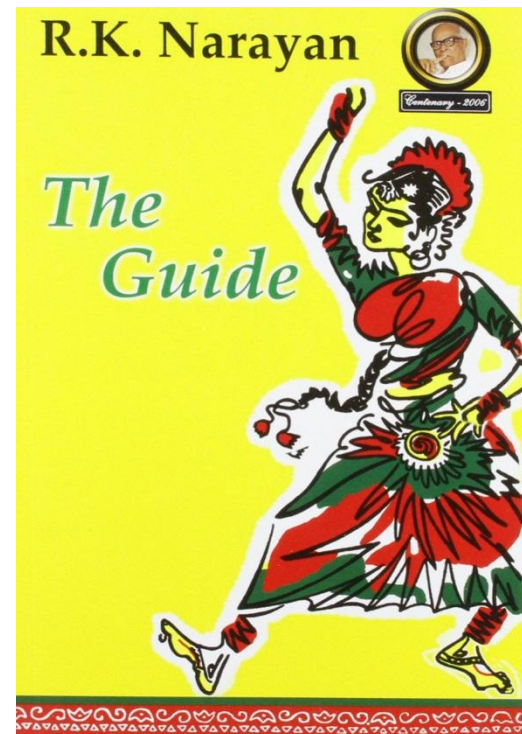
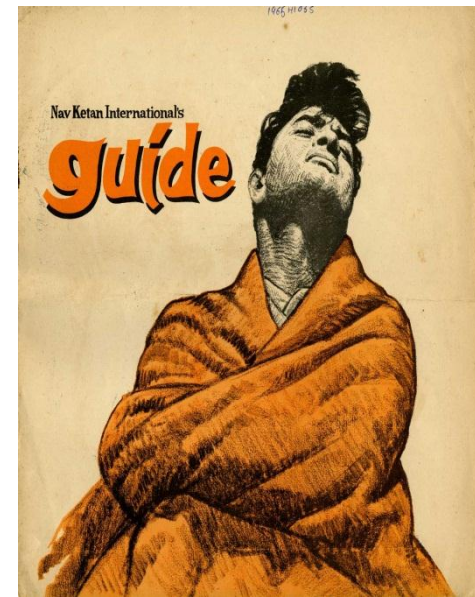
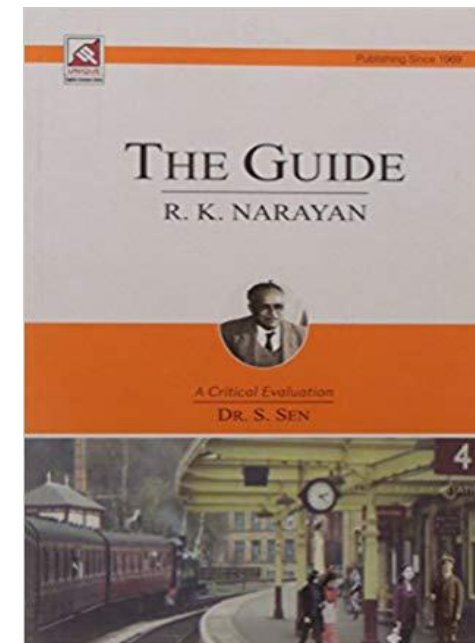




R. K. Narayan's The Guide



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The Guide is powerful story about spiritual transformation and self-realization.

The narrative itself is both fantastical and comical, as the path the main character, Raju, takes to understanding is not intentional.

In essence, Narayan's story shows how a man intent on deception, including self-deception, comes to find clarity based in large part on his life of deception

The adventures of a railway guide, popularly known as 'Railway Raju'. Widely popular a tourist guide

Contact with Marco and his beautiful wife, Rosie. While the husband is busy with his archaeological studies, Raju seduces his wife

Ultimately Marco comes to know of her affair with Raju and goes away to Madras leaving Rosie behind.

Rosie comes and stays with Raju in his one-room house. His mother tolerates her for some time, but when things become unbearable, she calls her brother and goes away with him.

