



Living on the seam of two worlds: Reconstructing history through memory and oral ontology in Rasipuram Narayanaswami's *The Guide*

Review article

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Abstract

This paper examines how R. K. Narayan depicts the pre-colonial India and the effects of colonial intrusion in the Indian society. In *The Guide* the Indian past is embodied in the peoples collective memory which is reflected in arts, specific locations, myths, legends and spatial configurations. Narayan through the use of oral ontology gives a succinct presentation of the gradual erosion of the Indian culture and the dismemberment of the Indian people. The paper adopts a textual analysis, anchoring on Ngugi's approach on memory in *Something Torn and New* to explore how Narayan in *The Guide* questions the hegemonic discourse that redefines the issues of civilization and the European claim of being a superior culture. In the novel, Narayan has memorialized "immaterial sites of memories" which are oral ontologies in the form of dances, songs, myths, folktales, ceremonies, proverbs and material sites of memory such as statues, inscriptions on caves, artifacts especially of the Indian culture to showcase the need to replace the colonial memory with Indian collective memory.

Keywords: history, memory, oral ontology, pre-colonial India



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Get a few of the natives, empty their hard disk of previous memory, and download into them software of European memory (Ngugi, 21)

Introduction

This paper examines how writers such as Narayan try to reconstruct history through the novel form since Narayan as a writer has witnessed the different changes the Indian society has gone through from the pre-colonial to British colonial rule and resultant imperialism. The writer employs the medium of creative imagination to represent, recollect, and recreate the Indian past and to decolonize the Indian memory. This use of literature to comment on societal ills is one of the cornerstones of literature which forms the dominant unit of this analysis. Although, previous researches have examined Narayan's *The Guide* from different perspectives (see Chitra Sankaran, Dharmendra Singh, Harish Raizada, William Walsh, Shodhganga Sarswat), an analysis based on how collective memory is presented in the text is scarce. This makes it pertinent to embark on this study to show the relationship between the colonized collective memories, and how memory is central to the understanding of a colonized people's past and present.

The importance of memory cannot be overemphasized in colonized societies because the colonial intrusion of Europeans into different continents has created scars which have been imprinted in the memory of the colonized. Memory is vital in any postcolonial studies because "Europeans planted their own memories on whatever they contacted" (Ngugi 6) and colonialism was "a symbolic act, a performance of power intended to produce docile minds" (Ngugi 25). This is why writers from colonized nations use their creative imagination in their quest for wholeness and identity; as such "memory serves as a link between the past, present, and between space and time (Ngugi 39). Postcolonial writers such as Achebe, Ngugi, Armah, Farah and Walcott in their works have continued to interrogate European invasion with "its geographical expansion and its attendant 'civilization' submitted the world to its memory" (Mudimbe, 30). Writers from the postcolony such as Narayan in *The Guide* attempt to reconstruct a biased orientalist depiction with India's indigenous collective memories. Drawing from precolonial India's oral ontology and epistemologies, Narayan reveals the solemnity and sanguinity that had characterized the Indian society or what Ashcroft calls the "myth of return " which is "the desire to reverse history, to retrieve some authentic pre-colonial cultural essence" (16) but this paper attempts to examine the role of collective memory in remembering and reconstructing Indian history. More so, the paper contextualizes the search for a collective identity or essence which is reflected in works of writers from colonized societies such as India. According to Ashcroft, "Post-colonial writings try to transform a particular perception, and it is fully ideological in nature" (15). This implies that there is an ideology behind any writing from colonized societies which is geared towards writing or speaking back.

Since the colonialists as Fanon observes are not contented with the control of the present but also the future of the colonized society but are also concerned not merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content, but turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it" (45). As such, Narayan in *The Guide* attempts to replace the distorted and disfigured Indian history presented by European discourses/literature. This underscores the special role literature plays in creating and reconstructing history. Literature has a special role to play since the creative imagination can represent a collective imagination. Through this, literary works especially postcolonial writings tend to give an identity to those that have been dis-articulated or even try to reconstruct history by challenging Eurocentric assumptions. Narayan in *The Guide* interrogates Indian postcolonial realities and he also challenges the notion of Indians as uncivilized.

