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Journey towards ataraxis a close study through R. K. Narayan's 'The English teacher' and 'The guide'

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ABSTRACT: The road to ataraxis, or inner tranquilly and calm, is examined in this study as it is portrayed in two well-known books by R. K. Narayan: "The English Teacher" and "The Guide." This study tries to reveal the paths travelled by the protagonists in their search for ataraxis by carefully analyzing the storylines, characters, and themes offered in these works. The analysis will dive into the struggles, disagreements, and transforming experiences that the characters go through, illuminating the numerous factors that lead to their eventual realization of inner peace. This research aims to provide a thorough grasp of the notion of ataraxis as portrayed by R. K. Narayan and the lessons it conveys to readers through an examination of significant events and motifs.

KEYWORDS: Ataraxis, Inner peace, Tranquility, R. K. Narayan, The English Teacher, The Guide, Journey, Quest

R.K. Narayan

R.K. Narayan, also known as Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami, was an Indian author best known for his works set in the made-up South Indian town of Malgudi. He was born on October 10, 1906, and died on May 13, 2001. Along with Raja Rao and Mulk Raj Anand, he was a notable early Indian English author.

The semi-autobiographical trilogy *Swami and Friends*, *The Bachelor of Arts*, and *The English Teacher* were among the first four books by Narayan that were published thanks in large part to Graham Greene, a mentor and friend of the author. *Swami and Friends* was the film that first featured the made-up town of Malgudi. *The Guide*, winner of the Sahitya Academy Award, was adapted for the film (getting a Filmfare Award for Best Film), and it was performed on Broadway. *The Financial Expert* was regarded as one of the most innovative works of 1951.

Narayan emphasizes the social setting and regular activities of his characters. He has been compared to William Faulkner, who developed a comparable imaginary community and similarly examined the vitality of everyday life with humor and compassion. Because of his talent for condensing narratives, Guy de Maupassant has been compared to Narayan's short stories. Narayan received numerous honours and awards over the course of a career that lasted more than 60 years, including the Sahitya Akademi Fellowship, the highest award given by India's national academy of letters, in 1994, the Padma Vibhushan and the Padma Bhushan, the second and third highest civilian awards in India. Additionally, he received a nomination for the Rajya Sabha, the Indian Parliament's upper house.

The word 'Ataraxis'

The meaning of word 'ataraxis'- unperturbed by mental or emotional unrest, tranquilly. The word "ataraxia," which should be spelt that way and "ataraxis", describes a condition of tranquilly, calmness, and absence of emotional turmoil. The phrase has its roots in ancient Greek philosophy, specifically in the Epicurean school, which believed that achieving ataraxia was a major objective in life. The phrase is frequently used to refer to a state of inner calm or contentment that is attained through mindfulness, meditation, or other techniques that support emotional harmony and self-awareness in modern usage.

'The Guide' by R. K. Narayan

The novel "The Guide" was written by R.K. Narayan, one of the most well-known Indian novelists of the 20th century. The narrative centres on Raju, a guy whose life is described in a fictional town called Malgudi. Raju is a regular guy who unintentionally becomes a spiritual mentor. The story follows Raju's development from a little child with heroic aspirations to a renowned figure in the community. Raju begins his career by serving as a tour guide for tourists visiting Malgudi. His life, however, takes a drastic change when he meets Rosie, a



stunning dancer who is caught in an unhappy marriage. Even at the expense of his own reputation, Raju falls in love with her and supports her in pursuing her passion for dancing. Raju's circumstances deteriorate as Rosie's career soars. He is ultimately sentenced to prison for forgery. Raju experiences intense contemplation while incarcerated, which causes him to experience a spiritual awakening. He returns to Malgudi after being freed, where he is revered as a sacred figure. People turn to him for advice, making him a revered figure known as "Swami." Raju, though, is still battling his own fears and the fallout from his earlier deeds beneath the surface. The novel "The Guide" examines the intricacies of human nature as well as themes of love, aspiration, and spirituality. It is a compelling story that sheds light on the human condition and follows the path of a regular guy who unintentionally turns into a spiritual mentor to both others and himself.

'The English teacher' by R. K. Narayan

In 1953, a revised edition of *The English Teacher* was released under the title *Grateful to Life and Death*. The main character, Krishna, develops gratitude for gaining a comprehension of life and death throughout the story. Although crucial to the plot, the novel's main interest is not, as the new title implies, the fact that he teaches English in an Indian institution.

