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### Transforming the Self in South Asia: A Study of Religion in BP Koirala's *Sumnima* and RK Narayan's *The Guide*

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#### Abstract

This paper analyzes the self-transformation process in *Sumnima* by BP Koirala and *The Guide* by RK Narayan, which have been discussed in terms of religion. Both the writers belong to the South Asian Hindu community and focus on the religious change that has played an important role in the life of their characters. In Koirala's *Sumnima*, Somdatta, the central character, realizes the state of equality transforming himself from his identity of Brahmin and bestows love to Sumnima, a girl from the Kirat community. Transforming himself from his orthodox Hindu culture, he performs the role of Bhilla for reviving pleasures. In Narayan's *The Guide*, the protagonist Raju ultimately turns as a saint (sadhu) from his role of a railway guide, a businessman, a good lover, a corrupt guy and a prisoner. In both novels, religion has played a key role to transcend the role of the characters and finally transform inwardly. The concept of self and the process of religious transformation have been used as theoretical tools to explore these novels. The findings provide evidence that religion in a true sense enables the human beings to transcend many kinds of human bondages and self-transformation. In both novels, the protagonists detach themselves from the material world and change inwardly realizing the self. They ultimately transcend material comfort for the liberation of their beliefs, undergoing different stages of their lives. In *Sumnima*, Somdatta gives up his religious ideas for the transformation of his self, but in *The Guide*, Raju transforms himself following ritual practices and becomes a saint.

**Keywords:** Culture, identity, religion, realization, self, transformation

#### Introduction

*Sumnima* and *The Guide* are both written by the South Asian writers BP Koirala and RK Narayan respectively, focusing on the issues of culture, religion, self-realization and self-transformation. Both novels deal with the theme of the state of the inner change of the central characters due to religious factors. In *Sumnima*, the central character Somdatta transcends his identity of a Brahmin and changes himself as a Bhilla by the help of Sumnima, a Kirat girl. Similarly, in *The Guide*, the protagonist

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Raju finally transforms himself into a saint undergoing different stages in life. Somdatta is the son of a Brahmin who performs different ritual practices for attainment. Being guided by religious rigidity, he realizes that physicality and desires, the bodily pleasures, emotions and dreams are follies. A reflection of Somdatta as a Bhilla from a Brahmin son shows the transformation of his inward feeling. He undergoes the process of self-realization avoiding his previous status. Sumnima whom he would call an uncivilized girl follows a primitive culture as she emphasizes passion and worldliness. In this connection, Dipendra Parajuli argues, “The novel is about dominating attitude that Somdatta shows upon the culture of Sumnima, but ultimately his attitude gets defeated and Sumnima’s voice based on humanitarian ground wins” (37). By avoiding a narrow attitude, Somdatta moves to make reconciliation of two cultures and finally his son and the daughter of Sumnima get married. Ultimately, he realizes that the superiority he has made by the help of his religion is no more important in this world.

Raju, in *The Guide*, happens to adopt different roles and finally transforms himself as a saint. From the beginning, he is guided by self-gratification and towards the end he is prepared to spiritual conversation. While performing different roles, he is an immoral man and completely guided by worldly pleasures. He seeks material satisfaction and pursues Rosie, a married woman for it. As a complex figure, he does not stick to a fixed personality but he adopts a variety of characters according to changing circumstances. He has to follow different roles due to his habit of not disappointing others. In this regard, Cynthia Vanden Driesen mentions, “His final metamorphosis into the Swami is then supremely understandable as the outcome of this innate compulsion to fulfill the role expected of him” (167). Throughout his life, he plays different roles to please others and exploits different circumstances for his own profit and in his final act transcends the self. For his transformation into a swami, religion has played a significant role, but all the roles he has performed earlier become meaningless for the final attainment. Due to his religious practices, he is able to transform the people in Mangala along with him.