Collective memory

There are diverse views on what is collective memory. According to James Wertsch "collective memory is the memory formed by all kinds of "textual resources" especially narratives. On the other hand, Benedict Anderson argues that "collective memory is invented to pursue certain aims, strengthen the group's identity and solidarity, among other things" (46). But Walter Benjamin observes that memory "is not an instrument for exploring the past, but rather a medium" (Ngugi 28). For Ashcroft, "social memory or collective memory is a strategy designed by postcolonial writers to resist the master discourse of European History" (18). Ngugi observes that memory contains "the seeds of communal renewal and self-confidence" (ix). This suggests that collective memory reflected in narratives or literary texts helps a society or nation to remember its past, it also serves as a means of consolidating the essence and identity of a people geared towards speaking back against Eurocentric assumptions about colonised societies.

Studies on Collective Memory

There have been Studies on collective memories especially within Western scholarship. For instance, Roger Terence (1983) Paul Connerton (1989) Richard Werbner (1998) have highlighted the importance of recollecting the past. They stress further that the process of remembering especially through creative writings is solely to orient a people within a particular society about the actions and emotions in the present. Rosa De Jorio examined the issue of memory and its role in the formation of political and social identities in various geographical and historical contexts including the colonial, postcolonial and diasporic setting. She describes the rich and often unexpected interplay between memory and history. The author explains further that "memory often emerges as a repository of heterogeneous fragments from which competing narratives of the past can be articulated and collective identities reconfigured (3).

In addition, Anthony Smith argues from a sociocultural point of view stressing that collective memory has to do with historical narrations, historiography and ethno-histories that are used to mold or develop a nation's collective memory. The scholar identified three transmissions or forms through which "ethnic histories" or the content of collective memory are transmitted which include religion, culture and arts. James Wertsch sees collective memory as that memory which is gotten from all types of "textual resources" especially narratives. In essence, historical narratives help a society or nation to remember its past. Wertsch further outlined how narratives that are geared towards promoting a collective remembering must concur to a definite "schematic narrative template" (9) and "these templates are geared towards maintaining a "textual heritage" (10). He states that the narrative templates involves, an initial situation where there is peace and harmony or people living in a peaceful setting. Then, the initiation of trouble or aggression by an alien force or agent that disrupts societal peace that leads to a time of crisis and great suffering and finally, overcoming the alien forces

Rauf Garagozov comments on Wertsch's "schematic narrative templates" that such templates serve as the crucible for historical narratives and are planted in colonial memory. Garagozov states further that these schematic templates when develop serves as a people's collective memory pattern. The collective memory is depicted in the spheres of collective experience as in the daily life of a family, the upbringing of children and even within the culture of a people.

Bill Ashcroft, in the ongoing discussion on Collective memory, observes that it is through literature that a collective imagination and a subject or people that have been "dis-articulated and dispersed" (199) gain an identity. Hue-Tam Ho Tai states that "the use of memory is pertinent because it helps to reconstruct versions of the past suitable for a myriad of purposes in the present" (34). In essence, one must revisit the past in order to under the present. John Bodnar observes that the rise in the study of memory can be linked to individual and group subjectivity and the disdain for colonial domination. More so, colonial domination as Bodnar rightly states "produced a countermovement to hold on to memory in a unique and compelling way" (x). Studies on memory in Africa are relatively scarce. One of such studies is Ngugi's *Something Torn and New* which elucidates various ways through which Europeans have sustained the colonial memory. Colonial memory is sustained through five ways namely:

Memory of Place: Europeans sustain the European memory by 'blanketing' the colonized landscape with the European memory of place. As such. "European memory becomes the new marker of geographical identity, covering up the older memory or native memory of place" (7).

The second means through which memory is imprecated on the colonized, where the colonizer tries to rename the land of the colonized and at the same demanding that the colonized must accept the "names and culture of the

conqueror, this is how Europe imprints its memory on the bodies of the colonized” (9).

