# Demystifying the Enigma in R. K. Narayan's *The Guide*: A Sartrean Reading of the Novel

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[**Abstract** : R. K. Narayan's novel, *The Guide* (1958), which is also known as his *magnum opus*, tells us about the life-story of Mr. Raju who starts his career at the Malgudi Railway Station as a keeper of the shop, established by his father, who deviates himself from their traditional profession of priesthood as they are Brahmins by caste. Raju, later, builds up a checkered career throughout his life. But, he adapts himself much in every profession he chooses and in every situation he faces. Interestingly, to the utter surprise of the readers, Raju sacrifices finally his life in a fasting, like a spiritual guide, to appease the god of water for rains with an aim to save the people of Mangala from the impending famine. Still, the ending of the novel, *The Guide*, with Raju's metamorphosis from a tourist guide to a spiritual guide, seems to be "enigmatic" to most of Narayan critics. The present study aims to demystify this enigma in *The Guide* by exploring the life-story of Mr. Raju in the light of "existential psychoanalysis" propounded by Jean-Paul Sartre. For this purpose, the writer of this paper intends to adopt some key ideas found in Sartre's existential philosophy.]

**Key-Words:** R. K. Narayan, *The Guide*, Jean-Paul Sartre, existential psychoanalysis, existential philosophy.

R. K. Narayan's very famous and popular novel, *The Guide* (1958), which is considered as his *magnum opus*, appears to be a sort of "life narrative" that "allow[s] empirical access to" (Altunnar and Habermas, 2018, p. 2) the life-story of Mr. Raju—"the most engaging and complex" (Ramteke, 2008,

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p. 123) one among all the Narayanean protagonists. Like the novelist Narayan, his protagonist Raju belongs to the South Indian Brahmin caste; however, he begins his career at the Malgudi Railway Station as a keeper of the shop, which is established by his father, who drew himself away from their traditional family profession of priesthood. Raju builds up a checkered career all through his life. He, at one point of his life, decides to become a tourist guide. Later, at different phases of his life, he turns out to be the lover of an archeologist's frustrated and unhappy wife, an entrepreneur of *Bharatanatyam*—a major form of Indian classical dance, a jail bird, and a priest of an old temple, respectively. Interestingly, he adapts himself skillfully in every profession he chooses and in every situation he faces. However, to the utter surprise of the readers, Raju finally sacrifices his life in a fasting, very much like a spiritual guide, to appease *Varuna*—the god of water—for demanding rains with an aim to save the people of Mangala from the impending famine. Though Raju's ability "to slip from one role into another," according to Binayak Roy, "makes him chameleonic" (2012, p. 104), he, eventually, wins the sympathy of the readers for his final decision "in which he was not personally interested" (Narayan, 1963, p. 213). Raju, thus, overcomes successfully the "test of a round character," being "capable of surprising [the readers] in a convincing way" (Foster, 1985, p. 78). Still, the ending of R. K. Narayan's text, *The Guide*, with Raju's metamorphosis from a tourist guide to a spiritual guide, seems to be "full of rich ambiguity" (Shankar, 2012, p. 81) to many critics and readers as well. O. P. Mathur maintains that *The Guide* ends with "a Sphinx-like riddle" (1993, p. 91). The conclusion of this novel appears to be "enigmatic" to Chitra Sankaran (1991, p. 130) as well. The present study aims to demystify this enigma found in *The Guide* by exploring the life-story of Mr. Raju in the light of "existential psychoanalysis," which is propounded by Jean-Paul Sartre, the most influential French philosopher and writer of the 20th century. For this purpose, the writer of this paper makes use of some key ideas taken from Sartre's existential philosophy, which seem to be quite relevant to the analysis of R. K. Narayan's text, *The Guide*.

Among all the existentialist philosophers, Jean-Paul Sartre has shown a profound "interest both in psychological theory in general and psychoanalysis in particular" (Cannon, 2014, p. 76) throughout his life. He sketches an outline of a phenomenological method of understanding human behavior in his philosophical masterpiece, *Being and Nothingness* (1992/1943), and names it "existential psychoanalysis." This eminent French philosopher "rejects the [Freudian] hypothesis of the unconscious," and makes all "psychic act co-extensive with consciousness" (1992, p. 728)

to develop his dynamic phenomenology, which is "best illustrated in … [his] conception of existential psychoanalysis (Bhadra, 1990, p. 345). For Sartre, "[c]onciousness is desire or lack of a (future) fullness" (Cannon, 1991, p. 43) of being. By describing man as the "*desire to be*," Sartre claims that "man fundamentally is the desire to be God" (1992, p. 722, 724). However, instead of the Freudian libido[1], Sartrean existential psychoanalysis strives to identify man's "fundamental project"[2] (Cannon, 2014, p. 81) through the systematic exploration of man's life history. According to Sartre, "man is his own [fundamental] project" (Suhl, 1999, p. 126), which comprises the "series of actions" he chooses in response to his "fundamental choice"[3] (Cox, 2008, p. 89). Nevertheless, man "understands" but "does not know his [fundamental] choice" as "it is the pre-reflective choice of … [his] being that is not reflectively known by" him (Catalano, 1980, p. 217). However, Sartre focuses "on the two sides of human reality"—one is facticity[4], and the other one is freedom[5] (Cannon, 1991, p. 46)—in case of choosing man's fundamental project. For Sartre, man's "freely but pre-reflectively" chosen fundamental project remains "concealed through" his "bad faith"[6] (Philips, 1988, p. 119). Though Sartre, who previously claimed in his book, *Being and Nothingness* (1992/1943), that "a person is *totality* rather than an unrelated collection of actions," he later modifies it in his other book, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (2004/1960), with the idea of "totalization" for referring to the process through which "consciousness does spontaneously and continuously in its assimilation of *new* experience" (Charmé, 1984, p. 62). In his phenomenal book, *Critique of Dialectical Reason* (2004/1960), Sartre makes use of the word, "*praxis*" (p. 19), to refer to the fundamental project like "goal-directed activity" with an aim to emphasize "the active nature of man as he lives his "project in the sociomaterial world" (Cannon, 1991, p. 170).Sartre, therefore, according to Betty Cannon, "allows us to add a sociomaterial dimension to the individualist approach of *Being and Nothingness*" (1991,

