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## Backlash against the Mistreatment of Beauty and Body in R.K Narayan's 'The Guide'

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### Abstract

This paper proposed to explore R.K Narayan's effort to redefine the status of women in the society. In the novel 'The Guide', Rosie, the heroine, made sensations through her quest for identity. I would like to apply the theories of Radical cultural feminism to demonstrate Rosie's emersion from a degenerated 'public woman' to a respected classical dancer. Her conviction to strength, her economic stability prompted her to break marital bondage. Rosie's decision to fight against sexism is the impact of her thought 'Consciousness Raising' which is the key concept of Radical Feminism.

**Keywords:** Misuse, Backlash, Emersion, Feminism, Femininity, Consciousness Rising

### Introduction

This paper proposed to analyze R.K Narayan's effort to redefine the status of women in the society, in which opportunities are always restricted for women. His feminist sensibility demonstrated through Rosie, the heroine who explores her talent rather than reducing her an ideological image prescribed by the society. Feminism in Indian literature is a byproduct of western feminist movement. With the advent of freedom struggle women become conscious of their rights to education, employment, identity in the patriarchal society. They raise their voice against exploitation and oppression. This is quite evident in the writings of Indian writers in English. The same fact is observed in *the common wealth Review*:

Feminism being an important movement in the modern world, women's place, position and especially the question of her identity are the major issues in India also. In India, since ages, a women's role in life was strictly compartmentalized: she was a daughter, a wife or a mother. In all these roles she had to adhere to certain appointed norms; she had no separate identity as a human being... Things are changing nowadays, especially among the sections where education and material prosperity have ushered in a degree of enlightenment in common with women all over the world. Indian women are also voicing their desire to be emancipated, to get rid of the unjust restrictions imposed on her and the pervasive discrimination against her. She is seeking the right to be regarded as a whole human being not simply as an adjunct to her make relations.

In this paper, I want to foreground the emersion of Rosie as an assertive individual in the light of radical feminist theories. Radical feminist are attempted to change the patriarchal System in the existing society. Sue-Ellen has rightly remarked in this connection: "...The patriarchy is the primary cause of women's oppression." In the patriarchal system, male dominates female and it becomes the root cause of so many problems.

In the novel "The Guide" Rosie, the heroine made sensations in the patriarchal society. I felt some similarities in between the revolutionary views of Radical cultural feminist and Narayan's attempt to take a twist in the emersion of Rosie, in which she neither succumb to Marco nor to Raju, but she embarrassed her profession of dance, which she consider as a boon.

Rosie is the finest creation of R.K Narayan, with her naïve beauty, firm determination making her way to achieve goal. Rosie comes from the family of temple dancers. She has given to receive formal education and post graduate in Economics. In her adolescent age, she expressed rebel attitude towards the restrictions and taboos imposed upon Devadasi women,

from the very beginning she is confident and clear in her vision. Rosie's beauty and education gave way to married off to Marco, a rich bachelor of high social background and academic excellent. Here, the fact is that a woman's worth is measured in terms of her beauty. Rosie is a commodity or object to Marco to do everything for him at the right time without any objection. Later she becomes an object for sexual gratification and money generation machine for Raju. Here R.K Narayan successfully portrayed Rosie's saga of predicament as she is maltreated by her husband and her lover and consciously break the constraints by her own transmutation to an assertive woman.

The marriage between Marco and Rosie is a union of two different outlook individuals. Marco, who is much dedicated to his scholastic profession, makes him indifferent to his wife and her talents. He never tries to consider her dance nor her requirement for innocent and sensuous pleasures in her marital life. The polarity in their marital life prompted Rosie to illegal relationship with Raju.

Rosie's transformation into 'Nalini' is in a way her spiritual transformation through her dance. Her dance decides and defines her fate. In her marital life, she got frustrated to think about dance, the substance of her soul later through the dance she got seduced by Raju who began to exploit her talent as a channel for money and fame. RK Narayan has used Raju to demonstrate the sexuality. Raju seduced by the beauty of Rosie "I watched her critically, but what I watched were the curves that tempted me to hug her on the spot.....whenever I watched her sway her figure, if there was no one about. I constantly interrupted her performance, although I was supposed to watch her from an art critic's point of views". (TG, 163)

When Marco got hints of her adultery with Raju, he fires questions to her and recklessly abandoned her. Here R.K Narayan depicted the instinct of a faithful wife in her. Quickly realizing her mistake, Repentant Rosie begs for pardon:

"I realized I had committed an enormous sin.....my mind was greatly troubled. I didn't want anything more in life than to make my peace with him. I didn't want to dance. I felt lost....."(TG, 133)

She sincerely apologizes to him, but in vain Marco ignored her totally. She begs: "I have come to apologize. I want to say I will do anything you want to do. I committed a blunder" (TG, 150) but Marco reacted in a cold way.

