

## **Redeeming Raju in *The Guide*: A Phenomenological Study**

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### **Abstract**

The paper intends to analyze the predicament of Raju, the protagonist of R. K. Narayan's *The Guide*, from the theoretical perspective of "existential phenomenology" of Martin Heidegger, supplemented by relevant ideas from Jean-Paul Sartre's early philosophy as well as Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological exploration of human perception. It considers Raju's painful alienation portrayed in the novel and interprets his deep-seated guilty conscience as the characteristic feature of what Heidegger calls an "authentic" existence. In order to make more sense of Raju's situation in which he undergoes extreme suffering, it focuses on his past life and how he gradually embraces an "authentic" existence. The study thus demonstrates that, in the "authentic" or final phase of his life, Raju is more concerned about his "being" or existence in the rural community of Mangal than the question of his life.

**Keywords:** *existential phenomenology, alienation, guilty conscience, authentic existence, being*

In his autobiography entitled *My Days*, R. K. Narayan tells us how, around 1956-57, he had been considering the theme of a new novel that would deal with the story of "someone suffering enforced sainthood" (220-221). Readers often see Narayan's own statement in relation to the situational obligation of Raju's sainthood portrayed in *The Guide*, the author's most critically acclaimed work published in the year of 1958. An interpretation of Narayan's novel is that because of Raju's

presumed sainthood, the villagers of Mangal approach him to organize a penance fast to atone for their collective sins, and he undertakes the ritual fast to end the drought by bringing down rain. According to Fakrul Alam, the villagers of Mangal embrace Raju as "a spiritual guide" who is "capable of leading the village out of a drought through a penitential fast" (151). In Krishna Sen's view, "Though reluctant to undertake the ritual at first, Raju's self-sacrifice was ultimately voluntary and not enforced. He made a free decision to conquer the weakness of his spirit" (25). Krishna Sen derives her powerful opinion from the text of Narayan's literary classic.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, critics often imply that Raju's undertaking of the ritual fast is a deliberate act motivated by his deep contemplation. Admittedly, Raju's self-sacrifice in the "penitential fast" has an implication that is not obvious to the villagers of Mangal. Reading the views of two leading critics of Narayan's classic novel, one would find a reason to see Raju's situation in a different light.

Taking a cue from Krishna Sen's critical opinion, one can argue that Raju's "voluntary self-sacrifice" originates in his deeper moral obligation to the villagers of Mangaland, thus, is not a "free decision." Being addressed as a "Swami," a respectful title for a Hindu male religious teacher or saint (Narayan, *The Guide* 91), and a "Mahatma," literally, a great soul, a person highly esteemed for his wisdom or saintliness (106), by the villagers of Mangal, Raju revels in their adulation and performs in the role of a wise, divine person. In so doing, he deceives the simple villagers, and he later implicitly intends to ease off his guilt feelings by undertaking the ritual fast. Arguably, what Fakrul Alam calls "a penitential fast" is also Raju's concomitant act of personal repentance for deceiving the simple-minded villagers of Mangal. By undertaking the penance fast, Raju assuages his guilt feelings to some extent. One can argue that Raju undertakes the ritual fast as an act of personal expiation or atonement to get over his troubled or guilty conscience. True,

Raju is guilty because of his wrongdoings to his blood relatives, friends, Marco, and even Rosie. But he is also confronted with guilt feelings because of his comportment to the people of Mangal. It seems that though "he was doing a thing in which he was not personally interested" (Narayan, *The Guide* 238), Raju is personally involved in the creation of the predicament from which he is ultimately unable to disentangle himself. Regarding this question, one can find some textual evidence to implicate Raju in the making of his perplexing situation. In order to understand Raju's complicated situation however, one needs to take into account Raju's past life and how it impinges on his present life. In this paper, I would adopt the phenomenological<sup>2</sup> ideas of Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty on human existence to interpret Raju's predicament in *The Guide*. In order to interpret Raju's consent to the collective wish of the populace of Mangal to undertake the penance ritual, I would focus on the transformation of his personality in the light of what Heidegger calls "authentic"<sup>3</sup> (individualized) human existence in *Being and Time*.

