

## A Study of Female Characters in Train to Pakistan, Susana's Seven Husbands and the Guide

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### Abstract :

Train to Pakistan is a partition novel by Khushwant Singh. This novel has only two active female characters. One is Nooran and another is Juggat's mother. Nooran is a Muslim weaver girl living in Manomajra. She has a love affair with Juggat. Besides Haseena who is a Muslim prostitute and her mentor. In moneylender Ramlal's family is seen some women but not so active. Susana's Seven Husbands has three women characters. Susana is the protagonist. She loves several persons that is seven times. She is a kind of flirt. Another woman is Susana's maid servant. The narrator Arun's wife also is included. The Guide by RK Narayan consists of three women characters. They are Rosie alias Nalini, Velan's step sister and Raju's mother. In the patriarchal society they hold different personality.

**Keywords :** partition, patriarchal, flirt, prostitute, alias, novella

**Introduction :** Ruskin Bond, R. k. Narayan and Khushwant Singh are Indian writers writing in English. Ruskin Bond's Susana's Seven Husbands and Khushwant Singh's Train to Pakistan are particularly novellas whereas RK Narayan's The Guide is a novel. The main theme of Train to Pakistan is partition. Ruskin Bond's Susana's Seven Husbands is a novella with the main theme of love and death. The Guide is a novel that deals with the subject matter of transformation of the protagonist Raju from a tour guide to a dance manager then to a spiritual soul. Train to Pakistan has several female characters. They have their distinct characteristics. Nooran is a Muslim weaver girl living at Manomajra. She falls in love with Juggat Singh. Haseena is a whore whom the magistrate, Hukum Chand uses for sexual satisfaction. Haseena's mentor is an old woman. Juggat's mother is a widow. Ramlal the money lender has some women family members who are only mentioned in the novella. The Guide contains principally three women characters. First is Raju's mother who is very dominating figure. Second is Rosie who is an ambitious higher educated woman. She changes her name from Rosie to Nalini. Velan's step sister is also the part of the female character. Susana's Seven Husbands is such a fascinating novella where the only manly female character is Susana. Susana is a beautiful lady who inherited a huge amount of wealth from her dead parents. Like a spider killer she kills seven husbands by her incomparable beauty. She has a maid servant with six toes in a leg. Arun the narrator, weds a girl who is a matter of jealousy to Susana. Are they comparable to Sati Sabitri or Sita? Are they prostitutes? What was the status of the women during partition of India in 1947? Colonial, post-colonial and modern women characters are alike or different? How are the Muslim women depicted? In the male dominated Indian society how are the females treated? Nalini is master degree holder but are Nooran, Susana, Haseena, Jugga's mother, Raju's mother, Shashibala educated? These are the questions that to be highlighted for the better

understanding of status of the colonial, post-colonial and modern Indian women in world perspective.

### **Female characters in Susana's Seven Husbands :**

#### **Susana :**

Susana Anna Karenina is the principal female character in the novella of Ruskin Bond. Her parents are dead. She possesses a huge amount of wealth and property. She is so beautiful that anybody falls in her love at first sight. She enjoys her life with happy go lucky life. She doesn't care what the society thinks with her. She loves as she likes. She marries when she needs. She is kind to good and cruel to evil. She has humour. Arun goes to steal guava from her garden and is caught red handed. When Arun confessed his crime, she is heard to comment him as an honest thief. She becomes cruel when her French artist husband beat her servant the Goonga with his whip and spoiled his one eye, she took revenge on him by injecting air into his vein. She has not a bit of remorse for such an evil person. She wanted to help one by the name of Jimmy whom she marries and helped in all possible ways but the man surrendered to the uncertain fate and died. Specially in the Indian patriarchal society polygamy for the females is not allowed but Susana breaks the tradition and marries several times. This is something treated as unorthodox. She is criticized indirectly because she is domineering woman belonging to the elite class. Has she been from economically weaker section she would be blamed as a prostitute. But she is wholly a different personality. Ruskin Bond depicts Susana Character on three possible lines – first, she kills her husbands for some bitter childhood impressions that prompt her to dominate the opposite sex. Second, it is simply her nature to hunt for new adventures. Third, sheer chance is responsible ultimately for deaths in succession. But for the people of her town she is an enigma, a lady of supernatural expertise.

#### **Maid servant:**

Maid servant of Susana is of aged type. She is well-wisher of Susana. She is always ready to save Susana from any kind of peril. She is a traditional woman obedient to her mistress. No unique thing is observed in her character.

#### **Shashibala:**

Shashibala is the married wife of the narrator Arun. She is an orthodox woman without any exception. Once she doubted her husband when he spoke of Susana with whom he might have some illegal relations. But she was futile to prove it.

### **Female characters in the Partition Novel :**

#### **Nooran :**

Nooran is a traditional woman. Her religion is Islam. She is perhaps the only Muslim weaver girl living at Manomajra which is Sikh and Hindu dominated border village of India. She is afraid of her father and the society. She is out of her home at night darkness when everyone is sleeping in order to woo a Sikh Juggat Singh. She protests when Juggat does intercourse with her. She got pregnant and goes to Juggat's mother to be accepted herself as the daughter in law

but she warns her of her another religion. Nooran politely informs her she bears her son's child in her womb.

**Haseena :**

During partition there was a great scarcity of food. Many women chose the profession of prostitution. Haseena is a vicim of famine. There is a proverb, "Necessity knows no law." The corrupted widower magistrate Hukum Chand had sex with that whore of his dead daughter's age. As a woman Haseena is not responsible for such a filthy livelihood. Society compelled her to adopt this vile heinous profession.