As Ngugi argues that Europe has planted its memory on the mind of the colonized. Europe or the colonizer sustains the colonial memory by imposing western epistemologies and thus, creating hybrids.

Colonial memory is sustained in postcolonial nations through the linguistic logic of conquest” (Ngugi, 17). Language becomes the *pari passé* of a people’s existence. Since language is a carrier of culture and it is through language that a people’s memory is sustained. As Ngugi posits that this linguistic logic of conquest results in Linguicide and linguifam. linguicide he argues is similar to genocide, Linguicide is “the conscious act of language liquidation” and Linguifam is derived from linguistic famine which refers to how Europeans have sustained their conquests through the establishment of schools in postcolonial territories and the usage of European curriculum.

European memory is sustained especially amongst the elites through religion, education and language. As Ngugi observes “the idea is to construct an elite who shall carry the weight of the colonizers, memory and become the means by which the elites parents shall lose cultural memory” (21).

Postcolonial nations and its people suffer from the memory of loss. The colonizers scheme of reconstructing a colonized people and implanting colonial memory thereby leading to the loss of history, culture and even geography constitutes the memory of loss. As Ngugi puts it, “name and language loss are the necessary steps towards the loss of the previous identity and the renewal of the new identity” (26).

Daniela Merolla interrogates how literature can be considered as a particular “site of memory”. This is because storytellers and writers are users and producers of memories. As such, writers employ historical incidents, myths, legends and creativity to depict their collective memories of their societies. Merolla further states that, “oral and written literature, as well as cinema, are powerful media to create a collective memory by remembering the past in a narrative form” (112). Merolla also argues that remembering the past is not simply an individual act but the use of memory is “a process shaped by social networks and cultural patterns which influences the way in which elements in the past are represented for future goals” (151).

Pierre Nora describes “sites of memory” as not limited to literature or arts alone but he argues that sites of memory refers to material and immaterial processes which are used by a people to create a national identity. The material forms include memorials, shrines, museums,

archive and emblematic places and the immaterial forms include speeches, ceremonies, rituals and so on.

Ikechukwu Umejiesi in “Collective Memory, Coloniality and Resource Questions: The Conflict of Identities in Postcolonial Nigeria” (2015) examines the rich and often unexpected interplay between memory and history. The author reflects how issues of coloniality have so far affected resource distribution within postcolonial Nigeria and the need to go back to our collective memory to re-define our existence. Abubakar Liman in “Memorializing A Legendary Figure: Bayyajidda, The Prince of Bagdad” examines how the Bayyajidda legend is memorialized within the postcolonial northern Nigeria where the society has been influenced by modernity, technology and globalization, Liman maintains that the Bayyajidda legend has been sustained and transmitted through museum artifacts, drama, films and songs. Although there are different perspectives on collective memory, Ngugi’s approach in *Something Torn and New* is apt for this analysis because he presents the importance of memory and he discusses the various ways through which colonized societies lose their indigenous memories. Ngugi being a product of such a society stresses the need to revitalize our indigenous or collective memories.

Analysis

Narayan problematizes the exclusive focus on western history by bringing attention to the Indian history. European memories were planted in the Indian society. This notion of colonized societies as savages, primitive or uncivilized can be traced to the enlightenment period of Hume, Kant and Hegel where binaries of civilization and darkness. European presence and otherness were created. History and its associated teleology has been the means by which the European concepts of time have been naturalized for postcolonial societies. How they might resist it and what kind of story they might replace it with is crucial to the self-representation of the colonized (Ashcroft, 17). Narayan in *The Guide* presents the need to return to the Indian culture and the need for a collective Indian memory which has been brandished by British colonial memory. Narayan in *The Guide* presents Indian ancient works of art as the bedrock. Thus, “she would then spend an hour or two in the forenoon studying the ancient works of the art, *NatyaShastra* of Bharat Muni, a thousand years old, and various other books, because without a study of the ancient methods it would be impossible to keep the purity of the classical forms” (*The Guide*, 122). Memories of the Indian art, culture and history are used by Narayan to shape a collective memory rather than to express an individual private one because the incredible force of cultural domination in peasant societies produced a countermovement to hold on to memory in unique and compelling way (John Bodnar, x).

