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## HUMAN VALUES IN R.K.NARAYAN'S 'THE GUIDE'

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### Abstract

Published in 1958, *The Guide* is the most acclaimed novel of R. K. Narayan that won him not only immense popularity but also the Sahitya Academy Award for 1960. '*The Guide*' is an imaginative locale created by Narayan. The attempt in this Research Paper is made to show, how through the series of '*The Guide*' novel Narayan presents the human values, social values, customs and traditions which have been in existence and still continue to play a major role in shaping the lives of people. The important family themes like Marital fidelity, husband-wife & father-son relationship, parental love and lack of communication between the old and the young generation etc. all are beautifully dealt by Narayan in his novels.

*The best portion of a good man's life is his little, nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love.*

**- William Wordsworth**

Man needs some values in him and in his profession to be popular. Narayan has an immense assortment of challenging aspects in him to check success in his goal. If a reader takes up Narayan's works, the first thing that hits the eye is their immense variety. He has written on every conceivable subject between heaven and earth. He chooses certain moments of utmost importance in the lives of his characters, and then explores those moments with care. He also paints life as it is, without caring for any instant or distant aims. He is a detached artist, but never drops his sympathy for his character. He introduced subjects and characters which are vulnerable to comic-treatment. He has become extraordinarily successful in making English both graceful and functional.

Narayan has reached the reputation of being one of the greatest evocative artists, because of his ease, limpidness and modishness. Malgudi is Narayan's Caster Bridge. His careful selection and ordering of material and all that is outside his range is carefully disdained. By exercising such arty self-control, Narayan has achieved magnitude. His sole aim is to involve and entertain his readers by presenting before them life's little ironies rationally and dazzlingly. If there is any message, it is never conspicuous and it is for the readers themselves to stockpile it from their reading of novels. Objectivity and neutrality are the hallmarks of Narayan's genius.

His chronicling of the life at the "back of beyond" township of Malgudi has been recognized as a unique attempt to create the outer framework of a regional novel, which essentially captures the spirit of humanity in general and India in particular. Narayan is a penetrating analyst of human passions and human motives, which makes him a great critic of human conduct. He presents both the good and the evil and never takes sides. He holds a mirror to nature and like a mirror shows nature truthfully without any distortion. Despite this, he does take the pain to communicate that bad or evil actions lead to similar consequences and good actions yield good results. There is no doubt that Narayan's vision is essentially moral, for the problems, he sets himself to resolve in his novels are largely ethical. Besides, it usually revolves

**HUMAN VALUES IN R.K.NARAYAN'S 'THE GUIDE'**

around Hindu traditionalism in Narayan's works, and involves a confrontation when that traditionalism is defied by the characters that entertain a more modern and more innocently individualistic values. Existentialism is to be or not to be, to be satisfactory with the worlds around us or should we change ourselves according to the 'worlds' or change these 'worlds' according to our need and desires. The world however is not the place alone. It is in fact the men, women, their actions and reactions that make a world, where each character perceives the world from a personal point of view and makes his choices.

The paper seeks to explore the human values embedded in his novel 'The Guide'. Interestingly, in '**The Guide**', Narayan's main characters resist the traditional, religious and familial duties and then accidentally drift towards their destined destiny, because, in Narayan's system the deviation or confusion caused by the non-adherence of norms definitely leads to adverse outcomes. However, as stated Narayan's moral vision is not consciously or explicitly cultivated in his writing. They are incidentally and inherently part of his art of story telling and of the cultural environment, which is the background for all his stories. Thus, Narayan's message in 'The Guide' also, has to be garnered by the readers themselves according to their own respective intuitions.

'**The Guide**' begins with realistic settings and everyday happenings in the lives of a cross-section of Indian society with characters of all sections. Gradually fate or chance, fault or blunder transforms mundane events to fantastic happenings. Unexpected disasters befall the hero as easily as unforeseen good fortune. The characters accept their fates with an equanimity that suggests the faith that things will somehow turn out happily. This, in a way implies the basic viewpoint of the novelist and depicts the approach towards life he seems to advocate. Raju, like a leaf drifts away with the wind of circumstances, reaches his lowest point when he gets imprisoned, is given a second chance and then hopes for a better tomorrow.

