

**Tribhuvan University**

**Study of Irony in R.K. Narayan's *The Guide***

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## Chapter: 1

### The Discourse of Irony

The term 'irony' basically refers to the contrast between the statement of what is said and what actual it means. The importance of irony in literature is beyond question. In short, irony, in drama and literature and statement or action whose, apparent meaning is underlain by a contrary meaning. *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary of current English* defines musing or strange aspect of a situation that is very different from what you expect: a situation like this: the use of words that say opposite of what you really mean "(822). Likewise, *The New Encyclopedia Britannica* defines the term irony from the point of view of its literal implication. It defines irony as, "*Either Speech (verbal irony) in which the real meaning is concealed or contradicted by the literal meanings of the words, or a situation (dramatic irony) in which there is an incongruity between what is expected occurs*" (432).

Tracing out the definitions we come to know the very basic meaning of irony as a situation in which 'what is' always differs from 'what appears' We come to know that the creative writers use irony as a literary device to show the gap between what is expressed and what is intended. The expressed meaning is for the concerned person or whom it is addressed and intended meaning is for the privileged reader. Thus, Irony, in its simplest form can be defined as a mode of speech, which brings a meaning contrary to the words. This concept of irony would be a fitting one in Greek comedies, however, such a simplified definition itself sounds ironical since irony in its concept and function is quite varied, dynamic and broad in its present uses. Now, irony has got a permanent seat in literature as a prominent tool for writers even to reveal existence, life and death.

As it is already explained that all good literature entails irony as a device - every work of art could be valued from ironical perspective though it may have more or less ironic instances. One need only list the major writers in whose work irony is significantly present: Sophocles. Euripides, Plato, Aristotle. Chaucer, Swift. Pope, Austin, Narayan and many others, such a list implies the impossibility, of separating an interest in irony as an art from an interest in great literature, one leads directly to the other.

### **Irony: A Historical Overview**

As mentioned earlier, 'Irony' has ever been a very subtle and widely used critical term. Thus it is noteworthy to have a brief glimpse into the historical development of it. In spite of the great complexities, several attempts have already been made to define and classify the concept right from the time of ancient Greek and Roman philosophers like Aristotle and Cicero. There were even in Homer's *Odyssey* situations and utterances, which could be termed ironic. But no one seems to have called it irony until the late eighteenth century.

The word 'irony' is derived from the Greek word 'eiron' which means a dissembler in speech. "In Greek comedy the character called eiron was a dissembler, who characteristically pretended to be less intelligent than he was, yet triumphed over the amazons the self-deceiving and stupid braggart" (Abrams135). 'The word 'eiron', in a sense of irony is first recorded in Plato's Republic. The term irony, then, indicates a technique of appearing to be less than one is, which in literature becomes the most common technique of saying as little and meaning as much as possible. In most of the modern critical uses the term 'irony', remains the root sense of dissembling or hiding what is actually the case; not, however in order to deceive, but to achieve special rhetorical or artistic effects. Today 'eironia' is

used as a figure in rhetoric. One can be blamed by ironical praise and praised by ironical blame. The Roman word *ironic* does not have the abusive meaning of the Greek word. Cicero explains it simply as 'saying one thing and meaning another'. Though the term is applied early in ancient Greek comedy, it took a long period of time to make a permanent room in literature. J.A.K. Thomson in his book *Irony* views the reason about its slow entrance:

As we saw, it was long in fighting its way into literature, and ever got in only by the back door of comedy. It was a 'vulgar' word so, when the thing it denoted had become anything but vulgar, the name for it appeared no longer suitable and that is one main reason why we have no adequate treatment in antiquity of 'Irony' as such. (4)

In England as in rest of the Europe, the concept of irony developed very slowly. We do not get the use of irony in English literature till 1950s. Spenser had used the term irony for Dryden followed the first time in English literature in 'Shepherd's Calendar'. The term irony however, was not employed up to the seventeenth century. It was gradually introduced in literary texts with the beginning of eighteenth century onwards with broader meanings. Dryden, Pope and Swift became the successful user of irony in literature. Though the concept of irony developed late in Europe, authors and thinkers used it frequently and gradually supported it with various new meanings. The more important of the new meanings that the word 'irony' took, emerged out of the ferment of philosophical and aesthetic speculation that made Germany for many years the intellectual leader of Europe. The principal 'ironologist' of this period was Friedrich Schlegel, but no less contribution was donated by other thinkers and writers as like August Wilhelm, Ludwig Tieck and Karl Solgar.

The next stage was a universal of these local and particular ironies. The use and purpose of irony became wider. Nineteenth century provided many terms for this generalization of ironies of events, of fate, of circumstances, of time and of life. Other German thinkers introduced the concept of irony arguing that true irony begins with the contemplation of the fate of the world, a concept that goes under the titles of world irony or physical irony. Similarly Schlegel and Solgar also used the term irony in relation to the detached and objective point of view of the artist.

As we come through history, we find that a new one has frequently replaced the earlier definition of irony, though the basic meaning remained the same. From the point of view of the historical development of irony Soren Kierkegaard's essay *The concept of irony*, is significant one. He opines it differently. He does not believe that irony tries to establish anything. According to him, "that which is to be established lies behind it"(278). There is yet another view highlighted in New Criticism, especially by I.A. Richards, Cleanth Brooks and Kenneth Burke, who view irony as dialectic of paradoxes. For them a paradoxical irony is the outcome of multiple impulses and experiences that are likely to be subverted by another. So, for them, literature is the representation of this fact of paradox, which shows how human beings maintain poise over such contradictions. I.A. Richards therefore defines irony in a similar way, "the bringing in of the opposite, the complementary impulses in order to achieve a balanced poise"(qtd. in Muecke 26). All of these three prominent 19 proponents of New Criticism supported the paradoxical nature of irony as it balances the opposite experiences and attitudes. From the above quote, it becomes clear that:

Every literary context is ironic because it provides a weighting or qualification on every world in it, thus requiring the reader to infer



meanings which are in a sense not in the words themselves: all literary meanings in this view become a form of covert irony, whether intended or not. (Booth 7)

Here, Kenneth Burke's claim that language is essentially ironic gets justified since ultimately the words are representations of such paradoxical human impulses; so each word is condemned to be rhetorical.

By the end of the nineteenth century, almost all the major forms and modes of irony were introduced. It is even defined in terms of its aesthetic, linguistic and psychoanalytical implications. S.B. Srivastava observes irony as a 'characteristic style' of poets. He thinks poets prefer to communicate their visions of truth in guesses and conjectures by making optimum use of language resources. Vasant A. Shahne makes the following comments on the aesthetics of irony as:

The aesthetics of irony implies that it is primarily an art of expression - allied with a sense of beauty and generating two levels of meaning. It is also a means of contrasting reality from appearance, truth from falsehood and subtlety from shallowness. Aesthetics of irony primarily arises from verbal irony of a profoundest kind, since it is through words, the tools for conveying the beauty of paradox that irony operates, (qtd. in Nair 31)

However, the great thinker of our time Noam Chomsky comments on irony differently. He thinks, since the indirect or deep level meaning that lies below the surface meaning of words and sentences plays a vital part in literature, it prepares that ground for contradiction and juxtaposition, which in its turn generates irony. According to him, "The syntactic component of a grammar must specify, for each sentence, a deep structure that determines its phonetic interpretation. The first of these is interpreted by the semantic component and the second by the phonological

component" (qtd. in Nair 31). Likewise, there is another dominant thinker of Irony, Allan Rodway, who views irony not only as a technique to drag out 'true' meaning but as a technique to expose double meaning. He says "irony is not merely a matter of seeing a 'true' meaning beneath a 'false', but of seeing a double expose [...] on one plate" (qtd. in Muecke 45).

The history of irony goes far off Aeschylus. Sophocles, Plato etc., up to the modern authors. As we come across time, we sense the complex nature of irony. Wayne C. Booth, realizing the complexity of the mobility of irony, categorized all types of irony into two distinct categories, namely 'Stable' and 'Unstable' in his book, *A Rhetoric of Irony*. He is of the opinion that, "The act of reconstruction and ail that it entails about the author and his picture of the reader become an inseparable part of what is said, and that act cannot really be said, it must be performed". (39)

For him, stable irony shares the ironic intention of the speaker with the reader, offering some patent clues in the established circumstances by the writer. So ironic writers in such an irony provide 'literary fixity' which automatically promotes unequivocal, absolute and fixed ironic 'literary fixity' Which automatically promotes unequivocal, absolute and fixed iron interpretation. Thus, stable irony, therefore covers all intentional ironies, which say one thing and give to understand the opposite. On the other hand, the unstable irony does not promote unequivocal interpretation since it is not Unite, absolute and fixed as one interpretation essentially undercuts another. Unstable irony, therefore, is a mode of reflecting the paradoxes in the structure of universe and in our existence. In this sense, unstable irony comes along the line of deconstructive irony.

The deconstructive irony, which is based on Paul de Man and Jacques Derrida's theoretical concept of multiple or rather infinite possibilities of meanings, exposes the impossibility of univocal, absolute, finite and stable meanings, as Linda Hutcheon points:

Overt production of meaning through deferral and difference has been seen to point to the problematic nature of all language: from a purely semantic point of view, the ironic situation of plural and separate meanings-they said together with unsaid held in suspension might challenge any notion of language as having a direct one-to-one referential relation to any single reality outside itself. (57)

The above quote further clarifies that the deconstructive irony arises, as Pam Bahadur Gurung reminds, "in the mix of semantic meanings that constitute in [thereby allowing] a way to think about ironic meaning as something in flux and not fixed" (16). Deconstructive irony operates where, as de Man claims, "The sign points to something that differs from its literal meaning and has for its function the thematization of this difference" (qtd. in Gurung 16). De Manian concept of irony turns to be deconstructive as it in the words of Beerendra Pandey, "becomes the motor of the entire rhetorical system. It signifies a refusal to hypostatize notions of the self of meaning, or interpretative as an end point" to the "otherwise vertiginous process of textual such as Booth's sharable norms" ("Deconstructing" 55). So, deconstructive irony turns out to be, as in Pandey's words, "radical openness" demanding widely divergent interpretations (Intellectual 665).

Irony in this latest sense is a way of writing designed to leave open the question of what the literal meaning might signify. The old definition of irony - saying one thing and giving to understand the contrary - is superseded. Thus latest

sense of irony says something in a way that activates not one but an endless series of subversive interpretations.

### **Types of Irony**

As the term 'irony' has been defined and redefined from its original meaning till today, irony is categorized differently according to its nature. Among the most important categories of irony the following prominent and easily distinguishable: verbal, dramatic and situational.

