

Decoding Patriarchy and Female Identity: A Feminist Reinterpretation of Rosie in The Guide

Md. Naimur Rahman✉ and **Md. Jobaar Talukder**✉

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Decoding Patriarchy and Female Identity: A Feminist Reinterpretation of Rosie in *The Guide*

Md. Naimur Rahman and Md. Jobaar Talukder*

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Abstract

This study reinterprets the character of Rosie in R.K. Narayan's *The Guide* through a feminist lens, addressing how patriarchal values shape her misrepresentation and the tendency to blame her for Raju's downfall. In Indian society, women's identities are often overshadowed by restrictive cultural norms, and female agency is frequently misconstrued as self-serving or morally flawed. This study critically examines Rosie's role within the novel, challenging traditional readings that view her as an opportunist rather than a woman asserting her independence within an oppressive environment. Utilizing a mixed-method approach, this study combines qualitative textual analysis with survey data gathered from university scholars to assess public perceptions of Rosie's character. This dual approach reveals how deeply ingrained patriarchal ideologies shape cultural and literary judgments, often clouding objective assessments of female agency. Results indicate that many readers still interpret Rosie's actions through a lens tainted by cultural bias, reflecting a broader societal reluctance to accept independent women who break from prescribed roles. By emphasizing a more balanced understanding, this study advocates for interpretations that appreciate the complexity of female characters and recognize their agency within literature shaped by patriarchal contexts. Contributing to the field of feminist literary criticism, this study underscores the need for inclusive and informed perspectives that challenge entrenched gender biases. Ultimately, this study provides a critical framework for future research on gender representation in literature, encouraging scholars to question cultural assumptions and explore how literary interpretations can evolve to promote gender equity in global narratives.

Keywords: Gender Identity; Patriarchy; Misogyny; Language and Identity; Cross-Cultural Communication; Indian Literature

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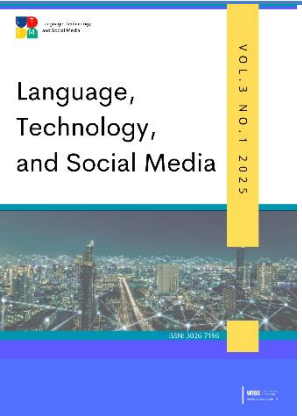
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INTRODUCTION

For thousands of years, human societies have been predominantly male-dominated, with only a few tribal cultures where women hold central roles. In the more “civilized” parts of the world, patriarchal structures prevail. In these societies, women who excel in their careers are often subjected to scrutiny regarding their dignity, loyalty, and character. Traditionally, women are expected to be submissive to their male counterparts, but when they assume authoritative positions, they are met with envy and defamation, as men find it difficult to accept their success. This parallels the Western notion of Original Sin, where Eve is blamed for the downfall of man; in patriarchal societies, women are similarly held accountable for all misfortunes. Patriarchal hegemony not only dictates societal norms but also reshapes women’s internal thought processes, instilling in them a sense of doubt and guilt whenever they surpass men. This self-questioning undermines their abilities and authority. This entire scenario is vividly portrayed in R.K. Narayan’s *The Guide*. The protagonist, Raju better known as Railway-Raju, the tourist guide of Narayan’s fictional town Malgudi is a savvy businessman who knows how to cater to his clients. His life takes a sharp turn after meeting Rosie, and their relationship begins a rollercoaster ride of highs and lows. Although they initially thrive, their success quickly unravels due to Raju’s greed and insecurities about both money and Rosie. Strangely, Rosie (or Nalini, as she later becomes known) is often blamed for their downfall, with many accusing her of using Raju to advance her career and abandoning him once she achieved success. Even in the novel, Rosie is seen mentally tormenting herself with guilt, blaming herself for the unfortunate turn of events. This research seeks to challenge and redefine the traditional view of Rosie, questioning why even many women share the opinion that Rosie is to blame. It explores how deeply entrenched patriarchal beliefs drive both men and women to hold Rosie responsible for Raju’s failures, reflecting societal structures that consistently place the burden of male missteps on women. To unpack this, the study delves into mechanisms of patriarchy, cultural hegemony, and misogyny. While existing feminist criticism of *The Guide* highlights Rosie as either a revolutionary figure or a victim of patriarchal oppression, it often overlooks the societal tendency to blame her for the entire tragedy. This study fills that gap by exploring how patriarchal structures shape public opinion and create a bias against women like Rosie. Using a mixed-methods approach, which includes the analysis of primary and secondary sources as well as data from an online survey, this research examines the factors that influence such perceptions, offering a fresh perspective on the cultural and societal forces at play.

LITERATURE REVIEW

R.K. Narayan is one of the greatest Indian writers in English. His storytelling is captivating and he perfectly pictures the trivial things often ignored but have an enormous impact on human life. His characters portray core human features like virtues, follies, emotions, and jealousies. Also, the actual reflection of society is painted in his settings. The characters from *The Guide* are prime examples for they naturally showcase human qualities, their struggle, love, and action are next to reality. Narayan’s illustration of society and its mechanisms are also honest. The novel is a masterpiece by Narayan showing his immense understanding of humans, culture, and society. The fictional town of Malgudi itself is a masterpiece finely crafted by Narayan, the settings of which exposes various aspects of Indian landscape and society without limiting the possibilities for the author to weave his plot as he wishes. B. Banu and S. Gunasekaran mentions:

Real places, bound by historical context and physical boundaries, could potentially restrict the author's ability to present a broader perspective on the reality he perceived. Conversely, the imaginary space of Malgudi, unrestricted by the confines of reality, allowed Narayan to depict his perception of reality on a canvas that extended far beyond mere topography and history [1, p. 63937].

