

The Guide Study Guide

The Guide by R. K. Narayan

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Contents

The Guide Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	3
Chapter 1.....	4
Chapter 2.....	6
Chapter 3.....	8
Chapter 4.....	10
Chapter 5.....	12
Chapter 6.....	14
Chapter 7.....	16
Chapter 8.....	18
Chapter 9.....	20
Chapter 10.....	22
Chapter 11.....	24
Characters.....	26
Objects/Places.....	30
Themes.....	32
Style.....	34
Quotes.....	36
Topics for Discussion.....	39

Plot Summary

R.K. Narayan's novel *The Guide* is the story of a man named Raju who comes from a small village in India called Malgudi. Malgudi itself does not exist. This fact gives Narayan's novel the feeling of a fable or fantasy. Raju's life is predicated on a series of self-deceptions which eventually lead the character down a road of confusion, loss of self and then to spiritual transformation and awakening.

Throughout Raju's life, he does his best to be whatever people require him to be at any given moment. When he runs a shop in the Malgudi train station, he is "Railway Raju," an extraordinary guide and procurer of all things needed. When Raju meets a beautiful dancer named Rosie, he becomes her lover and her guide as well by helping Rosie realize her wish to dance professionally. When Rosie becomes famous, Raju then becomes "Raj," a man of influence and elevated social standing. This does not last very long, however, and Raju eventually ends up in prison. While incarcerated, Raju again works his chameleon magic, whereby he becomes well-known and well-liked. However, Raju never seems to understand the lesson life wishes for him to learn.

After being released from prison, Raju finds himself wondering what to do with the rest of his life. Raju has no desire to return to Malgudi to face gossip and rejection. He hides out in an abandoned temple on the banks of the Sarayu River and buys himself a little bit of time. One day, a man named Velan appears at the temple and through a series of conversations, Velan comes to regard Raju as some sort of a holy man. Finding the situation beneficial, Raju plays along with the ruse. However, there comes a day when, due to some rather comical miscommunications, Raju is forced to reveal the truth about who he is and where he comes from. Raju believes that this act of disclosure will free him from playing the part of the accidental swami, but it has just the opposite effect.

Sitting in the ancient temple on the riverbank, Raju's final incarnation is that of "Swamiji." Raju's metamorphosis occurs when he is finally able to release his need to be all things to all people. He comes to an understanding of what it means to serve others selflessly. His entire life, Malgudi, Rosie, money and fame, all fall away until finally, Raju is left with nothing but the essence of himself as just another man. It is at this point that Raju becomes the saint he has been playing all along. Raju's deceptions prove valuable after all, as he eventually acts his way into his true self, finally becoming able to sacrifice himself willingly in order to restore hope to the lives of others.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

In the first chapter Raju, who has recently been released from prison is sitting in an abandoned temple wondering what to do now that he is free. Raju is approached by a visitor named Velan, a man who lives in Mangal, a village not far from Raju's home village of Malgudi. Velan has just come from visiting his daughter who lives nearby. The narrative then shifts to the past as Raju remembers stopping at the barber shop located just outside the prison. Raju goes in for a shave and a haircut before beginning his life outside the prison walls. The barber tells Raju that he can easily recognize an ex-convict. The barber tells Raju that he can tell how long a man has been in prison simply by looking at him. Raju and the barber engage in a brief conversation during which the barber tries to guess the reason for Raju's imprisonment.

The narrative once again picks up with Raju and Velan in the temple. Velan tells Raju that he has a problem and Raju prompts Velan to elaborate. It is revealed that he has a tendency to become involved in the affairs of others and that it is this particular quality which contributes most significantly to his expertise as a top-notch guide. Raju thinks to himself that were it not for his ability to accurately gauge and respond to the needs of others that "[he] should have grown up like a thousand other normal persons, without worries in life" (page 4).

Raju begins to tell the story of how he came to be sitting in the temple. Here, the narrative shifts into first person point of view. Raju's story begins with recollections of Rosie and Marco and with the character's explanation of how he came to be fascinated with railways. Raju also remembers the times he spent with his father at home and in his father's "hut shop."

Moving again into third-person narration, Velan tells Raju of the difficulties he is having with his ill-behaved half-sister. It seems that the girl is disrespectful and lazy. What is more, Velan's half-sister dishonors her family tradition by refusing to marry her cousin. Raju asks Velan to bring the half-sister to him and Velan does as Raju asks. The following morning, Velan and the half-sister arrive at the temple and bring Raju a basketful of food as a sign of respect for helping them to solve their problem. Raju launches into a story he heard many times as a boy.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Chapter 1 serves as the reader's introduction to Raju, the main protagonist. Raju's inner confusion about what to do with his life is reflected in the chapter's movement from past to present and the narrative shift between first and third person perspective. The chapter's structure gives the reader an idea as to the chaotic workings of Raju's mind at this point in his personal experience. Raju himself is at a crossroads. He knows that he



cannot return to Malgudi because everyone in his home village is aware of what he has done. Malgudi is representative of a past which, through the telling of his story, Raju must make peace with in order to progress as a person. The temple, on the other hand, signifies a place of change and spiritual evolution. At the beginning of the novel, however, Raju is unaware of this fact. He sits because there is nothing else for him to do. Raju is immobile not only physically but emotionally as well.

Velan is the catalyst for Raju's road to transformation. Velan is fairly one-dimensional in that his trajectory remains constant throughout the narrative. Velan is also the vessel for Raju's story. Raju deposits the story of his true self with Velan and Velan becomes the vault into which Raju places what has become his former self. This chapter also gives the reader some insight into Raju's personality as someone who is willing to accommodate others, regardless of the cost to Raju himself. At first, Raju goes along with Velan's perception of him as a holy man because of Raju's self-interest. Raju is a chameleon, an individual who is adept at camouflaging his true self to be what someone else needs or wants Raju to be at any given moment.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

In Chapter 2, Raju continues to reminisce about his boyhood in Malgudi. The character talks in vivid detail about the arrival of the railway. After Raju calls another boy a foul name, the boy runs and tells Raju's father. When questioned, Raju admits learning the bad word from the workmen who are building the railway. Raju's father decides to send Raju to school the next day. Raju is extremely unhappy with his father's decision. Rather than sending Raju to the more prestigious Albert Mission School, Raju's father chooses for his son to attend a local "pyol" school. The name "pyol" school signifies that the children are taught while sitting on the teacher's "pyol" or front porch.

One day, the boys sneak over the threshold and into the teacher's house and watch him prepare a meal in his kitchen. After chasing the boys from the house, the schoolmaster later twists the boys' ears until they scream. The schoolmaster has a habit of ordering the boys to bring him food from their homes when his own supplies are running low. The boys' parents are more than willing to oblige because they consider it an honor to give something back to the man who is educating their children. After awhile, however, Raju eventually warms up to the schoolmaster and earns grades good enough to warrant Raju's acceptance into the Board School. Raju is surprised at the schoolmaster's kindness when the schoolmaster escorts him to his first day at the new school.

Back to the present, Velan informs Raju of his half-sister's amazing transformation. The girl has become pleasant to be around. Velan's half-sister apologizes to her family for the trouble she has caused and she even agrees to marry her cousin. Velan is overjoyed at the progress his half-sister has made and he attributes the change to Raju's wisdom and guidance. Raju decides against attending Velan's half-sister's wedding, not wanting to draw unnecessary attention to himself.

Velan spreads the word of Raju to his neighbors and friends. Raju decides that he has no alternative but to stay at the temple and play the part of the wise holy man. Raju justifies his decision by telling himself that there is free food here for him and that he would rather not bear the shame of returning to Malgudi and becoming a target for ridicule.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Chapter 2 finds Raju revealing more of his childhood experiences. Also, in this chapter Raju makes a conscious decision to stay at the temple and go along with the ruse that Velan has set in motion. Here, Raju's self-interest comes into play. There is freedom in the temple and with the free food he receives from Velan and the others Raju's life does not look all that dire. As long as Velan is willing to place Raju on some sort of pedestal, Raju considers himself a lucky man. What Raju does not yet realize, however, is that



Velan is behaving out of sincerity and deference and that there is little or nothing Raju can do to convince Velan not to hold him in high esteem. Raju is not yet aware of the responsibility of the role he has tacitly agreed to play.