It is said to be a verbal irony if it is used to strengthen a statement by forcing the listener or reader to seek its true meaning. Abrams defines it as, "verbal irony is a statement in which the implicit meaning intended by the speaker differs from that which he ostensibly asserts" (135). Thus, verbal irony comes out from the ostensible use of language intending a sharp contrast between the expressed meaning and the implied ironic meaning. It is a figure of speech in which the meaning of a statement is different and opposed to the meaning intended. It brings a straightforward case of an ironic reversal. When the team coach of a certain cricket team praises the stroke of a batsman who has gone out for a duck, makes a smart example of verbal irony bringing a quick and clear reversal. This is well supported by D.C Muecke's view in *Irony and the Ironic us*. He says, "the simplest form of high-relief verbal irony is the antiphrastic praise for blame, for example the "congratulations!" we offer to the 'Smart Alee' who has let the side down" (56). So, the verbal irony depends on the ironist's pretension for aiming to achieve maximum plausibility of his ostensible meaning. In this sense, verbal irony can be viewed as:

A game for two players, the ironist, in his role of naif, proffers a text but in such a way or in such a context as will stimulate the reader to

reject its expressed literal meaning in favour of an unexpected 'Tran-literal' meaning of constructing ... the basic technique is either that going with the ironic butt and placing him in high relief or that of depreciating oneself, which is the countersinking intaglio' method. (Muecke 35-36)

Dramatic irony or sometimes also called Tragic irony was successfully practiced in Greek Tragedies. The ironic effect of the dramatic irony depends on the author's ironic intention shared with the audience. Writers of Greek tragedy, who based their plots on legends and whose outcome did their audience already know, made frequent use of this device. Sophocles' *Oedipus*, for example, is a very complex instance of dramatic irony. Some writers defined it in terms of theatrical performance, but it is not confined to drama only, it can also occur in narrative fictions "Whenever an author deliberately asks us to compare what two or more characters say of each other, or what a character says now with what he says or does later" (Booth 63). Similarly Abrams defines the term as:

Dramatic irony involves a situation in a play or a narrative in which the audience or reader shares with the author knowledge of present or future circumstances of which a character is ignorant; in that situation. The character is unknowingly acts in a way we recognize to be grossly inappropriate to the actual circumstances, or expects the opposite of what we know that fate holds in store, or says something that anticipates the actual outcome, but not at all in the way that the character intends. (137)

Dramatic irony appears whenever the audience sees a character confidently unaware of his ignorance. The Greek Tragedy *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles, for

instance presents a dramatic irony when Oedipus quarrels with Laius and kills him. But he does not know the man whom he killed is his own father. Oedipus then puts a curse on the slayer of Laius. The capital stroke of irony here is that Oedipus has unknowingly cursed himself as he says:

As for the criminal, I pray to God-  
Whether it be a lurking thief, or one of a number-  
I pray that man's life be consumed in evil and wretchedness  
And as for me, this curse applies no less  
If it should turn out that the culprit is my guest here,  
Sharing my hearth. (812)

Therefore, dramatic irony is a situation in which the reader or audience knows more about the immediate circumstances or future events of which a character is ignorant. We come to know that Oedipus has married his own mother, but he is ignorant about the fact as he says, "A man should live only for the present day. Have no more fear of sleeping with your mother" (831).

So, there can be no dramatic irony, by definition, unless the author and audience (reader) can somehow share knowledge, which the characters do not hold. Dramatic irony becomes tragic when the demystification of the real situation leads to a "typical case involving a victim with certain fears, hopes or expectations who, acting on the basis of these, takes steps to avoid a foreseen evil or profit from a for seen good, but his actions serve only to lock him into a casual chain that leads inevitably to his downfall" (Muecke 69). In other words, a dark and inflexible fate of a man gets a room for the exhibition of tragic irony when he comes in contrast with his hopes, fears and wishes.

Irony of situation consists in the discrepancy between 'appearance', and reality, expectation and fulfillment or the outcome of events and its consequences. According to Kierkegaard, "Situational irony is not present in nature for one who is too natural and too naive, but only exhibits itself for one who is himself ironically developed"(271). A sense of irony involves not only the ability to see ironic contrasts but also the power to shape them in one's mind.

The above statement makes it clear that a sense of irony involves not only the ability to see ironic contrasts but also the power to process and shape them using one's mental faculties. 'The observer's power of imagination, recalls of experience and the ability to find out something which offers an ironic contrast to the thing concerned. An imaginative reader will not fail to perceive this type of irony in the works of ironical writers.

The term 'irony' is used in a number of specialized senses also, qualifying it by certain adjectives or prepositional phrases. Thus we come across expressions such as structural irony, cosmic irony and romantic irony and like.

Structural irony is also a widely used rhetorical weapon of enforcement, which in a sense looks closer to verbal irony. But, the basic distinction between verbal irony and structural irony is that: verbal irony depends on knowledge of the fictional speaker's ironic intention, which is shared both by the speaker and the reader; structural irony depends on knowledge of the author's ironic intention, which is shared by the reader but is not intended by the fictional speaker. Abrams defines, "Some literary works exhibit structural irony: that is the author, instead of using an occasional verbal irony, introduces a structural feature that serves to sustain a duplex meaning and evaluation throughout the work" (135).

Invention of a naive hero, or else a naive narrator or spokesman is one of the common literary devices of this sort. Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* is a typical example for the invention of a 'naive hero' for the purpose generating structural irony. Here narrator himself is the main participant in the story. When the knowing reader dives deep into the implicit point of view of the author who conceals himself behind the hero, the sustained irony resulting from the expose of human vanity and frailty comes to light.

Cosmic irony or the irony of Fate characterizes works in which a character's fate seems perversely manipulated by forces beyond human control. The character's efforts seem only to 'tighten the noose' already prepared by destiny. In the words of Muecke, the cosmic irony is, "irony of the universe with man or the individual as victim" (23). Cosmic irony or the irony of fate is attributed to literary works in which a "deity, or else fate, is represented as though deliberately manipulating events so as to lead the protagonist to false hopes, only to frustrate and mock them" (Abrams 137). Where the expressed meaning is; human beings are like toys in the hands of destiny and unseen forces, while the ironic meaning is often critical causing people to question God and see the universe as hostile.

R.K. Narayan, in some of his works, has used this type of irony. His novel *The Man-Eater of Malgudi* portrays a typical example of cosmic irony or the irony of fate. Vasu is depicted as a modern 'rakshas' or demon. He violates all the rules of social morality, disturbs the peaceful life of Natraj and his friends, entertains Rangi, the temple prostitute and even tries to kill Kumar, the temple elephant. The irony of fate operates when he meets his sudden death. This also exemplifies that a



man (though he may be powerful) is predestined. Forces beyond human control manipulate him.

Romantic irony occurs when speakers or writers ridicule their own seriousness. They well balance the two opposites of human nature and bring forth it together. The major credit for the elaboration of the concept 'romantic irony' goes to the German thinker Friedrich Schlegel. Schlegel declared that irony was nothing to joke about. "That's true, of course and of course, it isn't true [. . .] Affirm and deny in one sentence and you too can be a romantic ironist" (qtd. in Enright 15). Similarly D.J. Enright in *An Alluring Problem* writes, "Most of us are, in our more modest ways, divided souls. Perhaps 'romantic irony' is simply having it both ways - infinity/finiteness, angel/ape, passion/reason, power/impotence, praise/lament, all those ancient dichotomies - on a grander than usual scale" (14). In this connection he further writes, "Keats mixed ardour with reasoned skepticism: he found life both beautiful and painful" (14). Thus, Romantic irony emerged out of the philosophical and aesthetic speculations about the paradoxical relationship between Nature and human beings. This type of irony implies itself in the incessant paradoxes of success and failure or even of life and death. Abrams defines Romantic irony as:

A term introduced by Friedrich Schlegel and other German writers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries to designate a mode of dramatic or narrative writing in which the author builds up the illusion of representing reality, only to shatter it by revealing that the author, as artist, is the creator and arbitrary manipulator of the characters and their actions. (137)

Byron's great narrative poem *Don Juan* persistently uses this device for ironic and comic effect, letting the reader into the narrator's confidence, and so revealing the latter to be a fabricator of fiction who is often at a loss for matter to sustain his story and undecided about how to continue it.

Hence, one can find romantic irony in constant dialectic interplay of objectivity and subjectivity. In many works, the authors may not use direct irony but we discover rather ironic tone and temper. The writers may remain aloof as a vantage point, a quest god like figure viewing his own creation with a smile. The author can study the contrast in human experiences tragically and comically. Nevertheless there is a general view that the combination of humor and irony makes expression effective. e.g. Saint burry argues that an ironist without humor is inconceivable. Thus irony lies in sequence between the pretence and actuality. An ironist can be identified and characterized by the recognitions of human antithesis in human experience. He is thus, detached but not indifferent and withdrawn but not removed. A simply becomes observer of the human psychology. He does comparison, provokes laughter and sympathy.

Irony is the feat of style. To be more specific, the stylistic technique or reversal is taken as one of the aspects of irony. Here, at last the transformation of the literal meaning of a text is primary issue. But sometimes it is possible to employ the techniques without being ironic too and it can be done through the use of satire. Satire is an artistic or literary expression, which generally aims to correct or reform either an individual or a society by means of ridicule showing the foolishness of an idea, manner, custom or tradition. Abrams defines it as:

The literary of diminishing or derogating is a subject by making it ridiculous and evoking toward it attitudes of amusement, contempt,

scorn, or indignation. It differs from the comic in that comedy evokes laughter mainly as an end in itself, while satire derides; that is, it uses laughter as a weapon, and against a butt that exists outside the work itself. The butt may be an individual, or a type of person, a class, an institution, a nation, or even the entire human race. (275)

Thus, satire can be defined as a sacred weapon of writers, which is intended for amusement and for the defense of truth. A number of writers like Chaucer, Dryden, Pope, and Swift successfully used it ridiculing the character, intentions, or behaviour of a person or a society. Swift, for example, in his *Modest Proposal* simply buttresses his unambiguous moral indignation by use of it in such a way that the readers are required to reverse its meaning. He writes:

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London, that a young healthy child well nursed is at a year old or a most delicious, nourishing and wholesome food, whether stewed, baked or boiled and I make no doubt that it will equal serve in a fricasee, or a ragout. (44)

Here, the irony is rather bound up with Swift's bland assumption of brutality and inhumanity in his readers. Swift's main concern is the dealings of English people with the Irish people. That is to say to understand the implication of irony; we have to go far from its literal meaning of words and to the meaning only sensed beyond the pages. Sometimes there can be only simple reversal of meaning. Suppose, as you are in a pretty sight; or as in the daily routine pleasantries of every day. The real meaning sometimes is not an exact reversal of what actually is said. In such situation, the irony may lie somewhere between the literal meaning and its logical opposite. In the meantime, irony does not relate

only the events but also the temperament and personality of person who observes the events. Its colouring may result from the passing moods or from a deep-rooted habit of mind and its directions may obey the logic of particular chain of events. It may originate in a vision of the universe that the particular events are selected to either identify or represent.