Not only the spatio-temporal details but also the lives living in it are affected significantly by the town. Hariprasanna states that the town is not merely a non-living thing but alive like the inhabitants of it. Malgudi is not static; rather, it lives, evolves, and transforms from one novel to the next, spanning from the early thirties to the early nineties. This evolution signifies a passage of time that not only affects the geography of the place but also shapes the social, political, and cultural contours of the society in Narayan's narratives, as his characters engage in their own human drama [2]. Hence, there remains no doubt that the town Malgudi also has many traits that reflect established structures and it also helps perpetuate the traditional practices.

Besides, paying attention to the narrative style and how the author weaves the threads is also pivotal in making women's image in literature which ultimately determines how women are seen in society. Because feminist critics have pointed out that language itself is gendered and sentence structures are also used to set an image of women by men. D. Spender's book argues that language is 'masculine' and is not a neutral medium but one which contains many features which reflect its role as the instrument through which patriarchy finds expression [3]. P. Barry in his book further explains:

The representation of women in literature, then, was felt to be one of the most important forms of 'socialisation', since it provided the role models which indicated to women, and men, what constituted acceptable versions of the 'feminine' and legitimate feminine goals and aspirations [4, p. 124].

Narayan's writings portray a range of female characters who demonstrate the role of women in family and society. These characters also illustrate the gradual transformation of evolving into their best versions. Britta Olinder says that his female characters can be categorized into three main groups. Firstly, the dominating powerful women who fight for their rights and individual identity such as Rosie. Secondly, the powerless, suppressed, and frustrated women who cannot voice out their concerns like Velan's sister. Thirdly, women who are submissive to the societal customs and norms representing the traditional Indian women upheld by male dominating social order, but contrastingly at the same time they find ways to informal and indirect control of their situations, for example, Raju's mother, a devoted housewife, who accepts the social customs and at the same time, she possesses the power to controls the household affairs [5]. Rosie on the other hand was a rebel, versatile and bold. A mixture of beauty with brain in golden ratio. S. Ashapure states, "I have found not a single woman character of Narayan so furiously audacious" [6, p. 320].

G. Kaur argues that Narayan has broken the usual face of women in contemporary literature either upper class or lower class and set a "New Face" for them via Rosie. Rosie, a mixture of conventional and unconventional hue, is partly traditional and partly modern.

The tints of modernity always pushed her life forward but in the essence of tradition, she always pushed back a little. In her, we can see a woman trying desperately to free herself from the pigeonhole, at the sametime allowing the doors of patriarchy to enclose her [7, p. 416].

M. Vanamala and S. Himabindu say Narayan's female characters strive for their liberation, raise their concerns, voice out for equality, and claim their individuality, create an identity of their own, for instance, Rosie, a passionate Bharat Nattyam dancer, depicts a modern career-oriented woman who is aware of her desires, concerns, and ultimately, she claims her own identity completely by her own without any link to Raju or Marco. They write:

Women in Narayan's works are quite conscious about their career, their disposition and ultimately their individuality...His characters are quite realistic, modern and also traditional possessing strong determination with a positive outlook towards life [8].

Although Rosie is a modern woman, she cannot accept her origin since society considers the Devdasi clan as not worthy of respect. She is continuously haunted by her past as a devdasi. Gangotri Shil mentions:

Another very important and controlling aspect of Rosie's life is her past. Her early identity as a Devdasi continues to haunt her and influence her actions all her life. She marries Marco and remains grateful to him in spite of all his misbehaviors as he erases her stigma of belonging to a devdasi family. Rosie's desire to serve food to her husband and Raju at the peak house during their happier days and 'be the last to eat like a good housewife', can easily be understood as her delight in having a regular home life, a common enough experience for many women but one which is usually denied to the Devdasis [9].

In contrast, Raju's mother is a character who has accepted the traditional ways of society which always place women lower than male. For her a good wife cannot leave her husband in any case, it is her responsibility to compromise and sustain the family. Dr Ashok Kumar in his paper "A Study of Women Characters in R.K. Narayan's *The Guide*" says, "She believes, like a traditional Hindu wife, that the right place for a married woman is always with her husband and a woman, in no circumstances, should leave him" [10].

Narayan's male characters are also crucial for executing his plot and he features these characters with virtues and flaws of Indian men and their perspective and behavior towards women. To begin with, Rosie's husband Marco is an enthusiast of antic-traditional arts and a highly educated person, however, he has some tragic flaws. First, he is too proud of his sophisticated knowledge of arts but fails to recognize it in his wife which shows his biased knowledge, enthusiasm, and perspective. Second, his aloofness about emotional well-being and conjugal understanding is the reason behind their ruined marriage. Bandana Baruah holds Marco responsible for the failed marriage because it is Marco who has made the tie loose in the first place then Raju takes the opportunity to woo her. In her paper she opines, "Marco's sheer neglect of Rosie encourages Raju, the guide, to make undue advances towards Rosie" [11, p. 4]. On the other hand,

Raju is a master of all crafts. Baruah describes him as saying, “He is slick and has a quick mouth. He often deceives people...to achieve whatever he wants... He never gives up an opportunity to impress people...to win their favours” [11, pp. 3-4]. Raju has an unquenchable thirst of money and glory for which he always seeks cunning ways to do so, such is described by Hemlata: “Raju is an ambitious young man; he wants money, name and fame. He always looks for opportunity and seeks short cuts” [12, p. 416]. Raju’s traits fluctuate over time since his actions are based on his whims, however, one particular feature remains constant about which K. Osborne-Bartucca says,

He acts and behaves as per the demand of his circumstances. But one very inconspicuous trait that runs from the beginning to the end of his personality is the sense of guiding people in their private or common problems of life [13].

R.K. Narayan subtly but powerfully illustrated the actual social approach of India and the factors that help domesticate women and suppress their thoughts. There are a few factors which influence people’s mindset about women, the major ones are patriarchy, cultural hegemony, and male chauvinism. Indian society, from the ancient to the modern time, has always been patriarchal. Men have acquired law, religion, custom, language and literature. *The Guide* is a powerful demonstration of Indian society’s religious beliefs, superstitions and overwhelming control of Swamis on people. Akter and Talukder write,

The Guide also depicts Indian religious beliefs, superstitions and philosophy. The blind faith of the Indian masses in sadhus and religious men is depicted in their acceptance of Raju as a swami [14, p. 143].