Moreso, revisiting ancient myths by writers serves as a means to establish a people’s collective memory. Ayi Kwei Armah adopts the Egyptian story of Osiris, Isis and Horus in *Osiris Rising*. In *The Guide*, Raju’s mother “quoted numerous mythological stories of Savitri Seetha, and all the well known heroines” (155). Savitri Seetha is a goddess in Hindu mythology, the

daughter of the Solar god Savitri and the wife of Brahma. The myth recounts how Savitri used the power of her dedication to her husband, Satyavan to prevent Yama, the god of the dead, from taking him when he was fated to die. Savitri in Indian history became the epitome of the youthful wife. Narayan also reveals the epic of Ramayana which was inscribed on “the tenth century Isawara temple at Vinayak Street”. (*The Guide* 146). Reverting to Indian myths and songs and dances is pertinent as oral traditions give colonized societies such as India, a sense of wholeness, it has enabled Narayan to reconstruct ‘the lost fragmented parts and which is vital for remembering and to preserve the memories of the colonized’ (Ngugi, 28) and most importantly, memory is used in the quest for wholeness since the Indians’ essence and existence seems to be fragmented, this is why Narayan in the *The Guide* employs myth to produce “a mythologized consciousness” (Garagozov ,58) and as Mazhukin Lobok puts it myth “is a construction material used to create a foundation for a new social identity”(55). Therefore, a people’s myth is important because it gives a taste of the past. Indians have been infected with the colonial memory but there is a need for an Indian collective memory. Narayan’s narration of the Indian glorious past marked by irredentism, are tied, once more to the mythological images of the past.

Postcolonial nations and its people suffer from the memory of loss. The colonizers scheme of reconstructing a colonized people and implanting colonial memory thereby leading to the loss of history, culture and even geography constitutes the memory of loss. As Ngugi observes “name and language loss are the necessary steps towards the loss of the previous identity and the renewal of the new identity’ (26). In *the Guide*, Narayan reveals the memory of loss that characterizes most postcolonial societies. The author reflects various ironies with European notion of development, progress and modernity; he argues that colonialism only brought about the demise of Indian cultural values. This is because, development, progress and modernity are among the central ‘master narratives’ associated with colonialism, which in the past produced and today reproduce a Eurocentric mono-epistemicism in which only one way of knowing is considered valuable (Mignolo, 2007; Quijano, 2010) and colonization promises a vision of progressive enrichment to the colonized. (Ngugi, 26). unfolds, Raju takes as the narration couple on a tour of Malgudi, on the way they come across, the statue of Sir Fredrick Lawley, an European who colonized India, yet his statue is implanted to sustain a colonial memory. Raju adds further that “Sir Fredrick Lawley was “the man left behind by Robert Clive to administer the district. He built all the tanks and dams and developed this district” (*The Guide*, 167). This excerpt suggests that colonialism involves an exploitative process. Robert Clive gives the mantle of leadership to Sir Fredrick Lawley, which can be interpreted to mean a colonial logic or movement from slavery, colonialism and to imperialism which dismembered the colonized from their land, from labour, from power, and from memory” (Ngugi, 28).

The naming of districts or places signifies how Europe has planted its memory on the bodies of the colonized. This is because names are central to how we are able to identify,

classify or even remember everything. This is why Ngugi argues that “the loss of name is linked to the loss of memory” (12). The naming of streets and districts after colonizers like Fredrick and Robert is an attempt to remake India in the image of the conqueror and to showcase European hegemony whereby the colonizer “acquires and asserts the right to name the land and its subjects, demanding that the subjugated accept the names and culture of the conqueror” (Ngugi, 9).