Also, Raju's experience as a schoolboy lets the reader know that the protagonist is a man of marked intelligence. This fact adds texture to what is already known about Raju. In addition, Raju's story of going to school gives the reader an idea of the circumstances of village life in India. Raju's father, like the parents of his school chums, prefers that his son be educated in a more traditional way, rather than sending the boy to a school at which Christian conversion is a primary motive. Raju's father's decision is a commentary on how some Indians resent and work against any form of colonization. The issue here is that Raju's father and other parents consciously choose to support those institutions and ways of doing things that support and reinforce their own culture. While Raju's father is not painted as a man of any particular political sensibility, this portion of the narrative does scratch at the surface of deeper issues in Indian society.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

In this chapter, the railway finally comes to Malgudi. In celebration, everyone in town is given the day off. A band played and many important men gave speeches lauding the arrival of progress. Raju's father's business continues to do well and his father invests in a "jutka" (a kind of taxi) and a horse to pull it. Raju's mother complains about her husband's expenditure, telling him that the animals they own are "sufficient bother" (page 28). Nevertheless, Raju's father ignores his wife's protestations and a groom is hired to care for the horse. The groom subsequently convinces Raju's father to be allowed to hire out the jutka and horse since the family does not use it very often. The groom agrees to pay for the horse's grain and promises Raju's father two rupees a day as a return on his investment. Raju's father consents to the groom's idea, delighted at the prospect of a little extra money coming into the household. After a short time, however, the groom begins to complain about a lack of fares and often pleads poverty when Raju's father attempts to collect the daily two rupees. Eventually, the groom talks Raju's father into selling the horse and jutka for seventy-five rupees. Raju's father agrees and the groom drives off in the taxi. Later, Raju and his parents notice that the jutka was "doing a brisk business carrying passengers to the town" (page 30).

Raju's father is granted permission to run a shop at the railway station. Raju sees this as a step up for his family. Oddly enough, Raju sees his father paying deference to the stationmaster. This is to be expected, however, as the stationmaster has the final say as to who has a shop in the station and who does not. It is during this time that Raju learns the importance of anticipating the railway passenger's every need. Shortly after his father's railway station shop is established, Raju's father returns to the hut shop, leaving his son to run the station concern. Because of the increasing success of his family's businesses, Raju decides not to return to school. This decision suits Raju fine, as he was never very interested in attending school. The rightness of his decision not to resume his studies is further reinforced in Raju's mind because neither of Raju's parents mention it.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Chapter 3 deals exclusively with Raju's childhood years in Malgudi. Raju's relationship with his father is further examined. More of Raju's father's character is revealed by way of the man's social relationship with the stationmaster. The stationmaster is a person in a position of authority to whom Raju's father pays close attention and whose directives Raju's father follows unquestioningly. Something of this stays with Raju into his adulthood and can be seen in the manner in which Raju often courts the favor of those of higher social standing than himself. It is obvious that Raju learns about business from his father. However, unlike his father, Raju possesses certain characteristics that make



him not only a more successful entrepreneur, but also (eventually) reveal him to be a less careful businessman.

Of note in this chapter is Raju's decision not to return to school. Raju's father sent him to school originally to keep his son out of trouble and beyond the influence of people of low moral character. However, in matters concerning the economic well-being, education becomes secondary in families in which children also constitute part of the familial workforce. This paradox is handled very subtly in *The Guide* and yet the matter of education resurfaces at more than one point in the narrative.

Chapter 3 is the shortest chapter in the novel. This may signify the amount of emotional room the episode occupies in Raju's memory. The things which occur in Chapter 3 all concern an upswing in the fortunes of Raju and his family. Prosperity, in this case, does not warrant much explanation or embellishment. The railway station is introduced as a place of importance for Raju and his family. That his father's business is located in the train station signifies movement and progress in the characters' lives. A train station, however, speaks to the impermanence of human relationships in that one never stays at a train station or any length of time. The Malgudi station is the simultaneous site of arriving and leaving, of coming and going and thus is not a static venue. Such is the nature of Raju's life: people come and go, moving in and out of Raju's frame of view. This holds true of Raju's own life, as well. The character will move from place to place not only physically but emotionally, financially and spiritually as well.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Chapter 4 once again returns to the perspective of the omniscient narrator as Raju speaks with a large group of villagers at the ancient temple. Raju learns that the villagers are not sending their sons to school during the day, preferring instead to have the boys take the cattle out for grazing. He suggests sending the boys to school in the evenings. Raju asks the villagers to send the schoolmaster to the temple. The next day, Raju speaks with the schoolmaster and convinces the man to teach the children their lessons at the temple in the evenings. The schoolmaster apologizes to Raju for only being able to bring a dozen or so children to the temple. He tells Raju that the children are apprehensive about crossing the river at night because they are afraid of being eaten by crocodiles. The schoolmaster asks Raju to speak to the children, believing that the children would benefit from the gift of Raju's wisdom. Raju talks to the children about life and a host of other things and is quite pleased with himself as a result: "No one was more impressed with the grandeur of the whole thing than Raju himself" (page 35).

Raju resumes his narration and remembers his experiences running his father's railway shop. By this time, students were bringing their used schoolbooks to be sold in his shop. Raju likes the idea of being a bookseller as well as a sundry merchant. He admits feeling that just selling magazines and snacks to passers-through was somewhat beneath him. Selling books gives Raju a feeling of self-importance. Raju's father dies during the rainy season one year, leaving Raju as head of the household. Because of his father's frugality, Raju's mother is a financially comfortable widow. Raju then closes the "hut shop" and turns his full attention to the shop at the railway station.

The narrative returns to Raju at the temple. Pleased with Raju's teaching, and still afraid of possible crocodile attacks, the children convince their parents to join them at the temple. Soon, Raju is surrounded by people asking to be taught about life and deeper spiritual matters. Raju decides that it is his responsibility to continue playing the sage as he does not wish to disappoint Velan and the other villagers. Also, Raju could see no clear way out of his predicament. The villagers bring him food each day and Raju considers it his duty to give the people what they want.

Chapter 4 Analysis

In this chapter, Raju steps even further into his role as a sage and priest. Here, Raju concerns himself with the education of the village children. Raju's telling the parents that their children need to be educated is paradoxical, given the character's distaste for school and his decision to forgo school altogether in order to enter the business world. Here, Raju is simply parroting what he has heard and not necessarily what he himself believes. Also, by arranging for the schoolteacher to give the children their lessons in



the temple at night, Raju is once again involving himself in the lives of others without necessarily being emotionally invested in the welfare of those he helps.

The narrator deals with Raju's father's death in a very matter of fact way. By telling the reader that Raju's father dies during the rainy season, the author establishes death as something closely tied to the seasons. Also, specifying that the father passes away when the rains come is a way to mark time in one's memory. In other words, looking back on his father's death, Raju may have said to himself, "This is the time of year when my father died," rather than saying, "My father died on such-and-such a day." This way of marking time is standard in agrarian societies. The weather that one experiences tells one what time of year it is. In other words, rather than looking at a watch or a calendar, one has simply to notice when the sun rises and sets and how the crops growing—and of course, when the rains come and when they cease.

Also in this chapter, Raju realizes that his position as priest of the temple is something he cannot get out of without embarrassment and an extreme amount of discomfort. The protagonist justifies continuing the charade by telling himself that he does not wish to let Velan down. This same attitude of not wanting to disappoint others is what motivates Raju to bend over backwards for the customers in his shop. By playing along for the sake of someone else's feelings, Raju is able to release himself from the responsibility of being truthful and honest in his dealings with others. Raju is simply giving the people what they want. By operating from this place, Raju can shift the blame for any potential catastrophe onto the villagers by blaming them for putting him in this situation.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Chapter 5 begins with Raju explaining how he came to be called "Railway Raju." During his time as a shopkeeper at the Malgudi station, Raju earns a reputation among the travelers as man who is able to get anything for anyone at any time. People passing through would ask Raju a variety of questions: how to get to a particular hotel or where they might buy a delicious meal. Raju always has an answer even if he has to make up a lie. Raju does not see this type of lying as a detriment, he is merely unable say, "No," and "I don't know." Raju tells himself that he simply lies sometimes in order to be pleasant. Eventually, Raju establishes a professional friendship with Gaffur the taxi driver. Whenever a customer needs transportation, Raju hustles him out to Gaffur and Gaffur takes the traveler where he wants to go, for a price, of course. Raju eventually finds work as a professional tour guide. Raju's mother expresses her displeasure at Raju becoming a tour guide. Raju tells his mother that he enjoys being a guide because of the places he is able to visit and that the money is good. Besides, Raju tells his mother, he is making name for himself: "It is something to become so famous, isn't it, instead of handing out matches and tobacco?" (page 44). Raju promises his mother that he will continue to look after the railway shop