Sapna Sah [15] mentions an ancient Sadhu Manu who lived between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D., an ancient lawmaker. He has been very influential among Indian people. His perspective towards women is narrow and his laws made women’s position vulnerable and inferior to men. Based on the necessity to manage women’s sexuality, he justified his regulations by claiming that women would become unfaithful to their husbands due to their passion for males, their temper, and their natural heartlessness, and thus had to be continually guarded. Manu’s regulations were particularly draconian when it came to women. Marriage could never be broken apart, and divorce was unimaginable and widows were never permitted to remarry. Upper-caste women were kept at home and were not allowed to labor outside the home. Young ladies were compelled to marry, and widows were forced to perform sati, or self-immolation on their husband’s funeral pyre. Patriarchy is a system created by men, for men where men are portrayed as powerful, masculine, and brave. Tasks requiring courage, strength, and intellect are in the men’s share where women remain at home taking care of chores, children, and feminine affairs. According to Edgar and Sedgwick patriarchy is:

The way in which societies are structured through male domination over and oppression of women. Patriarchy, therefore, refers to the way in which material and symbolic resources (including income, wealth, and power) are unequally distributed between men and women, through such social institutions as the family, sexuality, the state, the economy, culture, and language [16, pp. 269].

Apart from patriarchy, the women themselves are one of the pivotal forces that helps patriarchal system run smoothly. They think themselves inferior to men subconsciously and behave submissively no matter what they are educated or not. Saikia in her paper blames women's submissive character as a reason of patriarchal dominance. She says that even educated women like Rosie internalize patriarchal norms, which perpetuates the cycle of submission and dependency. She writes:

The submissiveness of women and their act of giving themselves away to be controlled in the hands of the males is equally responsible for empowering the already existing system of patriarchal dominance [17, p. 11].

Antonio Gramsci [18], an Italian theoretician, in his book *The Prison Notebook*, describes the term cultural hegemony as it is the domination of the ruling class on a culturally diverse society, which is manipulated in terms of culture, beliefs, views, values, and customs by the ruling class. The ruling class does this by thinking that the ideology they decide is good for everybody in the society to establish social, political, and economic status quo, however, it only benefits the ruling class alone. Women are labelled with maternity, fragility, beauty, and softness, they are considered unfit for the struggles of the outside world.

In existing literature, the Marco-Rosie-Raju relationship is researched with profound details capturing various dimensions and several aspects of their characteristics, however, there is a research gap as to why most people accuse Rosie of the whole disaster in the novel and what are the reasons behind it. This paper is an attempt to fill that gap.

METHODS

To reach a nuanced and well-supported conclusion, this study employs a mixed-method approach that combines qualitative and quantitative methodologies to examine both the textual intricacies of *The Guide* and the societal perceptions it invokes. In the qualitative analysis, *The Guide* is explored in depth, focusing on the nuanced depiction of its characters and the underlying themes that reflect broader social dynamics. A thorough review of secondary sources including scholarly articles, research papers, and archival documents supports the main arguments and offers diverse perspectives on key issues such as women's roles, patriarchy, cultural hegemony, male chauvinism, and systemic injustices faced by women. These sources contextualize Rosie's character within the social and cultural framework of Indian society, where her agency and independence are often viewed critically. By applying feminist, narratological, and postcolonial theoretical lenses, this study builds a multidimensional understanding of the text and its implications for gender roles.

On the quantitative side, an online survey was conducted to gauge contemporary interpretations of Rosie's character. Participants included students and faculty from public university English departments in Bangladesh, who bring a culturally resonant perspective to their responses. The survey featured five focused questions: two captured demographic details to contextualize responses, two examined respondents' perceptions of Rosie's character (particularly regarding whether they viewed her as an opportunist or held her responsible for Raju's downfall), and a final open-ended question invited participants to expand on their views. This combination of

structured and open-ended questions allowed for both statistical analysis and richer qualitative insights, revealing nuanced attitudes that may reflect broader societal biases. By integrating both qualitative and quantitative insights, this study presents a comprehensive and culturally sensitive reinterpretation of Rosie’s character, contributing to a deeper understanding of gender dynamics within literature and society.

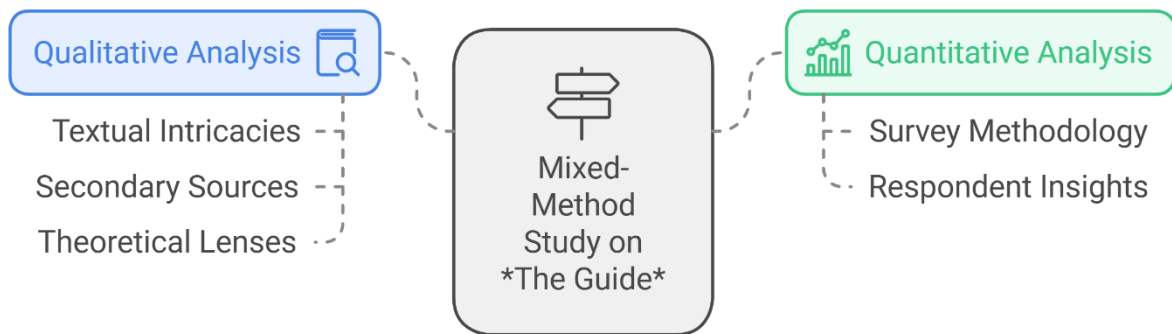


Figure 1. Textual Analysis and Survey Data Collection Process

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Rasipuram Krishna Swami Ayyar Narayanswami is a prominent Indian writer who has contributed greatly to Indian Literature in English. He is considered one of the pioneers, the others are Mulk Raj Anand and Raja Rao. He is crowned with numerous prestigious awards for his lucid writing capturing small details of life with great emotional value. He won The Sahitya Academy Award in 1960 for his most famous novel *The Guide*. In world literature, it is indeed a masterpiece and one of the renowned classics. M.K. Naik in his book “Aspects of Indian Writing in English” says, “After a series of half successes and near successes. Narayan has reached in *The Guide* the full maturity of his powers” [19, p. 176]. His characters show multifaceted human psychological aspects which denotes that the writer himself has a profound understanding of the human psyche.

