

The Tale of a Raju in *The Guide*: From a Guide to Peace-Maker

Md. Abdul Momen Sarker¹

Abstract: By nature, people love peace. But, sometimes, they reveal their devastating instincts both towards themselves and others. This phenomenon of conflict between love and hate prevails in many parts of the present world, especially in the Middle East and South-East Asia. Consequently, the extreme sufferings of humanity have impacted the creative writers of the world. This has, off late, become a popular area of literary exercise among fiction writers in South Asia. Following this trend, *The Guide* written by RK Narayan, portrays a bigger picture of a human and humane process peace-building that makes us constantly imagine of and get involved in establishing an ideal world. He, in the novel, proves how important it is for us to have peace in our life, which comes at the cost of self-sacrifice. This paper investigates, through theories and critiques, textuality and intertextuality, how Raju, the central character in *The Guide*, turns into a peace-builder, and how this peace-building puts back calm and happiness in his life as well as in the lives of others around him.

Keywords: Peace, peace-building, ideal world, self-sacrifice

Introduct

In a predominantly capitalist world where individuals are driven by their own greed for material gain, Raju stands as the symbol of the triumph of collective humanism. He is a man, who through the course of the novel, is metamorphosed from a conniving and deceiving cheat into a peacemaker under the influence of the collective religious conviction of his followers. Peace is a complex concept in itself, especially in the modern context. Raju's transformation provides the readers remarkable insights into the process of peacebuilding and into the concept of peace itself. This paper discloses the intricate workings of the relationship between human psychology and peace

¹Department of English, Daffodil International University
Email: momen.eng@diu.edu.bd

and the role of religion by closely examining Raju's psychological transformation and religious reformation. His religious reformation is evident through his activities especially by the end of the novel when he takes an oath to starving for appeasing God with a view to get the rain fall. The lenses of psychology, religion, intertextuality, interfaith are applied while trying to understand the paradigms of peace and peacebuilding in The Guide and particularly in the character of Raju.

Literature Review

The recent researches on The Guide e.g. Dominic (2018), Arunachalam (2017), and Pankaj (2017) show the postcolonial components through the conflict-rupture between pristine Indians like Raju's mother and modernized Indians like Rosie and Raju. They have discussed Indian cultures i.e. social and religious ethos, human customs and what not, which have been prevalent for decades with the Indians. They have not highlighted peace making issues in their writings. Jilani (2018) opines that the conversion of Raju, as a railway boy turned mendacious mentor of spirituality, into an agent of fellow-feelings, which is spiritual in true sense, accentuates the inborn human goodness. Raju, here, is not, albeit partially he is, an authentic peace builder.

Rashed, Rabiul, and Razanur (2017), Rathore and Muzaffar (2015), Neluka Silva (2014) deal with women emancipation through the resolutions to some patriarchal predicaments caused to Rosie and Raju's mother. They show that the kernel character Rosie, as the representative of many women of society, revolutionizes against the rigidly rooted second position of women through her MA in Economics and her toil for the attainment of economic emancipation. But Rosie's vision and mission does not liken to peace making mechanism compatibly. Raju's try and toil of attaining liberal humanism, not Rosie's revolutionary attempt, relates to true peace building. The authors have elaborated the feminist judgment only, which is very narrow in building peace. Social syncretism, which is a must for sustainable peace, is not highlighted.

Research Questions

The paper is intended to explore the following question:

- i) How does Raju transform himself from a railway guide to a peace maker?
- ii) What message does the author intend to pass on to the reader?

Research Objectives

The objective of the research is:

- i) To find out the mechanisms of peace building that Raju, in *The Guide*, attempts to accomplish across the world
- ii) To figure out the positive messages about the possibility of building in the world through the example of the central character, Raju, in *The Guide*

Research Methodology

The paper is a qualitative research dealing with textual analysis. Qualitative research delves deep into the research problem through generating ideas and/or hypothesis. The paper investigates, through textual analysis, the hypothesis of Raju's transformation from a tourist guide to peace-maker. The nature of the textual analysis is descriptive, exploratory and explanatory. The paper describes the relevant contents of *The Guide*, explores through them and explain them with a view to justifying Raju's transformation.

Theoretical framework is also inculcated in the article. The paper is imbued with the theories of Nietzsche, Karl Marx, Frederic Engles, Johan Galtung, Fischer and Jacques Lacan. It has also dealt with critiques and intertextuality.