It is clear that Raju feels an urge to be associated with people immediately following his release from prison after two years. In order to overcome his loneliness, he strikes up a "rambling talk" with Velan (Narayan, *The Guide* 5-6). But Raju is mistaken for a holy person by Velan who prostrates before the former and engenders the feeling of "attaining the stature of a saint" (16) in him (Raju). However, Raju's ability to persuade Velan's sister to marry the person her brother chooses convinces the simple villagers of Mangal that he (Raju) is gifted with some supernatural powers. Though he thinks about "means of escape" (31) from the situation in which the simple village folks accord him the status of a Yogi (a person proficient in Yoga and reached an advanced spiritual stage) (32), he soon realizes his limitations. Along with his agony for social isolation, he is also in need of food and habitation. On his thinking, getting back to the "town of

his birth" (33) will bring extreme humiliation for him. It is not in his nature "to make a living out of hard work" (33). He also finds a new start in life almost impossible. Unable to settle anywhere, he is left with the only option of playing the role Velan attributes to him (16, 33). While the villagers of Mangal provide him food, the age-old temple appears as a dwelling place for him. In particular, one can take note of Raju's concern for regular supply of food by the villagers of Mangal. When Velan and others do not visit him one evening, Raju is extremely terrified (34) and offers a banana to persuade a boy to tell the villagers to visit him the next evening (35). Clearly, Raju is disturbed by the thought of his vulnerable condition. In order to estimate Raju's character correctly, one cannot ignore these facts.

Anticipating his socio-material insecurity, Raju intends to develop a relationship with the people of Mangal by assuming the role of a Swami to their children. With this end in view, he initially convinces the villagers of Mangal of the necessity of education for their children and establishes a school in the precincts of the riverside temple, which he has already made his abode. Though there is a school teacher, Raju himself assumes the key role in their education. Invited by "the school-master" (Narayan, *The Guide* 45), he appears as a teacher to the young boys of Mangal one day and starts his occasional orations on issues like life, eternity, godliness, cleanliness, Ramayana, and "the characters in the epics" (47). He is quite impressed, indeed "hypnotised," by his own performance (47). He even comes to feel like an actor on the stage (50). Raju is clearly an experienced person with some amount of reading books and newspapers in his platform shop and jail (49, 228-229). In order to get an idea of his education, one can take into account how Raju, as the "personal servant" of the jail superintendent, had the scope for reading newspapers and "glanced through the speeches of world statesmen, descriptions of the Five Year Plan, of ministers opening bridges or distributing prizes, nuclear

explosions, and world crises" (228-229). It is also significant that being informed (by the school-master) that "He [Raju] knows English," James J. Malone, an American producer of films and TV shows, converses with him (Raju) in English (242). Enriched by diverse experiences and informal education, Raju becomes successful in finding a place in people's hearts and attracting a large following. Raju's past interactions with different types of persons help him impress the simple village folks of Mangal remarkably. Within a short time, the simple villagers begin to attend his orations regularly. To meet their expectations, Raju begins to talk on issues far beyond his immediate knowledge. In order to impress the uneducated villagers more, he starts to chant holy verses, discourse on philosophy, and prescribe medicine to the people (54). He is eventually addressed as "Swami by his congregation" (91).

Along with his impressive lectures, Raju becomes mindful of developing the persona of a Sadhu (a holy man). In this regard, what is noticeable is his affective disposition to be a Sadhu. With this end in view, he soon realizes that if he grows "a beard and long hair to fall on his nape," his "spiritual status" would be enhanced (Narayan, *The Guide* 53). In *Being and Time*, Heidegger explains how a human being, as "being-possible,"<sup>4</sup> is always motivated by his/her thrown possibilities which may be understood as one's thrownness into possibilities (Blattner 51). As Heidegger implies, one cannot get outside of one's thrownness, of the way things bear imports for someone or matter to someone. One can consider the difficult situation in Raju's life after his release from prison and how it delimits his existential possibilities. At this stage, he has to consider the reception of his spiritual status to the villagers of Mangal. Along with his role as a Swami, Raju gradually assumes the identity of a Sadhu by making use of different practices and comports to the villagers as a Sadhu. He is eventually successful in being both a Swami and a Sadhu and continues to provide moral instructions

and sermons to the villagers of Mangal. One can argue that Raju is attuned<sup>5</sup> to be a Sadhu, and he presses himself ahead with his intention to be a Sadhu.

