

The Journey Within: Inner Calling as Spiritual in R. K. Narayan's *The Guide* and Robin Sharma's *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*

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Abstract

The Journey within begins when people start contemplating about the real purpose of their existence. The contemplation of longing to know the real purpose of life starts in the process of sitting with mindfulness – meditation which transcends the survival purpose of life. It leads to spirituality, the ability to talk to oneself or the heart—the inner calling, leads humans towards the perception of Divine within oneself, treasure within oneself and happiness within oneself. R. K. Narayan's *The Guide* and Robin Sharma's *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* carve out spiritual traces where protagonists find pleasure and happiness. In *The Guide*, the transformation of Raju from a tourist guide to spiritual guide for the sake of humankind and his interconnectedness with the Divine owes much to the self-realization as well as to his heart. In the same way, *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* transcends the material prosperity and reaches to the state of ecstasy as exemplified in spiritual preaching of the monk—Robin. Following the spirituality as theoretical tool, the article the central characters and explores their transformation towards spiritual awakening.

Keywords: Inner calling, Spirituality, Non-attachment, Contemplation, Self-realization

Introduction

The Guide (1958) by R.K Narayan shows a transformation of Raju from a material world to a spiritual world. In the same way, the fable *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari* (1997) talks about how the lawyer Julian undergoes a massive transformation from a lawyer to a spiritual leader. In both fictions, the main characters struggle hard to find the meaning and happiness in life which they have previously thought in terms of the materialism. Raju becomes a tourist guide and starts to earn money even by telling false things and making people believe what he says. He develops relation with Rosie- the wife of Marco since Marco did not care

his wife who needs his company. Slowly and gradually, it is clear that Raju's relation with Rosie is something guided by sensuality and materiality. However, as Rosie becomes a dance star or celebrity due to her dancing skill, she is no more a girl that Raju met in the past with her husband Marco. Misunderstanding between them occurs as Raju forges a signature of Rosie and he is put into jail. In the jail, he realizes that his relation with Rosie was guided by his aim to be rich because he only cared about money. Thinking that the way to material world does not bring happiness, he decides to go to temple after being released from jail. After he is released, he goes to a Temple and starts living a life of simple man that people mistakenly think he is the sage. And his spiritual journey begins. In the same way, in the next story *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, Julian- the lawyer- who has a busy schedule working more to earn money goes to meet Sages of Sivana and he becomes a spiritual man. After, he has a heart attack; he leaves the city and goes to Himalayan region to be enlightened. His learning which he obtained from a Himalayan Guru changes him and he becomes a spiritual guru himself.

Raju's Transformation as the Spiritual Leader in *The Guide*

In the novel, *The Guide*, the central character – Raju works as a tourist guide. He even makes lies to earn money. He falls in love with Rosie- the wife of Marco. Once he is caught by police in the forgery of sign and put in jail, he contemplates over his life and decides to go to a abandoned temple to live a life of sadhu. He experiences a sense of spirituality at the end of the novel. During his twelve days of fasting, he conquers his senses of hunger and thirst; he transcends the senses and become one with God. He feels as if the drought is ended as the water drops touches his feet, “Velan, it's raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my legs” (216). His sense of rain falling and sense of becoming one with the Divine is individually experienced. It means he is almost unconscious due to twelve days' fasting, even in his unconscious state; he remembers God and feels rain touching his feet. It is not sure whether it has rain fallen or it is his realization of rain that he feels towards the ending of his life.

He has had hard times in the first two days of the fasting. Slowly and gradually, he conquers the senses, “If by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom, and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly?” 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”

(216) . By avoiding food, he is supposed to cause rain falling, which helps trees bloom, and grass grow. He is interested in doing something that does not bring anything to him personally but rather he is inclined to bring happiness for entire mankind and environment. It means his level of thinking has been changed. He realizes the material prosperity is useless as it is not useful in difficult time which the entire society is facing currently due to drought. In this regards, Sumanta Majumder in “Raju: A Need-Base Metamorphosis in R.K. Narayan’s Novel ‘The Guide’“ writes:

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. It gave him a new strength to go through with the ordeal. He had been fasting to save humanity from draught. He almost lost all sensations. He stepped into his basin of water, shut his eyes, and turned towards the mountains, muttering the prayer. The headman of the village is Velan who regards Raju as a saint. All the villagers believed in Velan and Raju becomes ‘Swami’ for them, a true saint. (157)

The quote talks about the selfless act of Raju as a saint, his involvement in the upliftment of the village which he does sacrificing himself. This job gives him new strength. His fasting is planned to bring happiness for the entire humanity. Since the villagers firmly believe him, he could not discard them and starts doing fasting. Towards the end of the novel, he is joyous despite the bodily pain because he is enjoying his connection with super soul which he personally experiences, “And at the end of the novel he sits up and thinks to undertake the fast in earnest, to experiment the veracity of the traditional faith in the efficacy of genuine fasting of a holy man to bring rain for the good of humanity” (157). He becomes a holy man- a sadhu for the good of humanity. He realizes that he should do something for the society.

