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LIFE'S LITTLE IRONIES IN *THE GUIDE*

Rawal Bhakti Mukesh

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ABSTRACT

Like Hardy's Wessex novels, Narayan's Malgudi novels are also so many studies in life's little ironies. The irony of life may be defined as the happening of the undesired and the unexpected. In life we expect one thing and get its exact opposite, and what we get is not only unexpected, it is also the undesired. Life's little ironies make Narayan's novels, tragi-comedies of mischance and misdirection, and *The Guide* is no exception to this general rule. It is also a study of life's little ironies enacted against the backdrop of Malgudi.



KEY WORDS: Irony, Life etc.

1. INTRODUCTION

The operation of life's little ironies is best seen in the life and career of Raju. In his life the unexpected and the undesired always happens, and his discomfiture is sometimes comic, and sometimes more serious. As a tourist guide, he is very popular, and Marco treats him almost as family member. But he seduces his wife Rosie and has a good time with her. He takes great pains to dress himself properly so that he may be able to impress her as a well-to-do youngman of taste and culture. But one day, when he least expects it, she arrives at his house, and sees him in all his poverty and stark nakedness. We enjoy the discomfiture of Raju from whose face the mask of gentility is now taken off, Later he has to give up his stall on the station and is prevented from being beaten and thrown out, by the timely arrival of his mother. Rosie looks at the entire scene from the doorway to his great discomfiture.

At every turn of the road we find that Raju is a victim of the irony of life or circumstance. He forges Rosie's signature to get the box of jewellery lying with Marco, and everyday waits for the arrival of the box and makes eager inquiries. But the unexpected and the undesired happens. Instead of the box of jewellery, the warrant for his arrest arrives, and he is arrested in the midst of a show before a packed house. He had tried to conceal the facts from Rosie, but now she, as well as others, know about the generosity of Marco, as well as about his own villainy and depravity. He had always believed that Marco was interested only in dead and decaying objects, but now, contrary to his expectation, he finds that he is quite capable of lying a trap and outwitting him. He had always been of the view that Rosie would never be able to pull on without him, but, quite to the contrary, she does well without him and so convincingly establishes that Raju is a mere parasite who had all along been living a life of luxury on her earnings.

Raju continues to be a victim of the irony of life upto the very end. On his release from jail he takes

shelter in a ruined temple, hoping that there none would notice him, but soon he becomes the object of worship of the people of Mangal. The unexpected happens, and the fraud is now called upon to play the role of a Swami or Mahatma. He lives comfortably in the temple, grows a beard, light of wisdom shines from his eyes, and wisdom flows out of his lips. He talks big and looks big, the people are impressed, and he is supposed to have magical powers and the ability to cure and heal.

It is he who tells the simple credulous villages that rains can be brought down if some one fasts for twelve days, and stands in water for a few hours everyday. He had never expected that soon he himself would have to undergo this ordeal. But soon there is drought and famine, and he is called upon to undertake the fast. Ironically enough, this suffering and ultimate death, is brought about by an idiot. He had told this idiot brother of Velan to tell his brother that the swami will not eat, unless they end their quarrel. But he told them that the swami will not eat, unless they end their quarrel. But he told them that the Swami will not eat till the rains come. While he had been expecting food stuff for preparing bonda, his favourite dish, the unexpected and the undesired happens. The people come to him with no food at all, for they believe that the swami is on fast, and so does not need any food. He is thus compelled to undertake the fast. In a desperate bid to save himself he narrates the story of his past to Velan. In this way he expected to make him realise that he is no Swami, no Mahatma, but a fraud, and no useful purpose can be served by his fasting. He expected that the people will call him a villain, stone him, and turn him out. Thus his life would be saved. But the contrary happens. The narration of his past, further confirms Velan's faith in his goodness and nobility; he promises not to disclose his history to any body, and contrary to his expectations, poor Raju has to go on with the fast.

CONCLUSION:-

Examples given above are enough to illustrate the operation of life's little ironies in the Guide. A similar condition of things obtains in the other novels as well.

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