Though Raju inwardly knows that he is a role-playing Sadhu, he almost unhesitatingly acts as the spiritual mentor of the simple village folks. One can argue that he acts in the role of a Sadhu because it consolidates his position in the rural community of Mangal. Evidently, both as a Swami and a Sadhu, the two rolled into one, Raju achieves a strong social footing and exerts a powerful influence on the villagers of Mangal. Apparently, Raju's transformation is motivated by questions like food and habitation. But speaking phenomenologically, his transformation is equally determined by his loneliness. In this connection, one can remember his painful alienation and yearning for fellowship and community immediately after his release from jail (Narayan, *The Guide* 5-8). He establishes a relationship with the folks of Mangal both as a Swami and as a Sadhu to lead his life in a sociable way. Speaking from the phenomenological standpoint of Heidegger, human existence or *Dasein*<sup>6</sup> is a social existence, and society is intersubjectivity.<sup>7</sup> Given all this, one clearly realizes that what Raju craves for is his "being-in-the-world" within the rural community of Mangal.<sup>8</sup>

In order to understand Raju's loneliness and "nothingness,"<sup>9</sup> one needs to take into account past incidents of his life as the shaping influences on his personality. From his early life, Raju, "a wide-eyed child" (Alam 151), has been oriented to the outdoor life. By his admission, "the panorama of life enchanted him" (Narayan, *The Guide* 14). Because of running a shop at the railway station and working as a tourist guide, he has the scope to see and be familiar with a wide variety of people. As a tourist guide, his name gets widely circulated in Bombay, Madras, Lucknow, and other places of India (59), and he is famously nick named "Railway Raju" (55). Extremely sociable, Raju's relationship with Rosie is his life's significant

turning point when he downplays his relationships with ("being-with"<sup>10</sup>) his blood relatives (including his mother) and his friends like Gaffur. In the course of developing a relationship with Rosie, he leaves his old jobs, including the one of an occasional tourist guide at Malgudi. It is a period of his life when he is "obsessed with thoughts of Rosie" (115) and shows little concern<sup>11</sup> for his father's old house being sold to the Sait by a court decree. One can consider how Gaffur, "essentially a man of heart" (162), warns Raju at least three times (88, 131, 162) regarding his relationship with Rosie. He categorically tells Raju to send Rosie away and "get back to ordinary, real-life" (162). After enormous suffering, Raju regrets that he could have been saved had he followed Gaffur's "very reasonable advice" (131).

It is interesting to see how Raju becomes very close to Rosie, who is not happy with her domineering husband (Narayan, *The Guide* 113).<sup>12</sup> When he realizes Rosie's growing impatience with her husband, he consoles her and begins to discount her patronizing husband. An intending lover, Raju is quite careful about Rosie's intentions and demands. An archeological researcher, Rosie's husband, keeps his wife in a hotel room and does his research at a spot fifty-eight miles (120) away from the hotel. Raju takes full advantage of this opportunity to grow his intimacy with Rosie. Anticipating her implicit wish to be a dancer, he encourages Rosie to develop her career in this direction. In order to impress Rosie, he begins to pay extravagant attention to his attire and behavior. Though no one looks at Raju's intimacy with Rosie favorably, he flagrantly clings to her without worrying about social stigma. Consequently, Raju starts losing his relationships with his mother, his blood relatives, and his friends like Gaffur. But he is hardly troubled by his growing isolation and becomes more mindful of shaping his personality and behavior in terms of Rosie's expectations. Raju tries his utmost to seduce Rosie, with whom he is entangled in a "self-other"<sup>13</sup> relationship. It

eventually happens that without Rosie's complement, Raju is unable to go about his business in the world. In this way, Raju's "being-in-the-world" dwindled into a "being-with/for-Rosie."