This realization made him stronger, “He felt suddenly so enthusiastic that it gave him a new strength to go through with the ordeal. The fourth day of his fast found him quite sprightly. He went down to the river; stood facing upstream with his eyes shut, and repeated the litany” (208). This is what he does in his penance. He goes to river with enthusiasm and bathes repeating the litany which prepares ground for his spirituality. He is doing what his inner self or the inner calling is saying to him, “I am doing what I have to do; that’s all. My likes and dislikes do not count” (218). He means to say that his sensory impulses and likes do not make any sense when his inner journey to spirituality is started.

According to the *Bhagwad Gita*, “He, who performs all actions as his duties without a desire for their fruits, is the true Sannyasi and a Yogi as well, and not one who shrinks his duties like sacrifices, rites and social service” (174). By avoiding food and sensory needs and one who does his duties are carried out without thinking about the personal desire, he becomes a sage or spiritual guide. This applies in the case of Raju because he is transformed to spiritual guide from tourist guide. Santanu Panda in “Cultural Juxtaposition in R.K Naryan’s novel *The Guide*,” writes, “Raju at the end of the novel achieves the connection with the super soul” (31). He has developed his connection with the super soul which is his personal experience. Panda further writes, “The surroundings the river, the tree with chattering birds and monkey, an ancient shrine creates the conception of a holy place. Raju’s rambling talk convinces Velan that Raju is a Yogi separated from the domestic life” (28). It means Raju is now far from his domestic life, he is a real yogi which the villagers have believed him to be.

As said in the Bhagvad Gita, “For him who has conquered the mind, the mind is the best of friends but for one who has failed to do so, his mind will remain the greatest enemy” (333). His matured thinking at the end of the novel is his ability to control his mind. He has control over the soul, mind which paves the spiritual journey away, “Unless the mind is controlled, the practice of yoga is simply a waste of time. One who cannot control his mind, lives always with the greatest enemy and thus his life and mission are spoiled” (334). It means the spiritual journey cannot be launched until the mind is conquered. Raju towards the end of the novel is able to conquer his mind thereby preparing the ground for spirituality. M. Kavitha reflects on how he acquires the dimension of becoming spiritual guide:

Raju acquires the dimensions of a spiritual guide, a guru to the village people of Mangla. He tells the village boy a semi -moron, that he will not the food until people stop fighting in the village because drought is a pestilence. The stupid fellow twists the message and tells people that the sadhu will not eat food until the rain come and help the people. As a result, people stop bringing food to him. (184)

Though Raju unwillingly started his fasting, but it develops as if it is something guided from inside, his inner calling. Kavita further writes:

Raju, as a saint stand from morning six to eight in the river water, meditate, salute to the gods, even if there is little water, people tried to fill up the basin with artificial water.

He begins to lose sensation and sags down, feeling the incoming rains. Praying to sun God after taking bath early morning in the river is still our culture. Narayan is successful in depicting the spiritual aspects of human character in the character of Raju. (186)

Raju has become a saint, stands in the river, and meditates for the wellbeing of mankind. She means to say that the novel is spiritually equipped. She further writes:

Spirituality in the sense, related to faith in God, means of reaching Him, consequences that result from the deviations of not adhering to such noble paths etc. People believe that religious values are real, absolute and eternal. They worship God, the Almighty who is omnipresent and omnipotent. (185)

The quote clarifies that spirituality is related to faith in God, means of reaching Him. Raju, as he starts losing his sense of life at the end due to the consequences of fasting for 12 days, he reveals that he is assimilating with the God.

The *Bhagavad Gita* talks about how one can acquire knowledge and become yogi, “A person is said to be established in self-realization and is called Yogi [mystic] when he is fully satisfied by the virtue of acquired knowledge and realization. Such a person is situated in transcendence and self-controlled. He sees everything—whether it is pebbles, stones or gold – as the same. (334). In chapter four, it says, “A faithful man who is dedicated to transcendental knowledge and who subdues his senses is eligible to achieve such knowledge, and having achieved it he quickly attains the spiritual” (286). Raju overcame the sensory objection to the spiritual path, “For one who has conquered the mind, the Supersoul is already reached, for he has attained tranquility. To such a man happiness and distress, heat and cold, honor and dishonor are the same” (334). He is connected to the super soul by conquering his senses and by controlling the mind. His sacrifice of fasting made him spiritually so strong that sensory pain or pleasure does not affect.