In *the Guide*, there are also tensions due to cultural conflicts between the ways of the colonialists, and the Indians. This cultural conflict which has resulted in the loss of identity is aptly reflected in this excerpt, thus: “Why did she call herself Rosie? She did not come from a foreign land. She was just an Indian, who should have done well with Devi, Meena, Lalitha or any one of the thousand names we have in our country. She chooses to call herself Rosie” (*The Guide*, 9). This is largely because the Indians have had their bodies branded with European memory which was as a result of cultural contact which influenced India’s existing structures and systems of beliefs and traditional practices. As Ngugi rightly observes they were “Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellects” (21).

The introduction of the railway line in Malgudi did not only exploit the people but it corrupted the moral values of the Indian people. This is depicted in the conversation that ensued between Raju and Shepherd thus: Let them be, what do you care? he said, which irritated me so much that I let out a yell and pounced on him with “You son of a ... and a variety of other expressions recently picked up” (24). The Indian communal way of life was gradually distorted because Raju began to use vulgar expressions from European men working on the railway line.

Furthermore, Narayan highlights how the representation of the past embodied in images, dances, proverbs and most importantly oral ontology are implicated in the construction and re-construction of Indian History questioning the notion of civilization since the Europeans believed that “colonialism was the empires gift to the World”. By using oral ontology, Narayan decolonizes the Indian memory by showing the centrality of the British experience to the colonial question and how Europeans have distorted the culture, language of the Indian people by implanting a colonial memory. This is because as Ngugi argues “memory contains the seeds of communal renewal and self-confidence” (xi). As Marco embarks on a tour of discovery, he tells Rosie that “do you know that there is a third cave; a sort of vault leads into it. I scrape the lime, and there you have a complete fresco of musical notations, in symbolic figures, the style of the fifth century” (*The Guide*, 122). Narayan reverses the hegemonic discourse that redefines the issue of civilization and it questions and demolishes the European or British claim to be a superior civilization. This however makes the European notion of bringing civilization to colonized nations plausible because inscriptions on music have been on symbolic figures in India.

As the narration unfolds, Rosie begins to dance and sing “a song from an ancient Sanskrit composition of a lover and lass on the banks of Jamuna: Rosie sang and danced with

reckless abandon while her feet thundered with the rhythm of the song. Most importantly, “the magnificence of the composition, its symbolism, the boyhood of a very young god, and his fulfillment in marriage, the passage of years from youth to decay, but the heart remaining ever fresh like a lotus on the pond” (*The Guide*, 125). Contrary to European assumptions that colonized societies were backward, Narayan in this excerpt has been able to show Indians rich cultural heritage which is the art of dancing and significantly he reveals the importance of these dances, each dance has a historical significance. This dance for instance examines the issue of time, from youthfulness to old age, or metaphorically, Narayan uses “the passage of years from youth to decay” to showcase the cultural conflict and the bastardization of the collective memory by the Europeans. Narayan’s art of delving deep into their past, the colonial intellectuals found, to their joy, that the past was branded not with shame “but rather with dignity, glory and solemnity. Reclaiming the past triggers a change of fundamental importance in the colonized’s “psycho-affective equilibrium.” (Ngugi, 41).

Narayan believes that India has a rich cultural heritage which will help channel a way to understand India’s present, give her a sense of belonging and to create a collective identity. Narayan achieves this when the narration moves from the ancient times, as Rosie performs this dance and to the present where the narrator reveals the thoughts going through Raju’s mind. In addition, Indians’ beliefs and worship of their gods is realized through certain dances. Thus, the art of dancing is used not only to appease their gods but also it serves as a means to maintain a cosmic balance. This is why Rosie wants to begin her dances she usually kept “a bronze figure of Nataja, the god of dancers, the god whose primal dance created the vibrations that set the worlds in motion”. (*The Guide*, 122). In essence, there is a connection between the Indian gods and the maintenance of equilibrium in nature. Dances are not just for aesthetic reasons but they have a deep spiritual essence. Narayan makes reference to two great Indian epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata. Ramayana was written in Sanskrit which has Rama as the protagonist. This epic depicts Rama’s quest and the Mahabharata is the Great Epic of Bharata Dynasty, According to Encyclopaedia Britannica,

The Ramayana was composed in Sanskrit probably not before 300BCE, by the poet Valmiki and it consists of 24,000 couplets divided into seven books” “ these epics contain a great deal of religious material in the form of myths, stories of great sages and accounts of exemplary human behavior” (507).