Perceptions of Rosie and Misunderstandings of Her Character

R.K. Narayan has also pristinely illustrated the aspects of patriarchal male chauvinist Indian society which accuses Rosie of all the tragedies in her marriage and Raju’s life. The same old Original Sin concept plays its role in holding Eve, or womankind as a whole for the ultimate downfall of mankind. First, Marco declares Rosie as a characterless woman then Raju out of rigorous jealousy states her as a serpent woman who can only endanger men. Raju warns Mani saying, “Be careful. She’ll lead you on before you know where you are, and then you will find yourself in my shoes all of a sudden! Beware the snake woman” [20, p. 176]. Finally, Raju’s mother from the beginning till the end believes that Rosie has made his son go astray. Before the hearing of the court, she says to Rosie, “Now are you satisfied with what you have done to him?” [20, p. 183]. They all, Marco, Raju, his mother, and patriarchal society, fail to understand Rosie as a human being and her efforts to sustain the relationship. Moreover, several critiques hold that Rosie’s intentions were not innocent rather deliberate. S. Ashapure clearly mentions that Rosie was an opportunist who took discissions based on her own benefit. As she says:

She decided to crouch on Raju for her survival. She has used Raju for her own benefits and at her own terms. I view Rosie as a boss who rules over the heart and head of her ardent lover cum provider with the power of her beauty and destiny [6, p. 322].

Social media has become an excellent platform for gauging public opinion, allowing people to share their views openly. To understand perceptions of Rosie, a survey link was shared across various social media groups, where respondents were invited to participate. The data collected from this online survey, which targeted students from English departments at several universities in Bangladesh, provided valuable insights into how Rosie is perceived. A total of twenty (20) responses were recorded, 15% of which were from women. As anticipated, 60% of respondents viewed Rosie as an opportunist, while only 40% considered her conscientious. This indicates that a majority see Rosie as self-serving and hold her responsible for the tragedy in the novel. The results reflect a commonly held perspective among scholars, emphasizing the tendency to blame Rosie for the unfolding events in *The Guide*.

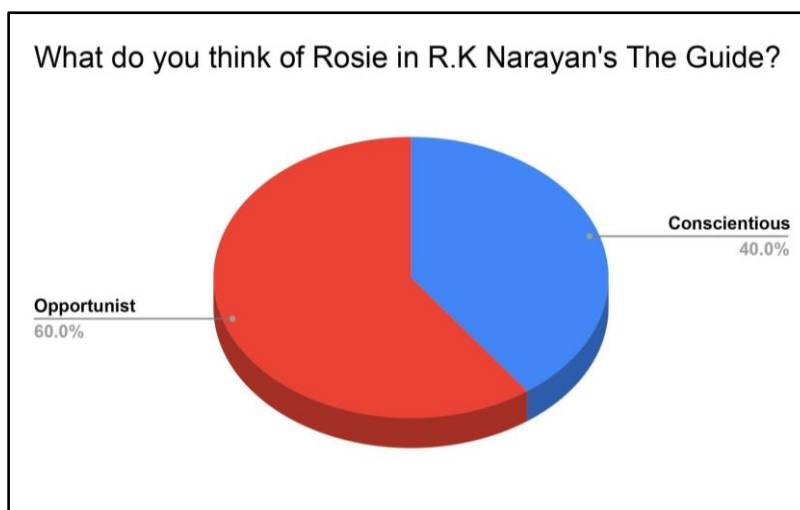


Figure 2. People's opinion about Rosie.

Patriarchal Conflict in Rosie and Marco's Marriage

The marriage between Rosie and Marco in *The Guide* provides a profound commentary on the constraints of a patriarchal marriage, where Marco's indifference and control over Rosie's passions create a stifling environment. Rosie marries Marco to escape her devdasi clan, which some may interpret as an opportunistic choice, but it highlights her struggle to find personal freedom. However, one must consider that the urge to step out of the lower-class section is not a crime. Rosie is not the only one who marries to get relief from patriarchal shackles. In Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* [21], Tara gets married to Bakul to escape from the situation. Also, Ila, one of the major characters in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* [22], too, like Rosie, marries a man to escape from the Hippocratic shackles of patriarchy. The paper [23] opines about Ila:

Despite being in a quite unhappy relationship with Nick Price, she chooses him for marriage. All this is because...She is an independent woman with ideas of individual freedom, but in Indian culture it is impossible to do whatever one wants to do, especially for a woman, they are deprived of personal liberty [23, p. 141].

This means it happens frequently in patriarchal society that women are bound to marry because marriage is one of the few granted ways of elevating women's status in Indian society. Moreover, Marco's advertisement for marriage is also too formal because he does not want any emotional attachment to a normal nuptial bond. He decides to marry only for physical desires and to get done the household chores and run the errands. He proves this by his utmost indifference towards Rosie, her dreams and desires. This indifference of Marco has made her sail away from him. Som Dev in *The Guide: A Critical Appreciation*, rightly critiques:

If Rosie is driven to the arms of a stranger, it is partly not her fault. Had he considered the basic needs of the woman he takes for a wife? He has offered insult to the womanhood and in turn womanhood in Rosie raises its hood to leave fang marks on him [24, p. 2].