Raju meets Rosie and Marco for the first time. Marco arrives first on the train from Madras and Rosie arrives in Malgudi the following day. Raju secures a room for Marco and Rosie at the Adnan Bhavan Hotel, room 28. The first thing Rosie asks Raju is if he can arrange for her to see a king cobra up close as it dances to the music of a flute. Ever willing to accommodate a traveler, Raju agrees to make the arrangements. Raju is instantly smitten with Rosie and decides to do whatever he can to get her attention. In the meantime, Marco retains Gaffur's services as his driver. Marco is interested in exploring the caves at Mempi. Several days later, Marco and Rosie have a disagreement and Raju manages to smooth things out between them. This raises Marco's estimation of Raju significantly and Raju takes an opportunity to impress Rosie by showing her around while Marco is investigating the cave paintings. Marco decides to take a room at the Mempi Peak House since it is too far to travel back and forth to Malgudi each day. It is obvious to Raju that all Marco cares about is his work. One evening after returning from Mempi, Raju and Rosie begin their affair in room 28.

Chapter 5 Analysis

In this chapter, Raju's inner workings are more clearly established. The character's inability to refuse a request proves to be a blessing and a curse for Raju.

Raju's mother's reaction to her son's working as a tour guide is significant for two reasons. First of all, Raju's mother may be experiencing a feeling of distance brought on by Raju's not staying close to home. By working outside the bounds of the railway shop,



Raju is asserting his independence as well as a desire to be something more than his father ever was. Raju is not satisfied with being a simple shopkeeper. He longs to be someone of importance and being "Railway Raju" gives the character a feeling of status and prestige. Raju's sentiments offend his mother because she feels that Raju is dishonoring his father somehow by wanting to move beyond the simple country life. Also, Raju's mother represents resistance to progress and change. She is satisfied with the status quo and prefers that things stay the way they have always been. In addition, Raju's desire for a bigger, broader life may inadvertently remind his mother of her own lack of initiative.

Raju's meeting with Marco and Rosie is a pivotal point in the character's life. While falling in love with Rosie brings Raju pleasure, his association with her also stirs up feelings of insecurity and self-doubt. Raju does as much as he can to set himself up as Marco's polar opposite: caring, attentive, and interested in Rosie and her innermost dreams and desires. Thus, in the beginning of their relationship, Raju's reaction to Rosie is much the same as Raju's reaction to a traveler in need. He sense a particular lack in Rosie's life and operates to fill that need. Raju does not realize it, but he plays the chameleon with Rosie as well. Because of the turmoil in her marriage, Rosie responds favorably to Raju. This is different than Rosie falling in love with Raju based on Raju's own merits. By allowing the affair with Raju to begin, Rosie is responding to her own need to escape a loveless marriage.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

At the beginning of Chapter 6, the narrator observes that Raju has lost track of how long he has been hiding out at the temple. It could be months or years, Raju does not know for certain. Velan and the other villagers continue to bring gifts of flowers and food to Raju, in appreciation of all the new priest has done for them. At one point, Raju begins distributing the gifts among the villagers, embarrassed by the outpouring of respect and adulation. The people begin to call Raju "Swami." During the times of heavy rains, the people would all crowd around Raju in the temple. However, after a while, Raju notices that it has failed to rain for quite a long time. The villagers become nervous about the lack of rain and they bring their concerns to Raju, who instructs them not to worry, as there is nothing they can do about the course of Nature. The size and volume of Raju's gifts decreased drastically and those in the congregation continued to voice their apprehensions to Raju. Soon, cattle began to die because of dehydration. The price of rice in the area rises dramatically and many of the villagers become angry with the local shopkeeper for charging them so much. Velan and several others decide to take matters into their own hands and the shopkeeper gathers his friends, relatives and other sympathizers to help defend his shop. Raju soon learns that Velan is among those who are injured.

Shortly thereafter, Raju is approached by Velan's brother who provides Raju with an update on the fighting in the village. Raju tells Velan's brother that they must cease fighting immediately or that he (Raju) will stop eating. Velan's brother, who is not very bright, completely misinterprets Raju's message and upon returning to the village he tells the elders that Raju has begun a hunger strike and will not eat again things are reconciled. The elders take the boy's message to mean that Raju is refusing to eat until the rains come again. In the meantime, Raju sits at the temple awaiting his daily ration of delicious food.

Raju is alarmed to learn what Velan's brother tells the elders. Thinking quickly, Raju tells Velan that only a saint should undertake such an endeavor as to go without food to prompt the return of the rains. Velan tells Raju that people of the village will attend him day and night while he fasts for twelve days. Raju decides that it is time to tell Velan the truth about himself and how he came to be in the temple.

Chapter 6 Analysis

In this chapter, Raju recognizes that time is unimportant. This also reveals Raju is entering a phase in which time becomes immaterial. Raju's life in the temple is no longer tied to the temporal world. Because Raju chooses to continue playing the part of the holy man, the character gives himself permission to operate on a different level. That is to say, Raju's perception of the world is changing based on his ruse. In short, he



is actually in the process of becoming that which he pretends to be. There is also a paradox at work in this chapter.

The paradox is thrown into play when Velan's brother tells the elders of Raju's hunger strike. Raju's way of life is threatened. Until this time, Raju enjoys a certain amount of success in his little pretend game. Food is plentiful, people sit at his feet and hang on his every word. He has the shelter of the temple and there is no need for him to work at earning a living. It is Raju's alarm at losing the comfortable life he has, not a desire to be truthful, which motivates Raju to tell Velan who he really is. Mistakenly, Raju believes that revealing his true self and circumstances will stop the game and allow him to go on with his life.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Raju elaborates on his relationship with Rosie and Marco. Raju finds Marco to be a rather impractical man who is so engrossed in his work that Marco has no head for the affairs of ordinary daily living. Because Marco is so involved in his exploration of the cave friezes at Mempi, Rosie and Raju begin to spend more time together, much to the displeasure of Gaffur the taxi driver. With Marco ensconced at his Mempi Peak bungalow, Rosie and Raju make Room 28 at the Adnan Bhavan their home away from home. Raju begins to feel insecure about his affair with Rosie. Raju finds himself confused and muddled, riddled with fear that he is not good enough for Rosie. Raju spends so much time with Rosie that the young man who has been hired to run the railway sundry shop begins to worry that the customers are not being attended to properly. For his part, Raju is unable to think of anything but being with Rosie. All of Raju's concern for his little business has gone right out of his head. Subsequently, Raju begins to lose track of his finances. Raju begins to worry that people are gossiping about him behind his back.

One evening at the hotel, Rosie expresses guilt over not being more attentive to her husband Marco. Rosie knows that it is wrong to be carrying on with Raju while her unsuspecting husband continues with his work. The only thing that seems to make Rosie happy is talking about dance. Rosie tells Raju that Marco has forbidden her to have anything to do with dancing. Rosie and Raju come up with a tentative plan whereby Rosie will talk to Marco about the plans they have made for her career. Two days later, Raju arrives back at the Mempi Peak House. Marco and Rosie are not on speaking terms. When Marco attempts to leave, Raju convinces him to stay at Mempi and rents the suite which adjoins Rosie's and Marco's. Raju tries unsuccessfully to get through to Rosie but she refuses to discuss things with Raju and tells him to leave.

One month later, Rosie shows up on Raju's doorstep alone. She has left Marco in Madras and finds herself with nowhere to go. Raju's mother takes pity on Rosie and welcomes the young woman into their home, but not without questioning the girl thoroughly about her background.

Raju loses his business at the railway station because of his preoccupation with Rosie.

Chapter 7 Analysis

It is in Chapter 7 that Raju's life really begins to unravel. Because of his obsession with Rosie, Raju becomes completely incapable of dealing with his own life. Raju puts Rosie and his need for her before himself. The character is continually off balance and subject to Rosie's whims and regret over their love affair. At this juncture, Raju does not understand the depth of the problems he is creating for himself. Raju is sent into a spiral



because he realizes that being the perfect guide does not work when it comes to Rosie. Raju is faced with the fact that he is not indispensable after all and that even though he devotes his entire emotional self to pleasing Rosie, he fails to meet his objective. It is this, and not necessarily a broken heart, which cuts Raju to the core.