Both epics portray Hindu dharma or moral righteousness. The significance of these epics is presented when Rosie tells Raju that she would love to read episodes from the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* because “they are a treasure house” (*The Guide*, 123). The *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are the treasure house because they are works of great literary artistry and its recitation is considered an act of great literary merit. Today, the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* has been translated into various Indian languages such as Tamil, Bengali, Hindi, Also, it has

been rendered into folk tales, drama and films. The story has also spread to the Southeast Asia and the Ramayan heroes have been carved as historic monuments in Indonesia. Narayan diminishes western assumptions as postulated by Hegel, that colonized societies are “the unconscious nature” (42).

Colonial dismemberment is aptly depicted in Narayan ‘s *The Guide*. Thus, dismemberment according to Ngugi is an act of absolute social engineering (5). This is vividly seen when Rosie at the beginning of the narration, abandons the art of dancing but she later begins to learn about her art when she came back to Raju’s house. However, she went back to dancing because that was what she had wanted to do all her life. But the story changes when the art of dancing comes with a price. Modernity and resultant capitalism when Rosie and Raju had to go on tours but the essence of their existence, or the love that bind them together was thrown to the wind. Also, the hitherto, traditional life that was characteristic of the Indian society was gradually eroded even after India had attained independence. This epitomizes the traits of Europe’s capitalist modernity. Similar to the postcolonial chaos of Africa, India was a victim of the “dismemberment of the Continent”. (Ngugi,6). This dismemberment is centered on the façade that the European society had an ever-ready market that could accommodate goods, resources and so on from other colonized societies. Malgudi, the fictional town in *The Guide* served as a point for tourist attraction. Europeans had ventured into Malgudi to see the ancient city of India thus.....

The railway line that was built by the Europeans was mainly to continue to sustain the dismemberment of the Indian continent. Initially, the India was “his own subject but now he is subject to another” (Ngugi, 42). When the railway line was built, it is the Indians that still continue to serve the Europeans. Raju becomes a Guide, while Gaffur is the tour driver. This shows that even after independence the Colonizers still had a strong hold on the Indian society. The colonialist logics also prevail in our academies and intellectual centers. Not only the postulate that manifests the hegemony of the Anglo-Eurocentric paradigm in the different areas of knowledge, but, and especially, the question of who speak when expressing and analysing our regional reality. Western education served as a mark of civilization, and this western education was characterized by “apparent violence and purposelessness” (*The Guide*, 28). The students who were taken to the Albert Mission school were converted into Christians “and are all the time insulting our gods” (*The Guide*,25). At the pyol school, there was never a designed curriculum that will enrich the knowledge of the pupils but the teacher and an old man “habitually addressed his pupils as donkeys and traced their genealogies on either with thoroughness” (*The Guide*, 26). Narayan subtly presents the façade underlying the British civilizing mission,

Linguifam is derived from linguistic famine which refers to how Europeans have sustained their conquests through the establishment of schools in postcolonial territories and the usage of European curriculum. Rosie is an Indian but she was never taught the ancient myths of Ramayana and Mahabarata, or stories of Devaka and Savitri Seetha but she was

taught Shakespeare. Narayan's *The Guide*, explores European modernity, the issues of capitalism which is a feature of imperialism. In the novel, the exploitative tendencies of capitalism and imperialism are aptly depicted. The forest was destroyed to build a railway line. The railway line was built to serve as a channel to cart away the resources of the Indians. The railway line itself caused a division amongst the people. We see the division between tradition and modernity. Thus:

One fine day, beyond the tamarind tree, the station building was ready. The steel tracks gleamed in the sun: the signal post stood with their red and green stripes and their colourful lamps; and our world was neatly divided into this side of the railway line and that side (*The Guide* 37).