In the same tone, Bandana Baruah says, "Had Rosie been in a happy marriage, Raju's attempts would not have made any difference, but her failed marriage led her to get involved..." [11, p. 4]. It is basic human nature to feel suffocated in any relationship if mutual understanding is absent that relationship is bound to break. Rosie feels the same like she is some lifeless object. Icing on the top, Marco suppresses her desire to become a Bharatanatyam dancer calling it a street acrobat, monkey dance and thinks that her dance is not creative art. These are enough to make any relationship bitter and it is obvious that Rosie is not content in this marriage, she says, "I'd have preferred ... one real, live husband" [20, p. 65]. Marco is so aloof from understanding human emotions that fails to understand his wife's feelings when she says, "Will you permit me to dance? I think I'd be very happy if I could do that. I have so many ideas. I'd like to try" [20, p. 115].

However, it can still be a question of morality that having an extramarital affair is morally condemnable. Yet, Rosie is not a morally debased woman and it has adequate proof in the text itself. Though she finds shelter in Raju's willing appreciation of her and her art, she always feels a sense of guilt. She always burns inside from this guilt. Eventually, she makes a self-confession to Marco about her and Raju's relationship and remorse with a pang of capital guilt as she admits, "I felt I had made the capital blunder of my life ... I had been indiscreet and wrong in all my actions. I realized I had committed an enormous sin" [20, p. 117]. This is because she is not inherently a bad woman. Afterwards, she endures every possible way to win Marco's forgiveness and she genuinely makes up her mind to abandon dancing permanently and serve her husband all her life with honesty because Rosie has a sense of respect for Marco as he has pulled her out of the *devdasi* clan. Interestingly, Rosie despite having an M.A. in Economics possesses typical Indian wife's norms to consider her husband as her supreme authority next to God, for this she always suffers from an inferiority complex.

Rosie leaves no stone unturned as she follows Marco to the caves back and forth for thirty days meanwhile Marco does not speak a word to her, but Rosie does not stop making efforts to win his trust back. On the efforts of Rosie, Uday Trivedi in his article "Facets of Change: Incarnations of Women in Some R.K. Narayan's Novels" writes, "She tries her best to regain Marco's sympathy and follows him like a dog but when all her efforts fail to win him" [25, p. 135]. At the hour of departure, Marco says, "I have no ticket for you and he flourished a single ticket and shut the door on me" [20, p. 119]. He is not taking Rosie along, because he does not forgive her. It is clear that Rosie is not the sole reason for their failed marriage and is not an immoral woman. In fact, if Marco

had not been that much callous to his nuptial bond, Raju would not have got the chance to impress Rosie with his modest care, and readers are aware of Raju's expertise in making a good impression and fetching out what he wants, also his love for Rosie is initially true. So, Rosie is destined to fall for him. Kumar rightly says, "Rosie's sexual relationship with Raju is more a result of circumstances than of any willful immoral tendencies in Rosie" [10, p. 50].

The Complex Relationship between Raju and Rosie: Love, Exploitation, and Independence

The relationship between Raju and Rosie in *The Guide* illustrates a complex evolution, starting from admiration and support, transforming gradually into a relationship marred by exploitation and possessiveness. As far as Raju-Rosie's relationship is concerned, it is evident that Raju initiates his moves to impress Rosie. A sense of comfort around Raju grows in Rosie later when she observes his genuine comments on her dance making her realize that she too, is worthy of something, a sense which keeps a man alive which she does not get from Marco. On the other hand, Raju is a cunning guy. He knows what he wants and what he needs to do for that. Raju for his clever moves wins every business which he has undertaken, a shopkeeper, a tourist guide, a manager, a fake Sadhu, and finally a true Sanyasi. He has won people over in all these roles, he has fooled a village and later the entire country. Raju refers to her as a "divine creature" and showers her with compliments, for instance, he cajoles her saying, "You may come out as you are and no one will mind it ... Who would decorate a rainbow?" [20, p. 55]. When a person is at his/her lowest emotional point s/he is so vulnerable and if somebody provides support and comfort, human beings tend to incline towards him/her emotionally. Raju plays that role in Rosie's life when she is prone to emotional turmoil since her husband ignores and insults her dreams and desires, Raju then provides her mental support, physical care, and genuine applause for her art form. In this case, it is more human to get involved with this man and as we know R.K. Narayan's characters are realistic, it was Rosie's fate to feel for Raju's continuous exposure to love. So, it would be an unwise desire if one wants to see Rosie immunize herself from a man like Raju. It will make her an extraordinary character with fictional dignity, a normal human cannot ignore when someone this charming gives him/her such comfort, support, inspiration and a sense of worth, and so does Rosie. Thus, Rosie starts fostering feelings for Raju.

After Marco's departure, Rosie heavily inclines towards Raju, meanwhile, Raju faces several financial problems as he is unable to focus on his business as a result he is in debt. The situation worsens with time. To cope with this, they decide to perform in public engagements and cultural programs which bring both money and fame for them. Nalini, the pseudo name of Rosie, becomes so famous because of her overwhelming traditional dancing skills that she starts to get pre-bookings for programs from all over India. She becomes a household name and money overflows in their accounts. This time Raju starts exploiting Rosie. Baruah opines:

Initially, Raju provides a new lease of life to Rosie by encouraging her to pursue her passion and eventually he gets romantically interested in Rosie. But later he becomes dependent on her emotionally as well as financially...When money starts pouring in, Raju's treacherous attitude and possessive instinct detaches Rosie from him [11, p. 5].