Discussion

Peace has been defined both negatively and positively by many scholars and sociologists. Johan Galtung & Fischer (2013) define "Positive Peace" and "Negative Peace". They say, "Negative Peace" is the absence of violence, absence of war and "Positive Peace" is the integration of human society:

tradition, custom, culture social institutions, and human beings. The “peace”, which prevails during the cease fire, is a good example of “Negative Peace”. However, “Positive Peace” is not only mere absence of violence, it also entails justice for all. A scholar named Royce Anderson (2004) says, “Peace” is a condition in which harmonious relationships and low levels of violence can be observed among individuals, families, groups, communities, and/or nations.

The paradoxical truth about peace is that it is not something constant where we can forever repose, rather there is a very subtle line between ‘peace’ and ‘pain’ and very often one transforms into the other. In order to experience happiness, satisfaction and peace, a person must undergo the opposite negative emotions of unhappiness, dissatisfaction and unrest. Moreover, if someone enjoys happiness for a prolonged period of time, they no longer feel that happy state as happiness. However, we human beings are gullible enough to put their faith in a non-existent utopia. In spring before we are done with harsh memory of winter the spring is gone! Life is a way too short to live by. For making sense of this unbearable ephemeral human existence, we need more love, compassion and empathy in our lives. We find a person’s happiness is rooted in the unhappiness of herself/ himself or somebody else, yet the endeavor of many peace-loving people to achieve a peaceful world for all is not achieved till now. It may be too idealistic to think that at one point or for good we might establish a world where all the people will live in peace.

Peace exists beyond the material condition of human beings. Peace has its roots deeply buried in the depths of human psychology. The meaning of peace varies from individual to individual. An unconflicted definition of peace does not exist and over the time the concept of peace is becoming more and more complex. In the capitalistic world, peace is no more connected with the collective state of a society rather it is more concerned about individual wants, demands, sadism, masochism, and relentless ego and feeding in the terribly enlarged and isolated capitalist world. Everybody is too consumed by them of self-centered desires and individual peace to even bother about the collective effort of bringing and manifesting ‘peace’ in the society. At this moment, people’s own ideas of ‘peace’ make themselves alienated from one another. Consequently, the inherent value of peace for ‘making a collective peaceful society in the world’ has been utterly destroyed. In addition, peace, nowadays, is centered around the materializing the individual’s own interests and money making has become the new motto of peace.

Contrary to our own activities, we are none but human beings, and we tend to believe in the fairy land that is completely out of the touch with this cruel reality. In Edward FitzGerald's translation of "Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam", Khayyam says,

Come, fill the cup, and in the fire of spring
The winter Garment of Repentance thing
The Bird of Time has but a little way
To fly and Lo! The bird is on the wing. (1905, q. vii)

The lines signify the nature of human existence where time slips through our fingers before we can even discern our experiences and for making this existence meaningful, we need to exert our efforts to transpire positive human emotions such as peace, compassion and empathy. Having said that man is the most complex creation in the world a person living in a society finds peace when he/she sees others in peace. Therefore, it sounds too utopian to dream for a world where all the people will cling to peace. It is really tough to establish an idealistic peaceful world living in a bourgeois world. Newton's third law is: "For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction" ("The physics classroom", n.d., para. 1). The cycle of happiness and unhappiness maintains the Newtonian law. If someone is in peace right now, he/she is going to be paid with the loss of peace. However, life is all about uncertainty. We only know our present, but we have no control over our past and future. So, it is impossible to achieve the peace of past, present and future in a perfect harmony. Many philosophers, authors, metaphysicians have exerted immense efforts to build a peaceful world in regard to the people living in it. Although these people have not failed completely in their attempt, they are yet to discover a universal formula for making a peaceful world.

Building peace in the society is not some kind of work that cannot be made to happen. We can make it happen in our society if we feel empathy for all living in our society. Sympathy and empathy are not exactly the same words. Sympathy is to feel pity for others and empathy is to feel the same with others. When a person devotes himself/herself to bringing peace in the society, he or she must feel at one with the community and the nature surrounding them. Great social reformers have always identified the gaps in the existing social structures before fixing them.

With the wisdom and empathy for the community, they can make the society go forward in harmony with the focus the community is involved in. The ideas of bringing peace in the society will be of no use, if they cannot understand the intricate forces that are at work behind the scene. In “Building peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies”, John Paul Lederach (1997) observes:

“Peace building is understood as a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates and sustains the full array of process, approaches and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable peace relationships. The term thus involves a wide range of activities that both precede and follow formal peace accords. Metaphorically, peace is seen not merely as a stage on time or a condition. It is a dynamic social construct”.