Sarcasm is yet another type of irony, which comes close to satire, but unlike satire, it involves the use of ridicule or mockery often harshly and contemptuously intended to wound the feelings. It is a common form of irony, in which the writers such as Swift, Hardy and Austen mostly used. Abrams observes that sarcasm is used for all irony in ordinary cases. Sarcasm use language so harshly and sarcastically that Abrams writes, "An added clue to Sarcasm is the exaggerated inflection of the speakers voice" (136). So, Sarcasm is bitter and harsh in tone. It consists of sneering remarks, which is always jeering and always intended to hurt.

Every irony is comic in its general uses because irony in general aims to prick and laugh the audience. It is in direct contrast with the other type of high-profiled ironies as it does not bring any significant losses to the concerned characters. Comic irony makes audience laugh gently at the unusual and petty dealings and actions of character. This type of irony is mostly used in the works of Narayan. Raju, an ex- jailbird, the protagonist of his novel *The Guide*, comically becomes a sage, when as many delightful examples of comic irony is provided in another novel *The English Teacher*.

The irony of simple incongruity results when two or more highly incongruous or incompatible phenomena, contradictory statements or incongruous images are juxtaposed together without any direct comment. The heroine, Belinda,

keeps various incompatible articles on her dressing table, which offers a classical example of this kind of irony in Alexander Pope's mock epic *Rape of the Lock*.

The insignificant and worthless items of cosmetics and cheap, vulgar and insincere love-letters are put side by side with the Holy Bible as, Puffs, powders, 32 patches. Bibles, Billet-doux" (page 137, Line No. 138), gives rise to irony of simple incongruity.

To conclude the brief introduction to irony and its literal implications, it is relevant to discuss the stylistic devices, understatement or antiphrasis. This is one of the major aspects of irony that is almost always used for negation. Though both understatement and antiphrasis are used for negation, one finds reasonable contradictions in meaning between the two. Using irony in an artistic manner which even as a stylistic technique is called antiphrasis where as understatement refers to direct negation of a statement. Here in the context of negation, Samuel Johnson's definition seems even more effective. He views irony as a mode of speech, which brings a contrary meaning to the words. In short, writers use irony to say more in little. It makes the weaker argument stronger. Writers use irony for a rhetorical enforcement, as a Kaleidoscope, which exposes the hidden meaning of a statement.

The whole range of ideas regarding 'irony' that is discussed above; finds its best expression in Narayan's novel, *The Guide* where Raju, the (chief) protagonist, is at the receiving end of irony, thereby bringing ironic reversal at the end of the novel. In the following chapter I will be discussing thoroughly how these ideas are presented in *The Guide*.

## Chapter: 2

### Narayan as a Writer

It is certainly praiseworthy to devote the entire life to the creation of works and become renowned in the field of literature. R (ashipuram) K (rishnaswamy) Narayan, an Indian writer, happens to be one. Apart from the exceptional works as a schoolmaster for short period, Narayan devoted himself exclusively to writing, which is a rare phenomenon in modern Indian literature. We cannot find any apparent source of inspiration for him regarding creativity except his inborn zeal for writing and his perceptive mind. The appropriate co-ordination of the zeal and perceptivity gave birth to the writing that we now ascribe to Narayan; At this point it becomes necessary to study his upbringing and his literary career.

R.K. Narayan (1906-2001) was born in Madras in his grandmother's house. From his early childhood, Narayan was firmly set in a disciplined track as his grandmother taught him Sanskrit verses and told him stories from epics. Migration from Madras to Mysore became one and only significant step of Narayan to enter into the world of literature. His father was a school headmaster in Mysore, where Narayan moved during his early teenage. He read numbers of British and American magazines in this father's full run school library, which helped him, sharpen his vision as a writer. Though his mother tongue was Tamil, he wrote purely in English. V.Y. Katak comments on Narayan's writing. "Our first impression of Narayan's English is that it is extremely limited. He does not seem to be interested in exploring the fuller and deeper possibility of language he is using" (67) His short time work as a reporter of 'Madras Journal' enabled him to meet with a wide variety of people, many of whom provided the characters for his novel. The micro observation of the nature and behaviour of his characters make

his novels superb and different from other Indian writers. By the same token, one of his milestone novels, *The Guide*, won one of the most prestigious 'Sahitya Academy Award. In this context, M.K. Naik writes about the greatness of Narayan's, *The Guide*:

The most popular and perhaps the widest known of Narayan's novel, it may owe this good fortune to the adventitious reason of its having been made into a (bad) film; but the vitality of its tragic irony and the complexity of its technique have certainly given it a well-merited pre-eminence among all of his novels – a pre-eminence on which the Sahitya Academy award of 1961 deservedly set the seal. William Walsh has rightly called it 'the greatest of Narayan's novels'. (65)

Narayan's theme points to a vision that comes out of a profound understanding of the human condition. An imaginary small town 'Malgudi' provides the setting for almost all of his novels making it the Indian equivalent of Thomas Hardy's 'Wessex' or William Faulkner's 'Yoknapatawpha'. But his milieu does not in any way make his works regional. He adapts in depicting social comedy centered on a sensibility that is truly Indian.

His literary career started from the publication of *Swami and Friends* (1935), where he created the fictional city 'Malgudi' for the first time. The novel was subsequently followed by – *The Bachelor of Arts* (1937), *The Dark Room* (1930), and *The English Teacher* (1945), Narayan's art reached maturity after independence of India with the publication of *Mr. Sampath* (1949), *The Financial Expert* (1952), *The Guide* (1958) and *The Man Eater of Malgudi* (1962). Narayan wrote a few more significant novels, which carried the sentiment of independence,

Gandhian principle and attitude, the struggle and its impact over his characters.

*Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955), *The vendor of Sweets* (1967) and *The Painter of Signs* (1967) came along the line.

Though the remaining few fictional works of Narayan *A tiger for Malgudi* (1983), *Talkative Man* (1986) and *The World of Nagraj* (1990), which were written in his old age, could not get equal fame; his short stories, Memoir, Essays and Travelogues are warmly received. His Memoir *My Days* reveals his personal experience along with his own commentaries about his characters, novels and protagonists, His translation of the Indian Epic and Myths *The Ramayan*, and *The Mahabharat* is praiseworthy that are published together as *Indian Epics Retold*.

It is certainly extraordinary to produce each work with the subtle touch of irony, but Narayan has happened to do so. Almost all the works of Narayan exhibit ironic strains. He ironies human foibles, frailties, their thinks and behaviours, attitudes and relations K.N. Naik writes about the sources of Narayan's irony as:

This is not an isolated instance of ironic justification of apparently improper and incompatible actions in Narayan's novels, and the ridiculous attempts to find philosophical justification to sinful and selfish activities better the baneful acts of sex and violence, as sources of irony. (123)

He, further, writes, "The presence of various strains of irony born out of different situational manipulations, shifting point of views, mythical correlations, cultural confrontations, character contrasts, thematic peculiarities and linguistic innovations is a notable feature of the novels of Narayan" (137). However, the use and attitude of his ironies are different in the different phases of his writing.

Narayan used irony merely as a technique in his earlier novels *Swami and Friends*



and *The Bachelor of Arts*. His ironies in these novels were only 'local' yet lacking the 'infiniteness' as adopted by Wayne C. Booth. M.K. Naik views the use of irony in Narayan's earlier novels, thus:

Operating in a world carefully insulated from the larger concerns in life, and totally devoid of a moral context, his irony here remains a method; it has not yet become the message. It is mainly the surface irony of social critic, and not the deeper irony, which... characterized as 'the familiar spirit of the philosopher, the mistress of truth'. (16)

Irony as a device in the earlier works of Narayan incontrovertibly matured into irony as moral discovery in his later works. At this juncture, Narayan's maturing giant leap is viewed positively by K. Chellappan as he quotes M.K. Naik, "The distinct development that his work shows over more than forty years from his first novel, *Swami and Friends* (1935), to...*The Painter of Signs* (1976) ... a giant leap from irony as weapon to irony as vision, from irony of brief moment to irony of great occasion". (23)

Thus, in this development phase of irony, Narayan's universally agreed three fictional works lie in – *The financial Expert*, *The Guide* and *The Man Eater of Malgudi*, which constitute cream of his fiction. M.K. Naik writes about the significance of the irony as moral discovery in these novels. "This is so because in the novels, irony, so far circumscribed in conception and consequently restricted in its operation, develops from merely a useful technique into an all embracing vision of life". (44)

Narayan is an unassuming keen observer of life and manners. He dedicates himself mainly to the task of depicting the comic subtleties and pathos in the

simple lives of the inhabitants of Malgudi, the Kingdom of his mixing south Indian realism with gentle irony. His keen observation of the life of people around him with an eye of compassion and tenderness provides the material for his writings. He writes mostly about persons and things he is most familiar with. Narayan is on the whole content to snatch Malgudi life's little irony, knots of satiric circumstances and tragic-comedies of mischance and misdirection. William Walsh, therefore, comments on his novels as 'comedies of sadness', that offers ample ground to flourish a tragic-hero. Narayan's work becomes praiseworthy because he blends his fastidious art with exact realism, poetry, melancholy, perception and gaiety.

To sum up his ironical perception, the gentle irony pervades all of his writings with underlying recognition that the follies and foibles of ordinary human beings can be accepted and looked with amused tolerance and sympathetic reality. There is a realization towards the end that the discomfiture of individual's life of his own doing, a direct realization of result of his absurd aspirations and ambitions in a world where the individual loses his importance and merges with the wider system. All this is done through a deep-rooted irony.