Koirala and Narayan project the theme of religion in which central characters transform themselves undergoing different stages of changes in their lives. They are guided by orthodox Hindu rituals and are confined in traditions. Due to their changing situations, they transcend the bondages of their religion and realize their self. *Sumnima* raises the issue of religious differences between Aryan and Kirat and achieves cultural harmony in which Somdatta transcends his religion and revives passion, worldly desires and erotic desires from a Kirati girl Sumnima who is of different caste. By having a sexual relation with the Kirati girl, he transforms himself and has sexual relation with his wife, Puloma thinking her as Sumnima. *The Guide* explores the transformation of Raju as a saint from different stages he encounters in his life. Finally, he undertakes a fast for eleven days to please the rain God to save the people of Mangala. He accepts it without any knowledge of sainthood and practices as a holy person and transforms himself through self-sacrifice. The central characters in both novels transform their role realizing the reality.

### **Review of Literature**

Many critics have mixed views about Koirala’s novel *Sumnima* and Narayan’s *The Guide*. Both novels criticize the Hindu orthodox ideas and focus on the liberation of the self. *Sumnima* by the Nepali writer and *The Guide* by the Indian writer are written that raise the issues of Hindu culture. Makarand Paranjape opines, “*The Guide*, undoubtedly Narayan’s best-known novel, as a narrative of modern

India. More specifically, it is about the nature of an ancient Indian institution, that of the guru, which indeed has no exact English counterpart” (174). Paranjape emphasizes that the novel is about the transitional situation of India after the end of British Imperialism. He points out the traditional role of religion and still overlooks the issue of self-transformation and self-realization concerning religion. Bhanu Kandel argues, “BP Koirala has minutely discussed socio-cultural diversity and tension created by ethnic differences in Nepali society and suggested the people how they can change it into a harmonious relationship in the novel *Sumnima*” (107). He discusses the issue of cultural diversity and integration, but he misses the issues of how religion helps a person in the process of transformation. So it becomes justifiable to explore the issues, which Koirala and Narayan have dealt with in their novels such as the process of religious conversion.

The social issues are the dominant themes in the novels of South Asia. Emphasizing the role of Indian practices, G.M.A. Christy notes, “*The Guide* reveals the Indian way of life and also the culture and tradition of India. R.K. Narayan has used typical Indian characters and Indian atmosphere to portray Indian culture ... R.K. Narayan has given a true social picture of India through ‘*The Guide*’. The traits of Indian manners and customs are also reflected in this novel” (1171). Christy has discussed the Indian culture, but he misses the theme of realization of the self. On the other hand, Indira Acharya Mishra has raised the issue of male domination in *Sumnima* as he explores patriarchy in which the protagonist Somdatta behaves rudely with women and take them as nature such as the earth to sow the seeds (129). She has not raised the theme of transcending human bondages for the liberation. As the above-mentioned reviews show that many critics have discussed both novels from different standpoints, but none of them have the issue of transforming the self. So this paper has attempted to fulfill the research gap by studying both novels from the perspective of religion.

### Methodology

This article adopts interpretative and explanatory method to analyze the novels by Koirala and Narayan. *Sumnima* and *The Guide* respectively have been taken as primary sources and reviews on these novels and their authors are taken as secondary sources. The secondary sources include different books, scholarly journals and book reviews by different critics on religion, self-transformation and self-realization and the techniques applied for transforming the self. Using both kinds of sources, the issues raised in this study have been compared, explored, interpreted and expounded to analyze the novels from the religious perspective. Religion and its weakness in terms of creating obstacles for the liberation of human beings have been also considered a major discussion in this article. Thus, religion has become a key methodological approach for thematic analysis of the novels, exploring how the characters in these novels transform themselves.

### The Concept of Self and Religious Transformation

The reflection of consciousness of one’s own being is the self of any person. It is also related to self-image or cognitive aspect which comprises beliefs, traditions, totality, opinions, cultural aspects and attitudes based on personal existence. It also includes emotional aspect of how we feel or value self-concept as self-esteem. Mainly, the self-concept is constructed by reflecting on what is already done and comparing with others. In this regard, Robert E. Franken opines, “Self-change is not something that people can will but rather it depends on the process of self-reflection.