1. The part of the id, which, according to Sigmund Freud, is the driving force of all human behavior
2. The series of actions that a person chooses in response to and as a result of his fundamental choice of life
3. The original choice of a person's life made in response to a particular even of her/his childhood
4. The resistance or adversity presented by the world that free action constantly strives to overcome
5. Man's choice of objects in the world as a way of realizing his fundamental project of being
6. Man's refusal to confront facts or choices he makes

p. 169). Finally, he maintains that the fundament project of one's life "is in the first instance a need-based project of organismic survival," and, thus, it "is *practical* first and *ethical* later" (Cannon, 1991, p. 163). However, in Sartrean existential psychoanalysis, as Roxanne Claire Farrar observes (2000, p. 9), the projection out of facticity towards value occurs in the gap between two unreachable poles, as shown in the following figure:

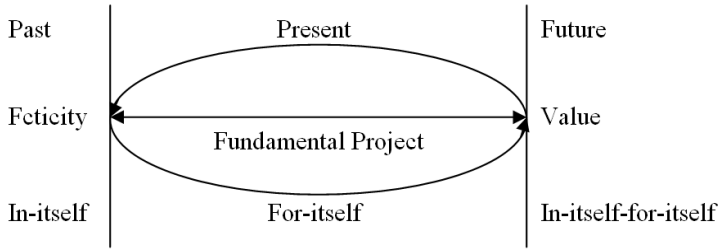


**Figure: Man's Fundamental Project of Life**
(Adapted from Roxanne Claire Farrar, 2000)

Like that in the case of the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, the Indian writer R. K. Narayan's "abiding interest in psychology" (Roy, 2012, p. 97) is quite noticeable in his way of creating plots and developing moods of narrative for most of his novels. Narayan's text, *The Guide*, as Lakshmi Holmstrom observes, is enriched with deep "psychological exploration" (1992, p. 70). It seems that for the purpose of his scheme of "psycho-narration"[7] (Daniel, 2001, p. 74), Narayan, the novelist, intentionally opens his novel *in medias res* with an aim to telling the readers the present life of his focal point, Raju—from his becoming "the new priest" (Narayan, 1963, p. 31) of the old temple getting out of the jail to his final stage of being "sagged down" (Narayan, 1963, p. 221) as a Swami in the eleventh day of his fasting—as a third-person omniscient narrator. On the other hand, for sharing Raju's life in the past— "from his birth to his emergence from the gates of the prison" (Narayan, 1963, p. 208)—with the readers, the writer (Narayan) makes his protagonist (Raju) perform the role of the internal focalizer as a first-person narrator. The novelist chooses "an unusual narrative strategy" for *The Guide* to deal with "complicated …emotions" (Alam, 2007, p. 152) and "the psychological complex of a man" (Nasimi, 1989, p. 51), like Raju. Besides, Narayan skillfully makes use of different stylistic strategies like "frequent interruptions, pauses, and breaks in the

7. A narrative style in which an omniscient narrator intervenes the inner preverbal life of a focal character

narrative" to make "Raju's agitation and changes in identity" (Garebian, 1974, p. 74) more apparent to the readers. In *The Guide*, it is also noticeable that he deliberately brings "constant juxtaposition of the present and the past" to help the readers understand "how the protagonist's present is rooted in the past and how the past also shapes his future with inexorable logic" (M. K. Naik, cited in Sethyraman, 2004, p. 82). N. Sethyraman thinks that, "on fully realizing the complexity of the story," Narayan goes for the "parabolic pattern in the novel to expose the rise and the fall of Raju, at different stages" (2004, p. 79). Furthermore, the writer plausibly chooses "this parabola movement of rise and fall" to provide the text with "the typical shape of [a] tragedy" (Frye, 1967, p. 3). Interestingly, the parabola pattern found in the narrative of *The Guide* resembles the aforementioned parabola shape of an individual's fundamental project that Sartrean existential psychoanalysis intends to determine.