When Rosie returns a month later, Raju feels vindicated in his devotion to the dancer. However, he is so far in debt and so emotionally confused that he is unable to fully recover. Pursued by creditors, hounded by grief, confusion and longing for Rosie, Raju loses his grip on life entirely. Rosie's return to Malgudi manages to further compound Raju's misery. He has no job, no means of supporting Rosie, himself and his mother. Raju's loss of the railway station shop constitutes a loss of reason and a loss of Raju's connection with reason. In addition, losing the business also means that Railway Raju loses his identity. Raju's obsession with Rosie leaves the character without a center, without a well-defined sense of himself.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Raju's creditor, a man known as the Sait, comes to the house demanding payment. Raju tells the Sait that he has no money. The Sait threatens to take Raju to court. Raju plays it off because he does not want Rosie to worry about anything. Raju is unemployed and desperate for money. Raju brainstorms about how he can make money from Rosie's dancing. Raju asks Gaffur for a 500 rupee loan and Gaffur refuses. Raju realizes that his friendship with Gaffur has ended.

Raju gives his last five rupees to a lawyer who has agreed to represent him in court. The lawyer manages to secure an adjournment. One morning, Raju's uncle pays them a visit. The uncle verbally berates Raju and tries to bully Rosie into leaving. Raju's mother joins in and tells Rosie that she will have to leave. Raju's mother and uncle continue to harass Rosie until she breaks down sobbing. Raju tells his mother and her brother that he will not permit them to throw Rosie out into the street. After more wrangling, Raju's mother decides that if Rosie stays, she will go and live in her brother's house. Raju's mother packs a few things and she and the unpleasant uncle depart for his village on the evening bus. From this point on, Rosie and Raju live in the family's home as husband and wife. Rosie continues to practice her dancing and one day she and Raju begin planning her career as a professional performer. First, they decide that a name change is in order. Rosie is not an Indian name, and Raju feels that a more traditional name would be better for her career. They finally decide that Rosie's professional name will be Nalini. This name change also signifies a new start for both of them.

One day, Raju invites a group from a local school to meet Nalini and to watch her dance. Raju wants the men from the school to allow Nalini to perform classical Indian dance as a part of their cultural program. To impress the men, Raju dresses himself well. He decides that since he is playing the part of manager, it would be best if he looked the part. As part of his outfit, Raju wears the rimless glasses given to him by Marco at one of their first meetings. Raju also wears a wristwatch, believing that the men from the school will be impressed by a gentleman who was serious enough to wear a timepiece. Raju talks to the men of the importance of classical dance to Indian cultural heritage and after a short while, Nalini performs for them. The gentlemen are so moved by the dance that they agree right away that Nalini should be the premier performer at their event.

Chapter 8 Analysis

In this chapter, Raju and Rosie embark on a path of reconstruction. Raju's relationship with his mother is damaged beyond repair. This fact signifies another break with his past and with Railway Raju. The final vestige of who Raju used to be is the house they live in, which was built with his father's own hands. Raju returns to his role of guide by



encouraging Rosie's name change and by devising a way for Rosie to finally begin her career as a professional dancer. What Raju does not realize, however, is that Rosie's name is not the only thing to have changed and that a new chapter in Rosie's life is beginning.

Raju the chameleon makes another appearance when the group of gentlemen from the school come to Raju's home. The lengths to which Raju goes to look the part of cultural expert and man of the world prove that Raju has not yet fully learned his lesson. His wardrobe, the glasses, and the wristwatch are all props Raju uses to further his cause. Raju is interested in Rosie's career, but he is more interested in making a name for himself. In light of this, it can be said that Raju is also using Rosie as a prop. In other words, by building Rosie up, Raju understands that he will benefit as well. It is unbearable for Raju not to be in some sort of spotlight and if being Rosie's manager is the only way to achieve this, then Raju is willing to do whatever he can to bring it about.

Losing the relationship with his mother and losing Gaffur's friendship once again place Raju in the position of concentrating all of his affection and attention on Rosie. Eventually, this leads the character into obsession, fear, self-doubt and emotional upheaval.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Nalini's professional career takes off. Raju realizes that he is recognized because of his association with Nalini and not the other way around. Raju takes it upon himself to play the impresario in public, controlling every facet of Nalini's career. He imagines himself to be a very important man and cannot see Nalini being able to get along without him. In order for Raju to settle his outstanding debt to the Sait, it becomes necessary for his mother to sign over her interest in the house. Raju's mother signs without resisting. Raju and Nalini move into a new home that is quite upscale and rather large. Raju hires musicians to accompany Nalini during her performances. Raju also hires two cooks, two gardeners, a bodyguard and a private driver. While Raju plays at being the lord of the manner, Nalini's daily life consists primarily of practicing her dancing and resting in her rooms out of sight. Raju takes great pains to keep Nalini away from others. Periodically, however, Nalini does welcome visitors of her own. Other dancers, actors and artists come to the house and visit with Nalini, often for hours at a time. Raju resents these gatherings, feeling somehow neglected and out of the spotlight. Raju admits that he wants Nalini to be happy, but only with him.

Tensions between Raju and Nalini often cause the two to argue. Nalini feels that Raju drives her too hard and that he is overly concerned with money and material gain. She accuses Raju of being so greedy that he insists upon hurrying from one engagement to the next without proper time to rest between engagements. Raju's spending upsets Nalini but he justifies this to himself as necessary. In reality, Raju enjoys the profits of Nalini's work. Because of Nalini, Raju makes powerful and important friends. He is now in the habit of playing poker and entertaining municipal officials, government employees and individuals of high social standing.

One day, Raju receives a copy of Marco's book in the mail. Raju decides not to tell Nalini about the book but his assistant, Mani, tells her anyway. Nalini insists on seeing the book, even though she admits it will probably bore her. She is happy that her husband has succeeded and refuses to say anything negative about him to Raju. A short while later, a letter from Marco's lawyer, addressed to Nalini, arrives at the house. Raju intercepts the letter, thinking it best not to bother Nalini with such matters. Raju is afraid that Nalini may still have feelings for her husband. The letter requests Nalini's signature to secure the release of some jewelry into her possession. Raju forges Rosie's signature on the letter, returns it to Marco's lawyer and waits for the box of jewelry to arrive.

One evening after a performance, Raju's friend the District Superintendent of police arrives and tells Raju that he will be arrested for forgery. Raju tells Nalini what has happened and Nalini responds by telling Raju that this is karma and that she had a suspicion that Raju had been up to no good.



Chapter 9 Analysis

Raju's ego grows bigger and bigger everyday. The result of this is Raju's attempt to control every part of Nalini's life. The more power and prestige Raju imagines he has, the tighter his grip on the dancer becomes. Raju's delusions of grandeur and disproportionate estimation of his own importance in society lead the character to make questionable choices. This cycle has become a well-established pattern in Raju's life. When Raju gains status and reputation, then his self-absorption takes over. Raju is fearful that his influence over Nalini will dissipate and his attempts to keep others away from her further signal Raju's downward spiral. Raju had not considered the fact that Nalini, his prop, his meal ticket, might chafe under his constant watchfulness. Raju hides the book because he does not want to give Nalini an opportunity to begin thinking about Marco again. His paranoia about Nalini's emotional attachment to her husband is what prompts Raju to forge Nalini's signature. Secondly, Raju sees Nalini's jewelry as a healthy addition to his coffers. Raju's greed is closely tied to his jealousy. Both are rooted in Raju's desire to acquire people, places, and things that increase his feelings of superiority.