Through self-reflection, people often come to view themselves in a new, more powerful way, and it is through this new, more powerful way of viewing the self that people can develop possible selves" (443). As being a cultural phenomenon, it can be changed and modified in a designed direction for transformation. There are different components of self-concept such as physical or spiritual or social or academic or transpersonal. People who focus on religion make a spiritual or transpersonal concept and then they direct their attention to that field. Transformation of a person is to practise spirituality so that they can divert themselves to the state of self-realization.

In the process of self-transformation, many factors play roles and change people in their direction. When people concentrate on physical aspect they may realize after getting wealth, matter and property because it is concrete. When people concentrate on religious aspect, they may feel transformed after realization of the self being transformed inwardly. Religion enables them to judge their actions. Then, ultimately people change their direction on this area and feel themselves being influenced by religious views. Some people transform themselves as saint from ordinary person while others realize and give up their old habits, cultural practices and traditions. Religion opens the gateway for transformation, which is the process of the self-transformation. Due to proper practices of religion, many people have abandoned religious dogmas and begin to adopt new methods. Regarding the nature of many religions, Gavin Flood argues, "Hinduism is often characterized as belief in reincarnation (*samsara*) determined by the law that all actions have effects (*karma*), and that salvation is freedom from cycle. Yet other religions in south Asia, such as Buddhism and Jainism, also believe in this" (6). In fact, the ultimate goal of any religion is to liberate human beings making them free from phenomenal bondages. By following the procedures of religious practices, human beings have realized godhood. The way to be near to God is to follow religion and then change is possible in life.

Transformation can be categorized in two ways as physical and spiritual. In the process of physical transformation, people are satisfied after having material prosperity. Religion motivates human beings to be spiritual, and then they can transform themselves. Spiritual transformation is related to the state of mind. When people realize themselves transformed by observing ritual practices they feel transformed. Self-transformation is concerned with reshaping people's worldviews by shifting into a new personality completely leaving their old identity. In the process of self-transformation, people refine themselves through hard work, discipline, sacrifice, concentration and dedication to achieve the results with new beliefs and values. Religion in such a state helps a person to choose a right way to follow to be liberated. It helps by pointing out the weaknesses of the person so that one can direct his/her goal to make the dream come true. Thus, it is a catalyst that transforms a person, but it remains the same. Ultimately, transformation awakens a person by purifying thoughts and actions, changing in personality, making a person aware by developing and strengthening of his/her inner self. By this power, the person can change himself/herself, enriching life by fulfilling the goals of life, his/her family, society and the world as a whole. It is related to society, interpersonal, global peace and the adaptation of spirituality.

### **Religion in South Asia**

South Asia is known as the place of Lord Shiva, Krishna, Buddha and Mahavir where many ideas concerning religious practices have influenced people. There are many religious debates concerning the liberation of human self. For instance, the writers like Koirala and Narayan have been influenced by such practices.

In the past, self-transformation is concerned with the determination of a person that a person should have the ability of change getting rid of his/her doubts. In doing so, such person can bring change in his/her actions, thoughts and behaviours. Sometimes change happens so easily but sometimes it takes a difficult process. The concept of transformation comes into existence when human beings are not satisfied with who they are and what they have individually or collectively. When people suffer from frustration, inner conflict, fantasy, fears and hope, they seek transformation of the self. The emphasis can be understood and explored in cultural and religious systems. In this regard, David Dean Shulman and Guy S. Stroumsa opine, “its structured tendencies to shift, to unravel, to disappear, to cumulate new levels or parts, to disencumber itself or parts, to refashion, deepen, or diminish its own self-awareness in changing contexts, and so on, all of these processes occurring either voluntarily or not, but very often through heavily determined and ritualized acts” (4). Each culture addresses the lack existing in it and prepares human beings to overcome the gap and all religious cultures demand human beings to follow the line of self-transformation.