As Sartrean existential psychoanalysis "places emphasis on the detailed exploration of a person's … [life] history in order to discover the nature of his unique fundamental choice of himself and his resulting fundamental project" (Cox, 2008, p. 71), let us first have an overview of Raju's life-story, which is essentially characterized by the "totalization" of the fundamental choice of his life. From Raju's first-person narrative, we come to know that his childhood begins before the "modern developments" (Narayan, 1963, p. 55) in Malgudi—the place where he has spent most of his life. Though his father moves away from their traditional family occupation of priesthood, he (the father) brings up Raju (the son) in the typical Brahminical way from his early childhood. Raju once focuses on his boyhood thus:

> [At the daybreak,] I washed myself at the well, smeared holy ash on my forehead, stood before the framed picture of god hanging high upon the wall, and recited all kinds of sacred verse in a loud ringing tone. After watching my performance for a while, my father slipped away to the backyard to milk the buffalo. (Narayan, 1963, p. 11)

After milking the buffalo, when the sky is clear and bright, Raju's father teaches him arithmetic and Tamil alphabet with an aim to make him "a genius out of a clay-head" (Narayan, 1963, p.12). On the other hand, Raju's mother tells before him the moral story of Devaka and the other legendary and mythical heroes to lull him to sleep while running her fingers through his hair almost at every night. Thus, Raju gets the teachings of Brahminical rituals from his "stern disciplinarian" (Narayan, 1963, p. 23) father and moral lessons from his loving and caring mother in his childhood. Meanwhile, the process of modernization begins at Malgudi; and, laborers,

who come from the outside, start working for the establishment of the Malgudi Railway Station in Raju's playground. Now, Raju often spends the whole day by watching the activities of the laborers who frequently use slangs in their day-to-day conversations. Then his father decides to send him to a school as a means of keeping him away from picking up dirty words from the laborers working in their area. Though Raju wants to be a student of the nearby fashionable English medium institution—Albert Mission School—which is run by the Christian missionaries, his father enrolls him in the traditional Brahminical *pyol* school the classes of which are held under a big tree. Raju, in spite of being disinterested in his school-life, progressively moves forward to the local Board High School in his pursuit of learning. By this time, Malgudi Railway Station becomes ready to be inaugurated; and, Raju's father is given an opportunity to run a shop there. This "business expansion" helps Raju "achieve a very desirable end" (Narayan, 1963, p. 38) of his student life as he now has to run the new shop while his father maintains the hut shop. Though Raju begins his career as a shopkeeper, he gradually loses his admiration for this profession, and, at one point, longs for a better one. However, he continues his job against his will simply for the sake of his father. In Raju's words:

> Though my father thought very highly of our shop, I could not share his view. Selling bread and biscuits and accepting money in change seemed to me a tame occupation. I always felt that I was too good for the task. (Narayan, 1963, p. 42)

After his father's death, Raju, consequently, soon begins to work simultaneously as "a seasoned guide" (Narayan, 1963, p. 53) for the people coming to visit the historical places in Malgudi as almost always they ask him for this particular job. After thinking of this profession as a much better one than mere shop-keeping, Raju gradually becomes "a full-time tourist guide" (*ibid*.) while leaving his shop in charge of the son of a coolie. Within a short period of time, Raju becomes quite well-known with the name, "Railway Raju" (Narayan, 1963, p. 49), among the tourists by dint of his wit, good service, and, above all, his vast knowledge in human psychology. That is why, tourists appear to recommend Raju to each other thus:

> 'If you are lucky enough to be guided by Raju, you will know everything. He will not only show you all the worth-while places, but also help you in every way.' (Narayan, 1963, p. 8)

Once, an archeologist comes from Madras to Malgudi for visiting the caves in the Mempi Hills with a view to writing a book on the cultural history of South India. And, he seeks help from Raju in his search for the history of Malgudi. Raju, now, calls this visiting archaeologist as Marco, thus

associating him with Marco Emilio Polo—the famous Venetian merchant, adventurer, and writer. On the very next day, Raju meets Rosie—the "lovely and elegant" wife of Marco—at the Malguidi Railway Station. This very first meeting between Raju, the tourist guide, and Rosie, the tourist, appears to him (Raju) as "a sort of surprise" as getting down from the train, this "divine creature," like Rosie (Narayan, 1963, p. 58) wishes to see cobra dance, while her husband does not show any interest in all her passion and intentions. In the following morning, Raju manages an arrangement of a cobra dance for Rosie, and, thus, comes to know about her deep passion for dance. Raju spends endless time with Rosie when Marco (her husband) remains busy with studying the wall-carvings in the caves at the Mempi Hills. Thus, Raju eventually comes to know more about Rosie, who originates from a family of *devadasis* (temple dancers), but sacrifices her passion for the caste-decreed art of dancing to become the wife of Marco. Rosie also tells much Raju about her agony in her life with Marco, who always devalues her passion to a great extent. Gradually, this young tourist guide develops a lot of sympathy for Rosie. Raju, at one point, begins to treat Rosie as his "beloved"—his "sweetheart" (Narayan, 1963, p. 67, 70). Further, he begins to appreciate her dancing skills, which have always been neglected by Marco. Hence, Raju and Rosie develop an intimate relationship with each other soon. Meanwhile, Marco becomes aware of this relationship between Raju and Rosie; after completing his research-work, he moves to Madras, leaving Rosie alone at Malgudi. Finding no other alternative, Rosie now comes to Raju and seeks his guidance to build up a career in her caste-decreed dancing profession. Raju welcomes Rosie wholeheartedly and tries to comfort her with the following words:

> 'You are in the right place. Forget all your past. We will teach that cad [Marco] a lesson by and by.' … 'First, I'll make the world recognize you as the greatest artist of the age.'
>
> (Narayan, 1963, p. 135)