On Narayan's actual experience of losing his wife to typhoid in 1939, the novel is based. The grieving Krishna is left with a little daughter, just like Narayan. Along with having a solid understanding of and affection for English literature, the author and character both detest teaching it to uninterested Indian students. However, whether Krishna's struggle with grief and his handling of his disturbed state correspond to the author's personal experience is pure conjecture. After spending a long time with her parents, Krishna's wife Susila and infant daughter Leela finally join him at the beginning of the book, and Krishna unwillingly gives up his free life in the faculty apartments. However, he soon starts to like his role as a homeowner. However, a few years later, Susila's passing brings a sudden end to this joyful condition. The majority of the book describes what happens after Susila dies, which deeply affects Krishna. The incident compels him to consider his own life at the same time.

He acknowledges that he despises being a teacher. He has always questioned the need for Indian students to learn English literature. According to Krishna, "This education had reduced us to a nation of morons; we were strangers to our own culture and camp followers of another culture, feeding on leavings and garbage." This observation's expression of the clash between East and West is a recurring theme in Narayan's writing. Krishna also thought of himself as a talented poet in the past, but he now sees the folly of this. The central query in Narayan's fiction is: What value do worldly riches and achievement have in connection to the spiritual aspect of life? This discontent with one's work and the rejection of unrealized hopes lead to these issues. The story shifts from a realistic to a mythical form once Krishna is forced to consider this all-pervasive puzzle, and it stays in this manner after that. Krishna struggles to get over his loss and finds himself becoming a bitter, hating, and aimless man as time goes on and his life "falls into ruts of routine, one day following another." When he starts speaking with his deceased wife, first through a medium and then on his own, he finds salvation. Narayan delivers these scenes in a matter-of-fact manner, as though such encounter were not at all remarkable. This is how Narayan typically handles such phenomena. When Krishna accepts the presence of his wife, not in a bodily sense but more in the spiritual. His decision to leave his miserable career and work as a teacher in an experimental school is motivated by this realisation. Many of the mystics who operate the school can be found in Narayan's writings.

The English Teacher is a prime example of Narayan's make-believe universe because it is firmly grounded in the entirely real city of Malgudi. Between the demands of life and the temptation to flee into the spiritual world, the main character is torn. He successfully combines the two paths, allowing him to contribute to the community while subtly pursuing inner tranquilly.

Journey towards Inner peace or Ataraxis as depicted in the texts selected.

A condition of inner quiet and tranquilly known as "ataraxia" is often attained via philosophical reflection and self-awareness as discussed above. Both R.K. Narayan's novels "The Guide" and "The English Teacher" explore the path to ataraxia via the experiences of their heroism.

Raju, the protagonist of "The Guide," initially has difficulty determining what his life's meaning and purpose are. He tries his hand at a number of jobs, such as dancing and tour guiding, but ends up in jail for a crime he did not commit. He considers his past errors while incarcerated and starts to gain a better knowledge of himself and his place in the world. As a result, he experiences ataraxia and retains it even after being released from prison.

Similar feelings of loss and grief are felt by Krishna, the main character in "The English Teacher," after the passing of his wife. He loses interest in his position as an English teacher and starts to doubt the significance of



his existence. Krishna, however, is able to rediscover his sense of direction and significance as a result of his interactions with a spiritual teacher and his own reflection. He reaches a condition of ataraxia and starts to comprehend how everything is connected.

Both books highlight the value of introspection and personal development in obtaining ataraxia. Raju and Krishna are able to have a better understanding of themselves and their place in the world by facing their own shortcomings and limits. They experience inner peace and happiness as a result, which enables them to meet problems in life with calmness.

Similarities and dissimilarities in "The Guide" and "The English teacher"

Similarities-

R.K. Narayan's "The English Teacher" and "The Guide" share a number of parallels.

1. Themes of self-discovery and personal development: Both books examine the path to both of these goals. Raju and Krishna, the primary characters, engage in an introspective and reflective process that helps them come to a deeper knowledge of who they are and where they fit into the world.
2. Exploration of spirituality: Both books address spiritual issues and the place of religion in everyday life. While Krishna uses spiritual practises to deal with the death of his wife, Raju meets a spiritual guru who aids him in finding inner peace.
3. Indian society is depicted throughout both books, with a focus on the experiences of middle-class people who reside in small towns. They investigate how social mores, traditions, and practises influence the lives of their characters.
4. Humour: In both works, Narayan uses a light and amusing style that helps to counterbalance some of the more sombre subjects. The characters' quirks and the circumstances they encounter frequently serve as the basis for this humour.
5. The importance of storytelling is emphasised in both books, which show how storytelling can bring people together and deliver important messages. Both Raju and Krishna use storytelling to captivate audiences and give them a sense of direction and purpose in their life.