Transformation is a regular practice which is determined by culture not at random, but in a structured or systematic way. When it is finally achieved, it becomes either irreversible or sometimes it makes fusion into god or sometimes enlightenment can be achieved by it. Sometimes prayer helps to transform the self. As a whole, the process of transformation is concerned with religious cultures. On the basis of cultural problems, the practices of self-transformation are determined. Shulman and Stroumsa emphasize, “The kind of transformation(s) a culture puts forward as a goal or possibility for human life always expresses the primary axioms, conflicts, and intuitions that make up its particular world” (4). The outcome depends on the focus of the culture. Philosophical and religious counseling refer to self-transformation because human beings are trapped in superficial attitudes towards themselves and their world. Their understanding is based on limited knowledge, narrow concept and unproven facts in which such counseling helps them transcend the restricted worldview. While analyzing the self-transformation process as spiritual quest, it is the state of achieving reality being near to God. In this regard, Prophet and Prophet opine that by following the law of *karma* (“act”), one can feel the currents of God which brings him/her into the realms of higher consciousness and the spiritual quest becomes the path of self-transformation (xvi). They consider the right action for the liberation of the self and by its help one can make his/her goal the ultimate truth.

Religion, on the other hand, is a philosophy about the human condition. It gives a message about the origin of human, humanity, human activities and orientation of human desires and so on. In the name of religion, human beings all over the world worship tribal gods wholeheartedly. Whatever different religions they follow, fundamentally they seem to be adopting the similar attitudes regarding the prayer of gods. Every society has some set of beliefs regarding the judgment of right and wrong, rituals, ceremonies, norms, values and beliefs, which comprise people’s ideology or religion. There are differences in religious practices of people living in different parts. People can examine how religion has brought transformation in their lives. Religion, in other sense, is a set of propositions, which is mainly concerned with spiritualism but the majority of the people consider it as leaning to tradition. Henriksen explains, “Religion cannot be comprehended or explained by those who do not believe because religion has to do with a spiritual realm that is only accessible to believers” (4). It is more to a state of realization in the inner world than in the outer world. There is no consensus about what constitutes a religion, but it is concerned with supernatural, spiritual and transcendental elements. Religion in fact works as a

catalyst because it changes human beings and their transformation by bringing the state of the realization of the self.

In South Asia, mainly Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam are dominant religions among many religions practised in the world. Hinduism has many paths for the salvation as it has many representations of gods and scriptures people worship. The uniqueness of it is to believe in rebirth before attaining enlightenment. Muslims believe that people have only one life and chance to achieve salvation. Buddhism emphasizes on physical and spiritual purification for the salvation, which is inherent in all human beings. The essence of all religions is transcendence or selflessness or the feeling of universal unity or decreased sense of self. Mainly, religion unites the world by connecting people together all over the world. Similarly, truthfulness is other essence without which there can be no chance of having confidence in one another. In this way, religions are concerned with the liberation of the soul of a person and value spirituality, ethical codes, self and universalism.

### **Self-Transformation in *Sumnima***

In the novel, Somdatta begins spiritual practices as desired by his father, Suryadatta. He goes to pilgrimage to perform ritual activities and embraces the ascetic way of life. He has abandoned all worldly desires due to his devotion to asceticism. He is away from passions, desires and emotions. He suppresses his passions by penance and yoga and thinks that sensual pleasure is a sin. He brings his bodily desires under control by the help of his penance which views physicality as a poison. Due to his religious mindset, he takes marriage as a duty to continue the lineage not as a matter of fulfilling physical pleasure. He believes, "Without children all the religious piety earned in this mortal world will be useless" (55). He does not think about the emotions and feelings of his wife but he concentrates on the religious idea of ancestors. Being completely detached from physical pleasure, he finds marriage meaningless in the beginning. Being pressed by his parents, he decides to get married. He takes marriage as an act of religious rite. After marriage, he performs ritual practices of getting a son abandoning passion and lust. Then they perform the ritual of sexual intercourse, which results in failure of bearing a son. Ultimately, he realizes that his religious idea is the barrier in this regard. He decides to take help from Sumnima's father.