At one point of their relationship, Raju introduces Rosie to his mother as a "refugee," and soon manages her (his mother) "to be hospitable" (Narayan, 1963, p. 137) towards the guest. Interestingly, when Raju's orthodox Brahmin mother comes to know about the past life of their guest, she vehemently opposes to house "a bad sort" (Narayan, 1963, p. 62) of woman, like Rosie, who, she (Raju's mother) thinks, has deceived her husband much. Eventually, Raju's mother leaves her residence for her brother's house in a village near Madras, as Raju is reluctant to give up Rosie. Soon after that incident, Raju and Rosie begin to live together like "a married couple" (Narayan, 1963, p. 155). On Rosie's request, Raju makes all arrangement for practising dance regularly at home. During all these

days of their close relationship with each other, Raju pays no attention to his shop. In the meantime, the railway authorities order him to stop running the shop. In addition, the Sait, Raju's main creditor, sues him for the debt of over eight thousand rupees and tries to appropriate his house through a court order to get back the dues. But, Raju becomes able to manage the Sait with the money kept secretly in his bank account. The immediate elimination of his shop, along with the impending appropriation of his home, make Raju move towards making the choice of a new career for his (and Rosie's as well) survival.

Soon afterwards, Raju manages a chance for Rosie to perform publicly at the annual program of the nearby Albert Mission School. This performance of her opens up a new horizon not only for Rosie to materialize her long-cherished desire of becoming a classical dancer, but also for Raju to start his career as the impresario of this "growing celebrity" (Narayan, 1963, p.165). Under the guidance and supervision of Raju, Rosie gradually becomes popular as a classical dancer along with the new name, "Nalini" (Narayan, 1963, p. 156) and earns well. They, at one point, shift to a "stylish house at New Extension," which truly suits their new "status" (Narayan, 1963, p.166). And, by developing his association with the powerful and influential people around him, Raju becomes well-known as "Raj" (Narayan, 1963, p.169) in the upper class society of Malgudi. While Rosie's career is "at the height" (Narayan, 1963, p.180), Raju tries to convince her for more performances with an aim to accumulate more money that would ensure a secured future for them. Raju tells Rosie in a persuading manner thus:

> We needed all the money in the world. … 'If we don't work and earn when the time is good, we commit a sin. When we have a bad time no one will help us.' (Narayan, 1963, p.174)

Interestingly, in spite of having fame and establishment, within a certain period of time, Rosie feels quite unhappy because of her "hectic professional existence" (Narayan, 1963, p.180). She feels like—as Marco said previously about her dancing career—"one of those parrots in a cage taken around village fairs, or a performing monkey" (Narayan, 1963, p. 181). Even, she sometimes remembers her ex-husband Marco with fond affection. In Raju's words: Rosie feels "sudden affection for her husband" (Narayan, 1963, p. 180). In the meantime, Raju receives a book, entitled *The Cultural History of South India*, sent to him by Marco with an acknowledgment for his (Raju's) services during the period of his research on the subject elaborately discussed in the book. Raju hides the book in "the liquor chest"—his "most secret, guarded place in the house" (Narayan, 1963, p. 177)—as a means of keeping Rosie away from the world of Marco.

However, three days later, Rosie comes to know about the book through a review published in the *Illustrated Weekly of Bombay*, which she reads regularly. She, then, inquires Raju about the book, which results into a quarrel between them. The conversation that takes place during the quarrel points towards the essential emotional gap that lies between them:

[Rosie:] 'Where have you kept the book?'
[Raju:] "Who told you about it?"
[Rosie:] "Why bother? I know it has come to you. I want to see it."
… 'Why did you want to hide it from me?'
[Raju:] 'I didn't know it would interest you.'
[Rosie:] 'Why not? After all—'
[Raju:] 'You have told me that you never thought his work interesting.'
[Rosie:] 'Even now I'll probably be bored. But anything happening to him is bound to interest me. I'm pleased he has made a name now, although I don't know what it is all about.'
… 'After all, after all, he is my husband.'
…
[Raju:] 'Don't you remember when and how he left you?'
[Rosie:] 'I do, and I deserved nothing less. Any other husband would have throttled me then and there. He tolerated my company for nearly a month, even after knowing what I had done.' (Narayan, 1963, p.178-179)

In the conversation between them, each and every word uttered by Rosie indicates that she still has got strong feelings for her former husband Marco. It is also apparent here that she now repents for deceiving Marco as well as for living together with Raju. After listening to all these words uttered by Rosie, Raju becomes confused about Rosie's behavior and mindset. He then sometimes thinks of being seduced by Rosie in the past. The following questions recur in his mind off and on:

> Was she sane or insane? Was she a liar? Did she bring all these charges against her husband at our first meeting just to seduce me? (Narayan, 1963, p.180)

After three days of the quarrel between them, Raju receives a request letter from Marco's lawyer which is addressed to Rosie for getting her signature to release "a box of jewellery left in safe custody at the Bank" (Narayan, 1963, p. 183). Raju thinks that "to show her this letter would be suicidal" (Narayan, 1963, p. 184) for him. So, he makes a plan about an act of forgery in the case of Rosie's signature in the document as he thinks that she might reconcile herself with Marco because of his (Marco's) "sudden

generosity to return her an old box" (Narayan, 1963, p. 183). This act of forgery, later, turns out to be a crime and ultimately causes the ending of Raju's life as "Raj" and the making of him a convict at the Central Jail of Malgudi for two years. Then Rosie leaves both Malgudi and Raju forever. Surprisingly, the "guide" persona does not leave Raju even during the period of his imprisonment in the Central Jail of Malgudi. Now, within the four walls of the jail, Raju emerges as "the master of the show." In Raju's words:

> Whether they were homicides or cut-throats or highwaymen, they all listened to me, and I could talk them out of their blackest moods. When there was respite, I told them stories and philosophies and what not. They came to refer to me as *Vadhyar*—that is teacher. (Narayan, 1963, p. 202-203)

However, this jail-life is the turning point, which clearly points towards the change of mindset in Raju. His stay inside the prison-house brings forth a remarkable change in his world-view. He now discards the modern world-view and opts for the traditional one, as it was in his early childhood. Now, in this changed situation, nothing is "going to surprise him" anymore. Raju now often ruminates thus:

> 'Have I been in a prison or in some sort of transmigration?'
> (Narayan, 1963, p. 20)

After his release from the jail, Raju first goes to a nearby barber's shop to have a clean shave of his face. As the barber recognizes him as a "two-year short," Raju becomes awe-stricken. He is a little impressed by both the barber and his attitude towards him. So, he then requests the barber to guess more about him—more specifically what he has not done. In reply, the man says: "You have not cheated in any big way; but only in a small, petty manner" (Narayan, 1963, p. 7). The barber states further:

> 'You have not abducted or raped anyone, or set fire to a house.' (*ibid*.)

In all the words uttered by the barber—the seemingly "wise and knowing" (*ibid*.) man—Raju gets answers to all the recurring questions that have haunted him during the period of his imprisonment. Moreover, here he gets justification for all his (mis)deeds, specially, his relationship with Rosie. After wandering here and there for some time, Raju finally takes refuge in a riverside old temple as he truly intends to hide himself from all the persons he knows and is familiar with. He, at this stage of his life, now realizes deeply that he is quintessentially a lonely person. So, he admits before himself thus:

> 'I am here because I have nowhere else to go. I want to be away from people who may recognize me.' (Narayan, 1963, p. 8)

Another important thing about Raju's mindset needs to be focused here. He has got deep fascination for the old temples from his early life. At the Malgudi Railway Station, he often "gazed on pictures of old temples" during "the interval between trains" (Narayan 1963, p. 44). After ruminating on the "many problems of his own" (Narayan 1963, p. 19), Raju now decides to follow the traditional profession of his forefathers—who were all (except his father) either a family priest, or a temple priest—by becoming "the new priest of this [old] temple" (Narayan, 1963, p. 31) as he has "not trained himself to make a living out of hard work" (Narayan, 1963, p. 30).Two days later, Velan—a villager of the nearby locality Mangala—visits the place where he finds Raju sitting "cross-legged" on "a granite slab" in the yard of the old temple. Raju now feels himself "amused and embarrassed" as Velan stands while "gazing reverentially on his [Raju's] face" (Narayan, 1963, p. 5). This incident reminds Raju of the comments made once by the barber—the "master"—who recognizes him (Raju) as "a *maharaja* [Swami]" (Narayan, 1963, p. 7, 8) while looking at his clean shaven face:

> [T]he villager resumed the study of his face with intense respect. And Raju stroked his chin thoughtfully to make sure that an apostolic beard had not suddenly grown there. It was still smooth. He had his last shave only two days before and paid for it with the heard-earned coins of his jail life.
>
> (Narayan, 1963, p. 6)

Thus, Raju is "mistaken for a saint" (Narayan, 1963, p. 45) by the villager. However, Raju tries "at least to say, 'I am not so great as you imagine. I am just ordinary [priest of this temple]'" (Narayan, 1963, p. 8). But, before he can "fumble and reach the words," Velan comments: "I have a problem, sir" (*ibid*.). So, Raju gets himself involved in Velan's problem because of his "old habit of affording guidance to others" (*ibid*.). To Velan's surprise, Raju solves the problem well. Consequently, Velan makes Raju familiar as a "great soul" (Narayan, 1963, p. 29) to the other people of Mangala. In this way, Raju starts passing his days on the villagers' demands simply for his survival by sacrificing his "likes and dislikes" (Narayan, 1963, p. 218). Here, the omniscient narrator records:

> Food was coming to him unasked now. If he went away somewhere else certainly nobody was going to take the trouble to bring him food in return for just waiting for it.
>
> (Narayan, 1963, p. 30)

Soon afterwards, Raju starts to grow "a beard and long hair to fall on his nape" for enhancing "his spiritual status" as a "clean-shaven close-haired saint" is very rare to find (Narayan, 1963, p. 47). After a certain period of time, Raju arrives "at the stage of stroking his beard thoughtfully;" and, his "prestige" grows "beyond his wildest dreams" (*ibid*.). All the people of Mangala take him with a lot of trust and reverence. They now begin to talk with him not only about their social problems but also about their different family problems, some of which are related to their ancestral property. So, Raju has "to set apart several hours of his afternoon for these activities" (Narayan, 1963, p. 48). However, Raju's career of the temple priest is challenged when drought strikes Mangala, and the people want him "to perform all sorts of miracles" (Narayan, 1963, p. 212) for saving them from the impending famine. Then Raju has to perform a ritual of twelve-day fasting to mollify *Varuna* for the demanding rains. Unfortunately, Raju sags down on the eleventh day of his fasting, while saying the following words to Velan:

> 'Velan, it's raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my legs —' (Narayan, 1963, p. 221)

