



## **Problems Of Adaptability And Amalgamation Through Orientalism In R. K. Narayan's The Guide**

S. Pavendhan<sup>1</sup>, Dr. C. Dhanbal<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. Research Scholar (FT) Research Department of English Bishop Heber College (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli, Tamilnadu, India  
Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamilnadu, India Mail : [pavendhan23@gmail.com](mailto:pavendhan23@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>Research Supervisor Associate Professor of English Bishop Heber College (Autonomous), Tiruchirappalli, Tamilnadu, India Affiliated to  
Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli, Tamilnadu, India

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### **Abstract**

The British people tried to make Indians cultured and civilized through their language, English. They have created a power structure and English speaking atmosphere in uncivilized countries. Hence there is a dichotomy between the East and the civilized West. Native language is reduced to a poor level and as a result the colonized begin to imitate the colonizer. Slowly they have become willing slaves under foreign masters. Orientalism has become a style of thought in a large number of writers who have accepted the distinction between the East and the West. The relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power domination and varying degrees of complex of hegemony. Tendency to despotism, aberrant mentality, habits of inaccuracy, backwardness are the characteristics of the Orient. They are different from Occidents. Orientalism is based on the highhandedness of the Occident.

**Keywords:** Subaltern, Hierarchy, Orientalism and Occidentalism.

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### **Introduction**

R. K. Narayan published his classical work, *The Guide* in 1958 at a time when India had already become independent. A great change in the norms and behaviour of Indian people waited. Many people faced temptation to the western modernity. The rest of the people were reluctant to embrace modernity (occidental) but they tried to cling to the traditional (oriental) values of India. The novel presents the elements of Orientalism and Occidentalism and there arises a conflict between them resulting in an amalgamation of the two to make the traditional values win over the western modernity. The independence has brought not only political changes but also social and religious changes, in the mind of Indians.

Corresponding author.

E-mail address: [pavendhan23@gmail.com](mailto:pavendhan23@gmail.com)

The characters delineated by R. K. Narayan in *The Guide* belong to two groups: Raju's Parents and uncle, old school master, Gaffur, the driver, Joseph, the steward of the bungalow where Marco stayed who exhibits the oriental culture. Raju, Rosie and Marco bear the occidental traits-features of western or modern culture and manners. The first group always clings to the traditional values. The second group has got a craze for modernity to break through all traditions and taboos.

Raju, the son of sweet shop owner, becomes a tour guide at the railway station in Malgudi. His pleasing personality and interpersonal skills allow him to win the trust and admiration of the tourists and earn the nickname 'Railway Raju'. Tempted by material pleasures like money and comfort, Raju soon finds himself drawn to another source of pleasure Rosie. Marco, an archaeologist and his wife Rosie visit Malgudi and meet Raju as a guide. Their marriage is unhappy marriage. Taking advantage of this feeble marriage, Raju exploits the opportunity by using tempting words on Rosie and grows a love affair with her. Rosie becomes a famous dancer because of her talents and Raju's impressive oratory skills as her manager. They start living together. Raju's mother is against this and she leaves the house to go and live with her brother.

Marco sends jewellery for Rosie. Greed consumes the good self of Raju. Tempted by it, Raju forges her signature. It is found out by Marco as a result Raju is put behind the bars for two years. After two years, he is reluctant to go back to Malgudi because he will be disgraced there as a former prisoner. He goes to Mangal, a small village, where a simpleton named, Velan, mistakes him as a spiritual guru. Raju convinces Velan's sister to get married as per the elder's wishes. Raju becomes an enlightened personality then. Mangal villagers soon ask Raju to perform a fasting to end the famine that has been ravaging their village for several years. Since they believe that Raju is a guru and he will appease the rain Gods to bring forth rain. Raju accepts it and begins the rituals. He is hungry and becomes very weak. He finds within himself a sense of fulfillment. His body grows weaker and he can't walk. Raju asks the villagers to take him to the river to do his ritual. There he utters his final words "Velan, it's raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet up my legs" (TG 14)

The people of Hinduism bow their head low and touch the feet of elders to show their respect. When Raju sits lonely on the river steps after his release from prison, Velan mistakes him to be a guru, a sanyasi, and bows his head and tries to touch Raju's feet. But Raju asks him not to bow his head low before a human being. "Velan rose, bowed low and tried to touch Raju's feet. Raju reclined 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" (TG 15).

Rosie belongs to the Devadasi clan. She is influenced by occidental individuality. She does not want to be a mere puppet in the hands of the male dominated traditional society. Her very name, Rosie, carries a westernized name. It makes her an outsider in the traditional world of Malgudi. Malgudi's traditional domestic setting has no place for any such woman having a non-traditional entity. Raju's traditional mother wonders how she is going to accommodate Rosie in her house. Rosie's marriage is also quite unconventional. She marries an archaeologist with no matching of horoscopes and no consideration of caste. Her marriage reveals how much she is deviated from the traditional values of Indian hierarchy.

Rosie reflects the complex blending of traditional and modernity. The art of dancing is very traditional in India. She has a passion for dancing from her birth. She thinks her husband will support her. But Marco, a dominating kind of man, does not allow her to practise dance. She pines for husband's love and affection. Marco, being a materialistic man, has got no time to spend with his wife. It leads to a rift between them. Marco's behaviour changes Rosie to have an adulterous

relationship with Raju. She goes to the extent of confessing her adultery with Raju and begs a pardon from her husband.