Nalini's career provides a boost of confidence and self-esteem she did not have at the beginning of her relationship with Raju. In addition, Nalini's new found sense of self places her in the position of Raju's emotional superior. Nalini's motives for dancing and performing are pure whereas Raju's motivation for being Nalini's manager is greedy self-interest. Nalini is unaware of Raju's opportunism where she is concerned. However, when Raju is arrested for forging her signature, Nalini comes to understand the depth of Raju's dishonesty and lack of moral fiber. Most upsetting to Nalini, however, is that Raju has been using her and betraying her all along.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Nalini visits Raju in jail and he advises her to go to their banker to assess their financial state of affairs. Nalini learns that all of Raju's frivolous spending has left them with next to no money. After three days in the local jail, Raju returns home to Nalini. Ashamed of what has done, Raju does his best to stay out of Nalini's way. Raju tries to convince Nalini to go through with the performances he has booked for her during the next quarter in an effort to collect the balance of fees owed to them in order to recover some of the money they lost. Nalini informs Raju that she has decided to let all of the servants go. Raju and Nalini argue after Nalini tells Raju that she will refund the advance money paid for the upcoming engagements. Nalini taunts Raju, saying that she is considering returning to Marco in Madras. Nalini says that she is too embarrassed to show her face in public, let alone give a dance performance. Nalini promises to do whatever she can to help with Raju's case but that when his trial is over, she wants him to leave her in peace.

In preparation for Raju's day in court, Nalini keeps her promise and raises enough money to hire a well-known attorney to defend Raju. Even though she had told Raju that she would never dance in public again, Nalini goes through with the engagements in order to receive the money they are owed. Raju is offended that Nalini seems to manage fine without him to oversee her career. Nalini enlists Mani's help and the public continue to pay to see the young woman dance. Raju recognizes a strength in Nalini that convinces him that neither he nor Marco would ever control her life again.

At Raju's trial, the famous attorney Nalini hires paints Marco as a villain with a desire to intimidate and frighten Nalini into returning to him. The lawyer says that it is Raju who saved Nalini from Marco, calling Raju "a humble humanitarian" (page 178). The prosecution's case is much stronger, however, and Mani testifies against Raju. A handwriting expert then testifies that the forged signature is indeed Raju's. Raju is sentenced to two years in prison.

In prison, Raju once again establishes himself as someone who is useful and attentive to the needs of others. During the hours spent outside his cell, Raju is a model prisoner. Raju ingratiates himself by filling in for the warders (prison guards) when necessary. He takes it upon himself to teach and counsel his fellow inmates. Raju finds prison life to be rather enjoyable and he enjoys a certain amount of popularity among the prison population and the staff. One day, Raju sees Nalini's picture in the newspaper. Not surprisingly, Nalini continued to make a name for herself. One day, Mani visits Raju and informs him that Nalini has returned to Madras and that she takes care of herself very well. Mani assures Raju that Nalini has not returned to Marco. Raju remembers his mother's sadness at his having brought shame on their family. This is the last time Raju sees his mother.



Chapter 10 Analysis

What is most important about this chapter is that even after being imprisoned, Raju still relies on his chameleon abilities to get by. It is as though Raju cannot help himself. No matter what situation he encounters, he always falls back on his manipulative brand of accommodating others. Raju is happy in prison because he is in a contained social environment. There are no variables in place which would adversely affect Raju's plans for self-promotion and self-aggrandizement. It is clear that Raju has not learned his lesson. For him, it is always the game of being what everyone wants him to be and reaping the rewards of notoriety, no matter how scant those rewards may be. Raju's level of self-deception remains high as the character convinces himself that he is somehow invaluable to smooth daily operations inside the prison walls. He is once again in the comfortable role of "Railway Raju." Thus, Raju actually reverts to his past, rather than learning any significant lessons from it. The ease with which he adjusts to his role as model prisoner is an indicator of Raju's staggering lack of emotional depth and his utter lack of powers of self-examination.

It is not surprising that Nalini manages well without Raju. However, once Raju realizes this for himself, he still remains relatively unfazed by it. Even in prison, Raju still does not perceive his own faults. In fact, Raju simply picks up where he left off before meeting Nalini and Marco. He once again becomes the guide, once again the smiling face who never says, "No," or "I don't know." Raju's life remains the lie. Raju's mother moves on, Nalini moves on as well. As usual, the most important person in Raju's life is whoever Raju needs to be at the moment.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

As Chapter 11 opens, the sun is coming up and Velan sits silently before Raju as Raju finishes telling Velan his story. When asked for his reaction to what Raju has told him, Velan is unswayed in his devotion to the "Swami." Velan gives Raju his solemn word that he will not tell anyone what Raju has shared with him. This puzzles Raju. Velan descends the temple steps and goes back across the river to his village. Soon, news of Raju's hunger strike spreads throughout India and members of the press begin to converge on the temple where Raju lives. Crowds of people gather at the temple to pay homage to Raju, the accidental holy man. Velan attends to Raju day and night, making sure Raju is not disturbed by pilgrims and onlookers. Raju longs for privacy. He admits to himself that he has not really been fasting for five days, as reported but only for four. On what was to be the first day of his fast, Raju sneaks and eats a small amount of rice with buttermilk and vegetables that he had managed to hide out of sight. Nonetheless, Raju halfheartedly resigns himself to his fate. As penance, Raju goes down to the river and stands knee-deep in the water, saying prayers while watching the crowds who watch him. Raju becomes desperate and at one point considers begging Velan to bring him food. However, Raju thinks the better of it when he realizes that Velan still believes Raju to be some sort of saint.

The crocodile that all the villagers had feared is found after it dies of dehydration. When the animal's stomach is cut open, ten thousand rupees worth of jewelry is discovered inside. The man who cut the creature open keeps all the treasure.

Raju decides that he will do whatever he can to keep his mind off food. He comes to the decision that his fasting might actually prompt the rains to come after all. With renewed commitment, Raju resolves to see the matter through to its logical conclusion. With the size of the crowd increasing daily, Velan has his hands full as the Swami's self-appointed guardian. Raju's former schoolmaster came to sit at his feet and he assumed the responsibility of intercepting all the cards, letters and telegrams that flooded in from all over India, wishing the Swami blessings and success. The local telegraph office was so besieged by the press that the telegraph operator cried out to his superiors for relief.

One day, an American film producer from California arrives on the scene. James J. Malone has come all the way to India from the United States to personally cover the story of "Swamiji" and his historic fast. After rigging up bright lights and turning on the cameras, Malone speaks to Raju in English, asking him inane questions and receiving one-word answers. Doctors are called in to examine Raju and it is determined that Raju's health is failing. In spite of directives from the highest levels of the Indian government, Raju goes to stand knee-deep in the river early the next morning.

Velan helps Raju down the steps and into the water, where Raju then collapses.



Chapter 11 Analysis

Chapter 11 completes the circle of Raju's life experiences. Velan remains unaffected by the story Raju tells because Velan knows that inside, Raju is indeed the Swami. It is Raju who does not realize it until much later. In keeping with his script of accommodating others at all costs, Raju continues with the hunger strike.

The crocodile is of special significance in this chapter because it speaks to the relationship of Raju and Velan. Raju's past, his life and mistakes, is symbolized by the dried out, dead body of the crocodile. While the people in Raju's life were not afraid of him, each one of them ended up avoiding him on purpose. Gaffur, Raju's mother, and eventually Rosie/Nalini, all chose to have nothing to do with Raju. Raju was left to his own devices. However, over the course of his life and the narrative, what materializes inside of Raju is worth its weight in jewels. What is inside the crocodile is really what exists within Raju; something nearly priceless which, when bestowed on whoever discovers it, proves to be a lifetime's worth of blessings and good fortune.

It takes nearly the entire narrative for Raju to come to a place of growth and transformation. The old patterns of behavior and the Raju's self-absorption are eventually replaced by true selflessness. In effect, Raju's fasting and praying for rain brought about his internal metamorphosis. The fasting and praying that Raju engaged in simply to fulfill a pretend part actually loose something within Raju which enables him to do something out of altruism rather than self-interest. It can also be said that the character of Velan is also a kind of Swami. After all, it is Velan who discovers Raju and pronounces him a holy man and it is Velan who remains unswayed in the face of knowing all there is to know about Raju.

The scene in which Raju talks to James J. Malone exposes the irony of the high-profile lawyer's description of Raju as a "humble humanitarian" in Chapter 9. The answers that Raju gives do indeed spring from a humble, unassuming heart. The irony becomes all the more glaring when one considers that Malone is an American, a Westerner in search of a sensational story. What Malone ends up with is certainly less than sensational, as Swamiji is simply a man doing what he knows is right.