**Mentor :**

Haseena's mentor introduced Haseena with Hukum Chand. She instigated Haseena to embrace the owner the magistrate for more money and more gift. She smiles and hereby knows the tactics of her body business. For money she handovers the young prostitute to a widower.

**Jugga's mother :**

Jugga's mother is a widow. Her husband died because of his crime. She is always afraid of the situation of disharmony among Muslim and Shikh Hindu. So that Jugga be safe and free from committing any heinous act she warns her son Jugga. She implores the police who come to arrest Jugga. When Nooran informed of her pregnancy by her son she is tensed much and broke down for different caste relationship

**Female characters in The Guide, Sahitya Academy Award winning novel in 1960:**

**Raju's mother:**

Raju's mother is a shrewd woman. Recently she has been widow. She does not tolerate any illicit relationship of her only son Raju. When some men came to beat to Raju she forbade her son not to be involved in any kind of quarrel. Raju fetches a wife of another man to her home and at this she was much afraid of the rumour that might be happened in the area. She can not believe her son's words so she asked Rosie everything. But some unknown confusion may be issued for such an illegal relationship with that unknown married woman she was conscious of that matter. She described Rosie as a snake girl judging her after consequences as occur in the case of a snake. Men are habituated to tame a snake with milk and banana and yet its character does not alter any more. It becomes unfaithful and bites its owner stealthily. Who can guarantee this Rosie will not change to be like a snake? She repeatedly requests that woman to leave their home and live with her husband but she turns deaf ear to her request. Being frustrated she herself leaves her own home and goes to live at her brother's house. She has motherly affection in her heart. She does not want to make her own issue in any problem. She is an Indian woman with everything that a woman may consist of. She has love to her family. Raju tells Velan about his mother : "She told me a story every evening while we waited for Father to close the shop and come home. The shop remained open till midnight." (P 20). Further he says, " Her presence gave me a feeling of inexplicable cosiness." (P 21). She has consciousness of her surrounding and thereby gives her son Raju statutory caution again and again. When Raju was in jail she proceeds to see him a glance. She has anger but like a goddess pardons her son's shortcoming.

She does not demand any gratitude from her son. She only gets bereavement for her son's entanglement with a snake girl. She has not any greed for wealth, property or money. She can adjust everything according to herself. Raju narrates his mother's behaviours in these words:

“After a few days she began to allude to the problems of husband and wife whenever she spoke to Rosie, and filled the time with anecdotes about husbands: good husbands, mad husbands, reasonable husbands, unreasonable ones, savage ones, slightly deranged ones, moody ones, and so on and so forth; but it was always the wife, by her doggedness, perseverance, and patience, that brought him round.” (P 160).

She does not instigate her son to any vile work as Lady Macbeth instigates her husband to kill Duncan. Most women are blamed for their venomous character but Raju's mother is free from such bad name.

### **Rosie or Nalini:**

Rosie is the principal female character in the novel of RK Narayan's *The Guide*. She appears as a wife of some scholar Marco. She comes to Raju's area with her husband. She falls in love with Raju for her showing her ambition dream. Where her husband seems to be egoist Raju is free and frank to her. She begins to share her emotion, passion, like, dislike everything to that guide by the name of Raju. She believes him fully and so she eloped with that unknown Raju. She wants to be a dancer by hook or by crook but only obstacle was her impractical husband Marco. So, she leaves him to possess the new world coloured with her dream. In course of time, she is successful to be a well-known dancer. She now can earn huge amount of money by her dance performances on the stages. But she is never an unfaithful to her mentor lover Raju. Raju forgers her signature yet she is not annoyed with him. When Raju convicted and imprisoned, she tried utmost to get him paroled. She dances like a snake but that snake like quality is never noticeable in her character. She gets her name changed from Rosie to Nalini that best suits for her dance program. She is a modern woman with modern relish. As she is beautiful as free is her mind and soul. She never proves immaturity. Name, fame, and recognition are her only food that nourishes her feminine character. She could break the law of orthodox society. She deserves her efficiency.

### **Velan's step-sister:**

Velan is a disciple of spiritual Raju. She has an adult step-sister. She has revolted not to marry a bride-groom selected by her relatives. She plays minor role in respect of Raju's mother and Nalini. She bears the courage to protest against the patriarchal society and chooses love marriage but can not carry on her insistence upto the last. She is really the inspiration for the weaker section downtrodden women of the society.

### **Conclusion :**

The female characters in the three novels of Ruskin Bond, RK Narayan and Khushwant Singh are treated with colonial, post colonial and modern aspects. If they are evaluated in the feminine theory of Wolfstonecraft it will be clear that only Susana shows the courage of going above male determined rules and regulations. Nalini alias Rosie even after being a wedded wife of Marco, she loves and eloped with Raju. This is not permitted by the orthodox society where

males' voice is considered as first and final. The males create anarchism and panic if a woman does according to her own will power. Intercaste marriage and love for the women are strictly forbidden. Yet Nooran, a Muslim girl loves a Sikh Juggat and got pregnant secretly. Malli and his band know that heinous relationship and laugh at them. Social, political and national instability forces many women irrespective of religion to be prostitutes. None of them is lesbian. Jugga's mother, Raju's mother, Susana's maidservant are females with conventional womanly characteristics.

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