Overall, the subjects, tones, and styles of "The Guide" and "The English Teacher" are rather similar. They place emphasis on the significance of self-discovery and personal progress in obtaining a sense of fulfilment and ataraxia and provide a window into the complexity of Indian civilization and the human experience in general.

Dissimilarities-

While R.K. Narayan's "The English Teacher" and "The Guide" have many things in common, they also diverge in a number of significant ways.

1. The narrative of "The Guide" is set up as a sequence of flashbacks that move back and forth in time. The narrative structure of "The English Teacher," in contrast, is more straightforward.
2. Focus on various facets of the human experience: While both works deal with issues of spirituality and self-discovery, they emphasise various facets of the human experience. While "The English Teacher" addresses the themes of love, loss, and sadness, "The Guide" concentrates more on the chase of material achievement and the negative effects of greed and dishonesty.
3. Character differences: Raju and Krishna, the two major protagonists, have diverse personalities and life experiences that have shaped their paths to self-discovery. While Krishna is first more contemplative and reflective, Raju is initially more egotistical and opportunistic.
4. Different settings: Although both stories are set in Indian small towns, there are differences in the settings and cultures that are highlighted. While "The English Teacher" takes place in the actual city of Madras, "The Guide" is set in the fictional village of Malgudi.
5. Although both novels use humour, the humor's tone and approach are distinct. While "The English Teacher" is gentler and uses humour to highlight the peculiarities of English-speaking cultures, "The Guide" is more caustic and utilises humour to attack parts of Indian society.

Overall, even if there may be some similarities between "The Guide" and "The English Teacher", they serve distinct functions and use various teaching and information-sharing strategies.

Writing technique used in the texts

A well-known author from India, R.K. Narayan is renowned for his straightforward writing. Narayan uses a number of literary devices to make his concepts and ideas clear in "The Guide" and "The English Teacher," two of his stories.



The use of humour is one of Narayan's main strategies. Both books are full with clever insights and amusing incidents that lighten the atmosphere and make the narrative more entertaining to read. In "The Guide," for instance, Raju uses his wit and charm to win over the individuals he meets, while Krishna, the main character in "The English Teacher," routinely engages in lighthearted conversation with his coworkers.

Narayan's use of colourful, descriptive language is another tactic. He uses rich, evocative language to create a clear picture of the locales and characters in both novels. In "The Guide," for instance, Narayan goes into great detail to describe the dusty town of Malgudi and the busy markets, while in "The English Teacher," he paints the verdant and tranquil landscapes of southern India.

Additionally, Narayan uses a plain narrative style that makes it simple for readers to follow the storyline and comprehend the motivations of the characters. He doesn't use a lot of flowery vocabulary or convoluted sentence structures, and his text is plain and succinct.

Narayan also examines issues of identity, cultural struggle, and self-discovery in both books. He explores the complexities of interpersonal relationships and bigger societal challenges via the experiences of his characters. Through his work, Narayan implores readers to reflect on these ideas and to give serious thought to the difficulties and chances presented by cultural and personal diversity. The humour, vivid language, direct narration, and investigation of significant subjects that characterise Narayan's writing style throughout "The Guide" and "The English Teacher" are all present in these works. His stories are more interesting, thought-provoking, and unforgettable because to these tactics.

Conclusion

R.K. Narayan is a renowned and well-respected author whose books have won praise from critics both in India and beyond. The following phrases accurately characterise Narayan and his books "The English Teacher" and "The Guide":

Masterful: Narayan is a gifted storyteller with a talent for developing vivid and captivating settings and characters.

Timeless: Although "The Guide" and "The English Teacher" were published many years ago, they are still relevant and interesting today, which is a witness to Narayan's timeless writing style. Deep insights into the human condition are offered by Narayan's works, which explore identity, self-discovery, and cultural conflict with tremendous delicacy and nuance.

Witty: Narayan's use of wit and humour is a defining feature of his writing, lending it levity and appeal.

Evocative: Narayan's writing is immensely evocative, effortlessly escorting readers to the peaceful vistas of southern India or the frenetic markets of Malgudi. Narayan's writings have stood the test of time and continue to enthral readers of all ages and socioeconomic backgrounds. Profound observations about life, love, and the complexities of interpersonal relationships may be found throughout Narayan's works.

Accessible: Narayan's writing is quite approachable, which enables readers of various literary sophistication levels to enjoy and be engaged by his writings. Narayan's writings are regarded as some of the most iconic works of Indian literature since they had a significant impact on both readers and writers in later generations.

Inspirational: Narayan's writings encourage readers to consider their own lives and experiences as well as the common human themes he explores in his stories.

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