

## Role of Snake in Susana's Seven Husbands and The Guide

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**Abstract**-- The reference of snakes is available in the novels of Ruskin Bond's *Susana's Seven Husbands* and RK Narayan's *The Guide*. In the house of Susana snakes are tamed and they are fed with saucer of milk. They are also worshipped by Susana's mother. Besides in their house is set up a Naag Temple by Susana's mother who pursued Hindu religion. All the snakes living near the water tank of Susana were venomous. But all are harmless and innocent. Goonga, a deaf and dumb servant of Susana's household sent Arun a basket full of guavas and two vipers were hiding inside the basket. In *The Guide* Rosie has been criticized as snake girl. She has been compared to a snake. Raju also tried to find the resemblance between a snake and Nalini alias Rosie. She danced like a snake. She imitated the dance of a snake. Nalini looked like a snake because her figure was slim. She looks beautiful. Here in the two novels snake symbolizes ungrateful, enmity, and harmful person. To underestimate a female character the vilifying word 'snake' is used. *Susana's Seven Husbands* died one after another in the influence of venomous reptile Susana. Likewise, Rosie abandons his husbands as well as her mentor Raju, the guide. Raju's life is spoiled under the influence of Nalini. Besides to elaborate and justify the comparison, *Lady Macbeth*, *Desdemona*, *Manasa Mangal*, *Samson Agonistes* are presented. Overall feminist theory is utilised.

**Keywords**-- snake, tamed, worshipped, venomous, vipers, ungrateful, justify, feminist theory.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Snake belongs to the reptile class. They are lizards, mongoose, gecko, crocodile and snakes. Of them snakes have no legs. In Indian sub-continent snakes have been provided divine recognition. In undivided Bengal Bijoy Gupta wrote the story of *Manasa Mangal*. Besides Bijoy Gupta the other writers of *Manasa Mangal* are Kana Hari Das, Kshemananda. The influence of the literature in Bengali society and culture is immense. The reference of the snake is available in *Susana's Seven Husbands* and *The Guide*. Snake biting has been very obvious in Indian society. Many people die of snakes biting every year. From the fear of biting death, the serpent is worshipped. In Bond's *Susana's Seven Husbands* the mother of Susana is a Hindu. She set up the Naag Temple in their house. Various venomous snakes live in the water tank. Still the snakes are served milk in the saucer. They do not harm the inmates. The novelist wants to show the religious beliefs of people. It is also a kind of superstition. It is also a display of the religious harmony of Hindu and Christianity. In *The Guide* Rosie wished to be a Bharat Natyam dancer. She desires to watch snake dancing.

A snake charmer is arranged for her. Raju's mother doubts Rosie as a snake-girl. The snakes in these two novels serve some purposes. The role of snakes in Indian society as well as in literature has been depicted vitally.

### II. SNAKE IN SUSANA'S SEVEN HUSBANDS

Ruskin Bond has introduced a snake in his novella. Susana lost her mother at an early age. Even she lost her beloved father who taught her how to manage horses, how to hunt and other practical works that are essential in her later life. After being without parents, the staff of household servants and pets become her companions. Her father had no belief in any religion. He was a Christian. Susana herself was a Christian. Yet tolerant of Hindu religion. Susana's mother was a Hindu and set up the Naag Temple at their home. Though they were not Hindu (father and daughter) they had respect for Indian culture and religion. Her mother worshipped the snake goddess and thereby the taming of snakes at home had been a tradition. They had the water tank where the snakes would live on frogs. Even the snakes would be provided with milk in saucers. They drank milk and glided in the bush of the tank. These poisonous vipers basked in the sun sitting on the steps of the water tank. There was no record of causing any kind of harm to anybody. So, they were not disturbed. This story is introduced by the narrator Arun.

### III. SNAKE TAMING IN SUSANA'S SEVEN HUSBANDS

Susana's house was an old building. In the boundary wall many venomous snakes lived there. No reported harm was seen to cause. No one was bitten by the snakes. They lived in the water tank. They basked on the steps. They would be served with a saucer of milk. As Susana's mother was a Hindu lady, there was a Naag Temple. She perhaps worshipped the snakes.