Rashid says:

“Peace building mission consists of post-conflict actions that strengthen and rebuild civil infrastructures and institutions in order to avoid a return to conflict” (2013, p.57).

In Chapter II, Verse 70 of Bhagavad Gita Sri Krishna observes,

“A person who is not disturbed by the incessant flow of desires—that enter like rivers into the ocean which is ever being filled but is always still—can alone achieve peace, and not the man who strives to satisfy such desires” (“Bhagavad Gita”, n.d., para.3).

So, for being peaceful, being not disturbed by different desires is a must.

Building peace depends on societal and religious values such as “respecting parents and elders, having love for the younger, greeting people in correct manner, showing kindness to fellow people, caring for the sick, asking permission before entering into others' house, speaking the truth, and avoiding rudeness and false speech” (Sarker, 2020, p.23).

RK Narayan with his philosophic quest and against the meditative setting represents Raju in his novel *The Guide* as a peace maker. Raju's character is that of a poor village boy who has dreams and he finds his dreams shattered in this cruel journey of life. Raju resembles us in his aspirations to lead a better life, although the definition of that better life is not clear to him. He awaits

stairs that would lead him to affluence, glory and peace. He understands the true value and meaning of happiness reposes on his contemplation of bringing peace among the community who needs rain and peace badly. His epiphany leads him to understand the meaning of peace and the inner meaning of life and this realization metamorphoses him into the person who will be the saviour of the whole community of Velan.

Raju, the young man of Malgudi in South India, is a tourist guide; he leads a life that offers honesty, simplicity, corruption, poverty, and fragile ladder to richness. He falls in love with Rosie, a traditional Indian woman, who loves her husband unconditionally and looks for nothing but the upcoming days of her lives to pass by peacefully. Rosie is like antitheses to his life. She contributes significantly in the Raju's transformation as a synthetic saint.

As we proceed on reading the novel between the lines, at times we tend to believe that both Raju and Narayan are identical to their search of peace that binds all of us with them together in the same string. It is a common phenomenon that we are all allured by the idea of peace at least in our personal domain. It is the desire to achieve peace that becomes the driving force behind all our conscious and unconscious actions. Narayan throughout his writing is in a quest to perceive the world that offers peace, ease, naivety, and harmony. Like a psychoanalyst he emphasizes on inner peace for which one must be able to distinguish between illusion and truth. In *The Guide* he shows us how sacrificing one's own life for the peace of thousand should be the ultimate task for us as human beings.

In *The Guide* of RK Narayan Raju is completely dissatisfied with the present condition of his life. He wants to be healthier, wealthier, and merrier in his life. With his social skills especially speaking ability and managing topsy-turvy situation in his own unique way, he goes on seemingly well with his life. He is a shopkeeper and in time starts considering himself a seasoned guide. He is satisfied with the state he is in, but he is yet to find complete happiness. There is something. It is as if his demands are being fulfilled but his desires are not. He starts loving viewing himself more of a tourist guide than of a shopkeeper and he takes some pride in it. When there are a few tourist guides around Raju does not want to go back to his shop but to Gafur to listen to his talk, dreaming to aspire to the higher status of those who are happy, rich,

and flamboyant. He no longer likes his remaining a simple guide and shopkeeper. He starts to be an “Overman” (Nietzsche, 1892, p.54). In his “Overman” theory “Nietzsche believed that the highest goal humanity could achieve was an ‘Overman’, a new creative being who could transcend religion, morality, and ordinary society, could further not reason, and whose life-affirming slogan would be ‘Become what you are’” (Peter, 2002, p.56-57). But Raju does not know yet that before turning an ‘Overman’, one has to, at first, sustain struggles like threat, hate, dilemma, doubt, loss and other attributes of human existence.

Raju looks forward to having a conspicuous life, no matter what it would cost him. In the prime of his life, he becomes reckless for happiness. He does not understand properly the socio-cultural milieu he lives in and how that it stands in relation with the economic platform of the society. All he could perceive of is that the society he lives in is the place and time where one is happy once they have money, jewels, beautiful wife, and social recognition. He conforms to the motto that “the essential condition for the existence is the formation and augmentation of capital” without understanding the suggestion Karl Marx and Frederic Engles provided in the long run (1973, p. 19). He is not happy being a shopkeeper and a mere guide. With the aid of his innate power of communication he promotes himself to a competent guide. His earning augments and subsequently so do his demands.