While studying R.K. Narayan, it becomes necessary to view the dealings of other two renowned Indian writers – Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao for their standpoint as idiosyncratic artist. Anand usually relates individual with society to depict the social, political or economic impact of the time. On the other hand, Raja Rao deals with what man should make of God, while Narayan with the typical irony of what man can make of him and of the entire business of living. His treatment of the characters is quite different from other Indian writers. Unlike Anand, his primary focus goes to the Pathos and concerns of the individual

himself. Thus, Narayan's novels can be viewed as 'novels of characters'. It is hardly surprising that in his own pronouncements about his art, Narayan has more than once stressed his preoccupation with human character. He once declared, "My main concern is with human Character-a central character from whose point of view the world is seen and who tries to get over a difficult situation of succumbs to it or fights it in his own setting" (qtd. in Naik 2). Narayan further viewed human relationship as, "I value human relationship very much, very intensely. It makes one's existence worthwhile-human relationship in any and every form, whether at home or outside. I think I have expressed this philosophy in my work successfully" (qtd. in Naik 2). Narayan portrays human character in different life-roles ranging from an honest teacher to a fraud saint: his minute observation of the characters with a subtle touch of reality makes them lifelike. M.K. Naik comments on Narayan's portrayal of his protagonists as, "The protagonist in each of Narayan's novels is made to play his life-role, during the course of which he or she either matures in the process, or rebels or simply drifts or again is chastised or even destroyed by a characteristic inner weakness" (1).

### **A Brief Review of Narayan's Works**

Narayan's first novel, '*Swami and friends*' is a delightful account of a school going boy Swaminathan. The very title of the novel is essentially ironical the word 'Swami' raises the expectations of bearded and aged figure and his 'friends' could naturally be expected to be either his disciples or of same age and similar type. But all the expectations of readers are soon diverted as they just read out the first paragraph of the novel.

The readers are amazed with the irony in the opening paragraph that arises from the contrast between their expectation and the reality. The character, Swami, the shortcut of 'Swaminathan' turns out to be a school going child with the universal nature and behaviour of the children as he enjoys the freedom of Saturday and Sunday, loathes home works, hates examinations, loves vacations and feigns illness to miss school. Hence, these childish behaviours suffice the ironic representation of the protagonist in the novel.

Narayan moves from the concerns of boyhood to the youth in his second novel *The Bachelor of Arts*. In this novel, Narayan deals with the theme of romantic illusions of youths and their experiences. Narayan has well depicted the fanciful imagination of a youth in the novel when we see Chandran attracted to Malathi and hopes that she is equally attracted to him. The youthful cynicism can be seen in him when we find that Malathi does not even know him. "When his dream to marry Malathi is shattered, his heart is broken and becomes a 'Sanayasi' for a time being, but eight months later returns to the world, to a regular job and an arranged happy marriage with Susila. Everything about her he finds 'divine'. The irony arises when he later names his infatuation to Malathi as a 'Silly infatuation'. At the end of the novel, we certainly encounter a more mature personality of Chandran following Hindu religiosity and oriental culture. K.N. Nair comments on the step taken by a youth in an orthodox traditional bound society as: "The irony sets in when one contrasts Chandran's act of meek surrender to the overpowering socio-conventional situation much against his heart's desire. He is not even ready to question the outdated beliefs, practices of an Orthodox and static social system".

(61)

Narayan's other novel *The English Teacher* portrays a theme of life and death. The novel is a distinct one because it has been coloured in a sort of spiritualism especially in the second half of the novel. The novel clearly demarcates its composition into two parts. Part first elaborates the routine life of protagonist Krishna, a young college lecturer, which ends with the death of his beloved wife Susila. Second part of the novel concentrates on Krishna's establishment of connection with the spirit of his dead wife.

The plot of the novel is wrapped with different kinds of ironies. It displays sometimes comic irony of the petty problems of the daily business of living, while on the other occasion, tragic irony operates. At this point, M.K. Naik comments, "An interesting development is the new note of tragic irony that is struck time and again especially in the first part of *The English Teacher* with occasionally even comic irony turning into Tragic" (25).

*The Financial Expert* is counted to be the first entertaining and enlightening novel of Narayan after India's independence. The central issue of the novel is ironic reversal, brought on clearly by a capital stroke of 'irony of fate'. Ironic reversal, in the novel, brings the wheel of fate full circle. In the novel, fate, aided by human efforts makes an obscure middleman a financial expert, and later abetted by human error, reduces the financial expert to his former puny stature.

The novel deals about a man. Maragyya, who makes his living by sitting in front of the central co-operative land Mortgage Bank and helps people with their loans, One day the Bank secretary humiliates him and shaken by this humiliation, he undergoes a long penance, fasts and worships Laxmi, the goddess of wealth, and his luck turns. But ironically, it crashes and he resumes his humble occupation. Ironically, he shows himself the way and then suddenly loses the way

so disastrously as to land him in total ruin. M.K. Naik comments on the drastic ups and downs in the life of the protagonist as. "At every stage during the meteoric rise and fall of Maragyya, irony operates, illustrating again the turning of the wheel of fate". (47)

*The Man-Eater of Malgudi* is yet another masterpiece of Narayan which unmistakably and rather convincingly the irony with ancient Hindu mythology. Vasu, a selfish godless bully, who, as he waits to shoot the temple elephant on a holy procession: accidentally kills himself, when he slaps at a mosquito buzzing near his forehead. This novel is based on a well-known mythological episode. The use of Bhasmasura myth in the novel was his conscious literary strategy as Narayan himself told an audience:

At some point in one's writing career, one takes a fresh look at the so-called myths and legends and finds a new meaning in them. [. . .]. I suddenly came across a theme, which struck me as an excellent piece of mythology in modern dress. [. . .]. I based this story on a well-known mythological episode, the story of Mohini and Bhasmasura. (Qtd. in Naik 66)

The novel also carries a moral as Naik further writes, "Every demon carries within him, unknown to himself, a tiny seed of self-destruction, and goes up in thin air at the most unexpected moment" (67).

*Waiting for the Mahatma* is Narayan's other prominent novel, written after Indian Independence. The novel presents Gandhian ideology of Non-violent struggle for Independence. Though the hardliner activities for the independence are also given a small ground in the novel, Narayan interiorize them supporting the Gandhian attitudes. The novel equally carries a theme of Bharati-Sriram love story

on the course of swift development of the plot with the ironic expressions. It presents the protagonist, Sriram, whose movement to the right goal is motivated by a wrong or mean purpose. He comes to the touch of Gandhian ideology because of his attraction to beautiful Bharati. His love for Bharati is stronger than his love for the nation, which carries an ironic import itself. The ironical instances are seen time and again in the novel. The very title of the novel itself carries the ironical expression puzzling us as our expectation goes wrong when we find Bharati and Sriram waiting passionately for the permission of Bapu (Gandhi) for their marriage.

*The Vendor of Sweets* continues the spirit of Gandhian ideology with an ironical treatment to the theme. In the novel, Narayan brings forth the issue of; clash of generation, East-west confrontation and the Hindu ideal of life in post-independence India. Jagan, the sweet vendor, who is a Gandhian, finds his only son, Mali, lured away by the west. Mali returns from United States with a half American and half Korean girl. Narayan presents the sweet vendor, Jagan, at the end, renouncing the frustrating world.

Narayan's *The painter of Signs*, published after nine year of silence, deals with a nature of complex human relationship. Raman, the protagonist of the novel, a signboard painter, proclaims to be a rationalist and is always conscious of his existence. He seeks rational explanation for everything. The relationship between Raman and his beloved Daisy is the center focus of the episode. Daisy is in-representative of modernity in Malgudi. In this love-relationship, Narayan ionizes Raman's propensity towards modernity. A capital stroke of irony arises when Raman, a rationalist accepts every condition lay down by Daisy in order to marry her.

Narayan is an unassuming keen observer of life and manners. The compassionate tone of his irony persuades the people to look into themselves and amend their ways. A close observation shows Narayan to be a special expert in constructing ironic artifacts. K.N. Nair views the nature of Narayan's irony as, "His irony is gentle in the sense that it gives rise to neither indignation nor condemnation. His good-natured mockery is not directed specifically against any particular individual or institution. It is rather a general exposure of human frailties with a 'sympathetic twinkle of eye". (138)

Narayan's portrayal of ironic expression can be found even in the very titles of his novels. In *The English Teacher*, Krishnan gives up teaching at the end of the novel. Whereas, others guide Raju, rather misguides himself and the villagers in *The Guide*. Narayan's first novel *Swami and friends* also brings the ironic expression in its very title as the 'Swami' of the title comes out to be a school going boy, turning down the expectations of the reader that he must be an erudite, an aged, bearded and thoughtful Mahatma. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma*, *The financial Expert*, *The Man Eater of Malgudi* and *The Vendor of Sweets* also forecast the ironic treatment in their very titles. In this way, Narayan starts irony from the title of his novel and continues it even after the novel is finished.

Another prominent feature of the novels of Narayan is the use of ancient Hindu myths and a complex Indian tradition in his works. Like Melville and Eliot, he used myths to reflect their essential human experiences in a symbolic form. And Indian people more than any other people are still closer to their mythology, which indicates their adherence to the tradition. Meenakshi Mukherjee points out the importance of Indian epics in Literature as, "If a worldview is required to make literature meaningful in terms of shared human experiences, then the Indian epics



offer a widely accepted basis for such a common background which permits the collective unconscious of the whole country". (29)

Narayan's portrayal of the typical Indian way of living is colored with the touch of modernity in almost all of his novels. The English name of his heroine Rosie and Daisy proves this very notion. Though Rosie, the heroine of *The Guide* sounds an English name: she is attracted to the traditional Indian Classical dancing. On the other hand Daisy, in *The Painter of Signs*, is seen obsessed to the modern way of living as she proposes a condition to Raman that she would not give birth to any children after they are married. Narayan's technique of intermixing tradition with modernity is further clarified as mirror, when Raju fails to produce any miracle in a complete traditional Indian setting in *The Guide*.

In most of the Narayan's novels, the women characters appear in a very subordinate role. Shavitri in *Dark Room* is a very fitting example of this kind. Narayan has exposed the plight of the traditional Hindu wife in this novel. Similarly, Ponni is another subordinate women character in the same novel. Likewise Susila, in *The English Teacher* is also a traditional Hindu wife bound in patriarchal social system. However, the heroines Rosie, Daisy and Bharati in *The Guide*, *The Painter of Signs* and *Waiting for the Mahatma* respectively are not completely subordinated in front of the male characters. These women seem to be using their consciousness to flourish their existence. At times, these women gain power over men through their attractiveness and capacity of fascinating men evoking their love.