### IV. THE GUIDE

Rosie married Marco but she had her high ambition to become a renowned dancer. She wanted to get the talim on Bharat Natyam. A snake charmer with the cobra was visited. With the bin flute playing Nalini practised dance. She danced as well as the swan neck raising dance. Raju remembered his mother's warning 'snake girl'. Snake refers here to vile and unsuspecting character. Snake is something foul.

It also alludes to the Biblical story of Satan. Satan in the disguise of the snake deceived Adam and Eve. Whereas in Susana's Seven Husbands snake is used mostly as worshipping god, in the Guide it is used as an evil force. Raju's mother was bored and scared with that snake girl from the very first day. Like Duncan's observation of Macbeth as, "There is no art to find one's mind's construction " becomes true when Raju's mother predicted of Rosie as being a snake girl.

#### V. IS NALINI A SNAKE GIRL

Nalini is the protagonist of the novel, 'The Guide'. Her original name was Rosie. She was the wife of the impractical research scholar, Marco. The couple were poles apart in pursuing their ambitions. Whereas her husband Marco wanted to be a great writer, Nalini wanted to be a famous dancer. She belonged to a lower caste dancing family. She had everything except her father. She was a higher educated girl with Master degree in Economics. Marco gave an advertisement in the newspaper for marriage. Rosie was chosen as the desired bride. As she had danced in her blood, she began to pursue her ambition of being a dancer. Her husband disliked the idea of dancing. As a result, she left his company. She embraced the life of Raju. From her first appearance Raju's mother predicted her as a snake girl. Raju wanted to be financially strong by swallowing the earnings of Rosie. Raju left his mother, his home and his father's shop for his own gain. Raju's life became topsy turvy for this beautiful lady. For her own ambition she could not obey her husband blindly. Like the Satan she revolted against her husband's objection to her dancing. She is independent here. She is strong enough. She is more than a snake. She is simple but iron determined lady. She has not any snakish characteristics. Raju was benefitted much by Nalini. But his intention being crooked he possessed everything of Nalini and was caught red handed and was imprisoned. She wanted to save him from his punishment and it is not that she did nothing rather she stood as a strong wall but in vain. Sometimes she was seen as double faced. She saw the article publication of her husband in a newspaper and she became changed. She hanged the picture of her husband though she stayed with Raju. Raju was at jail. She was outside. She did not forget to take her husband's book with her at the time of his departure for another place. It can be said that Raju spoiled his life himself. Rosie can not be blamed for the destruction of Raju's life. Rosie did not bite Raju like a snake rather she wanted to extract his inner poison like an exorcist. She contributed much for Raju's financial development but he was too cunning to take her help. But it is also true that Rosie was a disguised curse in blessing.

A snake is said to be ungrateful but where is Nalini resembling to a snake? She does her utmost attempt to save Raju. She was indomitable to her promise. She was ungrateful to her husband, Marco. It is as true as possible because Marco was an impractical research scholar as well as Nalini had her own ambition that always kept her haunting. Her husband Marco proved to be unsupportable, then she recourse to flirt with the fraud guide, Raju. Her ambition in life chases her. In patriarchal society everything is dominated by the whims of the male. She has not had her own like, dislike. Like other women she did not want to be pendulum in the hand of the patriarchal society. She is blamed unjustly as a snake girl because she was somewhat indocile to patriarchal society. She was a protestant woman. She was too modern to obey her environmental needs. Her ambition makes her a snake girl. According to Raju's mother Nalini was a snake girl but she could not be blamed totally as the snake girl. As she herself said to Raju that she belonged to lower caste. First, she forsook her husband, Marco. Next time, she left her lover mentor Raju. For these, she is not responsible. Time and situation compelled her to do these aim, ambition and goal chasing plan. Raju's maternal uncle rebuked Rosie and left his nephew but she bore everything calmly. Like the Satan who deceived Adam and Eve, Nalini deceived neither her husband Marco nor the guide Raju. Like a free woman she wanted to be independent.

