

The Guide

CLASSMATE

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- R. K. Narayan

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Paper - VII

Unit - IV

Topic - The Guide

Lecture - 01

Critical Appreciation of The Guide OR

Theme of the novel The Guide

Even as R. K. Narayan is not a committed writer like Anand, nor is he obsessed, nor is he obsessed with the philosophical and spiritual questions like Raja Rao, he does present, in his novels, a kind of social realism. He is much more concerned with the social problems haunting round in the bandwagon of art than in the pure aesthetic presentation of scenes and passions. However, he does not comment on anything overtly. It is ~~who~~ we who have to draw conclusion about the themes from the way they are discussed and treated.

Deterioration of moral values in a fast changing world, the oppression of women in Indian homes, the evils of commercialism, the gullibility of the superstitious masses, the incapability of fate - these are some of the issues that form the core of most of Narayan's novels. In The Guide Raju, the central character gets caught in a web of deceit and moral de-

generation in his quest to become rich and famous, until he redeems himself by a close analysis of his inner self. Rosie, the central female character becomes a victim of her husband's uncaring attitude. Though she breaks away from her husband to realise her passion for dance, she suffers endless pangs of guilt which is the natural consequence of social conditioning for wife expected to live in the traditional mode.

The whole novel can be viewed as a comedy in three acts: Raju's love for Rosie, his jail life and eventual reward for his qualities. His death is not punishment of the villain, it is a death of a martyr. This vindicates the theme of transformation of a sinner to saint. The transformation becomes more authentic as the focus is on Raju's character and not on a section of society. The encounter between Velan and Raju forces Raju to move from deception to self-analysis and then to confession. Raju is a changed man at the end of the novel. Even if he has undertaken the fast out of compulsion he is later moved by a real need to live up to the image—

If by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom, and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly? For the first time in his life he was making an earnest effort, for the first time he was learning the thrill of full application, outside money and love; for the first time he was doing a thing in which he was not personally interested"

Even the first phase of the life of

The protagonist is presented as a comedy in three acts by the adjournment. Lawyer: Villain, Marco trying to drive away his wife, Raju's humanitarian efforts to shelter her and help her stand on her legs and finally the villain's effort to ruin humanitarian Raju by implicating him in the false case of forgery, of signature. The story of Raju in each phase tells how he rose to fame from ordinary level. This links to another favourite theme of Narayan - an average man rising to the pinnacle of glory and the slipping back into its early phase. In The Guide, however, the nemesis is ironically the reward also for the hero. Even the bored house wife, Rosie, too ascends her artistic heights. Both Raju and Rosie become public personalities. Ultimately, one through self immolation for suffering humanity and the other through dedication to art for the common man. Once they submerge their individualities into social self, they fulfill themselves and rise to enviable heights.

[** Continuing **]