Characters

Raju

Raju is a young Indian man of indeterminate age who comes from the town of Malgudi. Raju is an only child. After his father's death, Raju inherits a small business and makes it flourish. As a boy, Raju is not interested in going to school even though he is of above average intelligence. From a young age, Raju learns how to make himself invaluable to others (especially his customers) by being able to meet all their needs. As a young adult, Raju discovers that he has some talent as a guide. The customers traveling in and out of Malgudi station call him "Railway Raju," which gives Raju a feeling of importance. Raju is extremely accommodating with the travelers who pass through the railway station at Malgudi. The character prides himself on his natural ability to find whatever people are looking for, no matter how much he has to inconvenience himself to achieve that end.

Raju's most glaring character flaw is a preoccupation with reputation. To Raju, appearances are everything and throughout the novel, Raju convinces himself that the way he looks in a given situation will determine the outcome of that situation. Raju is a person who is unable to tell others "no" no matter what they ask of him. For a time, Raju's closest friends are people he meets in professional settings, like Gaffur the taxi driver. Although he later comes to consider himself to be something of a celebrity, Raju does not establish genuinely close ties with anyone other than Rosie/Nalini.

As Rosie/Nalini's manager, Raju becomes egotistical and materialistic, letting his lover's fame and celebrity go to his head. Raju has visions of grandeur and often overestimates his importance in other people's lives. Raju can be careless and dismissive of those things and ideas which do not fit into his vision of how things ought to be. Given to jealousy and mild paranoia, Raju makes choices based on his fears and insecurities which subsequently put him and those around him in very difficult situations. Raju is redeemed by virtue of Velan's trust in his wisdom and guidance. Near the end of the narrative, Raju finally discovers something in himself which is not self-serving or motivated by a desire to further his personal agenda. Over the course of the novel, Raju becomes "Railway Raju" then "Raj" and finally "Swamiji." In this case, each name corresponds to a stage in Raju's life. Additionally, the re-namings happen according to Raju's emotional and spiritual changes.

Rosie/Nalini

Rosie/Nalini is Raju's main love interest. Physically, Rosie is quite striking. She is small and slender of frame. Her skin is described as "dusky" which would lead one to believe that she is rather dark (page 49). Rosie has eyes that sparkle and a smile which is surprising in its warmth. Rosie is a dancer, as are many women in her family. Dancing and performing are in Rosie's history and in her blood. Rosie's passion in life is dance.



What Rosie desires most is to perform for other people. It is important to Rosie that she share the dance in order to fulfill her life's purpose. It is almost as though Rosie is compelled to dance. There is nothing else which feeds her soul like movement and music. Rosie is an educated woman. It is revealed that Rosie holds a Master's degree but the details of her area of specialization are never given. When she meets Raju, Rosie is married to Marco; an intellectual, mostly concerned with his research on ancient cave paintings. Rosie's feelings for her husband are a complicated mixture of guilt, resentment, and fondness.

In the beginning, Rosie is insecure and compliant. Her marriage to Marco does little for her feelings of self worth. Marco forbids her to talk about dancing and becomes angry at the very mention of the word. Raju, on the other hand, encourages Rosie to dream of a career as a dancer. With Raju, Rosie allows herself to entertain ideas of having what she wants and doing as she pleases. When she changes her name to Nalini, Rosie enters a new phase of life. By stepping into life as Nalini the dancer, Rosie manages to cast off everything about herself which holds her back. Nalini is strong and confident, secure in her identity as a performer and individual. Nalini's transformation is complete when Raju is sent to prison. Without a man to depend on or to orchestrate her daily life, Nalini flourishes and becomes more successful than ever.

Raju's Mother

Raju's mother does not become a prominent figure in the narrative until after the death of Raju's father during one rainy season. While Raju's father is alive, his mother is the type of wife who nags and complains constantly about one thing or another. Usually, Raju's mother would complain about how much money was being spent. Somehow, she took it upon herself to remind her husband that he was something of a fool about business, although her husband manages very well as the owner of a "hut shop." By her own admission, Raju's mother is uneducated. However, this does not seem to bother her in the least. Raju's mother is somewhat provincial and her values are very traditional. At one point, she tries to convince Raju to marry her brother's daughter; something which was considered acceptable. She is woman who is resigned to her lot in life, cooking and cleaning and serving her family. Raju's mother is a woman who is accustomed to being subservient to a man. Upon the death of her husband, she defers to Raju as the head of the household. When Raju allows Rosie to stay in her house against his mother's wishes, she defers to her brother to handle the situation. Raju's mother loves him but her love is mixed with a measure of spite which makes her less than a sympathetic character.

Velan

Velan is a villager who comes to Raju's temple out of curiosity. Velan is a cattle farmer, as are many who live in his region. His home village is Mangal. Velan has a grown married daughter whom he visits regularly. Velan is the first son of his father's first wife. Even after hearing Raju's life story from Raju himself, Velan refuses to believe that Raju



is anything but a Swami. Velan is loyal and devout and he trusts Raju implicitly. Because Velan refuses to believe that Raju is anything but the priest of the ancient temple, Raju sees Velan as someone he will never be able to get rid of. However, by the end of the novel, Velan comes to be appreciated by Raju as a true and faithful friend. It is Velan's dogged insistence that Raju is a holy man which eventually brings about Raju's transformation.

Marco

Marco is Rosie's husband. Marco is not his real name. Rather, it is a nickname Raju gives the man because Raju thinks he resembles the explorer Marco Polo. Marco wears "thick colored glasses, a thick jacket, and a thick helmet over which was perpetually stretched a green, shiny waterproof cover" (page 5). Marco comes to the Malgudi region to study the ancient cave paintings found near Mempi. Marco is more concerned with his work than with his wife Rosie. He expresses disdain for Rosie's passion for dance. Marco is a rather cold, clinical man whose motives are never made clear to those around him. No mention is ever made as to Marco's profession, although from the narrative, it would be safe to say that Marco is either an anthropologist or an archeologist. Marco and Rosie are alike in that each is completely single-minded about their passion for one particular subject. Marco's focus on his research renders him unable to make room in his life for Rosie.

Raju's Father

Raju's father is a shrewd businessman who manages to make a decent living from his small hut shop. Nothing is known of his background but it is clear that Raju's father is a very gregarious, sociable man who enjoys visiting with his friends, talking politics well into the night. It is also well-established in the narrative that Raju's father is a disciplinarian who is not afraid to punish a child when necessary. Raju's father is a good provider who is ever on the lookout for ways to earn extra money for his family. After his death, Raju's mother is able to live quite comfortably on the money her husband set aside while he was alive. This proves that Raju's father was not such a fool after all.

Gaffur

Gaffur is a taxi driver and an acquaintance of Raju's. Raju describes Gaffur as a "shark" because of Gaffur's tendency to overcharge his customers. Gaffur rehabilitates broken-down automobiles and turns them into taxis. Gaffur likes to gossip and is known to poke his nose into other people's business. Gaffur dislikes Rosie and Marco, but he has no qualms about taking Marco's money. Gaffur and Raju have a falling out when Raju begins an affair with Rosie.



Mani

Mani is Raju's assistant. After Rosie gains a fair amount of fame as a dancer, Raju places Mani in charge of the daily administrative duties that Raju is too busy to handle. Eventually, Mani testifies for the prosecution at Raju's forgery trial. Mani's testimony is ultimately responsible for Raju's conviction.

Raju's Uncle

Raju's maternal uncle is a loud, bombastic, arrogant man who lives in a village near Malgudi. When Raju is a child, he does his best to avoid his uncle because the man is a mean-spirited bully and a blowhard. Raju's uncle appears on the scene after Rosie comes to in Malgudi with Raju and his mother. The uncle harangues Rosie and verbally abuses Raju so severely that Raju must protect her from the uncle's slanderous, vulgar taunts. Raju's uncle convinces Raju's mother to leave her home because of Rosie.

James J. Malone

James J. Malone is an American journalist who makes an appearance in the final chapter of *The Guide*. Malone travels to Malgudi to cover the story of Raju's hunger strike. The only physical description of Malone that the author provides is that Malone has "tousled hair" and that he is "large" and "pink-faced" (192). It is obvious that Malone is a white man, an outsider, and that his presence represents a Western tendency toward voyeurism. o Malone, India is exotic, "other" and his treatment of Raju (and by extension India) much like a scientist studying an insect.



Objects/Places

Malgudi

Malgudi is the name of Raju's hometown. Although Malgudi is a fictional place, in the narrative it is situated in proximity to cities and other geographical features which do exist.