Then again, we become frustrated with the newer demands and desires of our life. For example, we get hungry and we get food. So, the hunger is filled. This food here is our demand. On the other hand, we feel in us desire which cannot be fulfilled, although at times they might seem fulfilled. We long for drinking beauty from someone one loves desperately without knowing how and where to get stopped and how it may affect many in consequences. We long for love without knowing that love and lover are not identical. They are two separate entities, although in a philosophical sense one may prove that they are actually the same. Raju is caught in a deceptive boat that roars towards love-pier and simultaneously nowhere. Once Raju is in the guiding business, he earns more money than he used to make as a shopkeeper. Then he yearns for a partner in his life which is the usual outcome of earning more money. Although he does not find Rosie very fashionable still her curved body makes him desirous. Her “eyes that sparkled, a complexion, not white,

but dusky, which made her only half visible as if you saw her through a film of tender coconut juice” drives him crazy (Narayan, 1958, p. 58). He wants her in his life at any cost. It is completely immaterial to him that she is married to Marco, a foreigner, a “hateful fellow” in Raju’s opinion.

As days gone by, Raju and Rosie develop an intimate relationship. Their mutual understanding mostly based on their sense of loss leads them to a love affair. He is already in possession of money. He has gained a sort of respect in his community for uplifting his self from shopkeeper to guide. Now all he needs is a Rosie to bring fulfillment to his life. Rosie is the wife of Marco. Rosie is loved by both Raju and Marco in their own ways. She is the entity they both crave for in their life. This certain happening is not something pleasant in our lives. We have come to know from Jacques Lacan that “The object of man’s desire is essentially an object desired by someone else. One object can become equivalent to another in making it possible for objects to be exchanged and compared” (Hewitson, 2010). It might be that Raju has not got any scope of becoming educated like Marco. Now his sense of loss wants to get filled by the presence of Rosie in his life. There lies sort of sadist pleasure for Raju.

Raju being born in a poor family aspires to have wealth and social recognition which is pretty normal anywhere in the world but he fails to properly perceive that happiness is quite transitory. It is like a flying bird that rests somewhere for a while and moves within a short time to somewhere else. It does not last upon someone for a long time. It comes, goes and comes again. No one can become happy absolutely and it is a futile attempt to catch that happiness, “the wandering doe”. In Rabindranath Tagore’s words, Wandering doe of the enchanted forest

Who roams within deepest (of my) dreams -

Why do I want to capture her?

Is there a reason? (Choudhury, 2011)

Raju initially is not quite at the position of knowing that there is no point in chasing the “wandering doe”. He cannot grasp the essence that he should let it be roaming “within the deepest dreams” instead of catching it. He simply cannot win everything at the price of his sense of loss and goes unchecked by the Nature. He did not fully realize that our demands increase and decrease in

proportion with our wealth. He wants to be happy by means of wealth, beauty of Rosie, and social recognition. There is no absolute limit how much money and beauty can satisfy us completely. We can be happy, in truer sense, by having understanding of the values life exerts, and by exercising our sympathy, empathy, and humility which Pip in *Great Expectations* has had after going through tumultuous happenings in his life. For him and Dickens tears are didactic. It arouses Pip's love for and empathy to others, "Heaven knows we need never be ashamed of our tears, for they are rain upon the blinding dust of earth, overlying our hard hearts" (Dickens, 1881, p. 160). This philosophy of being happy through making others happy comes in Raju's cognizance once he steps in the shoes of a saint which initially, he has been reluctant to. But somehow, he gets himself in priesthood and starts to some extent in believing a saint that has been residing in him for a long time. His realization of his devastating past and regrets for it along with a bleak future which knows no direction for him allows him to identify a strong conviction and 'a peculiar strength', "If by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom, and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly" (Narayan, 1958, p. 213)? He feels that for the first time he devotes his life in doing something significant which has transcended the paradigm of materialism and money. This particular step is more about compassion and love and it outweighs all the things he deemed valuable until now. He is on the road of wisdom. The saint in him tells him that the people of Velan's village, Mangal, bestow their utmost beliefs in him and he must honour it. For the first time in his life he feels that he is at the cross road and he must choose wisely. His sense of "I" gets dissolved in "we". He must suffer, he feels, for the sake of the rain which is most needed now in the village and surrounding areas. "The hum of humanity around was augmenting. And the crowd congregated around the river at Mangala." (Narayan, 1958, p. 114). He starts believing in him and his spiritual realm. He surely cannot disappoint them. His heart becomes full of blessings and the people around him feel it.