Most of the times, Narayan's characters appear to be sex-obsessed. Though the evocation of such desires appears in both of his male and female characters; he makes his male character to feel it first. For instance, the unintentional touch of

Daisy makes the night of Raman sleepless in *The painter of signs*. Similarly, Raju also goes wild with the slightest unintentional touch of Rosie in *The Guide* as he expresses, " My thought dwelt on her golden touch"(509). But the most important thing is that such things never receive elaborate treatment in his works. He always takes special care to keep a safe distance from describing such matters. Even where an occasion demands such things, his description does not move forward beyond certain limits. K.N. Nair writes about Narayan's consciousness regarding such matters as:

The reason behind his reluctance to cross the self - imposed barrier appears to be the fear that such an action is likely to wound the moral consciousness of average tradition-bound Indian readers. His sensibility and sense of values reject them as abominable taboos not only in life but in literature as well. (120)

Narayan often presents his protagonists in a state of frustration, disappointment and failure. His protagonists strive for some ambitions of grappling with their fates. Having their own ambition and hope, they struggle hard to workout their destiny, and sometimes in this process they become the victim of their own decision. Raju, in *The Guide* happens to be one of it, as he ironically becomes the victim of his own dealings and decision though sometimes-even fate plays its crucial roles in making him a tragic character. The obvious conflict that exists between Raju's original motive in simulating a holy man and the final outcome of his action brings out the powerful impact of the irony, which Narayan has successfully used.

## **Critics on *The Guide***

*The Guide* is one of the most praised fictional works of Narayan, which makes an ironic exposure of a fraudulent saint (Raju). The novel is designed in a superb juxtaposition of past and present where the protagonist, 'Railway Raju' - a superb guide, develops an affair with Rosie, the unhappy wife of an unworldly scholar, and makes her a successful dancer: but is jailed for forgery: trying to prevent a possible reconciliation between her and her husband. Later on, after his release, the simple and credulous villagers for a saint mistake him. Raju plays the role given by villagers assiduously until it exacts him to his ultimate ruin, when he is compelled to die fasting, to bring rain to the drought-stroked village.

From the time of its first publication, a number of critics have commented upon the novel. Bhagwat Goyal interprets the novel in terms of the transformation of the protagonist. For him, "The main theme of this novel is a sort of spiritual transformation. It deals with the story of a Picador, who finds himself transformed into a pilgrim; a criminal changed into a saint" (142). M.K. Naik, too, interprets the novel in terms of the transformation of the protagonist, finds Raju's transformation as "transition from the initial 'comic irony' to the somber hues of 'tragic irony' " (54). C.D Narasimhaiah however gives a totally different interpretation as he views Raju's death symbolically as a means of self-purification and self-realization. He observes, "... individual by losing his life in water brings rain (and life) to his fellowmen and his death is just 'death by water' - which is rarely not death but a means of self-purification and self-realization" (91). Likewise, K.M. Chandar observes Raju's fasting as a means to calm down his own mental tension. He views, "Raju does fast honestly; by the end of the eleventh day

of sincere and complete fasting, most of his aggression and tension get resolved in the form of body- torture" (qtd. in Nair 73).

As the review of literature shows, a full-blown study of Narayan's tragic-comic vision in relation to his ironic technique remains in the periphery of the critical writings on the novel. This study aims to plug the critical gap by proposing to give a comprehensive treatment to the theme of ironic reversal in *The Guide*. In the novel, irony arises when Raju, a tourist guide, on the process of guiding, shatters the family life of Macro and Rosie and later on he misguides the people on a spiritual journey, wearing the mask of a saint. By the same token, irony functions when he rather misguides him self to the tragic death. In this way, the novel successfully portrays tragic irony carrying the theme of ironic reversal leading Raju to a tragic death at the end.

Upon observing these tendencies of the writer and commentaries given by many critics, I have decided to conduct a research on R.K. Narayan's fiction. *The Guide* with an ironical perspective. Varying perceptions of critics, writers, Wayne C. Booth, Muecke, M.K. Naik, K.N. Nair and D.J. Enright will be taken as guidelines besides the scholarly suggestion provided by lectures, professors and my senior colleagues as well.

### Chapter: 3

#### **Ironic Reversal in '*The Guide*'**

R.K. Narayan's, fiction events, generally harp upon the theme of ironic reversal. Narayan, as mentioned earlier, is one of the most popular novelists and an expert on irony. Human foibles have always been the butt of his attack of Narayan. His ironies are mildly pricking and gently tickling. He uses irony neither for offence nor defense in his writings but uses it to pin point and clarify his vision. His fictional work, *The Guide*, is universally acclaimed to be a masterpiece for its strikingly rich ironical mode. In this novel, irony has been used as an all-embracing vision of life. It is not life's casual ironies, but the large irony of life itself that forms the subject of the novel. It offers a meaningful reading of life in the process. The irony he has used in this text strikes on to the ontological aspect of life.

*The Guide* demonstrates the interplay between appearance and reality in the case of the protagonist, Raju. The novel, circles around the theme of ironic reversal. The ironic reversal of Raju from a tourist guide into a sage is the central issue of the novel. The transformation develops during the course of initial comic irony that goes on slowly but inexorably developing the somber hues of tragic irony, till Raju, finally sags down to his death. As the present research will focus on the issue of ironic reversal, it tries to show how Railway Raju, a guide, becomes a sage and how he pays a toughest penalty of a pathetic end, Narayan, in this novel, shows his craftsmanship of wonderful narrative technique, which unmistakably juxtaposes past and present. The juxtaposition of past and present constantly moves along with the intended ironical mode of the appearance and reality. In the novel, there are many instances of comic irony where the chief

protagonist finds him happy. But before he could eat the fruit of that happiness, we find him in a very undesired and unpleasant situation. He is either sent to the prison in the case of forgery (which he actually commits) or is enforced to take a fast. All these different instances of comic irony lead the plot to operate tragic irony where Raju fasts honestly for the first time in which ultimately leads him to get a frustrating and pathetic end. The irony actually helps the progression of the plot, which is heading down to tragedy.

### **Irony as a Motif**

The irony in the novel manifests on the process of Raju's significant transformation from a tourist guide into his death dealing sage hood. The transformation has been presented as a highly complex process unfolded in various distinct stages of development during the course of which the initial comic irony slowly develops into a tragic irony. The narrative opens with the conversation between Raju, a freshly released prisoner and Velan, a simple villager, at their very first meeting near the old temple of a lonely village called Mangala. When Raju sits there speculating his future in a quite meditative posture with closed-eyes and crossed-legs, Velan seems attracted to him, which is in fact an eventful encounter, which sets Raju firmly on the road to enforced sainthood. There is simple irony in this phase, which arises out of the incongruity of a freshly released forger being mistaken for a holy man. In this preliminary stage, Velan seems attracted to Raju when the latter advises him wisely on the domestic problems. Velan is influenced when Raju answers him philosophically. "If you show me a single home without a problem, I shall show you the way to attain a universal solution to all problems". (466). As a tourist guide, it had been Raju's business to solve his clients' problems. By sheer force of life, he thus agrees to

advice Velan and when the latter gratefully tries to touch his feet, he uses his persuasive language philosophically as "I'll not permit anyone to do this, God alone is entitled to such a prostration" (467). Here, the authors comment underscores the ironic import of this development "He felt he was attaining the stature of a saint" (467). From this point onwards, in keeping with the logic of irony, nothing that Raju does wrong. Every action of his, including even his mistakes and inadequacies, furthers the plot with ironic flavor which is finally complete only when he is compelled to attain a death dealing ordeal of fasting.

Ironically luck, chance and even his intuition pushes Raju into the web of his sainthood. For example, his meeting with Velan is nothing but a mere chance. Raju's intuition works when his guess regarding Velan's sister comes out to be the reality puzzling Velan. Again, Raju makes no attempt to solve Velan's problem, which concerns his recalcitrant sister, who has refused to marry the youth chosen to her. But the girl suddenly becomes tractable without Raju's any conscious effort and she attributes her change of heart to the look Raju gave her as "He doesn't speak to anyone, but if he looks at you, you are changed" (477). And thus she speaks of him as her savior. Similarly, Raju moves slowly into the perfection, into the world of experience when the villagers ignore his half-knowledge including mistakes. He starts telling Velan an ancient religious tale, but "halfway through he suddenly realizes that he does not remember either its course or its purport" (469), and abruptly stops; but this does not upset Velan at all. Raju gets a permanent seat of a great man in the blueprint of Velan. Again, when he sits speculating as to where he should go next, the villagers think that he is lost in deep meditation, which shows the presence of ironic strains in the line. When Raju hides himself behind a hibiscus bush to know the reactions of villagers regarding his value in

their eye, he finds it absolutely satisfactory as he hears them saying. "He has renounced the world, he does nothing but meditate. What a pity he is not here today!" (478). He is pleased with the value that the villagers attributed to him: "Just sitting there for a few minutes with him-ah, what a change it has brought about in our household" (478). Raju knows that he is welcomed heartily by villagers as he hears them saying "It would be our misfortune if he went away" (478). In this initial stage, thus Raju is transformed in to a saint without any conscious effort in his part. Though the process is actually set in motion by his own eagerness, derived from his tourist guide days, to interest himself in others problem. The scenario of the novel would have been different if he had not had the nature to interest in others problems. In the course of narration he comments himself as "I never said, 'I don't know'. Not in my nature, I suppose if I had the inclination to say, 'I don't know what you are talking about', my life would have taken a different turn" (493).

The deep-rooted irony stems out when the complexity is brought in the plot in another stage. The irony in this phase stems out of the improvisations practiced by saint to his face. Raju becomes the center of faith for the villagers. He realizes that he has nowhere to go and is assured of getting his food unasked by remaining in the village. He decides to play assiduously the role thrust upon him by Velan rather than going back to his own society to bear the giggles of the people. He tries to look as brilliant as he could manage and tries to bring a sublime cheerfulness in his face as a transcendental sage. He transfers his seat to the inner hall of the sanctuary in order to get a better background. His successful pretending sage hood automatically gathers a herd of people, which guarantees his food and necessities. He lectures to the village boys and is hypnotized by his own voice as the authorial



comments runs here "He was hypnotized by his own voice; he felt himself growing in stature as he saw the upturned faces of the children shining in the half-light when he spoke. No one was more impressed with the grandeur of the whole thing than Raju himself (488). He, however, runs into difficulties when the villagers request him to deliver the discourse, for the only few subjects on which he could speak with authority is jail life or his guide life—and that is rather unsuitable for the occasion. He is disappointed at the situation, but there is no escape. He has to play the part expected of him. By the sheer habit of tackling the situation in his favour; he cleverly hits upon a solution by saying his audience to meditate instead that gives him enough time of search for a suitable subject to talk about. At this point, knowing Raju's cunningness, the author comments, "He was dragging those innocent men deeper and deeper into the bog of unclear thoughts" (491). He keeps on fooling the villagers lying that he can remember six hundred words once at a time and says he has got it out of his habit. Raju becomes able to convince the villagers in his greatness, which helps the cohesive progression of ironic strains in this phase. Raju is a victim of irony. The irony in this phase lies in the success of his pretending sage hood. In this phase, the irony speaks for itself when Raju feels happy in his own fate.