Mempi Peak House

The location where Marco stays, the Mempi Peak House is closer to the caves that Marco is exploring. He spends his days and nights here rather than at the hotel with Rosie.

Room 28 at th Anand Bhavan Hotel

The hotel room where Rosie and Marco stay while on vacation. Room 28 is also the location where Raju and Rosie rendezvous while Marco is involved with his explorations.

The Railway Station

The Malgudi Railway Station is the site of Raju's small sundries business. Travelers passing through Malgudi stop at Raju's stand to buy newspapers, books, snacks and other essentials. The railway station shop is also where travelers can hire Raju to guide them through the city and the areas surrounding Malgudi.

The Letter

Marco sends Rosie a letter requesting her signature in order to have a box of jewelry released to her. In the throes of jealousy and suspicion, Raju chooses not to show the letter to Rosie, which signs himself and returns to the lawyer. Subsequently, Raju is arrested for forgery and imprisoned for two years.

The Cobra

When Rosie and Raju meet for the first time, Rosie asks Raju if he can arrange for her to see "a king cobra [...] which can dance to the music of a flute" (48). Raju, being a man of his word with a reputation to uphold, makes it possible for Rosie to see the snake up close.



Gaffur's Taxi

Gaffur's taxi is the main mode of transportation for Raju's clients. Raju hires Gaffur to drive Rosie and Marco wherever they wish to go. The taxi is rather old and can be unreliable, but Gaffur somehow manages to keep it running.

The Prison

Raju is sentenced to prison for two years after he forges Rosie's name on the jewelry box letter. In prison, Raju makes himself indispensable to the wardens by being a model prisoner who attends to their every need.

The Barber Shop

The barber shop is located near the prison and is usually the first place the ex-convicts go as soon as they are released. Men coming out of prison are anxious to begin anew and a fresh haircut gives them a feeling of starting over.

The Abandoned Temple

The temple is where Raju goes to hide out after he is released from prison. Raju feels too ashamed to return to Malgudi because he is convinced that the people in the village will ridicule him



Themes

What's In a Name?

With the exception of James J. Malone, the American journalist, none of the characters' last names are mentioned in the narrative. It can be surmised that Malone's entire name is used in an effort to reinforce his position as an outsider. In America as well as in other Western nations, a person's name is a signifier of who one is in society and where one comes from. However, by not revealing the surnames of the Indian characters in the novel, the author is subverting the notion that the name makes the (wo)man. In addition, there are several characters who remain unnamed altogether. For example, Raju's maternal uncle, Raju's parents and even the lawyer are never called by name. This would reinforce the view that it is sufficient for the author that the characters know their own names and secondary that the reader does not. Narayan seems to be challenging Western notions of storytelling in that his refusal to "name names" could also be interpreted as the author's way of resisting the convention of telling the reader as much as possible about his characters. Another view could be that Narayan's characters are not imaginary people at all, rather sketches or types of people (for example, "bill collector," "shopkeeper" or "academic"). Also of importance is the naming which does take place in the novel. Towns and cities are named, as well as geographical locations and features. The reader knows that Raju is from Malgudi, that Rosie and Marco come from Madras and that the Sarayu river runs through Raju's hometown.

The most significant naming which takes place in the novel concerns Raju, Rosie and Marco. To begin Raju's nickname is "Railway Raju" not because of an affinity for trains but because of the services Raju provides to customers. The name implies singularity in that there can be only one "Railway Raju" and that the character is indispensable to his traveling and sight-seeing clientele. However, when Raju becomes more important in society, he leaves this name behind and he becomes "Raj," which translates as "king." This is fitting as Raju does become king of his own small empire as a result of taking over as Rosie's manager and love interest. Raju's name then becomes "Swamiji" after Velan mistakes him for a holy man.

Similarly, Rosie also undergoes a name and personality change. No reason is given for Rosie's having been named as such by her family. Hers is obviously not an Indian given name. Actually, the name suggests Western (in this case British) influence and a loss of culture and identity in the lives of some Indians. This fact is what prompts Raju's insistence that Rosie take a more traditional name in order to help her career as a dancer. They choose the name "Nalini" for Rosie's professional name and once Rosie becomes Nalini in the public eye, she assumes the name and in a way reclaims her Indian cultural heritage.

Raju gives Rosie's husband the name Marco because of the way the man appears. According to the narrative, Marco is "dressed like a man about to undertake an expedition" (page 5). Raju has no idea what the real Marco Polo looked like, but the



association is what is most important here. Marco Polo was an explorer, indeed. Raju's assessment of Rosie's husband, however, suggests something else. The outfit Marco wear is reminiscent of that worn by British military men. By extension, Raju is associating Marco with the group which colonized India. Thus, Raju sees Rosie's marriage to Marco as a relationship between colonizer and colonized.

Reconstructing the Self

Raju reconstructs himself multiple times in the course of this narrative. Each time the character "becomes" someone else, it is due to Raju's ability to be what those around him need him to be. The character has a knack for reading situations and filling the space often created by someone else's need for something. As "Railway Raju" he is the super-guide and purveyor of whatever a traveler might need. Raju tells people what they want to hear and he is rewarded for his ability to assess a situation and act quickly on the information he receives. As "Raj," Nalini's manager, Raju plays the role of the busy impresario, scheduling engagements, handling all the finances and lording his position over others. As "Swamiji" Raju dispenses wisdom and common sense, drawing on the stories his mother tells him when he is a boy. Raju has no difficulties stepping into a part. He takes great pains to look whichever part he plays. When he is courting Rosie/Nalini, Raju makes it a point to dress in such a way as to give Rosie the impression that he is somewhat well-off financially. As Rosie's handler, Raju dresses to impress school officials in an effort to manipulate them into inviting Rosie to perform in their evening program. Raju even goes so far as to don a pair of glasses given to him by Marco. The point is that Raju is convinced that if one can look a certain way, things will go the way one wants them to go. This penchant to remake himself based on a particular situation is what proves to be Raju's undoing as well as the way to his own emotional and spiritual growth.

Self-Deception

Self-deception is the crux of Raju's difficulties. Raju is a man of little substance who convinces himself that in order to succeed in life all one has to do is look a particular way or behave in a certain manner. Time and time again, Raju believes his own press, as it were. For example, because he plays the role of an important man about town, Raju believes that he is an important person. Raju feels as though others are inferior to him because they do not possess the things and fine trappings that he accumulates as Rosie's manager and lover. Raju deceives himself into believing that Rosie cannot get along without him and that the lawyer will be able to have the forgery charge against him dropped. As it happens, neither of these things is true. Raju further deceives himself when he begins to believe the things Velan and the other villagers say about him. Although his "holy man" act is actually a ruse, Raju nonetheless plays along because of the free food and his own inner need to be needed by others.



Style

Point of View

Interestingly, Narayan's novel moves back and forth between first and third person narration with some fluidity. Also of note is the fact that this shift occurs more than once in several of the chapters. This proves challenging for the reader in that the point of view most often shifts according to chronology. Moving from past and present and back again is, in terms of this narrative, a matter of course and the reader becomes aware of the small space between "what is" and "what was." In this way, the novel closely mirrors what happens automatically in the human mind. In the first chapter alone, the narration moves between third and first person point of view four times. The successive ten chapters also follow this pattern. While this constant change of perspective is somewhat vertiginous, it nonetheless proves to be more than effective in that the story becomes a kind of tapestry. Raju narrates the story of his childhood and early adulthood. He also narrates the greater portion of the action which occurs after Rosie/Nalini arrives on his doorstep. That is to say, by allowing the main protagonist to tell part of the story in his own words, Narayan gives the reader an opportunity to directly engage primary character. The technique of transitioning between first and third person point of view also serves to guide the reader objectively along Raju's personal trajectory of inner growth

Setting

For the most part, the action in the novel takes place in and around the imaginary Indian village of Malgudi. The novel does, however, also make mention of real-life locations such as the city of Madras (now known as Chennai) and such geographical features as the Sarayu River. Other locations include the Mempi Peak House where Rosie's husband Marco stays while he researches the ancient caves around Malgudi. The Raj Hotel also figures prominently; specifically Room 28, where Raju and Rosie meet secretly when Marco is busy working. Raju's family home holds a particularly significant place in the narrative for two distinct reasons. First of all, it is where he spends his childhood with his mother and father. Secondly, the family home becomes a place of conflict between Raju's past (represented by Raju's mother) and his future (represented by Rosie). The prison where Raju spends two years is established as a place of paradox because of Raju's sense of importance and belonging. Finally, the temple where Raju hides out after his release from prison is yet another site of paradox. It is in the abandoned temple that Raju's inner transformation takes place as a result of being mistaken for a holy man by Vedan. Although it is not surprising that the character's spiritual evolution would happen within temple walls, the temple is also (in the beginning at any rate) just another prop for Raju to use. This means that for a time, the temple is part of Raju's act; much like any other accessory Raju would use to make him appear to be something he is not.