Admittedly, Raju undergoes extreme social alienation because of his relationship with Rosie. But he is not much affected because he is entirely captivated by Rosie's physical charm. When Raju's mother leaves her Malgudi house to distance herself from her son's scandal, Raju and Rosie seem to stay as "a married couple . . . steeped in an all-absorbing romanticism" (Narayan, *The Guide* 175). Being socially ostracized, they devise their career path in terms of Rosie's dancing career ahead. In accordance with their career plan, Raju becomes an agent of Nalini, (Rosie's new name in keeping with her public persona of a classical dancer of Bharat Natyam<sup>14</sup>) and an impresario who will arrange her dance performances. At this stage, Raju has lost contact with all of his relatives and friends, and cares only for his relationship with Rosie with whom he envisions a new start in life (162). He is not grieved by his father's old house being sold to pay off his debts (185) and moves to a "two-storied," "stylish house" (186) to live with Rosie unhesitatingly. As Rosie's career guide, he is now associated with influential persons and has no reflective understanding of his self-serving, parasitic existence. One can see how Rosie's presence in the life of Raju brings about a change in his "life-world" (Lebenswelt).<sup>15</sup>

But when Raju is sentenced to jail for two years after the exposure of his crime of forgery, Rosie begins to avoid Raju. In jail, Raju is often reminiscent of Rosie. One can see how he, during imprisonment, looks at Nalini's (Rosie's) photograph and reads the news of her dance performances, published in the Hindu on Fridays and Saturdays (Narayan, *The Guide* 229). After his release from prison, he mentions to Velan that Rosie is the bringer of all of his troubles in life (9). It seems that in his mindscape, Rosie still exists as a pointer to what he had once

achieved and lost with her. Despite his enormous suffering, Raju is unable to forget his relationship ("being-with") with Rosie. In the same way, Raju also remembers his mother and regrets his isolation from her (212). Indeed, as a human being (*Dasein*), it is not possible for him to wipe out the memories of his relatives, friends, and others once associated with him. Raju's reminiscences of Rosie early in the novel (9) indicate both his vibrant social life that he once passed with her and his current state of alienation.

During Raju's imprisonment, Rosie's career as a dancer reaches its zenith. With her social skills and position, she can manage her affairs. Arguably, she needs no one like Raju, who is a parasite and "not doing right things" (Narayan, *The Guide* 216). In fact, Raju realizes Rosie's growing disillusionment about him before going to jail (220-222). In prison, he undergoes extreme alienation because all of his relatives and friends avoid visiting him (229). Only Mani visits Raju in prison "on a visitor's day" (229). In this connection, one can see how Raju develops interpersonal relationships with other prisoners and the warders in jail and impresses them by telling "stories and philosophies" (226) to get over his alienation. A "model prisoner" (226), he develops friendly relationships with all in Central Jail (226) and is often referred to as "Vadhyar? that is, Teacher" (226-227). One gets the impression that because of his extreme alienation in prison, Raju perceives human existence (*Dasein*) as social existence ("being-with-others") and overcomes his alienation by making friendly relationships with others.

After his release from jail, Raju begins to give forceful orations to the villagers of Mangal. He is eventually raised to the status of a Mahatma by the village community of Mangal (Narayan, *The Guide* 102-103) and expected to undertake a ritual fast to end the drought by bringing down the rain. To the villagers of Mangal, he appears "a pure soul" as well as "a great soul" (109). But Raju is faced with a moral dilemma because he

inwardly knows that he is not a saint. According to one person, who is unmistakably voicing the collective view of his fellow villagers, a Mahatma is a holy person and a savior? i.e., one who can drive out all bad things (102) from the village of Mangal. In this prevailing sense, Raju clearly knows that he is no Mahatma. But the villagers insist that he is a Mahatma. One of the villagers even compares him with Mahatma Gandhi (102).<sup>16</sup> So, Raju is left with no alternative but to fulfill the demand of the people. Admittedly, he becomes an unintended Mahatma who is compelled to act in conformity with the expectations of the simple village folks. He has to undertake a twelve-day ritual fast to end the drought. In so doing, he becomes extremely weak and collapses in the dwindling water of the river on the eleventh day of his fast.

It is to be mentioned that as a role-playing Sadhu, Raju has placed himself above the rural community, which consists of simple-minded people who often need directions and consolation from a real Mahatma to endure hardship. When Raju intervenes to settle a major dispute of the villagers during a severe drought, they are prompted to see him as their savior and urge him to undertake a ritual fast to cease the drought by bringing rain. Though Raju tries hard to evade the situation, he soon realizes that he himself is responsible for directing people's thoughts in this direction. For he once told them the story of a Mahatma who had undertaken a penance ritual to bring rain (Narayan, *The Guide* 109). The simple-minded village folks interpret Raju's account in relation to the present drought and ask him to undertake a penance ritual to save their lives. Raju realizes that "he had worked himself into a position from which he could not get out" (109). He inwardly regrets having given such an idea to the village folks (110). Undoubtedly caught in a predicament, he knows very well that he is a play-acting Sadhu who has no divine power to save the villagers.