In the novel '**The Guide**', the protagonist Raju encounters questions of traditional existence when he sets out to realise his dreams and aspirations. He does not care to abide by the social and moral norms when it comes to Rosie. He seduces Rosie, the other man Marco's wife, begins living with him and thus, violates a major conventional order. The whole society including his own widowed mother stands against him but he puts a blind eye on the severity of the chaotic situation. He gets into financial trouble and becomes a kind of social outcast due to his relationship with Rosie, but he refuses to mend his ways and thus fails to bring order and harmony in his own life and his surrounding society. Raju's life becomes a total failure and he earns the wrath of everyone around him because he deals erratically with each one of him or her. Strikingly, Narayan's human experience and compassion constitute a mature existential vision which is vitalised by his humorous narration and given depth by his acceptance of traditional and religious values. The values at various points in his narratives place his characters in moral relief. His humour discriminates, between the permanent and the strange and thus, while Narayan gently mocks some peculiar, pretentious or hypocritical attachments to traditional customs. In the novel '**The Guide**', Raju is portrayed as an ordinary and not-so-great human being and Narayan presents in a humorous yet serious vein. His clumsy attempts at realising his potential for greatness and also the spectacle of his efforts towards maturity that is spiritually enlightening and morally uplifting. We see Raju maturing before us by

### HUMAN VALUES IN R.K.NARAYAN'S 'THE GUIDE'

stages, over a period of time. His self-awareness is hard earned but not in the way in which a tragic character earns it. The cleansing takes place no doubt, but not in the heroic strain. As Raju is a kind of anti-hero, Narayan does not show this 'common man' reach the tragic height of Shakespeare's protagonists, although, Raju's self awareness and the sense of social and spiritual fulfilment that results from it in the end is something that astonishes us and elicits appreciation. Narayan's fiction combines different facets of life and experience. Narayan views human relations, traditional values and conventions as essential elements of an orderly human life. Besides, he also seems to believe that in order to attain harmony and peace in human life it is very essential to give due attention to relationships because, man is basically a social animal and relations give stability to his existence. The marital relationship between Marco and Rosie breaks down, because, in the beginning, Marco neglects Rosie and later Rosie dares to break the chains and refuses to blindly respect and revere the tradition of marriage. The severing of relationship brings emotional trauma in its wake. Both, husband and wife eventually suffer and repent for not giving due regard to their mutual relationship. The relationship between Marco and Rosie in **'The Guide'** is not based on conventional philosophic values. This couple does not share the ideal kind of bond and therefore, their relationship does not become everlasting and in Narayan's system, is bound to bring doom. Thus, the role of traditional values and philosophical touch to human relationship has been emphasised by Narayan apparently in **'The Guide'** too, like his other novels. Narayan presents the characters passing through a period of struggle and transformation, but, towards the end they attain a new vitality, which provides them with a new explication of common situations. The normalcy in the life of Raju comes, only because of his submission to traditional values and self-realisation. Further, Narayan's vision also embodies the great theory of order and disorder. He applies a pattern in almost all his novels including **'The Guide'**. This pattern is found in the relationship between Raju and his mother, Marco and Rosie and even Raju and Rosie. Order and peace prevails in these relationships in the beginning, but this order does not remain for a long time. These relationships do not attain any suitable dimension because the motives of the individuals involved in these relationships clash with each other and their viewpoints and attitudes differ from each other.

Narayan's knowledge of Indian classical literature, philosophy, religion, morals and ethics pervades his writing, but as said already, he does not burden unnecessarily his readers with discourses on his viewpoint and vision. This is perhaps, Narayan views life's lapses not with any missionary kindness or zeal, but, with the understanding and sympathy of an artist. So, behind the narrative mask of his novels, Narayan attempts to portray a vision of life, a life of opposing dualities, of appearance and reality, beliefs and betrayals.

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