Raju goes through the different stages of journey; material and spiritual ones. His love and infatuation with Rosie, his job as tourist guide, his attempt to tell false things indicate he is materially guided. However, his journey to live a simple life going to the deserted temple is his spiritual journey. He, at the end of story, realizes that he is connected with the super-soul and his sacrifice of fasting brought happiness to the mankind. He realizes that his unlimited titles are useless so he goes to temple to be

spiritual guide. The moment one transcends from aspiration to realization, she or he is in spirituality. Raju's greater realization of self draws heavily upon his ability to conquer senses.

Julian Mantle's Self-Realization and Spirituality in *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*

In *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, the lawyer Julian Mantle has had a severe heart attack and is taken to hospital where he realized that he was living a meaningless life of tensions and pressures due to his busy schedule of attorney. Despite his name and fame, he is no more a happy person. Thus, he sells his mansion and Ferrari to go to the Himalayan region to study the seven virtues of the Sages which could lead to spirituality. This aspiration of going to Sivana is the beginning of his journey to spirituality. In fact, he realized his inner calling which guided him towards spirituality. He describes, "I had received a command from within, an inner instruction telling me that I was to begin a spiritual voyage to rekindle the spark that I had lost" (23). After going to the Sivana, where he learnt how one can live a happy life. He is a changed man now.

Talking about the inner journey, Dalai Lama writes, "It involves an inner discipline, a gradual process of rooting out destructive mental states and replacing them with positive, constructive states of mind, such as kindness, tolerance and forgiveness. In identifying the factors that lead to a full and satisfying life, we conclude with a discussion of the final component -spirituality" (247). The quote says that by replacing destructive mental states with kindness, tolerance, and forgiveness, one can be spiritual. One should be kind, tolerant and compassionate to be spiritual. The quote further says that the ultimate journey is spiritual. As seen in the story, *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, Julian Mantle enjoys his journey to live a simple life of sadhu in Sivana. By doing this, he becomes spiritual. Talking about spirituality, Lama further writes, "Thus whether one leads a spiritual life depends on whether one has been successful in bringing about that disciplined, tamed state of mind and translating that state of mind into daily actions" (260). Spirituality requires a disciplined mind. If the discipline mind is not practiced in real life it is no more spiritual. It means to say that spirituality is not only limited in what we say, it is what we do in our life being simple and disciplined.

The consequences of spirituality are visible in Julian personally. When Julian returns back to America being spiritual, his friend -John is

surprised to see changes in Julian Mantle. In the story, John says, “I was astonished by the new and improved Julian Mantle. How could someone who looked like a tired old man only a few short years ago now look so vibrant and alive?”(22). His physical appearance is greatly improved, almost miraculously better, and similarly his mind and attitude on life are far better this is spiritual transformation. Yet this spirituality is socially colored as he goes on preaching how one can live a very happy life.

While working as a lawyer, he was very busy and his busy schedule was the result his hidden interest to earn money. Due to stress, he has had a heart-attack. In the Himalayan land he is enlightened and returned a transformed man. John says, “Gone was the elderly appearance and the morbid expression that had become his personal trademark. Instead, the man in front of me appeared to be in peak health, his lineless face glowing radiantly” (25). The glowing face indicates that Julian is now stress free and is happy. This happiness is the way to spirituality.

Julian learns to live happily in the land of Sivana. This is the place where found his true self. Spirituality for Julian is something related to joyous life guided by spiritual journey within. Thus, he is indebted to the land he reached and he describes this far-away land as a “personal odyssey of the self. He confided that he was determined to find out who he really was and what his life was all about before it was too late” (23). He is happy to find out his new selfhood located in the spirituality which he was unaware at the initial stage with the realities of life, afterwards when he realizes his ‘self’ and went on preaching people. Julian says to John:

I realized that my mission is to serve others and somehow to contribute to making this world a better place. I serve those in need. I am simply a man who has found his soul. The secret of happiness is simple: find what you truly love to do and then direct all of your energy towards doing it. If you study the happiest, healthiest, most satisfied people of our world, you will see that each and every one of them has found their passion in life, and then spent their days pursuing it. This calling is almost always one that, in some way, serves others. Once you are concentrating your mental power and energy on a pursuit that you love, abundance flows into your life, and all your desires are fulfilled with ease and grace. (167)

Julian says that he is a man who found his self, and his mission was to serve others. He wants to serve those people who are in need. He talks about secret of happiness which is all about finding what one truly loves and directing oneself towards that goal with all efforts. He is guided by spiritual feeling similar to something found in Bhagavada Gita, “I am the source of all spiritual and material worlds. Everything emanates from Me. The wise who perfectly know this engage in my devotional service and worship Me with all their hearts” (549). As said in the quote, Julian is a wise man who devotes to help the people who are all emanated from God.