"You are not my wife. You are a woman who will go to bed with anyone that flatters your antics... (TG, 152)

Radical feminist perceived themselves as revolutionaries rather than reformers. These feminist thought of "consciousness rises". When Rosie realized the forgery committed by Raju, he wondered at the response of Rosie.

"I thought she would breakdown, she often broke down on small issues". But Rosie responds in unagitated manner.

Radical feminist agreed in principle that sexism is the most widespread or deepest form of woman oppression. Radical feminist split into two groups – Radical libertarian feminist and radical cultural feminist. These feminists voiced different views about how to fight sexism. Radical cultural feminist claimed that sexuality is the primary locus of male power in which women-harming gender relations are constructed. On the contrary to the views of Radical libertarian feminist. They proposed that it is better for woman to be strictly female/feminine. They should try to

be more like woman emphasizing the value and virtues culturally associated with woman and try to deemphasize the values and virtues culturally associated with men When Rosie realized forgery committed by Raju and he gets arrested. The innocent nature of Rosie is revealed here, she does her best to reduce his punishment and shown her caliber in decision making, dignity, pride and self-esteem. In the critical moment in her life, she proves her managing power to redefine her own individuality by denying the constraints of social mores and assumptions. Rosie defiantly breaks the clutches imposed on her and decides to lead her profession of dance. Here Rosie empowered by the realization that men's control over her life aversively effect on her self-identity, self-respect and self-esteem.

Rosie tells Raju about her decision: "If I have pawn my last possessions I'll do it to save you from jail. But once it's over leave me once and for all, that's all I ask forget me. Leave me to live or die, as I choose; that's all

In "sexual politics" Kate Millet, the radical feminist advocates for sexual revolution, which demands an end to sexual inhibitions and taboos. It ensures sexual freedom. Primarily sexual revolution attempted to abolish both the ideology of male supremacy and traditional socialization of patriarchy. This would help to reexamine the traits of categories as 'masculine' and 'feminine' with reassessment of their human desirability. In this novel 'The Guide' Rosie is a practical minded woman later she observed sexism is the root cause of woman oppression. Her firm determinates to follow her profession is highlighted her rebel nature to oppose the pernicious sexism and prefer the best way to eliminate. Marilyn French, the radical cultural feminist attributes male-female differences more to biology (nature) than to socialization (nurture) and she seems to think traditional feminine traits are somehow better than traditional masculine traits. R.K Narayan's characterization of Rosie is a fine inspiration to subdued woman in our society that she proved her tactfulness to secure her own life at any circumstances that she faced. Response of Rosie is dump like a bombshell to Raju, as he murmured: "It hurt me to see her go through her work, practice and engagement unconcernedly" Mary Daly, the radical-cultured feminist denigrated traditional masculine traits in Gyn/Ecology, Daly decided to reject several of "androgyny". The more she reflected on the traditional concept of femininity. Daly was convinced there is nothing good in to pursue the notions of femininity completely. Women should dare to reject the seemingly "good" aspects of femininity as well as "man-made constraints" shaped for the purposes of trapping women deep in the prison of patriarchy. Daly used Jerzy Kosinski's image of painted bird to detail the differences between "false femininity" and "true femaleness". Her. Raju observes:

"She would never stop dancing; she would not be able to stop. She would go from strength to strength. I know, looking at the way she was going about business, that she would manage whether I was inside the bars or outside, whether her husband approved of it or not. Neither Marco nor I had any place in her life, which had its own sustaining vitality and which she herself had underestimated all along". (TG- 222-223)

Rosie is the finest creation of R.K Narayan with her naïve beauty, firm determination making her way towards the goal. She is more cautious and practical that she used Raju to strengthen her economic stability. Her emersion from a

degenerated 'public woman' to a respected classical dancer helps her to rediscover her own individuality. Her firm determination to ensure her economic stability promotes a sensuous courage to break marital bondage. Although her struggle to ensure identity and existence through a backlash to the concept of patriarchy.

It would be wrong to consider R.K Narayan as a feminist. In terms of western feminism R.K Narayan's rebellion is strongly supported to the views of radical cultural feminism. He launches to bring a change in the status of Indian women. It is absolutely right that R.K Narayan admits the notions of radical cultural feminism to liberate woman in his novel.

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