In yet another stage the ironic expressions are made frequent. This phase works as a foundation to operate a tragic irony in the last phase of Raju's reversal. Raju is seen perfecting his role as a saint. The irony lies when Raju poses himself as a real saint that his beard caressed his chest and his hair covered his back. Every activity of Raju becomes ironical- managing prayer meetings, playing the additional roles of doctor and judge, prescribing the herbal medicine to the children, arranging the disputes and quarrels over the division of ancestral

property and what not. Raju's prestige grows beyond his wildest dream. The flow of people to listen to his discourse becomes so vast that he loses his personal limitations. People took his words as a holy suggestion. The cause of ironic reversal that occurs at the end of his life is brought with a draught in the village in this significant stage. The people looked at him with a hopeful eye, but the solution was beyond his power. The summer seems continuing without a drop of rain in the village. The severe draught disturbs the life in the village, leading people to a riot. A turning point comes in Raju's life with the visit of a village moron, Velan's brother, to him. When Raju knew all about the violence and the villagers' plan to attack the other group, he tried hard to control the situation. The irony of fate operates impressively by making the village moron an unconscious instrument of Raju's destruction. Raju fears regarding the arrival of police who might expose him. Anxious to prevent the arrival of the police, Raju still playing the saint, asks the moron to relay a message to the villagers. Their conversation runs as thus:

Tell your brother, immediately, wherever he may be, that unless they are good I'll never eat.

'Eat what?' asked the boy rather puzzled.

Say that I'll not eat. Don't ask what. I'll not eat till they are good. (525)

But, as Velan's brother was not told to go to Raju and narrate about the incident, he afraid to connect Raju's fasting with the violence. As a result of the villagers' impatience to know what the Swami said and the moron's intellectual inadequacy, the message gets twisted into something like 'the swami won't eat because it won't rain'. And the villagers naturally believe that the swami is undertaking a fast to bring a rain in the village. The villagers become

overwhelmed by the Swami's sacrifice. At this moment, one of the villagers talks of Swami showing his gratitude as:

This Mangala is a blessed country to have a man like the swami in our midst. No bad thing will come to us as long as he is with us. He is like a Mahatma, when Mahatma Gandhi went without food, how many things happened in India! This man is like that. If he fasts there will be rain. Out of his love for us he is undertaking it. This will surely bring rain and help us. (527)

In this way, here, the deep-rooted irony is revealed when the villagers attribute so much respect to a fake saint yet failing to grasp the twisted message.

The velocity of irony quickens appreciably in this stage. Raju is even more ironized here. Every speech and activity of Raju manifests a fine stroke of irony in this phase. Raju spends the whole day thinking about the varieties of special dishes that he likes. He harbors to eat 'Bonda' which he used to eat in the railway station. Next day, when the villagers, full of enhanced reverence for him arrive, Raju has actually been expecting them to bring special food. The irony works when he sees a crowd more than usual approaching to him and becomes happy over the fact that he has prevented the violence. Again, another striking example of irony works when he views Velan's brother, "That idiot brother of Velan didn't seem so bad after all" (529). Narayan, in this phase, continues the tempo of irony. There is even an irony when he saw the people bare hand and hoped. "They had the flour in a bag [ . . . ] they were bound to leave it in the Kitchen" (529). But the reality is that they have actually come to him bare hand; unaware of the irony fully convinced that he is already in his fasting. All these ironies mentioned above are nothing but

an outcome of the contrast between thinking of Raju and the reality of the situation, which he could not grasp.

The villager listens to him attentively because of the sympathy and reverence arouse for him, yet being unaware of the irony. That day, their devotion was so unquestionable that he thinks his "personality radiated a glory" (530). When people try to touch the dust of his feet, Raju becomes so satisfied with his own performance that the author comments, "It seemed possible that he himself might bow low, take the dust of his own feet, and press it to his eyes" (530). The misunderstanding continues until Raju tells Velan, "Tomorrow I'll take my usual food" (531), and the latter asks with a shock of surprise, "Do you expect it to rain tomorrow, Sir?" (531). Raju is ashamed with the new turn in the story when he knows from Velan that he has been fasting to bring rain. Here, in this situation, a good deal of irony works making Raju a victim of it. Raju remembers that he had once told the villagers, "When the time comes, everything will be all right; even the man, who would bring you the rain, will appear all of a sudden" (532). He had told this only to divert their mind from the draught. But now they interpreted his words and applied them to the present situation. He is compelled to undergo the fasting. It now dawns upon him that the garbled message has landed him into an ordeal. Velan gives him a very account of what he is expected to do. He also admits that the whole countryside including him is now happy because of the trial, which the great soul has agreed to go through. Now Raju feels that he had worked himself into a position from which he could not get out. A further stroke of irony is that he has to undergo a difficult penance of praying into a pond of knee-deep water. Ironically the circumstances compel him to go through such difficulties as he had discussed about such penance, its values and techniques in one of his

earlier discourses. Raju thinks of running away, but is afraid of getting caught and exposed. As a last resort, Raju even makes a long and frank confession to Velan, but this also fails to produce any effect. Narayan applies here a fine example of irony of fate that when Raju clarifies Velan that he was not a saint, but an ordinary human, in a hope to escape from the situation; Velan pays even more respect after hearing him. At this situation, Raju makes a pathetic remark "This man will finish me before I know where I am" (620). Ironically the sainthood, which he had accepted happily, has now become a prison from which there is no escape for him.

In the last stage, tragic irony operates while the under song of comic irony continues. The ironic reversal takes place along with Raju's tragic end in this stage. Dramatically the news of his fasting spreads all over the country with in a no lapse of time. The entire description of the scenario has been couched in terms of comic irony. The shrine is filled with devotees. It becomes as like as a park and picnic spot. A big crowd to have a 'Darshan' of him circles around Raju. In this stage, Raju's enforced penance passes through various difficulties. On the fourth day of his fasting, he gulps down the stale food he has secreted which was actually two days old. In rest of the days, all the sweet flavour of cooked items around the surrounding supported his hunger even more. Deprived of all food, he keeps thinking only about food. Though he is sure that the hidden food is finished, he hopes for a miracle to happen as he thinks, "When they want me to perform all sons of miracles, why not make a start with my own aluminum vessel?" (622). When Velan inquires about the noise of vessel, he rages at him "An empty vessel. Have you not heard the saying, 'an empty vessel makes much noise?" (623). But, in fact, his remark is very accurate to reveal that an empty stomach makes a man very irritating. He is enraged at the persistence of food-thoughts; soon after,

convinced that he is not going to get anything to eat; he resolves to suppress all thoughts of food. At this point, he tells himself "I'll chase away all thought of food for the next ten days. I shall eradicate all thoughts of tongue and stomach from my mind". (623-24) This resolution gives him a peculiar strength. He argues, "If by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom, and the grass grow, why not it do thoroughly?" (224). And the authors comment here brings out the significance of his thought: "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" (624). The irony reveals the deep-seated and unpredictable complexities of human nature. During the last stages of his ordeal, lack of food gives him, 'a peculiar floating feeling, which he rather enjoyed with the thought in background this enjoyment is something Velan cannot take away from me' " (624).

The life of Raju ends tragically in the morning of his eleventh day of fasting. All the efforts to bring rain are shattered along with the end of his life. In the last day of his life, with the help of Velan, he went down the steps of river and muttered the prayer. The last sentence he said to Velan is "Velan, it's raining in the hills. I can feel it; coming up under my feet, up my legs" (624). The deliberate use of ambiguities that operate at the ending of the novel questions ironically our accepted ideas of human nature and conduct. M.K. Naik insists on the death of Raju claiming that his remaining alive would have make the novel like a salt less curry. He writes. "The inexorable irony of fate demands that Raju must die, for the sharp edge of the ethically motivated irony would have been irrevocably blunted had Raju lived". (65) Naik further quotes Narayan's view regarding the ending of the novel from *My Days*:

Graham Greene liked the story when I narrated it to him in London. While I was hesitating whether to leave my hero alive or dead at the end of the story, Graham was definite that he should die. So I have on my hands the life of a man condemned to death before he was born and grown and I have to plan my narrative to lead to it. (64)

Though different interpretations have been made regarding the ending of the novel, a close examination of it with an ironical eye presents a clear indication that the miracle, which has been waited to be happening, does not occur. The ironic reversal takes place pushing Raju to the tragic death without a drop of rain. K.N. Nair's view supports it as he writes "the question such as whether the rain is a reality or illusion or whether the protagonist dies in the end or not is of little importance. But obviously, the rich ironic mode is kept quite open, in such instances" (74).

Raju has been ironized throughout his entire life. The tragic irony that operates at the end of his life is not only the outcome of the transformation of comic ironies of his sainthood days. Narayan ironizes him throughout his life. The series of irony have been applied even in his past life.

In fact, the ladder of tragedy starts since the days of his tourist guide life in Malgudi when he meets a tourist couple; Marco, an unworldly scholar and his unhappy wife Rosie. The progression of the plot, which is to portray tragic irony at the end, starts with the comic complications. Raju develops a keen interest in Rosie as he is already attracted to her at their very first meeting. He speaks out his love for her with a twisted tongue flavouring it with the appreciations other art," What a glorious snake dance! Oh. I keep thinking of you all the night. World's artist number one! Don't you see how I am pining for you every hour!" (514).

Taking the benefit of a gulf created between Marco and Rosie, Raju wins the favour of Rosie. They engage romantically and move up to the level of love making in the process. Raju enjoys boundless happiness with her but his happiness suddenly shatters as their crime is revealed in front of 'Marco. A fine example of irony works out here. Raju remains in a quite ironical situation of the contrast between what he thought and what actually happened. In his gloom, he makes a remark, which clearly shows that if he had followed Gauffer's advice he would have been saved from this ironical situation:

It was very reasonable advice he was giving me. Even at the moment, it would have been all different if god had given me the sense to follow Gauffer's advice. I should have gone quietly back, leaving Rosie to solve her problems with her husband. That would have saved many sharp turns and twists in my life's course. (547)

Narayan uses a very powerful example of irony yet in this phase. After Raju's showdown with Marco, he is even left by Rosie. He hung about the railway platform, conducted visitors, but was never at peace with himself. But Rosie's sudden arrival helps him come out of his depression. After listening to the story of Rosie, he assures her to make her art to be recognized by the world. The name 'Rosie' is changed by a classical name 'Nalini'. She gets a chance to dance in 'Bharat Natyam' and finally gets what she deserved. Rosie revives the classical dancing and becomes famous as a "dancer Nalini'. With her increasing popularity, their luxury, status, power, position relation, balance and everything increase. Raju enjoys a boundless happiness and opportunities with Rosie. He is happy to be known as a master or else, as a husband of a great artist of the country. He enjoys the moment in front of ministers and officials when the great artist shows her



courtesy to him, as she never began and end the show without his consent. Raju even enjoys being seated in the middle of the sofa with respectful and powerful personages on the stage.