From the beginning, Somdatta and Sumnima are in relation irrespective of their different cultural backgrounds. In the name of attaining salvation, Somdatta gives up physicality and tries to get victory over flesh abandoning worldly comforts. He does not have knowledge about practical affairs, which are very important for existence. Due to such ideas, he suppresses his passion. He marries a Brahmin girl named Puloma to continue his clan, but he fails to prove his virility by making his wife satisfied. Being worried, Somdatta remembers Sumnima's father who could help him for having a son as being a religious teacher and a Kirati priest, Bijuwa. He thinks as, "who had pleased the Kirat deities. Like a man surrounded from all sides by water of hopefulness gets the help of a straw" (53). Realizing his condition of helplessness, he decides to get help from the Kirati people whom he would call as uncivilized people. He cannot decide himself and surrenders his self with Sumnima. Finally, she helps him in the process of reviving sexual desire in him.

Koirala discards the binary oppositions existing in the society in any form. From the democratic point of view, all people are equal and people who realize such worldview are able to transform themselves as Somdatta does in *Sumnima*. He gives up his orthodox Hindu faith for his transformation and unites with the culture of

Sumnima. They are friends from their childhood and are away from each other due to his dogmatic religious practices. They like each other, but the orthodox Hindu culture becomes a barrier. He hates his own biological needs for the sake of his tradition. This also creates a problem in his family affairs. Finally, he believes, “that his whole life was a failure, he realized that all his life that he ran after an illusion. All the counting of beads with sacred words, recitations, worships, penance and his efforts for salvation went in vain” (107). Ultimately, he realizes that the foolish ideas are imbedded in the religion, knowing the secret of life and accepts the role of Bhilla, which is the transformation of his self.

### Self-Transformation in *The Guide*

*The Guide* tells the story of Raju who first works as a guide in Malgudi. He becomes a lover of Rosie who is left by her husband Marco. Being involved in forgery, he Raju is sent to prison for two years. After his release from the jail, he is made to act as a holy man in Mangala. There he meets Velan and tells him every detail to escape from the fake role of *swami* (“saint”). He has to perform the role reluctantly as it is described in the novel: “Raju had mentioned without a single omission every detail from his birth to his emergence from the gates of the prison. He imagined that Velan would rise with disgust and swear” (185). But Velan does not care what Raju has told and addresses him Swami, as he says, “I don’t know why you tell me all this, *swami*. It’s very kind of you to address at such length your humble servant” (185). At that time, Mangala suffers from a drought. He undertakes a ritual fast for twelve days to please the rain god. The news of the penance of Raju has been circulated in all towns of the country as it is narrated in this way: “Holy man’s penance to end drought” (186). In this way, Raju has been publicized as a swami or holy man or a saint. Many people and media begin to take interest in the activities of Raju. On the fifth day of his fasting, his activities are reported as, “how the Swami came to the river’s edge, faced its source, stood knee-deep in the water, from six to eight in the morning, muttering something between his lips, his eyes shut, his palms pressed together in a salute to the gods, presumably” (186). He is surrounded by a mass of people as he begins to focus in deep meditation conserving his energy.

For a few days, Raju manages to eat some food hiding from the people, but later he is determined to continue his fasting. His resolution is reflected in such way, “If by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom, and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly?” (189). Then, he is inclined to do meditation as he realizes, “For the first time in his life he was making an earnest effort; for the first time he was learning the thrill of full application, outside money and love; for the first time he was doing a thing in which he was not personally interested” (189). Ultimately, he feels that lack of food will no longer give him pain. He has feelings of new enjoyment, which cannot be disturbed by Velan. Due to his penance, Mangala was so crowded because many people from different parts came to visit there. The place was transformed because many new shops were opened due to increasing crowd. Doctors found the condition of swami very grave, but he continued his fasting for twelve days. When rain comes, the fake *sadhu* (“holy man”) has transferred himself through his self-sacrifice. He exploits the ignorance of the villagers by disguising himself as a holy man without having any supernatural power. His fake spirituality entraps himself at the end and transforms into a saint adopting the image of an Indian holy man. In this regard, Chinnam mentions, “*The Guide* is a story of Raju’s romance, his greed for money, his sin and repentance. It is also the story of everyman’s growth from the ordinary to extra-ordinary, from the railway guide to the spiritual guide. In Narayan’s plot there

is a mixture of the comic and serious, the real and the fantastic” (514). Passing through different stages of human life, Raju becomes a saint at the end and his activities can be related with the life of other human beings. People realize their weakness and finally become ready to sacrifice for the best. The incidents in the novel trap Raju to act a role of a fake *sadhu*, finally realizing his self and transforming himself from an ordinary person to a saint.