Though there lies a lot of confusion regarding his death, the external sources confirm that Raju dies at the end. The novelist, R. K. Narayan, puts forward the following argument in this regard:

> 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 is born, and I have to plan my narrative to lead up to it. (Narayan, 1988, p. 99-100)

As R. K Narayan leaves his novel, *The Guide*, open-ended, readers in general will face a dilemma as to whether the rains really descend or not after Raju's "big sacrifice" (Narayan, 1963, p. 94) in belief that the rains must come. However, according to Lakshmi Holmstrom, "[t]he miracle that happens is not that the rains come, but that Raju becomes the swami dying for his people" (1992, p. 70). Through this final sacrifice, Raju desires to fulfill his fundamental project, which, according to Jean-Paul Sartre, can be described as the desire to be the God. Sartre thinks that the fundamental choice that constitutes this fundamental project of Raju's life, is "made in response to a particular childhood even" (Cox, 2008, p. 41). If we look back at his childhood, we shall recognize that such an event is the story of Devaka—the name Raju "heard … all most every night" (Narayan, 1963, p. 19. So, his desire *to be* someone *famous* like Devaka—as Sartrean

existential psychoanalysis suggests—has emerged as Raju's fundamental choice of life from his early childhood. This desire *to be famous*—his fundamental choice—influences all the thoughts and activities in the life of the protagonist of R. K. Narayan's novel, *The Guide*. Raju's life-long emotions and desires can be explained in the following ways.

First, because of his desire *to be famous*, Raju considers the act of shop-keeping as a "tame occupation" (Narayan, 1963, p. 42) and, so, always longs for a better one. So, later he becomes a tourist guide and begins to maintain some kind of distance from the shop. Once Raju ruminates thus:

> Even when I had no tourist to guide I did not go back to my shop, but to Gaffur on the fountain parapet, and listened to his talk about derelict automobiles. (Narayan, 1963, p. 53)

As a guide of the tourists, Raju, at one point of his career, feels extremely happy and confident about himself. He thinks that he has become "so famous" that people who come from Bombay, Madras, Lucknow, and other places know him as the "Railway Raju." Once Raju discusses with his mother about his profound satisfaction as a tourist guide thus:

> 'You don't know, Mother,' … 'This is a far better job I am doing than the other one. … Do you know how well known I am? People come asking for me from Bombay, Madras, and other places, hundreds of miles away. They call me Railway Raju and have told me that even in Lucknow there are persons who are familiar with my name. It is something to become so famous, isn't it, instead of handing out matches and tobacco?'
> (Narayan, 1963, p. 52)

Raju's essential desire *to be famous* is also evident in his interior monologue during the first time of his independent speech with Marco's wife, Rosie:

> Would she [Rosie] know my famous name?
> (Narayan, 1963, p. 64)

Later, after being motivated much by his desire *to be famous* with Rosie as her professional guide, Raju becomes her impresario. It is clearly apparent in the following self-assertion of Raju:

> When I watched her [Rosie] in a large hall with a thousand eyes focused on her, I had no doubt that people were telling themselves and each other, 'There he is, the man but for whom —' and I imagined all this adulation lapping around my ears like wavelets. (Narayan, 1963, p. 162)

As Rosie's impresario, Raju now thinks that he has become quite famous along with the celebrity dancer. "In the glow of this radiant existence"

(Narayan, 1963, p. 175), Raju thinks too highly of himself. His self-confidence and self-satisfaction are evident in the following words as well:

> Sometimes I observed how big a crowd waited for me outside, through the glass window in the hall, and I made a strategic exit through a side door, straight on to the garage, and from there dashed to the gate, while the visitors looked on helplessly. I felt vastly superior to everyone. (Narayan, 1963, p. 167)

Besides, to become famous in the upper class society of Malgudi, Raju now always maintains "back-slapping terms" (Narayan, 1963, p. 168) with judges, politicians, textile mill-owners, bankers, municipal councilors, and the editor of newspapers as they are the famous and influential people in the society. Raju says to himself:

> All kinds of men called me 'Raj' and slapped my back. … Through my intimacy with all sorts of people, I knew what was going on behind the scenes in the government, at the market, at Delhi, on the race-course, and who was going to be who in the coming week. I could get a train reservation at a moment's notice, relieve a man summoned to jury work, reinstate a dismissed official, get a vote for a cooperative election, nominate a committee man, get a man employed, get a boy admitted to a school, and get an unpopular official shifted elsewhere, all of which seemed to me important social services, an influence worth buying at the current market price.
> (Narayan, 1963, p. 175)

Afterwards, while Raju passes his time as a prisoner in the Central Jail of Malgudi, his desire *to be famous* does not disappear at all. This quintessential and long-lasting desire in him motivates him to become ingratiated with the superintendent, the warders, and the inmates alike. Eventually, he turns out to be a "model prisoner" (Narayan, 1963, p. 202) in that famous prison-house. Much later, as the lone priest of the old temple, Raju firmly believes that his service to gods as well as to the people will make him famous. It is very much vivid in Raju's speculations thus:

> I shall be rewarded for this profound service to humanity. People will say, 'Here is the man who knows the exact number of stars in the sky. If you have any trouble on that account, you had better consult him. He will be your night guide for the skies.' (Narayan, 1963, p. 15)