Raju's mother is a traditional Hindu woman; she is astonished to see Rosie coming to Raju's house for shelter after being deserted by her husband. Rosie is a modern woman. The western influence is evident in her attitude, behaviour and temperament. Being a traditional woman, Raju's mother cannot tolerate Rosie to practise dancing in her house. She threatens Raju to abandon Rosie. Later she leaves the house for Raju and Rosie. This reveals the replacement of tradition by modernity. The western culture has brought many changes in the village but caste system and traditional occupations continue to exist. Malgudi seems to be a place where Occidentalism and Orientalism live together.

Raju's fasting to appease the rain gods and bring rain to save the people from the droughts is the most significant ritual in the novel. Ritual is depicted as an ordeal, because this is imposed on the reluctant Raju who has no faith in it. The drought and the plight of the villagers compel him to pray to heaven to send down rain to save the villagers. Narayan does not glorify the superstitious rituals but, at the same time, he does not deny the existence of a strong strain of faith among the villagers. Malgudi is the symbol of modern India under the impact of western civilization. The railway of Malgudi has transformed the simple agricultural community to a sophisticated urban society.

R. K. Narayan portrays the conflict of tradition and modernism in *The Guide* neither through the rejection of westernization nor through the celebration of tradition. He is aware of the transition of the society in modernity and the problems created by the transition "The interface between tradition and modernity is mediated with characteristic irony. Narayan is interested in looking at the extent to which the cultural life of the poet can be viably integrated with the post independence reality of India" (Sen 117).

The impact of imperialism has led to a new kind of subjectivity and society emerged in India. Indian modernity is not just an imitation of western modernity. The aspect of Indian modernity includes Enlightenment, Rationalism, Science and Western knowledge. Said states "imperialism involved the practice, the theory and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; "colonialism", which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on the distant territory" (Said 9). Indian modernity has its own path. He has taken critical aspects of western modernity and tried to combine them with India's usable past. Both the western modernism and India's traditions have multiple possibilities and processes. So, the self constitution of India's modernity has diverse culture by the advent of modernity. Makarand Paranjape says

Indian modernity is thus neither anti-traditional nor necessarily pro western it is, instead a complex interplay of multitudinous forces which are sometimes complimentary and sometimes contradictory. Reform, revival, resistance, conflict, collusion, collaboration, capitulation, compromise, adoption, adaptation, synthesis, encapsulation, hybridity and multiculturalism are all a part of India's experiment in modernization. (MakarandParanjape 173)

Raju, being influenced by Occidental modernity dissociates himself from Oriental society and goes after Rosie. He defies the morality of Indian traditional society and so he faces unpleasant repercussions. But he returns to society as a Swami and he achieves redemption.

Rosie, influenced by the individuality of the modern world, transforms to Nalini a classical dancer in traditional India. Narayan points out that one has to go to the West in order to come back to the East. Narayan portrays the characters and settings of the novel to uphold the traditional values

through conflicting and blending them with each other. All the characters in the novel are the symbols of either Orient or Occident. Raju ignores the theory of Karma. He has violated all traditional values of Hinduism. This leads to his miserable life. At last, he meets his redemption but turning himself into traditional swami. Rosie has the notion of western identity.

The Guide depicts not only Indian culture but also the conflict between the Oriental and the Occidental values which are symbolized by Raju's mother and his maternal uncle on one hand and by Raju and Rosie on the other. Narayan delineates two different aspects of Indian culture. Narayan describes two places called Malgudi and Mangal. The arrival of western innovation brings out a lot of changes in Malgudi. Malgudi represents the rich traditions of classical dance by Rosie or Nalini and the breath taking paintings of Marco's *The Classical History of South India*. Malgudi is bargain between the age old Oriental convention and the cutting edge Occidental human advancement.

Mangal, the neighbouring village symbolises the spiritual dimension of Indian culture presented through Raju's growth into a celebrated Swami. Marco spends his time to bring out the buried treasure of Indian culture. Rosie finds stratification in classical dancing. Raju is ready to undertake fast to appease the rain god for the welfare of the people. Malgudi has become urbanised rich world occupied by Raju and Rosie. It is not the traditional world inhabited by Raju's mother and his uncle. But the villagers of Mangal have got unconquerable faith in Raju thinking that he is a holy man, a sanyasi.

The holy man is an integral part of traditional Indian society having Indian values and wisdom. They believe that his authority is unquestionable and he will be the redeemer of the society. They think that the fasting of sanyasi for twelve days will bring rain. Raju undertakes the ritual. But it is not clear whether it has rained or not. The Brahmin priest might have exploited the innocent people. R. K. Narayan pictures such beliefs but he does not want to glorify whether it has rained or not. There is no hint in the novel. Narayan does not endorse tradition openly but at the same time he does not reject it.

Malgudians have a blind faith in everything that goes in the name of religion. Astrologers and priests play important roles in their lives. No work can be started without consulting an astrologer. Marriages depend wholly on their advice. For building inauguration, inauguration of studio, it is the astrologer, who will tell the auspicious time for it. Belief in astrology is one of the ways which has the support of religion. Synthesis of Orientalism and Occidentalism as revealed in the place Malgudi. R. K. Narayan's Malgudi is a bargain between the Oriental age old convention and the cutting edge occidental human advancement. As the western innovation comes to Malgudi, its own particular indigenous qualities are consumed. Narayan seems to believe the doctrine of Edward Said for the creation of hybrid culture, in uncivilized countries.

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