### **The Role of Religion in Self-Transformation**

In Koirala's *Sumnima*, the protagonist Somdatta is brought up in a hermitage by his parents for the purpose of teaching religious culture. His parents want their son to achieve a higher way of life. So they cannot leave their son in the village and hope that their son would be like a sage. In the novel, Koirala describes the incident in this way: “They had high hopes of their son's future. The son too was very intelligent. He had exhibited great symptoms since his very young age. He possessed a wonderful power of memory” (3). Somdatta is trained to recite different religious verses as many scholars point out that the boy has full of special qualities to become an excellent Brahmin with a great soul. This made Suryadatta, father of Somdatta, feel satisfied as he says, “A sage has taken birth in my lineage. I will not let any insufficiency creep into his proper training and education” (4). Somdatta's parents are determined for his salvation. When he first meets Sumnima, he introduces himself as of superior cast, cultured, educated and calls her a rustic Kirat girl as he says, “We are the descendants of the Aryas, we are well cultured. You are wild Kirats, a community devoid of any good culture” (7). He has feeling of so-called supremacy of Brahmin. He says, “we are Brahmins who can achieve dignity by the power of penance” (8), which means that he has a feeling of supremacy of his race. He believes that the Kirats are rustic, ignorant and impetuous people and cannot achieve salvation. Sumnima is not convinced with the ideas of him and says that the Brahmins cover their real identity hiding everything. She further says that they use many ritual practices, sacrifices and even their mothers hide bodies whereas the Kirats do not do it. He is affected by the reply of her and calls her an uncultured girl. But she emphasizes to be tied with the earth and to the customs of human beings.

In the course of time, Somdatta and Sumnima become young. He studies the Vedas, the Upanishats, and the Vedanta philosophy and well versed in rituals. He is taught by his father to be indifferent to physical attachment. His father says, “Son, you should be very cautious...that sensual pleasure is the worst thing, as physical pleasure is like poison and so the greatest spiritual achievement which is like the ocean you have conquered through hard penance will be turned into poison just by its one small drop” (23-4). Such doctrine has made Somdatta out of practical value. Sumnima appears before him as a destroyer of youth and searches pleasures out of the human body. For producing descendants, the parents force him to get married and his father says, “Son! Celibacy is not interfered with the companionship of a wife when you have an objective of fulfilling a duty. Only sexual passion is the thing to be abandoned” (41). After marriage, Somdatta is worried for not being able to bear a child and determines to get help from a Bijuwa, a Kirat priest and goes to the Kirat village. There he meets Sumnima and realizes that he has killed the desires of his body. Bijuwa advises him to take a dip into the man's pond for the revival of bodily pleasures. Bijuwa says, “Somdatta's man within him has gone angry because he hated his own man ...the inner man is hurt he is angry. His habit is like that of a child. OK Sumnima! We must now please his man within him” (57). Taking Somdatta in the human pond, Sumnima transforms him by arousing pleasurable sensation in him.

For the purpose of changing Somdatta, Sumnima says, “the human spirit inside you feels happy if you take up another form” (67). He finds himself in the form of a Bhilla man. Then, he is able to revive sensual passion and bears a son from his wife, Puloma. Towards the end of the novel, she says, “We Kirats are creatures of soil, we love the soil. We are fully absorbed in the enjoyment of the pleasures of life, we don’t see its lack. For us our body alone is the most loving thing. We regard the Brahmins like the kites with broken strings and they may think us like the earthworms” (114). With the help of Sumnima, Somdatta comes to a state of realization. While talking with her during his final hour, he becomes nostalgic as he says, “The memory of the past had made it pleasant in his mental screen the entrance into deep emptiness. He felt that he was sinking into the unclear world of the bygone days” (108). Thus, Somdatta transforms inwardly with the help of the people imbedded with nature. For a person who is fully guided by religious ideas, the necessity of taking help from the uncivilized people is the main focus of his transformation of the self. His ultimate realization of being a failure person running after illusion while following the orthodox religious beliefs, showing his transformation.