In order to get himself out of the false situation, Raju unfolds the story of his life with a particular emphasis on his affairs with Rosie to Velan, the single man who is "responsible for his present plight" (Narayan, *The Guide* 236), with the expectation that the narrative will convince him (Velan) of his sinfulness and bring in his (Velan's) view the status of an ordinary man who has no power to save the villagers. Arguably, Raju is under no illusion about his spiritual status to Velan and does not hesitate to relate the events of his past life so that he (Velan) would not insist on the penance. For Raju, it is the only way "to escape the ordeal" (112). Paradoxically, the simple-minded Velan deems Raju's tale confirming yet another example of India's glorious band of saints who were formerly damned sinners. Raju is unable to overcome his predicament. Moreover, he cannot escape the ritual fast, which would end the drought according to the collective wishes of the villagers.

As Raju tells Velan that "I am prepared to fast for the sake of your people and do anything if I can help this country. . ." (Narayan, *The Guide* 112), one could wrongly think that Raju is compelled to act as a Sadhu praying for rain. Concerning this, one can consider his conversation with James J. Malone, an American producer of films and TV shows. In response to one of Malone's queries, Raju tells him about his obligation to undertake the ritual fast in which his "likes and dislikes" (243) are largely immaterial. Raju, however, does not explain to Mr. Malone how his comportment to the villagers of Mangal has prompted the rise of popular expectations of him. Claiming himself to be a Yogi all through his life (242), he contends that his ritual fast would ultimately bring down rain and that fasting is a way to ensure peace in the world (243). But Raju's statements are intentionally stated in conformity with his role as a Mahatma. He obviously knows that his fasting would not bring down rain and that there is little possibility to maintain peace through fasting.

But Raju's verbal exchange with Malone unmistakably brings into view the problematic nature of his "existence" in the rural community of Mangal. In no way is Raju ready to undermine his status as a Sadhu and a Mahatma. Admittedly, Raju cannot publicly utter anything threatening to his position. With some fear and inner torment (Narayan, *The Guide* 109-110), Raju reluctantly undertakes the twelve-day ritual fast. Though Raju was at first unable to understand the consequences of his fasting, he should have considered the doctors' cautionary warnings on the eleventh day and taken some meal. In that case, his twelve-day fasting would remain incomplete, and his spiritual status as a Sadhu and a Mahatma would be impaired. After his failure to carry out the penance ritual, he would be unable to command people's veneration consequent upon the recognition of his spiritual status. With this anticipation, he clings to fasting in order to cater to the illusion of the people about him.

Despite his thinking to get away from the people of Mangal (Narayan, *The Guide* 111), why Raju does not leave the place in order to save himself is a question that immediately strikes every mind. One ready answer to this question is that he is emotionally moved by the earnestness of the villagers, "by the recollection of the big crowd of women and children touching his feet" (109-111). However, this view gives an incomplete picture of the mental condition<sup>17</sup> of Raju who is already suffering from a guilty or troubled conscience because of his deceptive role and story of a Mahatma who would end the drought by bringing down the rain. Realizing the villagers' acceptance of the story and his presumed role in undertaking the ritual fast, Raju becomes quite serious (111). At first, he thinks that he would fast "for a few days," and the rains would "descend in their natural course sooner or later" (111). However, his resolution "to go through with the ordeal" (238) results in a terrible disaster when he falls in the dwindling water of the river

on the eleventh day of his fast. Propelled by a guilt feeling,<sup>18</sup> he undertakes the twelve-day penance fast and incurs a threat on his life. In this relation, one can remember Heidegger's view of guilt succinctly expressed by Michael Inwood: "Every *Dasein* is Guilty, but only authentic *Dasein* realizes its Guilt and acts in full awareness of it" (80). Admittedly, Raju is "authentic" in the realization of his guilt, and this guilt feeling conditions his comportment to the villagers of Mangal.