Although there is no rain yet and simply the hint is given in the last paragraph of the novel that a rain is coming up, yet it is clear to the reader that Raju brings peace in the community. The people of the village get someone to hold onto. They got someone who can call upon the natural forces in the name of gods. They are happy.

Peace is hard to define as it involves many dimensions. As a social being in a society a person's happiness lies in the unhappiness of herself/ himself or somebody else. It seems it is like Newton's third law. No one goes happy without causing some unhappiness to others. But of course, there is no denying that everybody wants to be happy, even if it costs destruction.

Pure bliss is the wealth of our childhood. As we grow older and start becoming more interactive with the social activities, we face hard reality that contradicts with the reality of our childhood. This contradiction does want to get dissolved in us. But something hinders in the process of mediation between these two opposing forces. That something is the cause of unhappiness in us and we strive to change ourselves from one state to another for the sake of finding happiness. This pursuit is again futile. Happiness is like a sportive sunshine and we have to accept that we cannot get that sunshine all the time in our life.

In The Guide of RK Narayan we see how the protagonists Raju and Rosie look forward to having a peaceful life, no matter what it would cost them. Their incapacity to understand the complex interaction between their sociocultural backdrop and their financial conditions leads to further problems. Their incompatible economic and social conditions do not get fit together and they both in the long run lead troublesome lives particularly the lives of "Railway Raju and Dancing Girl Nalini". Somehow Rosie seems to find happiness with the love offered again by her husband Marco, but it is Raju who instead of coming to a normal peaceful life gets caught in an unusual life that offers him an unforeseen platform. He uses that platform to bring happiness to the people of Velan's community.

Velan, although, hears from the past events of Raju's life from none other but Raju himself, takes him as a saint. Velan's sister is unwilling to marry. Velan and his family do so many things to persuade her in marrying. But she keeps refusing sternly. There was nothing that Velan would not do to have her persuaded in marrying. Such adamant sister of Velan, after meeting with Raju, agrees to get married and subsequently that establishes his reputation as a man of beyond ordinary level. This incident, once known by the local people, bestows many adjectives before Raju's name and the people start believing him as someone who has supernatural power.

Initially Raju protested in their believing in him a saint, a rescuer from dire situation through miraculous power. But the people, uneducated, poverty-stricken and thus not critical, would not accept his refusal. In their lives they then needed a saint who could change condition.

Now through a misunderstanding the people around Velan's locality assume that Raju is not going to eat anything until it rains. Raju fasts and becomes both retrospective and introspective. He feels crying, "Get out, all of you, and leave me alone, I am not the man to save you. No power can save you if you are doomed," (Narayan, 1958, p. 211). Instead, he feels if he could bring some happiness through his fasting that would mean a lot for him, since he believes his whole life did not have a single shred of humanity except this time. He resonates Socrates as in "The Apology of Socrates" Socrates says that the 'improvement' or 'tendance' of the soul, the care for wisdom and truth, is the highest good. "This is why I (Socrates) go about, persuading old and young alike not to be concerned with bodies of your money, but first and foremost to care about the improvement of your soul" (Lavine, 1984, p. 15). Raju feels in him the highest good. He feels the very essence of humanity under his skin. He comes to know that people's belief in him brings some hope to them. All he feels he must honour their feelings. He must bring some happiness in their lives even if he dies. In the novel it is not clear whether he dies, but his bringing peace to them is noted clearly. Raju and Raskolnikov both are identical in perceiving their crimes perpetrated by them, feeling penitence in their souls and seeking salvation of their sinned souls through purgation. "Raskolnikov in *Crime and Punishment* commits murder as a matter of principle and is immediately entrapped in the tentacles of his conscience. His mental agony as a form of punishment and the sufferings in the prison of Siberia evaporate the question of justification of his murder" (Rakibul & Sarker, 2014, p.126). Raju's soul is inculcated with the same gusto i.e. the arousal of his conscience.

Conclusion

Raju is the model who shows how to keep peace in The Guide. He is a self-oriented person and by going beyond his being self-oriented he feels the connection with others with their respective community. Raju desires

sustainable peace in the society. He knows the importance of peace in the society and also wants that. It should never abandon their community. If any crack is found in the society, it will all break down. The common people of the society know the significance of peace but they do not know how to keep it sustainable. Therefore, they want someone in their society who knows how to keep peace in society. Raju by the end of the novel transforms into the peacemaker of the society where all the ordinary people can put their faith. He is such a character who maintains peace in the society no matter how difficult it is for him. His journey to peace building at certain point becomes the journey of our own to find sustainable peace for himself.

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