

# Exploring the Profound Use of Symbols in R.K. Narayan's The Guide

Dr. Archana Sharma

*Amity School of Languages, Amity University Madhya Pradesh, Gwalior, India*

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**ABSTRACT:** Symbols play an important role in describing the author's thoughts, emotions, and perceptions in literary works. A symbol is described as a figure of speech in which a person, situation, word, or object is used to represent another thing. Narayan was the master of using various symbols fetched from nature such as rivers, hills, and snakes throughout his novels. He wrote several novels, and *The Guide* is one of his masterpieces. This research paper focuses on the extensive application of Indian symbols and their impacts throughout the story of the novel *The Guide*. It emphasizes how symbols convert complexity into simplicity in terms of imparting ideas. They are also helpful in provoking emotions and grabbing the readers' attention.

**Key words:** Symbols, literary works, masterpieces, complexity, extensive, imparting, grabbing

## INTRODUCTION

R.K. Narayan was known as one of the greatest wordsmiths of initial Indian English literature. He penned down various books based on mythology, non-fiction, and fiction for his beloved readers across the world. One of his best works is the well-known autobiographical trilogy "Swami and Friends," "The Bachelor of Arts," and "The English Teacher." The book "Swami and Friends" introduced the well-known fictional town of "Malgudi." He was compared to William Faulkner on a serious note because of his empathy for his characters and his emphasis on the social background. Regarding his writing, Narayan always manages to connect with the audience. His method included common sense and a built-in sense of humour. Narayan's portrayal of beauty and comedy in tragedy drew comparisons between him and Chekhov from critics. His descriptive writing style, which favours realism above analysis, makes for a more genuine and realistic story. He consistently stated that a person's identity is confused by the expectations of society. He did a great job of accurately and simply putting all of the situation's components on paper.

## BACKGROUND OF THE NOVEL

*The Guide* is an engrossing novel based on the life of a scoundrel that began as a comic book but it has something different. Precisely, the book offers abundant aspects of the regular lives of the people of India. Malgudi serves as a small town having different cultural systems, superstitions and values of the people which brings Indian people together.

Initially, in the novel, the protagonist, Raju, is a little lad who resides in Malgudi, a South Indian town with his parents. Raju works in his father's business near the railway station to support his family after his father, a shopkeeper, passed away when he was a small boy. Raju decided to become a Malgudi tourist guide after realizing one day that many of the people who get off trains are tourists and that they are always looking for guides.

Raju poses as a tour guide, but it's fake since he misinforms gullible travellers about popular destinations. Raju soon rose to fame as a tourist guide in his hometown, earning the nickname "Railway Raju" from the locals. A new character named Marco Polo appears. He is a dedicated researcher who travels to Malgudi to learn more about the town's old temples, paintings, and caves. He takes his stunning wife, Rosie, on an exploration of the town's temples and exquisite paintings in Malgudi. Raju is the tour guide he employs. The narrative now shifts to Rosie, who asks Raju to assist her in getting to know Snake Charmer so she can witness the snake dance. When Rosie noticed Snake Charmer, Raju assisted her in meeting him.

Later on, Rosie is presently alone in Malgudi and doesn't know how to go back domestic so she chooses to go to Raju's domestic to look for offer assistance from him. When she goes to Raju's domestic his mother is shocked after observing a lady in her domestic, but gradually she acknowledges her. A short time later, Raju learns through his mother that Rosie is from a lower caste family, she was hitched to Marco fair to raise her standard in society.

When Raju's neighbour learns approximately Rosie living in their domestic, they begin spreading gossipy tidbits like Raju and his mother are living with a hitched lady who has a place in a lower caste family. Raju is confronting a money-related issue as his shop isn't running well and he is additionally not got any unused visitor clients since Marco. The story presently presents Uncle Raju and the brother of his mother who was stunned by the appearance of a lower caste lady in

their house. Raju and his uncle have a battle in which Raju's mother takes the side of his brother, she chooses to take off her possession domestic with his brother whereas Raju and Rosie are cleared out alone at domestic.