Like in *Sumnima*, while undergoing different roles, Raju in *The Guide* does not seem to escape his religion. His fate seems to be determined by outer forces or events as he does everything by accident. When people began asking him the way, he became a guide and similarly he became a lover, a prisoner and finally a saint. After being released from the prison, he goes to a temple near a river and resides there before he becomes a saint. In this case, Sarala Krishnamurthy states, “subsequently, he settles down on a ledge near the river Sarayu, and he is taken to be a “Sadhu”: a seer. The concept of a Sadhu is a peculiar one in the Indian subcontinent. A Sadhu is one who has renounced all worldly desires, taken an oath of celibacy and committed his life to devotion to God” (109). As a simple man, his life takes on a religious dimension for his transformation. He gives up all the worldly desires and is devoted to god for the sake of others. He moves to the path of redemption for this as Kumaraswamy mentions, “As regards the typology of sanyasa in *The Guide*, it may be useful to note the *sanyasa* (“penance”) phase of the protagonist underlining the essential stage of his ascetism. The first stage of *sanyasa* begins in Raju’s life as he closes the door on his past life” (6). When his final act is portrayed as *sanyasa*, it is clear that he has achieved state of self-realization. He also accepts his new role of a *swami*, leaving all old habits of being involved in other people’s affairs. He revolutionizes his inner self by adopting spirituality in life. At the end of the novel, he falls on the river bank completing the fast of twelve days for rain. Finally, he fulfils his given role of saint, transforming himself and realizing the feeling of rain coming up to his leg.

In both novels, the central characters Somdatta and Raju transform themselves realizing their self. Religion plays a role in the process of bringing changes in the state of the mind of them. First, Somdatta realizes that during his life he is running after religious practices for nothing. He becomes ready to get help from the Kirats discarding his religious views, but he becomes a Bhilla. As Sumnima decorates him, he realizes after transformation, which is described in the novel: “What I see is not me at all. There is one Bhilla man and a beautiful young woman with a golden body” (68). After going beyond his ritual practices he comes to the state of the transformation of the self. In the similar way, Raju realizes his transformation after his fasting for eleven days. He finally says, “Velan, it’s raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my legs—” (195). Ultimately, being a *swami*,

Raju transforms his self. He comes to a state of realization by the force of Velan. Unlike Somdatta, he follows the ritual practices of Hinduism and attains sainthood.

### **Conclusion**

Both Koirala's *Sumnima* and Narayan's *The Guide* emphasize on the self-conscious process, connecting with the theme of religion. In South Asia, many religions have influenced people in many ways as they perform many religious activities on the basis of their culture. There are many holy places. By visiting these places and worshipping many gods, people feel satisfied and transformed. Somdatta, the protagonist of *Sumnima*, finally transforms himself leaving his orthodox view of life and knows about the biological needs. He follows Sumnima who changes him as a Bhilla. He revives his instinct. The novel focuses on the unity of human being, which is possible after avoiding narrow-minded and dogmatic attitudes. Somdatta gives up his own culture and integrates himself with the culture of Sumnima as, in the beginning of their meetings, he used to neglect her culture as bad. He would claim himself as a person of higher self, but finally integrates with her. Like Somdatta, Raju, the protagonist of *The Guide*, transforms himself as a saint, undertaking various roles in life. He changes himself by outer forces and events. He attempts to give up his role of fake *sadhu*, but the situation does not allow him. Velan makes him continue his sham role of *sadhu* and finally he does a fasting for twelve days to please the rain god to escape the people of Mangala from the drought. Then, he becomes a saint, transforming himself from his role of a tourist guide. He is recognized as a holy man due to his fasting. The transformation of Somdatta as Bhilla and of Raju as a saint shows the transformation of the self as both of them realize and feel themselves transformed, liberated beyond the realm of material world.

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