Yogi Raman who is the eldest and leader of the Sages of Sivana goes on teaching Julian regarding spirituality. Julian became a monk and was requested by other monk to spread the wisdom that he learnt to the West and beyond. Being enlightened, Julian wanted to work on helping others and spreading the wisdom of the Sages of Sivana. There, he listens a fable which revolves around the whole story. The fable is about beautiful garden, flowers, silence, Japanese sumo wrestler, “As this sumo wrestler starts to move around the garden, he finds a shiny gold stopwatch which someone had left behind many years earlier. He slips it on, and falls to the ground with an enormous thud” (48-49). According to the fable, the sumo wrestler walks around the garden with flowers. It is silent and calm in the garden. He finds a shiny gold stop watch. Suddenly he falls down there and wakes up due to the fragrance of roses. The gold sparkles showing the path ahead. The writer further writes:

The sumo wrestler is rendered unconscious and lies there, silent and still. Just when you think he has taken his last breath, the wrestler awakens, perhaps stirred by the fragrance of some fresh yellow roses blooming nearby. Energized, the wrestler jumps swiftly to his feet and intuitively looks to his left. He is startled at what he sees. Through the bushes at the very edge of the garden he observes a long winding path covered by millions of sparkling diamonds. Something seems to instruct the wrestler to take the path, and to his credit, he does. This path leads him down the road of everlasting joy and eternal bliss. (49)

The seven key elements in that fable to focus on, which most of the book depends on are: the beautiful garden, the lighthouse, the sumo wrestler, the pink wire covering the sumo wrestler, the gold stopwatch, the yellow roses, the path of sparkling diamond. These elements indicate the seven basic virtues of the Sivanan System. The beautiful garden represents

human mind, the lighthouse represents goals and purpose, the sumo wrestler represents kaizen which means constant self-improvement, the pink wire covering the sumo wrestler represents discipline and willpower, the gold stopwatch represents respecting your time, the yellow roses represent selflessly serve others and the path of diamonds represent living in the moment and to some extent, enlightenment.

In *The Guide* and *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, Raju and Julian- the monk, follow what their heart says 'inner calling'. When they both realize that the journey of tourist guide and lawyer respectively, they are taking, does not necessarily give happiness in their life, they seek for the spiritual journey. This journey is what their heart says to follow. This is the reason why Raju does not want to be with the rich lady- Rosie and Julian gives up his title, sells his Ferrari and goes to Sivana land to meet sages. Happiness comes when one follows what the heart says one to do. Inner calling and journey within are interrelated since both talks about same thing; one should do what the heart says without being enslaved to any kind of doctrine, let it be social or cultural. In Raju's case, it was necessary for him to earn money for the family. However, after being disillusioned with wealth, he abandons what he has and he becomes happy to live a simple life of sadhu in a temple. Julian also gets pleasure to be a sage and preacher. By giving up the hectic life of lawyer and following what his heart says, he is able to conquer the senses and he becomes spiritual.

Conclusion

Spirituality here is an individual experience. It is all about how one becomes happy and lives a simple life. Thus, spiritual journey needs no distance; it begins when one sits in his/her body, emotion, and feeling and contemplates. Knowing oneself fully is spiritual. How joyful one is feeling within himself or herself, he is living to determine his quality of life. The reasons of unhappiness are something to set some impossible conditions like both characters did in their past life. The impossible conditions to be happy ruined both characters in once and it is the spiritual journey they undertook and finally lived a happy and meaningful life being merged with One. They become peaceful not messing the mind. As both of them are spiritual they know how to conduct mind and emotion. Raju at the end of story realizes that he is connected with the super-soul and his sacrifice of fasting brought happiness to the mankind. Both characters sit in meditative mood as spiritual gurus. The journey from aspiration to realization is the journey of spirituality--- the journey within or inner

journey. It is not something to close eyes and sit vertically. It is realization of the true self. It begins when one transcends the senses and sits mindfully in the body, in the mind, in the emotion and in the heart. The monk - Julian on the other hand, realizes that his unlimited titles are useless so he goes to India to be the one seeking the spiritual and being a spiritual guide. The moment one transcends from aspiration to realization, she or he is in spirituality. Raju's greater realization of self draws heavily upon his conquers of senses. As he passes through the different stages of life, he experiences transformation and develops a spiritual insight.

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