It appears that through his tragic suffering, Raju is simultaneously able to redeem his guilt feelings and save his social identity as a Mahatma, an identity which the people of Mangal ascribe to him and which he accepts in an unwilling and hesitant way (Narayan, *The Guide* 106). Though Raju privately tells Velan that he is "no saint" who can conduct the penance fast (112), he ultimately undertakes the ordeal in order to maintain his appearances of a Sadhu and a Mahatma to the village folks of Mangal. A role-playing Sadhu and a fake Mahatma, Raju, is, however, extremely conscious of his spiritual status to them. Being conscious of one's mode of being or existence may be considered the trait of an "authentic" individual. As Alexander Dugin writes, the "most important aspect of authentic (*eigene*) *Dasein* is the fact that it is "focused on the possibility to be, on the kind of Sein (Being) that is (ist) this-one-here (da)." (363). An "authentic" human being who is extremely conscious of his identity, Raju is almost inclined to sacrifice his life but not his "being" or existence in the rural community of Mangal. It can be argued that Raju's life at this stage conforms to what Heidegger calls the "authentic" (individualized) mode of existence.<sup>19</sup> In terms of the phenomenology of his guilty conscience indicative of an "authentic being-in-the-world," one will clearly understand why Raju is finally unable to evade the ritual fast and how his ultimate decision to undertake the penance fast helps him maintain his social existence as a Mahatma.

My discussion shows that Raju, being extremely

concerned about his "being" or existence to the people of Mangal, is ultimately unable to do what an ordinary individual can do. An ordinary person has the privilege to disclose everything to the people (i.e., the villagers of Mangal) or flee from them. But Raju consciously avoids these options in order to exist as a Sadhu as well as a Mahatma in the imagination of the village folks of Mangal. Understandably, Raju is extremely caring about his identity to the villagers of Mangal. However, his undertaking of the ritual fast is an act of personal choice. By effectuating an act of subjective choice full of Angst (anguish or anxiety) and tremendous responsibility, he transcends his mediocre stature and accepts extreme suffering with fortitude. In this way, he lives up to the highest level of human existence, in effect, a *Dasein* per excellence. Raju's "existential" suffering is an indication that the dignity and significance of one's life is often predicated on one's emotional choice which could be irrational but worthwhile.

#### Notes:

1. Krishna Sen gives this opinion with references to p. 111 and p. 237 of *The Guide* published in 1999 by *Indian Thought Publications*. In the text of the novel, published in 2009 by Indian Thought Publications, I see that Raju reaches a firm decision to undertake the ritual fast in p. 112 and p. 238 respectively.
2. Sartre's idea of an "initial choice" (one's general project or program) is often deployed to explain a person's behavior and actions with complete freedom and responsibility. However, Sartre's view of a person's total freedom and responsibility is criticized by Merleau-Ponty who, being influenced by Heidegger's insistence on the "'thrown' character of existence" and Jasper's insistence on the "'boundary' imposed by our historical definiteness" (Cooper 160), focuses on one's understanding of a world already interpreted by others. Arguably,

a person is not completely free in making an "initial choice." And a person's seeming freedom and responsibility is already conditioned by his/her thrownness of existence. Given this view, one can argue that Raju's undertaking of the penance fast is not his free decision; it is already a part of his "initial choice" to perform as a spiritual mentor or guide to the villagers of Mangal. However, it is equally true that Raju's "initial choice" is determined by his existential condition which Heidegger calls a "thrown possibility" (qtd. in Blattner 52)? after his release from prison. Heidegger's thinking has a considerable bearing on Michel Foucault's thinking on human freedom. For Foucault, a society's power relationships have productive or transformative potentials to shape an individual. One can argue that a person's affective disposition to be something is brought about by a society's power grid which is creative and requires free individuals for its operation. For Foucault's view on human freedom, see Ransom 124-129.

3. Edmund Husserl, "the originator of phenomenology as a philosophical approach to knowledge" (Cohn 10), had drawn upon Franz Brentano's key idea of "intentionality" to demonstrate that human consciousness is intentional. According to both Husserl and Heidegger, phenomena mean intentional objects. Whereas Husserl promotes his view of the phenomenological "reduction" (epoche) to describe our intentional experiences (of entities) "as uncontaminated by foreknowledge, bias and explanation" (Cohn 11) to apprehend the "essence" of experience itself, Heidegger entirely rejects his mentor's methodology and brings into view his novel approach of "existential phenomenology." For Heidegger, the essence of being human is existence (11). Sartre clearly endorses Heidegger's approach when he states that "existence precedes essence" in human beings (11). Influenced by both Heidegger and Sartre, Merleau-Ponty's view of perception as an ongoing dialogue between the perceiver's lived body and the perceived

world is also grounded in human existence. The much-discussed existential philosophy has grown out of the philosophical insights of "existential phenomenology" (Cooper 39). For a clear, helpful analysis, see Cooper 39-56.