The life of Raju is full of issues presently since he was as of now confronting a monetary issue and presently his mother and uncle moreover cleared him alone within the house. When Rosie learns about the money-related issue of Raju, she chooses to seek after her energy which is moving, she begins practising her craftsmanship of classical move. Rosie dropped her English title "Rosie", and chose a modern title which is Nalini. One day, Rosie reported that she was prepared to make her move to the world. Rosie began performing on arrange with the assistance of Raju who got to be her supervisor, her big appearance move execution got to be a tremendous victory in town, and they made an extraordinary fortune out of it. His eagerness for cash in Raju increments day after day, and he begins booking back-to-back movie exhibitions which makes Rosie tired and bored of dance as her dream was to gotten to become the finest artist in the world, not a money-making object.

The issue in Raju's life happens when he gets an unforeseen allocate from Marco which could be a book for Rosie, Raju doesn't need Marco in Rosie's life once more so he stows away the book from her. He too stows away a letter from Marco which he composed to provide back all her gems. Raju signs a fake signature of Rosie as he needs to require all her adornments from Marco without letting Rosie know. Afterwards, Raju's wrongdoing is uncovered and he is sentenced to 2 a long time in jail. After discharging from jail Raju sits on the banks of the Waterway considering almost his future, there he meets an unusual man named Velan who considers him a Sacred man and begins sharing his issues with him. Raju makes a difference in persuading his sister to wed a man whom Velan has considered for her. As a result, Raju got to be prevalent within the town and changed himself into a Holy man.

A while later, there comes an issue of the extremely dry season in town since of no rain which influences the town and due to error, villagers begin accepting that Raju can bring out the rain by taking 2 weeks long quickly. Raju began fasting for two weeks to bring out rain, the news of his quick began spreading over the town and he became increasingly well known within the town. On the final day of his quick Raju got to be so powerless incapable of going on the banks of the stream to carry vigil. Velan makes a difference by going near the waterway and within the conclusion he becomes oblivious after telling Velan that he has a feeling that rain is coming over the mountain.

The book story closes with tension, we do not know what happens to Raju, whether the rain will come or not.

### **DEPICTION OF SYMBOLS IN 'THE GUIDE'**

In The Guide, there are many natural things such as the Mempi hills, a symbol of neutral and indefinite fate and the Sarayu River, a symbol of the continuity of the universe and the definiteness of fate. Due to this quality, the river Sarayu occurs again and again in other novels of Narayan. Another natural body, the cave where Rosie and Marco fought each other and parted their ways. Rosie is also seen as the symbol of vibrant life whereas Marco is a symbol of the hardness and harshness of modern civilization.

Narayan being a true Indian novelist has used symbols like temples, rivers, villages, caves, snakes, and dance to draw an original picture of Indian life and not to pander to the expectations of the Western man. The Swamis, the snakes, the beggar, Bharatnatyam and yoga are used by novelists like Raja Rao to offer an easy way to the tourists of our country. However, Narayan does not imply these symbols as the necessary structure to paint pure India and its authentic sensibility.

The symbol of the snake is extended much further in The Guide, where Narayan created his most complex woman character, Rosie (Nalini). The complexity created lies in the roles she assumes, and the degree to which we as readers take them to be impersonations or identifications.

There is another kind of symbol in The Guide. The novel shifts from Raju's early life to his doom day. This symbolizes the life journey of a person from unawareness to awareness, from thoughtless love to selflessness, from worldly involvement to spiritual detachment and from vanity to modesty. In the story of the hero's life from childhood to youth and death, the novelist tries to show an ordinary man becoming an extraordinary man, a saviour, a martyr who sacrifices himself for the sake of humanity. Thus, Raju's story of life is symbolic of the common man's journey from ignorance to knowledge. But it is not the kind of death he visualizes when he utters this sentence. It is rather the glorious death of a martyr of one who lays down his life to bring rain (which here symbolizes life) consciously or unconsciously incorporated into the work.

But while Narayan depicts the old and new coexisting side by side, Hardy depicts the rural way of life disappearing and urban culture encroaching on rural life. Both the modern complexity of life and the pastoral simplicity coexist. The scientific and technological era has arrived, but there are still supporters of the traditional way of life.

The symbol of the snake is extended much further in *The Guide*, where Narayan created his most complex woman character, Rosie (Nalini). The complexity created lies in the roles she assumes, and the degree to which we as readers take them to be impersonations or identifications. Rosie's past is set in the context of Raju's narration of events of his former life. Rosie, unlike Shanti Bai, is frank. "I belong to a family traditionally dedicated to the temples as dancers; my mother, grandmother, and before her, her mother. Even as a young girl, I danced in our village temple. You know how our caste is viewed.... we are viewed as public women."

