

English Honours

Semester II

CC 3

1. Discuss the use of double-narration in *THE GUIDE*.

Or,

Comment on Narayan's technique of Narration in *THE GUIDE*.

Ans- R.K.Narayan, an important Indian English artist, story -teller and novelist is never concerned with elaborate technical experiments or show off of artistic skills. In most of his novels , there is a classical beginning, middle and end with a succession of chronological events without any deep probing into the mind or subconscious. In spite of that, Narayan has , according to E.M. Froster , “ the primitive power of keeping the reader in suspense and playing on his curiosity.” Like the traditional narrative, his novels are generally written in direct style, without any sub-plot, easy flow of words, well contrived structure and narrative technique.

However “The Guide” draws attention to itself for its somewhat unusual narrative technique which at its subtlest. The novel uses the literary technique of a frame narrative – that is, it is a story within a story, as Narayan tells the reader the story of Raju's life and Raju narrates the story of his past life to Velan. This technique of double narrative is full of flashbacks and time shifts. The narrator continuously switches between first person and third person narration. The novel can be understood in two parts; Part one traces his growth as a child, as a tourist guide , as Rosie's lover and his imprisonment. The second part paints his growth as a Swami. The two time schemes and narratives move alternatively and help in removing Raju's confusion and bringing out the irony of his life. While one narrative paints him as a criminal, the other shows the gradual deepening of his saintly aura. The novel by moving from Raju's childhood to death, depicts man's journey from ignorance to wisdom and birth to death. The narrative is thus , circular and cinematographic.

As Raju is the narrator of his past, he is seen in his narrative as he wishes to be seen. There is nobody to question him and he has the freedom to present himself in any colour. Being a mood to confess , he points out his

feelings. After a few sentences about Rosie and Marco , he starts narrating his experience from childhood. “ My troubles would not have started but for Rosie” from the association of ideas , he thinks of Marco whose coldness has ruined his life. Having thrust the reader and Velan in the middle of the story , he leisurely traces the story of his childhood. Narayan handles Raju’s roles so well that inspite of Raju narrating from his own point of view , we do not know the real Raju. He portrays himself as he wants to be seen and at no stage does Narayan question what he says. In fact , the two narrators have the same humour, self – criticism ironic attitude. Raju’s narrative is detached charged with self- criticism, but not self- debasement , with irony not ridicule. Thus , his character remains ambiguous till the end.

Since both the narratives move simultaneously , the use of parallelism can be seen. After a short but brisk romance with Rosie, Raju concludes the narration of his romance. While narrating this experience he is mentally transported from the temple to Rosie. The novelist at this stage subtly takes over the narrative of the second phase of his life, leaving Raju with Rosie in the hotel room. At this stage his love and dignity as Swami matures. Therein, starts the reversal of his fortunes. Similarly, at the end of his confession he says, “ I am not a saint , Velan , I am just an ordinary man”” I was accepted by Marco as a member of the family” .

In Narayan’s plot there is a mixture of the comic and serious , the real and the fantastic . So, is the case with “The Guide”. Raju , the poor becomes the rich, the convict gets the reputation and regard of the saint, the holy man and the Swami. There is squalor , poverty and misery in the life of Raju , on the other hand there is relief, which is beautiful and charming Rosie . Raju’s development from an ignorant guide to an altruistic swami is a result of events which in turn influence his character since character and action develop through a logical sequence of events , there is nothing superficial in the narration . Though Raju’s narration and the author’s throw light on character the technique flashback and double narration also arouses the curiosity and the interest of the reader never flags. The technique of double perspective – use of two narrators, i.e. Raju and Narayan – also creates an illusion of depth and shows a dichotomy between the ordinary and extraordinary selves of Raju.

To sum up, we may say that the cinematographic or photographic technique of Narayan is well suited to his theme. Narayan ‘s has a gift of sketching pen pictures that bring scenes and characters vividly to life without

taking recourse to ornate or excessive description. The tone of "The Guide" is quite and subdued. The novel is narrated on two planes- past and present , from two points of view and since the narratives moves without jerks, it proves Narayan's skill as a born story teller.