At this stage Raju grows indifferent towards love and emotion, the main reason why Rosie loves him is because love and affection are the things which Marco fails to provide. This Raju cares

more for monetary gain, he says, “We needed all the money in the world” [20, p. 153]. On the other hand, Nalini has no affection for money, she only cares for her dance and has little happiness in life. Raju himself says, “She liked to loaf in the market, eat in a crowded hotel, wander about, see a cinema, these common pleasures” [20, p. 67]. Not only this, Raju gets possessive about Rosie’s indulgence with co-artists and envies Rosie for her success, fame and popularity. Thus, he too, starts controlling her dos and don’ts “She was my property ... I had pulled her out because I didn’t like to see her enjoy other people’s company. I liked to keep her in a citadel.” [20, pp. 148, 152]. This is a drastic change in Raju’s nature resulting in a reincarnation of suffocation and constraints in Rosie’s mind which she previously felt with Marco. Rosie expresses her suffocation in clear words that she does not care for money and fame, all those engagements which indeed bring plenty of money, but make her like a circus animal taken to places to entertain people. She exclaims, “I feel like one of those parrots in a cage taken around village fairs, or a performing monkey” [20, p. 160]. Meanwhile, Raju, blinded by money, fails to recognize her feelings and ignores her. His reason worsens and he turns to forgery. Disappointed with Raju, Rosie regrets her failed marriage because Marco has at least given her freedom to manoeuvre, but Raju limits that as well. Raju, alarmed with her feelings for Marco, gets afraid and more possessive. When Marco sends a legal notice requiring Rosie’s signature for opening a joint vault where jewelry has been stored, Raju is excessively jealous of Marco’s attempt to get close to Rosie, alarmed that this letter might bring them closer again and greedy for the sum of money it will bring in, forges Rosie’s signature and ultimately gets caught. Rosie after knowing his wrongdoings determines that this Raju is not whom she has loved in the first place.

She could have left Raju right away, but she did not. Rather she spends heaps of money to manage bail for Raju which ravages their financial condition. To cope with this, She starts working ceaselessly to manage all that money. “Nalini worked harder than ever to keep the lawyer as well as our household going” [20, p. 179]. When Raju gets bail for some time, Rosie expresses her desire to be free from everyone and everything. Raju, being infuriated, crosses the red line by stating she is a snake woman. Now, it is a serious concern to call her an opportunist woman, after her dreams with Raju get shattered, she could easily move on but she stays beside Raju on his bad days. Not only that, when Raju is about to go to jail for two years, Rosie plays all the cards at hand and she is determined to do everything in her capability to save him from the bars. She says, “If I have to pawn my last possession, I’ll do it to save you from jail” [20, p. 176]. But one cannot fight the court’s decision, thus Raju goes to jail. Morally, one cannot hold Rosie accountable for all these blunders, she possesses a few flaws, but everyone does that as the famous proverb goes “To err is human.” For the failed marriage Marco is the one who deserves the blame likewise Raju for their relationship. Contrastingly, raising questions only about Rosie’s infertility is nothing but patriarchal hypocrisy. She has done hard enough to sustain both of the relationships, but it needs two hands to make a clap. Rosie honestly informed Raju about her wish to leave him when everything is settled, “But once it’s over, leave me once for all; that’s all I ask. Forget me. Leave me to live or die, as I choose; that’s all” [20, p. 176]. It is for her lifelong quest for an identity of her own, without anyone’s support she finally manages to create one for herself.

Even scholars like A. Sandhya have misunderstood this case, as she claims, “When finally two men Marco and Raju left her, Nalini becomes self-reliant” [26, p. 156]. This interpretation is incorrect. It was not about being abandoned by these two men; rather, Rosie consciously chooses to leave Raju and decides not to return to Marco. Her actions reflect confident determination. She

defies the typical portrayal of Indian women whose identities depend on their male counterparts, as seen in characters like Savitri, the protagonist of another R.K. Narayan novel, *The Dark Room* [27], where Savitri leaves her unfaithful husband only to eventually return to him due to societal expectations that wives must always compromise. Rosie, however, breaks away from this pattern by creating her own path and realizing she does not need anyone else. This is evident in Raju's statement, "Neither Marco nor I had any place in her life, which had its own sustaining vitality and which she herself had underestimated all along" [20, p. 176]. Therefore, any allegations against Rosie/Nalini's honesty, modesty, or conscientiousness are baseless. She never intentionally uses Raju, Marco, or anyone else to elevate her position. The events in their lives unfold naturally and spontaneously.

Therefore, it is a proven fact that Rosie is judged with inbuilt bias, the question remains why people think as such in the first place and what factors are there behind this. R.K. Narayan's *The Guide* is a classic illustration of patriarchal society's mechanisms of making an identity for women which is designed by men. The major characters of the novel such as Raju, his mother, and Marco execute necessary acts of patriarchy and male chauvinism to confine women into a controlled world. Firstly, Rosie is misjudged immediately at her first appearance. Her name Rosie itself raises suspicion about her origin. Raju wonders, "Why did she call herself Rosie? ... Devi, Meena, Lalitha or any of the thousand names we have in our country" [20, p. 4]. Along with Raju, the reader's minds are also infused with a sense of foreignness and unacceptance that she is not one of us. It might have been an exceptional name back then when the novel was produced, but now more than half a century later, perspectives are expected to be changed. Shockingly, the perspective has not changed much. In a recent Bollywood cinema released on April 19, 2024, named "Do Aur Do Piyar" directed by Shirsha Guha Thakurta a married couple Ani and Kavya is shown. The husband, Ani, engages in an extramarital affair with a woman named "Rosie" and surprisingly when Kavya discovers, one of her key concerns is about the name Rosie. She asks her husband, "Seriously Ani? A Rosie? Who would have an affair with a girl named Rosie?" [28]. Ani then tries to justify the name by saying that it is her stage name since she is an actress. Interestingly, both of their accounts show that they both consider "Rosie" not an appropriate name for a dignified Indian woman. It also shows that society nearly a platinum jubilee later still holds the same norms that exclude a Rosie or more specifically a woman with unconventional nature, thought, and belief.

Secondly, in the greater Indian society, a child's identity is determined just after its birth, the future role of this child will be set based on its gender. Gangotri Shil in her paper says:

If the child is a girl, her prime identity of being a 'female' remains her main identity for the rest of her life. From infancy she is taught to behave like a 'girl' and all the rules and norms set for the girl by the society. Just like a colonized in a colonial rule, who after a certain period of time starts believing in his/her inferior position, most of the girls too, in any patriarchal system becomes so saturated in their submissive roles set by the society that they think it to be right, inevitable, beneficial and justified for women ... Rosie is no exception. Despite of all her education, assertive nature, love for her art and independent identity, she can't come out of this patriarchal hegemony [9, p. 3].