4. David E. Cooper's interpretation of what Heidegger calls "authentic" human existence as an "individualized" existence is clearly understood in relation to his (Cooper's) explanation of "inauthenticity" as equivalent to "self-estrangement" (101). Heidegger views "authenticity" as one's "ownmost potentiality-for-Being" (222). In his view, one's "authenticity" remains hidden from him/her when one "is completely fascinated by the 'world' and by the Dasein-with of Others in the 'they'" (220). Heidegger's language clearly implies Dasein's (human being's) alienation or self-estrangement from itself. For Sartre, a person is in "bad faith" when he/she denies his/her essential freedom and looks forward to the dictates of the social collective. The communal character of human existence (Being-with and-for others) generally emphasizes the playing of social roles, which, from the viewpoint of the existential phenomenologists, is living inauthentically (Heidegger) and in "bad faith" or self-deception (Sartre). Authenticity, Heidegger claims, demands "a confrontation with our finitude, an 'authentic being-towards-death,'" "heeding the call of conscience," "exhibiting 'care' towards the manifestation of Being," and "a new 'resoluteness,' which signifies 'letting oneself be summoned out of one's lostness in the 'they'" (Lilla 27). For a clear analysis, see Cooper 109-121.

5. According to Heidegger, a human being or "*Dasein* is in every case what it can be, and in the way in which it is its possibility" (183). However, Heidegger makes it explicit that "Possibility, as an *existentiale* [an ontological aspect of human being or *Dasein*] does not signify a free-floating potentiality-for-being in the sense of the 'liberty of indifference' (*libertas indifferentiae*). In every

case *Dasein*, as essentially having a state-of-mind, has already got itself into definite possibilities. . . . But this means that *Dasein* is Being-possible which has been delivered over to itself ? thrown possibility through and through" (183).

6. Heidegger's term *Befindlichkeit* is properly translated as "attunement." Put briefly, *Dasein*'s attunement is "the affective aspect of the experience of Being-in-the-world" (Cohn 14). For a helpful analysis, see Blattner 46-54 and Gerner 76-82.

7. David E. Cooper thinks that for the existential phenomenologists like Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty, "the most serious question with which philosophy has to deal is that of alienation in its various forms ? alienation from the world, from one's fellows, from oneself" (8). Indeed, many important philosophers have considerably focused on the question in their writings. For Hegel, it is the only issue of philosophy because "alienation is the fundamental feature of consciousness throughout its history" (Cooper 26). In Marx's writings, alienation implies the "estrangement of humans from their productive nature with the consequence that social relations of production and the products of our labour seem alien" (Perry 160). For Marx, alienation has an economic origin, and it is the cause of class divisions in society. So the abolition of classes can ensure the overcoming of alienation (Cooper 30). The existential phenomenologists start with an inseparable relationship between a human being and the world. Heidegger characterizes human existence as "being-in-the-world" in *Being and Time*. However, as "being-in-the-world," a human being is a being-with and -for others and, thus, alienated from its "authentic" (ownmost) being. Understandably, a person's alienation from the world and others is an "inauthentic" existence at the extreme level. The phenomenological view of alienation is a sort of spiritual condition, which is closer to Hegel's view of alienation and does not stem from economic conditions and exploitation in society (30). Sartre is categorically right in his claim that "alienation [in

the phenomenological sense] precedes oppression" (qtd. in Cooper 30).

8. Heidegger prefers the term "*Dasein*" to mean "human being" with respect to its openness to being (*Sein*). Following the Anglophone authors, I have not italicized it. For a brief analysis, see Cooper 67.

9. What Heidegger/Sartre calls a person's "being-with-others"/"being-for-others" or relational context is often called intersubjectivity (Cohn 25). In *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty writes: "True reflection presents me to myself not as an idle and inaccessible subjectivity, but as identical with my presence in the world and to others, as I am now realizing it: I am all that I see, I am an intersubjective field" (qtd. in Cohn 5). In *Phenomenology and the Social World: The Philosophy of Merleau-Ponty and its Relation to the Social Sciences*, Laurie Spurling writes that "Phenomenologically, society is intersubjectivity" (86).

