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R.K.NARAYAN'S 'THE GUIDE' AS A POST-COLONIAL TEXT.

SK ABDUL SALAM, A RESEARCH SCHOLAR, NORTH ORISSA UNIVERSITY. BARIPADA, ORISSA.

ABSTRACT:

The term post-colonialism connotes displacement, destabilization and subversion of the pre-colonial life and cultural roots of the colonised, imposition of the culture of the colonizers upon that of the colonized, a radical change and transformation, formation of new identities and resistance against the cultural imposition and devaluation of native culture and adjustment with the alien culture etc. Now how to cope up with this impact of colonial culture by way of sublimating the native culture is a big challenge to a native writer who embarks upon a mission to write back. Narayan responds to the challenge successfully by remaining non-attached to the complexities of colonialism and showcasing the potential of Hinduism as an operative cosmopolitan philosophy of life encompassing and adjusting all contradictions in its corpus. In this article I have undertaken to assess how Narayan's 'The Guide' is an exploration of how our native culture tries to adjust itself with the set of contradictions that westernization confronts it with. The main signifier of the post-colonial traits of the novel is the advent of railways that bring about a radical change in the economic and social life of south India. The traditional milieu of the place began to vibrate with the influx a new set of people and ideas of life. The railways facilitated access to the far flung and unexplored parts of the sub continent creating new job opportunities like acting as interpreter, tourist guide, military man etc. The winds of change began to sweep across the age old milieu prompting the Malgudians into a swift transformation to thrive in these changed circumstances. Raju changes himself rapidly by rising to the demands of the community and switching in quick succession from one role to another. Raju's transformation from a paper vendor to a tourist guide, 'Railway Raju', and ultimately to a fake saint, the transformation of Malgudi to a holy place where Raju performs miracle as a saint, Rosie's elevation to a classical dancer from a mere 'Debdasi', Raju's marrying Rosie's dissolving her marital tie with Marco and ignoring her position in the traditional social hierarchy, Rosie's turning into Nalini etc all these speak for the post-colonial phenomena in the novel.

Keywords: Post-Colonial, Culture, Transformation, Raju .

Raju's dilemma in the final episode of the novel foregrounding the oscillation between belief and disbelief represents the predicament of a post-colonial Indian who would turn away from modern science and rationality and seek assurance in the world of faith sustained by myths, legends and folktales. Thus the novel may be read as a remarkable attempt at reconciliation between pre-colonial milieu and post-colonial contradictions entailed by colonialization.

In his essay 'Two Great Commonwealth Writers': R.K.Narayan and V.S. Naipaul, George Woodcock raises the question whether a modern Indian can reject westernization, with its political and moral implication. He himself answers this question. According to him the only way to attempt it as Narayan suggests is by withdrawal into one of the two Indian worlds that remained untouched by the intrusion of the Raj and the influences that have survived it. These are the interlocking Worlds of villages, still living largely by traditional techniques as well as beliefs and of the wandering holy men. In Narayan's novel such withdrawal rarely provides a way to self transformation but it does often lead to self discovery. Meenakshi Mukherjee has labelled this withdrawal in terms of the hermeneutics of nostalgia the anxiety of Indianness i.e, going back to a simple pre-colonial past as a reaction against post-colonial hybridity. The phenomenon in Raja Rao, Anand and Narayan came out of their own desire to be rooted. The encompassing Hindu ambience of Narayan's novel has been viewed as a strategy of post-colonial resistance in terms of the recuperation of Pre-colonial values.

Assuredly The Guide delineates an Indian which tries to come to terms with a bewildering set of changes entailed by colonialism by bringing into a sharp focus the magnitude and depth of this change and transformation in post colonial era, the text ensures its claim to be a classic text.

The opening of the novel unfolds how the advent of the railways ushers in substantial transformation in the social pattern of behaviour and ways of living in the traditional milieu of Malgudi. The railways bring a pulsation and dynamism of exotica to the otherwise secluded and uncontaminated of Malgudi facilitating influx of new people and ideas and opening up new avenues of job opportunities. The winds of change sweeping across the country stimulate the characters floating through Mulgudi to adjust them in hectic haste with this western influence. It precipitates Raju's switching over from a mere newspaper vendor to a tourist guide. P Gaffur, the hotel employes, forest officers, village people arranging cobra shows, the owner of the photo store- all contributing to an entertainment and tourism industries and thriving from them. In the role of a fake sannyasi Raju wins the faith of the villagers in him as their spiritual guide by giving spiritual sustenance and succour to them in their distress and there by giving Malgudi a holy association.

The wave of western influence splashed even into Malgudi's private contours of love, romance and conjugality. Raju with his newly acquired modernity and dynamism proves himself to be a better substitute than Marco for Rosi and ultimately breaks her away from the bond of her wedlock with Marco paving a smooth way for her hitting as a Bharatnatyam dancer per excellence under the sobriquet at Nalini. Raju's dilemma in the final episode where he hesitates, cogitates, vacillates between self preservation and his

feigned sainthood which won the faith of the gullible villagers in him as their messiah in time of calamity, typifies the oscillation of a post – colonial Indian who would seek for succour in the domain of their belief fostered by the myths, legends and folktales of their land in spite of their exposure to science and rationality.

To conclude , the novel may read as an intelligent and interesting attempt by the novelist at reconciling tradition and modernity pre- colonial values and post colonial complexities unleashed by colonialism.

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