But, ironically, all of his happiness comes to an end leading him to the prison. The turning point comes to his life along with the arrival of a letter. A letter comes to Raju addressing Rosie alias Nalini, which he reads without Rosie's knowledge. To his surprise, the letter came from a lawyer under an instruction of the client Marco, to release a box of jewelry, which is kept safe in bank custody, requesting for Rosie's signature. Raju, either driven off his greed or to prevent possible reconciliation between her and her husband, forges Rosie's signature. Later on Raju is arrested in the case of forgery and is sentenced for two years of imprisonment. At this turning point, Narayan implies a very powerful irony. All the efforts of Raju to remain happy, prosperous and powerful lead him into the jail cell. The most important thing Raju loses here is Rosie's trust for him. In her depressed mood. Rosie says to him "If I've to pawn my last possession, I'll do it to save you from jail. But once it's over, leave me once and for all; that am all I ask. Forget me. Leave me to live or die, as I choose; that's all" (612). Raju is left nowhere-he is made a victim of irony. The irony lies here is that before Raju could eat the fruit of his happiness; he is sent to the prison. He is even discarded by Rosie who was a constant source of his happiness for she provided him love, money, power, position and everything that he desired.

Thus, to conclude this sections 'irony as motif, we come to say that Narayan has dealt irony along with the thematic aspect of the novel. The chronological development of irony from comic to tragic has become the ironical

treatment of Narayan in the life process of Raju in order to make him a victim of irony.

### **Irony and the Structure**

The sharply focused structural fitness of the novel too contributes to Narayan's central ironic vision. The similarity and contrast between the characters has been repeated in several instances throughout the novel which itself carry the ironic spirit often relating it with the theme of the novel. M.K. Naik finds the similarity and contrast among the characters in the novel as, "The Raju-Rosie relationship is balanced by the Raju-Velan relationship. The common element is both Rosie and Velan spell ruin for Raju, each in their own way; the contrast is that while Raju makes Rosie a famous dancer, it is Velan who is mainly responsible for Raju's sainthood" (63). Similarly, the parallelism and contrast is further carried out through Marco and Velan. Marco's indifference to the concerns of Rosie gives a ground to flourish her relationship with Raju, which in turn brings Rosie both fame and frustration. On the other hand, Velan's severe attachment with Raju forces the later to play the role of saint which brings him veneration and fame but also death. But a contrast, which gives more subtle touch of irony in the situation that Naik notices, "the judge ruins Raju's career as an impresario but Raju's prison life is happy, whereas Velan's pardon only in effect tightens the noose around Raju's neck" (63).

The narrative of the novel is dominated by deep-seated irony. The parallelism is even carried out throughout the use of symbol. The crocodile, an archetypal symbol of hypocrisy, provides a fitting parallel to the fake saint. We know about the crocodile from the villagers' gossip that it is there in the river, which flows by the side of Raju's sanctuary. Though the villagers know it is there,

no one has actually seen it," let us go before it gets too dark. They say that there is an old crocodile in this part of the river" (478). The myth of crocodile is parallel to Raju's sainthood as both of them display the reality at their death. The crocodile is seen for the first time when the draught, which is to kill Raju also kills it.

The title, *The Guide* is also not free from the flavour of irony itself. It is the story of a person Raju, professionally a tourist-guide, who misguides and shatters the family life of a tourist couple. Later on at the outset of his career, he tries to be a spiritual guide of the credulous villagers of Mangala; ironically the deep level meaning of the term attains its full significance as he rather misguides them.

In this way, Narayan's structural strategy is praise worthy which is linked with the thematic irony of the novel. All these different instances of complex and deep-seated ironies help the progression of the plot to foreground ironic reversal.

### **Irony and Fate**

The Guide is an unquestionably ironical work of Narayan. He has used different kinds of irony to foreground the reversal. Several episodes in the novel also harp upon the theme of irony of circumstances, making for quick and fateful reversal. For example, after Raju's showdown with Marco at the peak house, a repentant Rosie asks him to go away and he thinks that is the end of his affair with her. He finds himself plunged in a 'world of gloom' and feels "bored and terrified by the boredom of normal life" (553). And then most unexpectedly Rosie comes to him having left her husband and a new and exciting chapter in his life begins. Likewise, M.K. Naik finds a similar example of irony of circumstance in the novel, which too makes quick and fateful reversal:

The crucial forgery incident is a fine specimen of the ironic shadow that falls between intention and upshot. Raju forges Rosie's

signature on a legal document in order to guard against the possibility that her attitude to her husband might soften if she comes to know about the generous gesture of Marco, offering her jewels; yet it is this very act of his that ultimately leads to Raju's loss of Rosie and the ensuing train of events ending in his own death. (59)

According to the definition of 'irony of fate', it characterizes works in which a character's fate seems perversely manipulated by forces beyond human control. The characters' efforts seem only to 'tighten the noose' already prepared by destiny. As in his other works, Narayan emphasized 'fate', as a dominant tool in this novel. *The Guide* manifests 'fate' with ironic expression. In the novel, there are numerous instances where 'irony of fate' has been applied which play its crucial role in making Raju a tragic figure. But, perhaps the finest stroke of 'irony of fate' is the fact that Raju, a man of the world is worsted by three men who are all innocent — Marco, the unworldly scholar who exposes his forgery; Velan, the simple villager, refuses to be shocked by his revelations and compels him to continue to play the saint up to the bitter end: and last but not least the village moron (actually described as a 'semi'- moron) who twists his message to the villagers, forcing Raju to the fast-unto-death. In fact, the entire episode of the message and its getting twisted in the process of transmission is suffused with irony. The moron, Velan's brother was "one of the lesser intelligences of the village" (523) is actually "one of those rare men in the village who never visited the Swamiji, but preferred to sleep at home at the end of the day. But now he had come almost for the first time" (524). Again, he comes to meet Raju by sheer accident. He had come here "this morning- not because anyone had sent him to carry a message for Swamiji, but because he was at a loose end and had suddenly

felt that he might as well pay a visit to the temple and receive the swami's blessing" (524). The ordeal of the fast-unto-death would perhaps never have been thrust upon Raju had the moron not visited him that day.

### **Irony and the World of Novel**

As for Marco, a cynical idiosyncrasy is seen in his character. Though he gained the reputation, name and money after his rocketing success in his remarkable publication, he also suffered from a tragic married life. His cynicism is foreground by his sheer attachment to the unworldly and non-living things than caring for the existing one. Raju's summing up for the man is therefore apt as he thinks Marco as a 'creature': "Oh, what a man! has not met a more grotesque creature in my life" (513). The element of grotesque is accentuated by the fact that he has no name except the nick name Raju gives him: 'Marco polo', because "he dressed like a man about to undertake an expedition-with his thick coloured glasses, thick jacket and a thick helmet over which was perpetually stretched a green, shiny, water-proof cover, giving him the appearance of a space traveler" (504). Raju comments on him regarding his dress as "in fact, his dress, with his helmet and thick jacket [. . .] was that of a wild African Shikari" (512). Marco's dress is indeed symbolic in a sense, for it rightly suggests his complete insulation from the world of normal human concerns. He was a devoted student of ancient art, "dead and decaying things seemed to loosen his tongue and fire his imagination, rather than thing that lived and moved and swung their limbs" (512). Hence the irony is that he feels joyous with the musical notations that he finds in the ancient cave paintings, but has no interest to the music itself. This is further clarified when Rosie narrates how Marco discarded her song and dance; "I sang that song about the lover and his girl on the banks of the Jamuna and danced the

piece for him. He sat watching me coldly. I had not completed the fifth line when he said, 'stop, I have seen enough' "(561), He is interested in painting and old art and things like that, but not to one which can move its limbs. The figures of dancers in a temple frieze interest him far more than his own wife, who is an accomplished dancer. "All practical affairs of life seemed impossible to him; such a simple matter as finding food or shelter or buying a railway ticket seemed to him a monumental job" (535). A further stroke of irony is that despite the general lack of practical wisdom, Marco displays a strange obsession with vouchers, which he seems to sanctify all payments. He would pay for everything, if he got a voucher for payments, "He would not yield an Anna without a voucher, whereas if you gave him a slip of paper you could probably get him to write off his entire fortune" (508). Narayan presents Marco's character so ironically that he shows no humanly feelings for all the living beings, but shows his ever readiness for the unworldly things like vouchers and bills. He can't forget vouchers even when he quarrels with Raju, who, he knows is flirting with Rosie: "Give me your bill and be done with it" (549).

Similarly, Rosie, born in a family of traditional temple-dancers, loves to dance and breaks her marriage with Marco because it leaves her with no hope to practice the art. She catches the hand of Raju to get help for the purpose of sharpening her art. She is totally absorbed in the music and dance and thus forgets all the values of relation and responsibilities of a woman. But once she becomes a well-known danseuse, she finds her newly acquired success as tedious. Therefore, Narayan also keeps Rosie along the similar line of other characters for she displays a fine stroke of irony. After the success other dream, she finds it as irksome and wishes to go back to her normal life again. She tells Raju, "the

thought of it make me sick. I feel like one of those parrots, in a cage taken around village-fairs, as a performing monkey". (599) She further says to him, "I'll not dance in public anymore. I am tired of all this circus existence". (612) The irony has been used even regarding Rosie's thinking while she gets the opposite of what she thought. Her husband, Marco, whom she used to think as a barrier to her career, now realizes his kindness, honesty and liberty. On the other hand, Raju, torn whom she left her husband, comfort and luxury, turns out to be a mean, a materialist and a forger. After Raju's forgery, Rosie does not find a thread of trust to him. We can realize her disbelief as she says to him:

I think the best solution for all concerned would be to be done with this business of living. I mean both of us; A dozen sleeping pills in a glass of milk. One often hears of suicide pacts. It seems to me a wonderful solution, like going on a long holiday. We could sit and talk one night perhaps, and sip our glasses of milk, and may be we should make up in a trouble-free world. I'd propose it this very minute if I were sure you would keep the pact. But I fear I may go a head and you may change your mind at the last second. (612)

The irony of Raju's transformation is the central issue of the novel as M.K. Naik says:

The title *The Guide* seems to sum up in one word the tremendous significance of the strange transformation of the protagonist from a tourist guide into a transcendental guru: from 'Railway Raju' (as he popularly known during his avatar as a tourist guide) into recluse Raju; from a forger into a fakir and a Picaro into a pilgrim, and from a fake Sadhu into a famous martyr. (54)

As for Raju, the tragedy in his guide life occurred because of his own eagerness to love money and position whereas his tragic death at the end is an outcome of the other assigned role that he played during his performing sainthood. Similarly, the same motif of a self-chosen or other-assigned role becoming bondage and producing major ironic consequences is repeated in the case of some other characters also in the novel. Velan, a simple villager, was the self-appointed first devotee of Raju and the discoverer of the Raju's non-existent sainthood is the prisoner of his own innocence and credulity. Velan goes on playing the role of his self-appointed faith even after hearing Raju's frank and straightforward confession. Raju is shocked to hear the response of Velan as he says, "I don't know why you told me all this swami. It's very kind of you to address at such length, your humble servant". (620) Velan refuses to accept that the saint is a charlatan and hence we are ensured of his self-chosen bondage to his own role as a devotee as he says, "I'll never speak a word what I have heard to anyone" (620). The irony lies here that Raju made a clean breast of everything to escape from the situation whereas Velan's refusal to view him as a fraud ensures the perpetuation of Raju's bondage of enforced sainthood.