Thereafter, when Raju has to do the penance by fasting with an aim to save the locality from the draught, he has perhaps realized that his act of fasting for rain would make him famous not only in Bombay, Madras, and Lucknow, but also "in all the towns of India" when the news about his

activities would be "circulated" (Narayan, 1963, p. 209). Now, Raju appears to become successful in his new effort as the government sends a team of people to request him to discard fasting while the national newspaper prints the news as the headline: "Holy man's penance to end drought" (Narayan, 1963, p. 209). Raju cannot get rid of his desire *to be famous* even on the tenth day of his fasting. It becomes strongly apparent in the following conversation between Raju and Mr. James J. Malone:

> 'I'm James J. Malone. I'm from California. My business is production of films and TV shows. I have come to shoot this subject, take it back to our country, and show it to our people there. I have in my pocket the sanction from New Delhi for this project. May I have yours?'
> Raju *thought over it* (my italics) and serenely nodded.
> (Narayan, 1963, p. 217)

Raju, perhaps, now thinks of becoming famous even in America, and, one day, in the whole world, through this documentary film. Jean-Paul Sartre's observation in this regard is worth-mentioning:

> A person's fundamental project is his life history viewed as ceaseless effort to overcome his own particular lack of being as defined by his fundamental choice of himself. Through his fundamental project every … [man] ultimately strives to be God. That is, it strives to become … a being, like God … As such a state of being is impossible, the ultimate goal of the fundamental project is unachievable. (Cox, 2008, p. 89)

Although it is not possible to become the absolute being (being-in-itself-for-itself) "which religion calls God," (Stern, 1967, p. 174), Raju strives to become a go(o)d man, like Devaka, by sacrificing his life for the betterment of others. Thus, by surpassing as well as conserving the past, Raju's desire *to be famous* projects him towards a future value that has been fixed much in the days of his early childhood. From Sartrean point of view, it can be said that the "experience of being cared for with love" at childhood—the teaching of Brahmin rituals from his father along the moral lessons from his mother—might enable Raju "to discover and build a sense of self based on being an object of value" (Charmé, 2020, p. 260). Raju's final sacrifice, from the Sartrean point of view, points towards his strife for achieving the value of a go(o)d man, like Devaka—"a kind of mythic prototype of Raju" (Sen, 2004, p. 24).

On the other hand, from the Sartrean point of view, it can also be stated that Raju can "understand," but "does not know" this fundamental choice of his life as it remains concealed by the circumstances or facticity and his bad faith (Catalano, 1974, p. 216). Jean-Paul Sartre thinks that:

> In bad faith the subject deceives himself in that he both knows and does not know what he is doing. Behind the particular project of bad faith there is a fundamental choice, made pre-reflectively, which represents the subject's originary orientation to the world. (Phillips, 1986, p. 163)

So, at this point, it is necessary to explore Raju's bad faith which conceals his fundamental choice—the desire *to be famous*—of life from him. Firstly, we see that Raju often blames "the old, old habit of affording guidance to others" for all his worries thus:

> It was in his nature to get involved in other people's interests and activities. "Otherwise," Raju often reflected, "I should have grown up like a thousand other normal persons, without worries in life." (Narayan, 1963, p. 8)

From the Sartrean point of view, it is an act of bad faith as Raju cannot say "no" to anyone not for his "old habit," but for his fundamental choice of life. In the days of his early childhood, Raju becomes motivated by the personality of Devaka and other legendary heroes belonging to the stories told by his mother. Besides, Raju's confession that he makes before Velan about his becoming a tourist guide is also an example of an act of bad faith. He confesses thus:

> I was a [tourist] guide for the same reason that someone else is a signaler, porter, or guard. It is fated thus. (Narayan, 1963, p. 10)

According to Jean-Paul Sartre, "Choice and consciousness are one and the same thing" (1992, p. 595). So, Raju's act of becoming a tourist guide is not determined by his fate; rather, it is the outcome of his conscious choice. Moreover, Raju once tells his mother that to be a tourist guide "is to be something so famous, … instead of handing out matches and tobacco" (Narayan, 1963, p. 52). So, here it is quite clear that it is very much his conscious and deliberate choice. On the other hand, Raju's speculation about the causes of his sufferings is also an act of his bad faith:

> 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.
> (Narayan, 1963, p. 49)

It can be considered as an act of bad faith, as, according to Sartre, "an action is on principle *intentional*" (Sartre, 1992, p. 559). It (action) refers to one's conscious pursuit about a future project. Finally, let us now consider Raju's identification of the root-cause of his sufferings. He admits thus:

> My troubles would not have started (Raju said in the course of narrating his life-story to this man who was called Velan at a later stage) but for Rosie. (Narayan, 1963, p. 8-9)

It is also an act of his bad faith as "an authentic man," according to Jean-Paul Sartre, does not attempt to deny his freedom and assumes full responsibility for his choices and deeds" (Daigle, 2010, p. 53). Moreover, Sartrean existential psychoanalysis "requires that a person take full responsibility for all his choices, those he has made and those he will make" (Cox, 2008p. 168). So, Raju is bound to accept the full responsibility of all his (mis)deeds as an authentic Sartrean being.