Gradually, the Indian people were drenched into the western economic, political and social vortex of British colonialism. Colonialism with its resultant capitalism uprooted the ancient traditional way with the western culture, as such the colonizer's life "was given a powerful and dangerous virus which was injected with a terrible effect" (Robert Heilbroner, 190). The railway lines brought about modernity but which comes with repercussions. Since the Indian society has been colonized by the British thus the establishment of the railway line was to benefit the colonizers. The railway line did not only introduce or attract tourists into Malgudi, but it also corrupted the moral values of the Indian people. This is aptly depicted in the conversation that ensued between Raju and the boy who was grazing, the unnamed character. Raju had picked up a vulgar language which he had picked from the men working on the railway line. Thus: Let them be, What do you care? He said, which irritated me so much that I let out a yell and pounced on him with "You son of a ...and a variety of other expressions recently picked up" (*The Guide* 24).

In addition, colonialism even within the sphere of religion did not see the colonizer as equals, as such the colonized becomes the inferior being. Throughout, the narration, Railway Raju was a guide, Gaffur, the driver; Joseph attends to the need of the tourists who visit the lodge. No Indian in the story had a position of authority; they were either ways serving Europeans or colonizers who came to visit India. Narayan in *The Guide* depicts the postcolonial India, a society where the Judicial or penal institutions need to be re-addressed. Metaphorically, the Prison itself is symbolic of the Indian society where the people are still held in the shackles of imperialism. The ancient laws of injustice are uprooted and are exchanged with the western penal system thereby dislocating and disrupting the local culture. As such, the Indian society is unable to come to terms with this disruption. This results in the bastardization and abuse of the western penal system. As the Barbers tells Raju when he came out of prison: You would look different if you had been in for seven years, which is what one gets for murder only half-proved" (*The Guide*, 7.) Sarcasm can be discerned in this statement

with the phrase “half proved.” This showcases the failure of the Indian Judicial system due to the imposition of the western type of judicial system by the British.

Narayan reverts into the Indian past to reveal its collective memory. This is a form of resistance because “the memory circumvents the striated space of history and re-infuses the present with a sense of potentiality” (Ashcroft 17). In addition, collective memory in the *Guide* is imprinted on the spheres of the Indian people’s collective experience such as in their family lives and even in the upbringing of children, marriage ceremonies and so on. Raju, the Saint tells the people stories using vibrant proverbs or wise sayings. Thus: “If you show me a person without a problem, then I’ll show you the perfect world” (*The Guide* 14). Poetry, Raju’s mother says “If there is one good man anywhere, the rains descend for his sake and benefit the whole world”, quoting from a Tamil poem. (*The Guide*,111).

Wise sayings of the Buddha “Go into every home in this city and find one where death is unknown, if you find such a place, fetch me a handful of mustard from there, and then I’ll teach you how to conquer death” (*The Guide* 15). Also, if you show me a single home without a problem, I shall show you the way to attain a universal solution to all problems” (*The Guide* 15). “It was not the custom there, in that society to ask who or why, when so many came and went”, (*The Guide*,45), While the first proverb reveals the death as a finality, the second proverb suggests that in this world, one can never stay without problems and the third proverb re-echoes the norms and values of the Indian society. Narayan also depicts the society as a communal one not an individualistic society. Narayan presents marriage ceremonies which carries memories of clan, place and the Indian society, this stresses the importance of India’s local culture because cultural recrudescence will according to Ken SaroWiwa re-create societies which have been destroyed by European colonialism, neo-colonialism, (190).

Conclusion

Narayan in *The Guide* employs Indian arts and oral ontology in the form of proverbs, myths, festivities dances encapsulated in India’s collective memory thereby interrogating the dominance of European concept of civilization, narratives and epistemologies and how it has been naturalized for post-colonial societies. Through the use of satire and irony, Narayan tries to reveal an authentic pre-colonial cultural essence that has been trammled by the British Raj.

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