Similarly, Rosie leaves her husband after a frustrating trial to modify his vision about the living art and dance for the sake of other self-chosen field. She receives a remarkable recognition in classical dancing. But ironically, after a successful recognition in her self-chosen profession, she finds her newly created halo very tiresome as already stated. The following lines confirm that her self-chosen role has become a bondage to her, as she says to Raju, "No. I'm not happy. What will you do about it" (599)?



Likewise her husband, Marco too is so much a slave to his self-chosen professional role as a scholar that he is incapable of playing his other-human and social role as a good husband. Though his coldness to social and emotional aspects of life helped him to get a worldwide recognition as a writer of his book 'A cultural history of south India', ironically the same coldness ruined his family life.

*The Guide* carries another dominant feature in that it uses the functional role of local irony in it. This is well illustrated by the description in the last chapter of the huge fair, which suddenly materializes when news of Raju's fast spreads. The entire description is couched in terms of comic irony. The news of Raju's fasting spreads through a wandering newspaper correspondent when he hears about the swamiji, picks up the news and sends off a wire to his paper, making it a headline as, "Holy man's penance to end drought" (620). The author comments, "The pen of the wandering journalist had done the trick" (624) when the crowd increased like a fair in the village. The scenario becomes so picnic like that author again comments:

But each day the crowd increased [. . .] children shouted and played about, women came carrying baskets filled with pots, firewood, and foodstuffs, and cooked the food for their men and children [. . .] It was studded with picnic groups, with the women's bright - coloured saris shining in the sun [. . .] people swarmed around little water-holes (621).

While Raju continues fasting, the surrounding materializes so quickly that the shops spring up around the shrine, displaying, "coloured soda bottles and bunches of bananas and coconut toffees" (624). The tea propaganda Board opens a big stall serving free tea and "the public swarmed around it like flies and the flies

swarmed on all cups and sugar bowls" (625). The fly brought in the health department officials who coax people to inoculate themselves against cholera, Malaria and other diseases. The situation becomes so humorous with comic flavour when the khaki-clad health workers have to play hit music on the gramophone with loud speakers to attract the people for the inoculation. The shrine is filled with varieties of people including jugglers, peddlers and gamblers, which show Narayan's intentional description of the situation with comic touch. When an American film producer arrives to film the entire scene, people seem more attracted to his instruments and activities. The crowd, of course, does not forget to watch the saint with profound awe; "They touched the water at his feet and sprinkled it over their heads" (625). This description does not merely provide simple comic irony in contrast with the tragic irony of Raju's enforced sainthood; it shows virtually the same forces at work, which have brought about Raju's pathetic end.

### **Raju: A Tragic Antihero**

Narayan presents the tragedy of Raju in a modernized form. The tragic flaw in him has been constituted on modern lines. In the classical tragedy there must be goodness and appropriateness of the protagonist. But as we find him in the midstream of the situations, he lacks essential goodness though the appropriateness is of course in him. In that sense, this novel shares some of the qualities of it with the 'picaresque fiction'. Abrams defines the term. "Picaresque fiction is realistic in manner, episodic in structure (that is composed of a sequence of events held together largely because they happened to one person), and often satiric" (191). The novel has nearly all the ingredients of being such - the novel is realistic in tone and setting, Raju is the center of focus as every event and action

circles around him to bring about his tragic death, and the novel brings forth the satiric impulses through irony. We can keep Raju parallel to Daniel Defoe's heroine Moll in *Moll Flanders*. Defoe's this novel is a wonderful example of a 'Picaresque fiction' ever written in English literature in which the young heroine Moll displays a striking role of antihero (anti-heroine). Abrams quotes a line from *Moll Plunder* to depict about Moll's character, "twelve year a whole, five times a wife, (where of once to her own brother). Twelve year a thief, a year of transported felon in Virginia" (qtd. in Abrams 191), which is parallel to Raju's entire life story as a clever and money minded guide for years, then a sensual lover, a forger, a prisoner and a fake saint. Raju thus can be viewed as a colourful modern version of old *Picaro*. Raju's dishonesty and meanness stands him as an antihero. Though the classical antiheroes lack the qualities - power and heroism; ironically Raju manifests fake power and fake heroism. Raju shares the qualities of antihero on the ground of his moral behaviour. The irony is revealed when Raju comes out to be a Failure. Raju has been ironized when he fails to produce any heroism in effect.

Though the heroisms of Raju are ironized, making him like an antihero; he is the hero of the novel. Though the qualities in him signify his antihero ness, he is a hero around whom the entire event circles. He is a tragic hero because of the failure of his penance to bring rain in the village. The tragic element is even more supported at his death: Narayan brings to; in his tragedy applying irony. On the whole, *The Guide* is tragedy with Raju as a tragic character. But as already stated, Narayan constituted Raju's tragedy in quite modernized lines; his sufferings are more external than internal. He does not suffer with an inward agony as like other

ideal tragic heroes Hamlet, Othello and Oedipus. This very fact is also an irony used on Raju. On the whole Raju is made a victim of irony.

All these different instances of irony help the plot to move forward to bring a tragic irony, which Narayan aims to achieve. The all-prevailing note of comic irony in the novel is wound up with the tragic irony in Raju's death. The tragic irony operates when Raju dies of an enforced fasting. The ironic reversal occurs along with the tragic death of Raju. The term ironic reversal refers to a situation in which readers assume a place of the concerned character (Protagonist).

But later on are amazed to find him in a quite different position just across the street where he actually sits in. Here, in the case of Raju, the reversal is brought when the tragic irony operates at the end, pushing Raju to a tragic death. In the novel, irony has added more to the poignancy. It has intensified the agony even more. The use of irony has even more sharpened Narayan's tragic vision.

## **Chapter: 4**

### **Conclusion**

#### **Ironies of Life Lead Protagonist into Failure**

Irony is a rhetorical tool, which is used by creative writers to fill the gap between what is expressed and what is intended. The novel I analyzed in this study, which deals with the theme of 'ironic reversal', uses irony as a rhetorical tool, not only as a mere technique to provide a contrast between appearance and reality, but also to foreground the moral aspect of life. It raises the issue of ontology, ironic reversal, and, brings the novel to achieve its significance. The novel would have definitely failed to carry the message with equal force and effectiveness, if only Narayan had not used irony. Thus, the very credit of it goes to this rhetorical tool for its amazing exposure of the pathetic and tragic death of the hero through ironic reversal.

The novel attains its full significance in the purpose of making the protagonist Raju, as an ironical character. Though the novelist uses different kinds of irony such as comic irony, irony of fate (cosmic irony) and tragic irony in the novel, tragic irony remains the dominant one throughout as the end of the plot leaves a tragic note effectively. The use of other types of irony just provides further help and the tragic irony, which the writer aims to achieve. The initial comic irony of the novel slowly but inexorably gets transformed into tragic with an occasional but foremost support of irony of fate. The comic irony happens impressively when Raju has mistaken by the villagers to be a holy man and he himself accepts it rather happily. In this stance, comic irony is further carried out wherein every step taken by Raju turns out to be comical with the touch of irony. The comic irony is found even in the respect attributed by the villagers to Raju.

Lastly, the commercialization of Raju's fasting and Narayan's intentional description of people and their manners has also been suffused with the comic irony. There are many instances of 'irony of fate' in the novel, which plays its crucial role in making Raju a tragic figure. For example, the irony of fate operates while making the village moron an unconscious instrument of Raju's destruction. The village moron, in fact, is one of the less intelligent persons of the village, who prefers to sleep at home at the end of the day. But this time he pays a visit to Swami without any significant purpose and twists his message to the villagers, forcing Raju to the fast-unto-death. The entire episode of the message and its getting twisted in the process of transmission are filled with irony of fate. In another instance, Irony of fate functions again to lead Raju towards his tragic situation. At that time, Raju makes a clean breast of the reality of his existence to escape from the trap of fasting, but Velan pays even more respect after hearing him. In this way, the irony of 'fate' plays an effective instrumental role to lead the plot to function as tragic irony.

The transformation of irony from comic to tragic moves along with Raju's chequered career from tourist guide to a saint and tragic irony rises at the pathetic end of Raju because of the entrusted ordeal of fasting in order to bring a rain in the village. Narayan is able to portray the tragic notes impressively at the conclusive section of the novel in different respects. Firstly, Raju's desperate effort to handle the situation and save himself from the ordeal goes in vain. Again, his persistence of food- thought during his fasting also exposes his pathos. Likewise, most importantly, Narayan ironizes Raju (a fake saint) on his moral ground along with the Hindu concept of miracle when his fasting does not bring rain in effect; also leaves an impressive tragic note. The life of Raju ends tragically in the eleventh

day of his fasting. Narayan's purpose to use irony receives its full meaning at the pathetic end of Raju as he brings ironic reversal through Raju's death.

Thus, the aforementioned novel, in a nutshell, can be studied from the ironical perspective; Narayan's ironic vision is clarified as he ironically victimizes Raju. Raju has been an ironic butt in different respects. He could not carry out his happy love affair with Rosie and could not enjoy money and power as he commits forgery and is jailed. He could not manage to keep himself away from taking up undesired fasting. He fails to produce the miracle of rain and finally gets the toughest penalty of death rather pathetically. Raju always reaches almost near to achieve his goal, but his desperate efforts end tragically and this tragedy is carried out through the use of irony. The use of irony has made the situation more poignant and it has intensified the agony even more in *The Guide*.

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