Interestingly, Raju once thinks of running "away from the whole thing" at the initial stage of his fasting; but, later this idea appears to him as an "[im]practical solution" (Narayan, 1963, p. 97). Raju takes secretly little food—which is kept in his reservation—till the third day of his fasting. Even he confesses all his naked past to Velan, considering it as "the only way … to escape the ordeal" (Narayan, 1963, p. 98). Through all his words of confession, Raju tries to convince Velan thus:

> I'm prepared to fast for the sake of your people and do anything if I can help this country—but it is to be done only by a saint. I am no saint. (Narayan, 1963, p. 98)

Nevertheless, Raju can do nothing but continue his fasting because of Velan's "deep obeisance" (Narayan, 1963, p. 209) to him—even after his confession—and the other villagers' true reverence for him. Finally, the "[l]ack of food" gives Raju "a peculiar floating feeling" on the "fourth day of his fast," and he finds "him quite sprightly" (Narayan, 1963, p. 213) henceforth. This new realization in Raju provides "him a peculiar strength" to make the following declaration:

> If by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom, and the grass grow, why not it do thoroughly? (Narayan, 1963, p. 213)

However, Raju "attach[es] too much value to it" (Narayan, 1963, p. 94), as his mother once used to say by "quoting from a Tamil poem" at every evening in his childhood:

> 'If there is one good man anywhere, the rains would descend for his sake and benefit the whole world.' (Narayan, 1963, p. 97)

This realization in him about the "essence of sainthood" (Narayan, 1963, p. 46) makes Raju confident about his penance. It also gives "him a new strength to go through with the ordeal" (Narayan, 1963, p. 213). Even, the change in Raju's inner being begins to be reflected in his eyes thus:

> His eyes shone with softness and compassion, the light of wisdom emanated from them. (Narayan, 1963, p. 79)

Raju now strongly believes that rains will surely come after his twelfth-day penance. This strong belief in Raju's mind is very much evident in the following conversation between him and James J. Melone on the tenth day of his fasting:

> [Melone:] 'When will you break your fast?'
> [Raju:] 'Twelfth day.'
> [Melone:] 'Do you expect to have the rains by then?'
> [Raju:] 'Why not?' (Narayan, 1963, p. 218)

In this regard, it may be worth mentioning that "both Raju's penance and his ultimate sacrifice" seem to be "real" to Makarand Paranjape (2003, p. 182) who maintains that "[t]here is ample textual evidence to suggest that a gradual but sure alteration in Raju's inner being does take place" (*ibid*.). However, although Raju exists as a saint among the people of Mangala for a long time, he discovers the essence of his sainthood just on the fourth day of his fasting. Thus, Raju seems to prove the Sartrean view that: "existence precedes essence" (Sartre, 1992, p. 725). Moreover, Raju's fundamental project—as Sartrean existential psychoanalysis claims—is *practical* first, it is *ethical* later. So, it can be said that Raju, ultimately, makes attempts to prove himself as an authentic being—in the true sense of the term—through his final metamorphosis by fulfilling the Sartrean notion thus:

> Man makes himself; he is not found ready-made; he makes himself by the choice of his morality, and he cannot but choose of his morality, such is the pressure of the circumstances upon him. (Sartre, 1960, p. 50)

Much like the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, the Indian writer R. K. Narayan also believes that "there is a spark of godhood" in "every one of us", and that if we "are able to rouse it and employ it," we "will acquire matchless strength" (Narayan, 1965, p. 23). Moreover, it is assumed that Narayan strives to propagate this belief through portraying the metamorphosis of a "just ordinary" man (1963, p. 8) like Mr. Raju.

Unlike the empirical psychoanalysis fathered by Sigmund Freud, the existential psychoanalysis explained by Jean-Paul Sartre's "provides nothing … to work with patients" in the clinic; rather, it provides us with "only a set of principles" (Cannon, 2014, p. 77) for exploring the life-history of a man systematically to understand his fundamental choice that determines all the activities in his life. Even, Sartre, in this regard, regrets that his psychoanalysis has "not yet found its Freud" (1992, p. 734). In fact,

Sartre's main focus here is "never really directed toward the clinical practice of psychotherapy" (Charmé, 2020, p. 255). Rather, he strives to establish his existential psychoanalysis as "a highly subjective form of literary criticism" (Dyrud, 1984, p. 231). Nonetheless, Sartre confirms that he has applied his existential psychoanalysis for the purpose of literary criticism "twice"—once in *Anti-Semite and Jew* (1967/1944) "to the study of a collective problem," and, on another occasion, in his work, *Baudelaire* (1967/1947), that focuses on "the study of an individual" (Stern, 1967, p. 205). Like Jean-Paul Sartre's text—*Baudelaire*—which is rather the psycho-biography of the eminent French poet, Charles Pierre Baudelaire, R. K. Narayan's novel, *The Guide*, can be considered as Mr. Raju's life-narrative which expresses his "fundamental choice of being and its complex manifestations" (Michel Leiris, cited in Suhl, 1999, p. 127). And, when we will try to understand the thoughts and activities initiated by Raju against the backdrop of his fundamental choice that constitutes the fundamental project of his life, only then the novel, *The Guide*, will appear as a significant tragedy of "an ordinary human being" (Narayan, 1963, p. 99) who sacrifices his life for the sake of other people. Then the text does not appear as a "serious comedy" (Walsh, 1995, p. 114). Then, "what happens in *The Guide*," as Makarand Paranjape observes, appears to be "far more convincing" (2003, p. 177-178). Finally, the present study contends that with the help of existential psychoanalysis, as Jean-Paul Sartre intends to prove, "without being God, but simply as a man," it is truly possible "to understand another man perfectly," if one has "access to all the necessary elements" (Charmé, 2020, p. 255) or information of that man's life.

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