Rosie's situation gets murky when she tries to break free from her caste and integrate into a respectable society. Her yearning for passion and her need to dance, both represented by the snake and the snake dance, work against her position as a wife.

Her first attempt to contain all her needs within marriage ends hopelessly. Marco, her husband, neither understands her dance, which he calls "street acrobatics" nor her needs for the pleasure of living. What is your interest, Raju asks her and she answers: "Anything except the cold, old stone wall." "She liked to loaf in the market, eat in the crowded hotel, wonder about, see a cinema this common pleasure seemed to have been beyond her reach all these days." He says, "You are not my wife. You are a woman who will go to bed with anyone who flatters your antics."

The second irony is that, although Rosie is ready to give up and set aside any hopes of pursuing a career in dancing, Marco abandons her, leaving her with no alternative but to go to Raju and rely only on her dancing for her livelihood.

Paradoxically the more she is outside ordinary social rules, the more traditional her values become her friends are artists: "They have the blessing of Goddess Saraswati on them, they are good people."

Through her appearance within the novel, at that point, there's nonstop extremity and strife inside Rosie (Nalini), the pressure between the life of energy and the requirement for respectability spoken to by her possess family of artists and her husband Marco; afterwards, the indecision between her got to move and the inescapable commercialism of her exhibitions which makes her deny the life of a dancer; the drag between the require of her life and the call of her craftsmanship. There's a persistent move of accentuation inside the values she endeavours to include and resolve. This strife inside Rosie (Nalini) is parallel to the equivocal reactions she brings out.

The theme of the wind move is carefully worked all through the book to bring out the uncertainty, which is portion of Rosie's make-up. On her entry at Malgudi, she begins with words to Raju that she needs to see a lord cobra moving and it is the exploration for the cobra that withdraws the two together (we note that Marco considers this a "morbid interest" and denies to go) Raju himself is repulsed by the wind but when he sees Rosie mirroring the cobra development, has the sudden conviction that she is the most noteworthy artist within the nation.

The final of Nalini's exhibitions that Raju goes to moreover closes with the wind move. It is the music and her move that lift the cobra from being an "underground reptile" into "an animal of elegance and holiness, an adornment of the Gods." The affiliation between Nalini and the two viewpoints of the wind is clear: grittiness and energy, deliberation from energy. Raju observing her eyes as in case for the primary time reviews his mother's caution. He considers cautioning Mani afterwards of the temptation and heartlessness of her magnificence but knows at the same time that within the inward interest of her claim life and craftsmanship, she takes off these qualities.

There's another kind of image within *The Guide*. The novel moves from Raju's childhood to his passing. This symbolizes the travel of a common man from obliviousness to information, from childish adore to charitableness, from materialistic association to otherworldly separation and from conceit to humility. In the story of the hero's life from childhood to youth and death, the novelist tries to show an ordinary man becoming an extraordinary man, a saviour, a martyr who sacrifices himself for the sake of humanity. Thus Raju's story of life is symbolic of the common man's journey from ignorance to knowledge. But it is not the kind of death he visualises when he utters this sentence. It is rather the glorious death of a martyr of one who lays down his life to bring rain (which here symbolizes life) consciously or unconsciously incorporated into the work.

Be that as it may, Solid appears the vanish the country's mode of living and the urban culture impinging upon provincial life, while Narayan portrays both the ancient and modern existing side by side. There exists peaceful straightforwardness as well as the modern complexity of life. The period of science and innovation has set in, however, the ancient way of life has its votaries.

## CONCLUSION

The Guide, thus, is a masterpiece of symbolism and mythical references. Raju remembers what his mother used to tell him that the rain would always be decent for his sake for the benefit of the whole world. It is because of this point that he is ready for the self-imposed ordeal of self-immolation to bring rain to the drought-hit Mangala Village. He knew about great men who sacrificed themselves for the sake of others. It shows the simple and pure faith of the villagers which can even transform the pseudo saint like Raju. The Sarayu reminds us of the great temple made in memory of the visit of Raju. Mangala village has a rich symbolic overtone of evocative power. Raju supposed death by water may not look like the crucifixion of Christ, but his last words are almost prophetic: 'Velan, it's raining in the hills, I can feel it coming feet, up my legs—'

This action is an attempt to enliven the classical Hindu Mythology and legends where people have sacrificed themselves for the sake of others.

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