10. The village of Mangal is a fictional locale conceived by the novelist. But there is evidence that people also call it "Mangala" (Narayan, *Guide* 102).

11. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger discusses *Dasein*'s views of "world," "meaning or significance," "Angst" (anxiety or anguish), and "nothingness" coherently. It is a critical assumption that Sartre's view of "nothingness" is derived from Heidegger, especially from the latter's inaugural lecture at Freiburg in the year 1929, titled "What is Metaphysics?" In *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology*, Sartre makes the concept of "nothingness" the cornerstone of his philosophy. According to Sartre, "nothingness" or negativity does not solely belong to propositions and judgments but to the fabric of reality (Cooper 62). As Sartre writes, "There are an infinite number of realities . . . which are experienced . . . and which in their inner structure are inhabited by negation" (21). In Sartre's memorable language, "Nothingness lies coiled in the heart of

being ? like a worm" (21). Sartre thus implies that countless things and properties have negativity or "nothingness" "as a condition of their intelligibility and application" (Cooper 63). To speak from the phenomenological standpoint of Heidegger, one's "being-in-the-world" (Dasein) signifies his/her "being-in-the-world-with-others" (Cohn 13). Influenced by Hegel's emphasis on the importance of recognition in human life (Fay 41-43), Jean-Paul Sartre complements Heidegger's view ("being-with-others") with the idea that one's existence is a "being-for-others," (Cooper 105). In Sartre's view, an alienated person is engulfed by a feeling of "nothingness," because his/her "being" or existence is not recognized by the "other."

12. Heidegger's term "Mitsein" is translated as "being-with." In order to understand the significance of Dasein's "being-with" other Daseins, see Heidegger 153-168.

13. One can see how Raju gradually wins Rosie's heart by mixing with her in a friendly manner (Narayan, *Guide* 87-89, 113), which is to be understood from the perspective of "existential phenomenology."

14. Sartre's view of human existence as "being-for-others" is predicated on a view of "self" which depends on the recognition of the "other."

15. Bharat Natyam, according to Krisna Sen, is "the centuries-old temple dance of southern India dedicated to Shiva-Nataraja" (52).

16. "Life-world" (Lebenswelt) is a term emphatically used by Edmund Husserl in the later part of his life. According to some critics, in emphasizing the term, Husserl probably had Heidegger's "existential phenomenology" in mind.

17. The real official name of Mahatma Gandhi is Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, India's greatest anti-colonial, nationalist politician. He was given the honorific "Mahatma" (Sanskrit: "great-soul," "venerable") in the year of 1914 in South Africa. The influence of Gandhi's political activism is recognized in the

entire world and still felt in an undiminishing way. In no way, Raju bears comparison with such a world personality. But, on the imagination of the uneducated villagers of Mangal, Raju bears some likeness with Mahatma Gandhi, and he is expected to drive out all bad things from their locality. As one of the villagers says, "He [Raju] is like Mahatma. When Mahatma Gandhi went without food, how many things happened in India! This is a man like that. If he fasts there will be rain" (Narayan, *Guide* 102).

18. Raju's tragic alienation immediately after his release from prison and gradual transformation into a Mahatma is mostly related from the perspective of a third-person omniscient narrator who often dips into the mind and thoughts of Raju to make more sense of his involvement in the creation of his predicament.

19. Heidegger thinks that in virtue of making a choice and bearing its responsibility, every Dasein has a conscience which is a "primordial phenomenon" (qtd. in Cohn 72) and which calls it continuously. However, an "authentic" Dasein, not lost in the comforting embrace of the "they" (the social collective), hears the call of conscience which makes it feel guilty (Inwood 79-80). A contemporary Heidegger scholar, Alexander Dugin, notes that in the "authentic" mode of existence, Dasein is characterized by a "concentration on Being" (364). As Dugin writes, "Dasein's authenticity is its turn towards Sein, its desire and will to be, and determination to discover oneself as Being (366). In this case, Dasein's "being-with" and "being-in-the-world" becomes "being-with-being" and "being-in-being" respectively (366). In Heidegger's view, it is one's extreme condition when one is transformed into a "being-towards-death." For an illuminating discussion, see Dugin 363-371.

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