their marital life. When Marco comes to know about Rosie's infidelity with Raju, he shows extreme displeasure and treats her very cruelly and decides to go back to Madras leaving her at Malgudi. He could have shown generosity at this critical situation because it is his negligence that makes her to commit such a crime .When she makes passionate appeal to him - 'I want to be with you,...I want you to forgive me' (Narayan, 134), he is not moved by that and replies - 'I'm trying to forget -even the earlier fact that I ever took a wife...' (Narayan, 135). The most inhuman activity he has done when he says to her at the train 'I have no ticket for you and flourished a single ticket and shut the door on me' (Narayan, 135). C.D. Narasimhaiah analyses that '...Marco for all his erudition looked upon dancing as street acrobatics and he killed Rosie's instinct for life and love of art by denying her both of them' (Narasimhaiah, 132).

Examining the relationship between them, we can claim that it is the neglect of her husband that makes Raju-Rosie relationship credible and acceptable. At Malgudi Railway station, when Raju first sees Rosie, he is overwhelmed and allured by her mesmerizing beauty and at once falls in love with her. His elaboration of her beauty goes as follows '... she did have a figure, a slight and slender one, beautifully fashioned, eyes that sparkle...' (Narayan, 58). Her charismatic physical beauty attracts his mind so powerfully that he becomes mad forever.

When Rosie tries to seek permission from Marco to allow her to start dance practice, he at once rejects the idea. As a way out she bends towards Raju, a railway guide. She is attracted towards Raju because he shows interest for her art i.e. dance. Krishna Sen holds the same point of view-'Rosie feels that Raju is giving her a new lease of life by encouraging her to dance- indeed this is the main reason why she is attracted to Raju' (Sen 11). Rosie says to Raju 'I belong to a family traditionally dedicated to the temples as dancers; my mother, grandmother and before her mother. Even as a young girl I danced in our village temple' Narayan, (75). When he takes her to see a dancing cobra, he observes that her body begins to sway rhythmically in

keeping with the movement of cobra. He realizes that she is a potential dancer or god gifted - 'the greatest dancer in the century' (Narayan, 61). He gives consolation to her and assures her that he would make her top dancer. From then, Raju emerges as a guide of Rosie and his main aim is to fulfill her goal in life. Raju says 'The only reality in my life and consciousness was Rosie' (Narayan, 104).

After her separation from Marco, Rosie realizes that it is Raju who is capable of fulfilling her creative and physical cravings and likes freely in Raju's house as a mistress and a dancer in making under changed situation. He carries various duties for his beloved. He is a guide for her training as a dancer, a manager cum director cum producer for her stage performance and at the same time a youthful and passionate bed companion. The emotional encounter of Raju and Rosie is interestingly described by Narayan. 'At the door number 28,...She opened the...door half open. May I come in ...no no, go away...But on an impulse I gently pushed her out of the way and stepped in and locked the door on the world' (Narayan, 78).

It is only for Rosie that Raju decides to face his maternal uncle boldly and shouts that those who do not like this house are free to go. It is only for her, he discards the codified laws of society and goes against the conventional society. At this critical situation, his mother decides to go with her brother. After that, Raju and Rosie begin to live like husband and wife and make their own paradise. She carries on her dance practice and adopts a new name - Nalini and gets her first opportunity to give a public performance at Albert Mission College.

Krishna Sen says 'From that small beginning, Rosie/Nalini's meteoric rise as a classical dancer soon propels her to the summit of wealth and fame' (12). They are earning a lot and have shifted from the old house to a stylish house at New Extension. She studies *Natya Shastra* of Bharat Muni in order to learn the classical dance forms and looks for ideas in *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. The development of Rosie from a dependent housewife to a self made woman suggests an image of a snake as it generally leaves its old skin and is reborn.

But the extra-marital relationship between Raju and Rosie is not lifelong but temporary and it is shattered to pieces as there is some incompatibility between them. She is well educated and more sophisticated than Raju and so they are totally mismatched and there is also another fact that Raju is perhaps jealous of her fame and success. An emerging quarrel also enhances a way to break their relationship when he conceals Marco's book *The Cultural History of India*. Actually, he is afraid that it would arouse her admiration for her husband. To quote Krishna Sen, 'The ensuing quarrel is the first rift in their relationship' (12). Later, she is also annoyed with the fact that he has acted in forging her signature to get the jewelry box. She expressed her ultimate notion about Raju - 'I felt all along you were not doing right things. This is Karma. What can we do?' (Narayan, 193).

Rosie would allow Raju to make love to her but she, being a Hindu woman, would suddenly become thoughtful and absentminded and think of her husband and says - 'After all, he is my husband, I have to respect him...' (Narayan, 105). Actually, as the days have passed, Rosie becomes tired and irritated with the shows and more of Raju who considers her as his own property or as a medium to earn money. So she feels like 'one of those parrots in a cage taken around village fairs or a performing monkey' (Narayan, 181).

Though Raju raises Rosie as a performing dancer to the summit of success and 'sacrificed his time and profession for the protection of the lady and enabled her to rise so high in the world of arts' (201), it is his possessive instinct that betrays her aspiration, terminates her peaceful life and above all spoils her money. G S. Balarama Gupta believes that 'Raju is a selfish swindler, an adroit actor and a perfidious megalomaniac...' (Gupta, 127). Like Marko, he is not a suitable mate for Rosie as he uses her for his personal gain. So their clandestine relationship is doomed because it is not based on pure love and true understanding.

In this novel, we also encounter a description of marriage of Velan's step-sister who does not like to marry with her cousin's son and has fled from her house on the day of her marriage. She has brought home with great difficulty. After some proper advice from Raju and her family members, she gives her consent- 'I will do what my brother and the other elders at home tell me to do' (Narayan, 26). This marriage has helped R.K. Narayan to generate two important aspects. The first one shows the typical framework of the Indian marriage where a girl accepts to marry a man to keep the words of the family members and secondly, it establishes Raju's reputation as a Swami as Velan thinks that this miracle has done by the former. Velan's sister also accepts this by saying- '...if he looks at you, you are changed' (Narayan, 28).

Thus in his magnum opus *The Guide*, Narayan has very aptly represented the contemporary marital and extra-marital relationships of the Indian society. His treatment of these relationships is both traditional and unconventional or modern. It is unconventional as Rosie leaves her husband and begins to live with Raju and then she creates her own way with her art and intellect which shows a liberated woman in the post independent Indian society. Krishna Sen claims that 'Socially the novel (Guide) charts the transition in India from an old fashioned way of life to a modern and urbanized one' (Sen 66). But being a traditionalist, Narayan always gives emphasis on the happy conjugal life between a husband and wife. Through the marital and extra marital relationships, he has portrayed two types of Indian women - firstly, the traditional who are simple, modest, religious, and the upholders of the ancient Indian way of life and secondly, the emerging class of women who are more modernized and more unconventional in their views and ways of life and they live without the bonds of matrimony to reveal the Indian society more realistic.

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