#### VI. IS NALINI RESEMBLING SAMSON AGONIST'S DALILA

Million's Samson Agonist's heroin Dalaila is a woman who deceived her husband Samson in the interest of her own country. She revealed the secret of the source of power of her husband's strength. Dalila did the work for her patriotism. She saved her own country from the foreigner like her husband. Dalila is not a snake girl. But whatever Rosie did was everything of her own interest namely name, fame and money. She was driven by her own profit, gain and benefits.

#### VII. WAS DESDEMONA LIKE NALINI

Othello killed his beloved Desdemona driven by jealousy but it was the misunderstanding of Othello. Othello understood his fault and he committed suicide at once. Nalini sacrificed her life for the development of Raju but she had to face the blame of a 'snake girl' by Raju's mother. Raju sacrificed his own for his own misdeed. Desdemona was criticized by her husband but actually she does not deserve to be called a snake girl.

Whereas Desdemona belongs to Western culture and of middle age, Nalini belongs to the Indian culture of almost the modern period. First, Othello was sceptical of Desdemona of her deceptive nature but later repented for her mistake. Her father Brabantio also warned Othello of her deceptive nature may be revealed in future. But these proved to be mendacious. So, the comparison of Desdemona with Nalini as a snake girl is mismatch.

#### VIII. NALINI AND SNAKE

Rosie was a beautiful girl. For her figure, for her beauty and academic qualification she was wedded to the writer and scholar Marco. When she danced, she perfectly resembled a snake. As the scale of a snake glazes, her active dancing figure dazzled too. When she stood akimbo like Nataraj she looked like the Nagin girl. Observing her attractive slim figure, Raju's mother commented her as a snake girl. But his mother judged her from her appearance. She could not go inside her to judge her intention. Raju was so obsessed with her beauty and attraction that he ignored his mother's warning. The invisible secret biting of Nalini tempted him to go down to the deteriorating conditions.

#### IX. SUSANA AND SNAKE

Susana was a flirt lady who was extremely beautiful. She was so beautiful that nobody could get rid of her temptation. She is nowhere compared to a snake but in her characteristics lies the tempting power of a snake. We may allude to the temptation of Satan to Adam and Eve in the disguise of a snake. Susana tamed many venomous snakes in her water tank. They would be provided the saucer of milk to suck. The snakes did not do any harm to anybody. They lived peacefully and safely. Susana's mother was a Hindu lady who adored snake goddess. Consequently, they had a Naag Temple in the house.

From outside there was not any way to recognise Susana whether she was a snake girl or a snake like girl. She could be charged as a snake girl because she trapped many young men to her web of love. She was kind to the good and very much cruel to the bad. Her personality was so high that nobody could dare to criticise her. Besides we get the reference of snakes. Arun's wife Shashibala was sent a basketful of guavas.

When Shashibala went to take guavas, two snakes got out and glided in the drain. She fainted. Arun thought it was the conspiracy of Susana to kill the couple secretly by sending two venomous snakes in the name of the gift of guavas. But Susana confirmed that she did know nothing of sending them any gift. She added that it might be Goonga to send the gift with the venomous snakes. Susana did not hide anything. Whatever she did, he did everything patiently and openly. She did not possess a snake character hundred percent.

#### X. CONCLUSION

*Nalini and Susana:*

Both Nalini and Susana are female protagonist of The Guide and Sudan's Seven Husbands. They are conscious of their rights. Consciously or unconsciously, they became aware of their environment. Susana did whatever she liked. She was free and frank to deal with her surroundings. She is the true representative of feminism. She protested boldly against anything that is unjust and unfair. She is not directly alleged as snake girl. She is like the wife of bath in Chaucer's Canterbury Tales. She is Virginia Wolf's 'Room of One's Own's true defender. On the other hand, Rosie is a dancing family girl. She is beautiful lady. By her intention, she occupied her position. By hook or crook, she excelled herself. She danced like a snake. She followed the body movement of the real snake. Besides, Raju's mother predicted her as a snake girl.

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