Patriarchy tends to discard women and their thoughts when it fails to understand the female psyche. It seems easy for men to trash the female ideas rather than trying to absorb the essence, as

Elif Shafak in her novel *The Forty Rules of Love* says, “Human beings tended to disparage what they couldn’t comprehend” [29, p. 20]. Similarly, Raju cannot understand Rosie and her philosophy of life. Rosie, though she is an M.A. in Economics, she still is ashamed of her background as a temple dancer because patriarchy has decided that being a *devdasi* is cheap. Rosie says, “We are viewed as public women ... We are not considered respectable; we are not considered civilized” [20, p. 64]. This narrative shows the pinnacle of hypocrisy in patriarchal Indian society where serving God is regarded as the most pious deed, there *devdasi* who dedicate their life serving the temple, for the god, are labeled as unrespectable and uncivilized. Patriarchy disguises itself under modernity and broad-minded slogans but underneath it carries out the fundamentalist ideology and desperately tries to control women’s behavior. This characteristic can be seen in Marco, Shil in her paper also says:

She marries a scholar and apparently broad-minded person. But actually his only intention is to earn the name of a liberal and modern man. He never accepts Rosie’s talent as a dancer and completely ignores her keen desire to continue her career in dance [9, p. 1].

Not only the power to impose identity upon women, men think they have divine rights over women and it is their moral duty to control women for women’s good like when Velan wanted to get his sister married without paying heed to her likes or dislikes. Velan’s sister has tried to stop it but eventually failed the fate of millions of women in India. For example, Amitav Ghosh pictures a profound example of this practice of men setting parameters of women’s freedom, and controlling women’s actions in his famous novel *The Shadow Lines* where Ila a modern woman who grew up living in different cities of the Western world wants to dance in a bar in Delhi but she is forcefully refrained from doing that by her paternal uncle Robi who says, “You can’t do it, Ila, you just can’t do it ... it’s a question of our culture, that’s how we live” [22, p. 96]. Robi despite being a modern and educated guy who has lived in Western cities as well, puts chains on Ila’s will. Here, it is not Robi, an individual but the patriarchal Indian society which is dominating Ila and setting rules of what she can do and does not. Marco, too, does the same by setting a role for Rosie. Despite being a highly educated person and an ardent lover of ancient Indian cave art, he fails to realize that Rosie’s dance is itself an art. He disapproves of dance as an art form rather marks it as trickery and monkey dance, “What is there intellect or creative in it?...We watch a monkey perform not because it is artistic but because it is a monkey that is doing it” [20, p. 115]. Here, Marco not only simply disapproves of dance but also compares Rosie with monkeys. In other words, he is representing the patriarchal male ego which defines a woman by comparing her with a monkey, it’s not because of dance as an art for which people watch it rather, they watch dance because a dancing woman gives men sexual pleasure, demeaning women at its best by male chauvinist mentality.

On top of that, cultural hegemony has rooted its essence so deep into women’s psyche that women themselves denounce a woman if she goes against patriarchal norms. For example, Shakespeare says, “Frailty, thy name is a woman” [30]. Their existence, identity, and behavior are controlled by men from the very beginning of their life. As a result of patriarchy and cultural hegemony, most women naturally feel that they are not equal to men, so they have to be submissive and please their male counterparts in every case, they have attached this with their idea of womanhood. Thus, a woman’s psyche is permanently shaped and a woman always thinks of herself as inferior to male. P.P. Saikia demonstrates that for this interiority complex women give up their

potentials without even trying, their mindset says they need male support to stand strong in society without which they are too vulnerable.

The sense of patriarchal interpretation also gets infused into the minds of women who themselves have no high thoughts of their own category...Even the uneducated men are considered superior to the educated women and hence, the women seek shelter and support of these men [17, p. 12].

Effects of cultural hegemony on women's psyche can be traced in Rosie's longing to serve food like a traditional housewife showcases that even in an educated modern woman, there is a sense of submission towards societal norms planted in her unconscious mind. Again, in Raju's mother when she says, "it was always the wife, by her doggedness, perseverance, and patience, that brought him round" [20, p. 121]. Tradition expects that no matter what nature a husband possesses, be it a good, bad, moody, ignorant, savage, reasonable, unreasonable or slightly deranged one, it is always a wife's responsibility to maintain peace in the family and entertain the husband in every possible means. Raju's mother has accepted these rules set by the male-dominated society as tradition. Furthermore, she is so accustomed to tradition that she cannot stand anymore if any woman does otherwise. These behaviors show the effect of patriarchy embedded in women's psychology and thought processes. Shil states, "In fact, it is women, even in today's India who impose those rules more brutally on other women than men" [9, p. 3]. When a woman does the otherwise, women whom patriarchy calls traditional and dignified women, repel her brutally.

Misogynistic men often believe that women's career successes are solely due to male support, essentially claiming that women's achievements are theirs as well. For instance, Raju exemplifies this notion through his jealousy of Rosie's accomplishments when he states, "A humble humanitarian called Raju, who sacrificed his time and profession for the protection of the lady and enabled her to rise so high in the world of the art" [20, p. 178]. Raju asserts that without his time and efforts, Rosie would not have become a renowned artist, thus appropriating her success for himself. When a woman does succeed despite such challenges, she often encounters additional obstacles imposed by patriarchy. Gayatri Saini highlights the difficulties women face in the workplace, noting, "At work, women are taunted and treated as inferior by male chauvinists. They are regarded as second-class workers, with uneven pay for the same job" [31, p. 306]. Often, a woman is not viewed as prestigious if she works outside the home, as societal norms suggest that esteemed women in Indian society should not pursue careers. A prime example of men's jealousy towards working women can be seen in Satyajit Ray's film "Mahanagar," released on September 29, 1963. This movie poignantly depicts the middle-class crisis, male ego, and women's struggles to earn money and establish their identities, even when their primary intention is to support their families. In the film, the protagonist Arati, an educated housewife, begins working as a saleswoman to help manage household expenses after her husband Subrata loses his job. This decision meets resistance from her family, particularly her father-in-law, who views women working outside the home as a stigma. Interestingly, even as the family's financial situation improves due to Arati's earnings, Subrata remains envious of her success and grows suspicious of her fidelity. He insists, "Resign from the job Arati" (চাকরিটা তুমি ছেড়ে দাও আরতি।) [32]. This jealousy and suspicion stem from

the patriarchal male ego and nothing else. Saini explains why male chauvinism desperately tries to control women; she says:

It is the male chauvinists that don't allow them to go out to work, meet with their friends, or come back at any time ... Male chauvinism keeps women away from the power system for the fear of losing their authority [31, p. 305].