Language and Meaning

R. K. Narayan is one of India's premier English-language novelists. Since the author's place of birth was at one time under British rule, the English language of *The Guide* is slightly different than U.S. English. Thus, the reader will notice some variation in the spelling of such words as "nought" (for "naught"). Narayan's use of the language is nimble and deceptively simple. Upon close examination, however, one can recognize that many of the inflections employed in this narrative are decidedly British-influenced. This observation is also true in terms of sentence structure. Also of note is the author's use of non-English vocabulary. Words such as "dhoti," "dhobi," and "bringal" are left untranslated. In such instances, the reader becomes responsible for deciphering the words' meaning. On one hand, this can be interpreted as Narayan's resistance to anglicization of his novel. On another level, leaving certain words untranslated could be a sign to the reader that some things about Indian culture will always be inaccessible to those on the outside looking in. That so many words remain untranslated (and/or unexplained) in Narayan's novel, it could be surmised that the author's original audience may have been Indian or those familiar with Indian customs and cultures. Until the appearance of James Malone in the final chapter (who only speaks English), one cannot be entirely certain which language the characters speak. There is a distinct chance that characters in the lower castes and classes (Vedan and Gaffur, for example) would speak Tamil rather than English.

Structure

The novel's structure is relatively standard. There are eleven chapters, most of which are rather brief. The only exception to this observation is Chapter 7, which comprises the majority of the action. Chapter 1 serves as a kind of set-up. The main character (Raju) is introduced and some of his personal history begins to unfold. The second and third chapters concentrate primarily on Raju's boyhood and adolescent years. Also, these chapters establish for the reader Raju's relationship with his father. Of the sections, Chapters 1, 2 and 4 consistently weave back and forth from past to present, while alternating between first and third person points of view. Chapter 3 is narrated by Raju as are Chapters 5 through 10. The final chapter brings the novel full circle, concluding in the main protagonist's present. Also, it should be noted that Chapter 11 is the only chapter narrated entirely from the third person point of view.



Quotes

"A man who preferred to dress like a permanent tourist was just what a guide passionately looked for all his life" (Chapter 1, page 5).

"The sugar was kept in an old tin can, which looked rusty but contained excellent sugar. It was kept on a wooden ledge on the smoke-stained wall of the kitchen, out of my reach. I fear that its position was shifted up and up as I grew older, because I remember that I could never get at that rusty can at any time except with the cooperation of my elders" (Chapter 1, page 7).

"Raju was filled with gratitude and prayed that Velan might never come to the stage of thinking that he was too good for food and that he subsisted on atoms from the air" (Chapter 2, page 24).

"He realized that he had no alternative: he must play the role that Velan had given him" (Chapter 2, page 24).

"The banana worked a miracle" (Chapter 4, page 32).

"No one was more impressed with the grandeur of the whole thing than Raju himself" (Chapter 4, page 35).

"[Rosie] was not very glamorous, if that is what you expect, but she did have a figure, a slight and slender one, beautifully fashioned, eyes that sparkled, a complexion not white, but dusky, which made her only half visible — as if you saw her through a film of tender coconut juice" (Chapter 5, page 49).

"She looked disheveled; her eyes were red with recent tears, and she wore a faded cotton sari; no paint or perfume, but I was prepared to accept her as she was" (Chapter 5, page 55).

"He enunciated some principle of living such as that on a special Wednesday he always liked to make his food with rice flour and such-and-such a spice, and he mentioned it with an air of seriousness so that his listeners took it as a spiritual need, something of the man's inner discipline to keep his soul in shape and his understanding with the Heavens in order" (Chapter 6, page 80).

"He had created a giant with his puny self, a throne of authority with that slab of stone" (Chapter 6, page 85).

"After all, mechanical brakes, you know; I still maintain they are better than hydraulic. Just as an old, uneducated wife is better than the new type of girl. Oh, modern girls are very bold. I wouldn't let my wife live in a hotel room all by herself if I had to remain on duty on a hilltop!" (Chapter 7, page 89).



"I was becoming fear-ridden. I couldn't even sort out my worries properly. I was in a jumble. I was suddenly seized with fears, sometimes with a feeling that I didn't look well enough for my sweetheart. I was obsessed with the thought that I hadn't perhaps shaved my chin smoothly enough, and that she would run her fingers over my upper lip and throw me out" (Chapter 7, page 90).

"My old life, in which I was not in the least interested, was dogging my steps; my mother facing me with numerous problems: municipal tax, the kitchen tiles needing attention, the shop, accounts, letters from the village, my health, an so on and so forth; to me she was a figure out of a dream, mumbling vague sounds; and this boy had his own way of cornering and attacking me" (Chapter 7, page 91).

"She was a devoted artist; her passion for physical love was falling into place and had ceased to be a primary obsession with her" (Chapter 8, page 128).

"I was a man with a mission. I dressed myself soberly for the part in a sort of rough-spun silk shirt and an upper cloth and a handspun and handwoven dhoti, and I wore rimless glasses [...] I wore a wristwatch — all this in my view lent such weight to what I said that they had to listen to me respectfully" (Chapter 8, page 139).

"I too felt changed; I had ceased to be the old Railway Raju and I earnestly wished that I too could bury myself, as Rosie had done, under a new name" (Chapter 8, page 139).

"What can a crocodile do to you if your mind is clear and your conscience is untroubled?" Raju said grandly (Chapter 4, page 34).

"Who would decorate a rainbow?" (Chapter 5, page 55).

"Of course, they paid for the dance, and the public was there, after paying for their seats but all the same I gave the inescapable impression that I was conferring on them a favor by permitting the dance" (Chapter 9, page 144).

"My father had designed this house for a shopkeeper, not for a man of consequence and status who had charge of a growing celebrity" (Chapter 9, page 146).

"I've come to the conclusion that nothing in this world can be hidden or suppressed. All such attempts are like holding an umbrella to conceal the sun" (Chapter 9, page 156).

"Sometimes I observed how a big crowd waited for me outside, through the glass window in the hall, and I made a strategic exit through a side door, straight on to the garage, and from there dashed to the gate, while the visitors looked on helplessly. I felt vastly superior to everyone" (Chapter 10 page 148).

"I was suddenly racked with the feeling that after all I had done for her she was not sufficiently sympathetic to my cause" (Chapter 10 page 174).



"I felt choked with tears when I had to go out after two years, and I wished that we had not wasted all that money on our lawyer. I'd have been happy to stay in this prison permanently" (Chapter 10, page 181).

"For the first time in his life he was making an earnest effort; for the first time he was learning the thrill of application, outside money and love; for the first time he was doing a thing in which he was not personally interested" (Chapter 11, page 189).



Topics for Discussion

How does the shift between third and first person narration in Chapter 1 correspond to the chronology of the main protagonist's life?

Using examples from the text, discuss the ways in which Raju manages to reconstruct himself at various points in the narrative. Discuss the character's preoccupation with appearance and its impact on his social relationships.

On page 28, Raju's mother asks, "Why should you have all this additional bother in this household, horse and horse grams and all that, while the buffalo pair is a sufficient bother?" Considering her question, in what way(s) does Raju's mother symbolize provincial resistance to progress?

Compare Raju's attitude toward being mistaken for a holy man with his feelings concerning his role as Nalini's manager. How are these two "parts" similar in the character's mind? How are the "parts" different for Raju? Use textual examples to support your position.

Why is imprisonment such a pleasurable experience for Raju? Cite examples from the narrative explaining the character's feelings and motivations.

What is the significance of Malone's presence in Chapter 11? In your response, take into consideration Raju's infatuation with notoriety.

Narayan's novel contains very little in the way of descriptions. As a reader, how does this phenomenon impact the way one engages the story? Does the lack of descriptive information make it more difficult to fully understand what happens to the characters? Why or why not?