Things get worse when women achieve professional success beyond what the men have thought or permitted. Then men get extremely jealous and start demeaning women's achievements. Raju expresses his resentment towards Rosie's successful career saying, "Her empire was expanding rather than shrinking. It filled me with gall that she should go on without me" [20, p. 182]. Raju is not alone, Marco too, inherits this misogynist jealousy. When Rosie asks his permission to dance, he envies that it is only to rival him, and he boasts of his sophisticated knowledge. Degrading Rosie's art, he says, "Oh, you want to rival me, is that it? This is a branch of learning, not street acrobatics" [20, p. 115]. Raju and Marco, both representing misogynist ideology, cannot stand that women's careers can be boosted without men and beyond their grants. In consequence, women's modesty, fidelity, and ability are questioned.

Patriarchy, Cultural Hegemony, and the Representation of Women in Literature

In *The Guide*, R.K. Narayan illustrates how patriarchy, cultural hegemony, and societal norms dictate the identities, values, and restrictions imposed upon women, binding them within traditional roles. Consequently, it is the system that imposes on women what their identity is, their value, and what they can be able to do and binds them into domesticity with the men in charge. In such cases where the woman is able to break the chains of these patriarchal activities, society has always been quick to seek to assassinate her character by questioning her alienation and honor. Patriarchy, cultural hegemony, and misogyny are seawards in this deprivation women are seeing with regards to their rights and what they can think and do. These forces result in Rosie being seen wrongly by several people including other women because the lens towards women is very wrong. In the Indian context, a woman's behavior and its impact are often associated with her horoscope, however, only the ill effects of the horoscope are blamed on women and all the good ones on men. Moreover, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak accuses Narayan for he has shown Rosie as a mere heroine of a tragicomedy in a manner that does not focus on societal ill practices. She considers it as a portrayal of Narayan's "Patriarchal Hypocrisy." Spivak holds that literature can sometimes manifest and perpetuate traditional gender roles rather than challenging social norms [33].

CONCLUSION

This study provides a feminist reexamination of R.K. Narayan's *The Guide*, particularly focusing on Rosie's character and her complex navigation through the patriarchal confines of Indian society. By challenging conventional interpretations that label Rosie as an opportunist, the study illustrates how entrenched gender biases and cultural prejudices often distort perceptions of female agency in literature. Through a mixed-methods approach that integrates qualitative textual analysis and quantitative survey data, this research highlights the widespread societal tendency to view female ambition through a lens tainted by patriarchal values, thus reinforcing restrictive gender roles. The

findings suggest that despite progress in feminist discourse, the misinterpretation of characters like Rosie underscores the deep-seated cultural biases that continue to influence literary criticism and public opinion. The study's dual methodology sheds light on the persistence of these biases, as evidenced by survey responses from academic circles, where many participants still associate Rosie's independence with moral ambiguity. This inclination reveals broader societal struggles to accept women who transcend prescribed roles, often perceiving them as transgressors rather than individuals asserting their identity. By contributing a culturally contextualized understanding of feminist literature, this research not only adds to feminist literary criticism but also encourages scholars to adopt more inclusive perspectives that challenge traditional narratives. Future research should continue to examine how literary works reflect and perpetuate cultural norms, especially those related to gender, and explore the potential for literary analysis to foster gender equity in both regional and global contexts. Ultimately, this study advocates for a nuanced recognition of female characters' complexity, urging a reevaluation of literary interpretations that often overlook the constraints of patriarchal settings. In reassessing Rosie's role and motivations, we contribute to a richer and more empathetic understanding of women's representation in literature, advancing the discourse on gender equality and cultural sensitivity in literary studies.

LIMITATIONS

This study has limitations regarding the scope and sample. The qualitative analysis focused solely on *The Guide*, which may limit broader applicability. The quantitative survey included a small, culturally specific group of Bangladeshi university scholars, limiting generalizability. Online survey distribution may also have introduced self-selection bias. Future research should involve larger, more diverse samples and multiple texts to strengthen and expand these findings.

AUTHOR INFORMATION

Corresponding Author

Md. Jobaar Talukder – Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Islamic University, Kushtia-7003, (Bangladesh);

 orcid.org/0000-0002-2273-7770

Email: jobaar.eng@std.iu.ac.bd

Authors

Md. Naimur Rahman – Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Islamic University, Kushtia-7003, (Bangladesh);

 orcid.org/0009-0007-6614-8373

Md. Jobaar Talukder – Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Islamic University, Kushtia-7003, (Bangladesh);

 orcid.org/0000-0002-2273-7770

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

M.N.R. conceptualized the research framework, conducted the primary qualitative analysis, and contributed to the theoretical foundation of the study. M.J.T. supervised the overall research process, designed and implemented the quantitative methodology, and coordinated the data collection. Both authors actively collaborated in drafting, revising, and finalizing the manuscript, ensuring alignment with the research objectives and academic standards. All authors approved the final version of the manuscript for publication.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DECLARATION OF USE OF AI IN SCIENTIFIC WRITING

The authors utilized ChatGPT to refine the language, enhance sentence structure, and produce graphical representations of the data. All content generated with the aid of this tool has undergone thorough review and revision by the authors, who bear full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the final publication.

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