Rosie is a born dancer, she practices regularly and soon Raju finds an opening for her.

In her very first appearance, she is a grand success. Soon she is very much in demand and their earnings increase enormously.

Raju lives lavishly, entertains a large number of friends with whom he drinks and gambles.

All goes well till Raju forges Rosie's signatures to obtain valuable jewellery lying with her husband. The act lands him in jail.

Rosie leaves Malgudi and goes away to Madras, her hometown. She goes on with her dancing and does well without the help and management of Raju, of which he was so proud

On release from jail, Raju takes shelter in a deserted temple on the banks of the river Sarayu, a few miles away from Malgudi, and close to the village called Mangla.

The simple villagers take him to be a Mahatma, begin to worship him, and bring him a lot of eatables as presents.

Raju is quite comfortable and performs the role of a saint to perfection.

However, soon there is a severe famine drought, and the villagers expect Raju to perform some miracle to bring them rain. So he has to undertake a fast.

The fast attracts much attention and people come to have darshan of the Mahatma from far and wide. On the twelfth day of the fast, Raju falls down exhausted just as there are signs of rain on the distant horizon. It is not certain if he is actually dead or merely fainted.

The last pages of Narayan's best novel, *The Guide*, find Raju, the chief protagonist, at the end of a lifetime of insincerity and pain.

As a professional guide to Malgudi's environs, he invented whole new historical pasts for bored tourists; he seduced a married woman, drifted away from his old mother and friends, became a flashy cultural promoter, and then tried, absentmindedly, to steal and was caught and spent years in jail, abandoned by everyone.

He stops eating, and quickly diminishes. News of his efforts goes around; devotees and sightseers, gathering at the riverside, create a religious occasion out of the fast.

Characteristically, Narayan doesn't make it clear whether Raju's penance does actually lead to rain. He also doesn't make much of Raju's decision, the moment of his redemption, which a lesser writer would have attempted to turn into a resonant ending, but which is quickly passed over here in a few lines.

His last few months have been spent in relative comfort as a holy man on the banks of a river: a role imposed on him by reverential village folk.

But the river dries up after a drought and his devotees start looking to him to intercede with the gods. Raju resentfully starts a fast, but furtively eats whatever little food he has saved.

Then abruptly, out of a moment of self disgust, comes his resolution: for the first time in his life, he will do something with complete sincerity, and he will do it for others: if fasting can bring rain, he'll fast.

Raju's transition from conman to holy man is both comical and didactic. Narayan's narrative shows how people can be destined for great things without even realizing it.

At the same time, it shows how people's pasts are not entirely what defines them. People can change and do good in life. They can go from self-centered individuals to people of character, like Raju.

Ultimately, perhaps, the narrative shows that there are often greater forces at work than what mankind perceives in a moment of choice, whether a good choice or not.

There is hope for mankind, despite outward appearances. Raju's journey is testament to this hope.



THE GUIDE



CHARACTERS

Raju (Novel begins with him and closes with him)

The protagonist and at times the narrator, the son of a poor shopkeeper from the village of Malgudi.

His character undergoes various transformations -from shopkeeper to guide ("Railway Raju"), to lover, to impresario (manager of Rosie's career as a dancer), to prisoner, to impostor (fake guru), to perhaps genuine swami or mahatma

Raju is clever, and although he succumbs to the temptations of luxury when Rosie (A married woman) succeeds as a dancer.

Marco Rosie's husband trusted Raju.

He does offer her the chance to do what she has always wanted, and his love for her appears to be genuine.

While Marco is away with his research, the relation between Raju and Rosie grow mentally as well as physically.

When Marco comes to know about their affair he abandon Rosie and went to Madras.

Raju gave Rosie shelter, but since he was involved with a married women, he lost his job from railway station. Also loses Gaffur who advised him to sent Rosie (a tainted women) back.

Raju helped Rosie for pursuing her ambition of becoming a dancer (Bharat natyam). By managing her performances Raju became a wealthy person.

Rosie adopted a new name as Nalini in new phase of her life.

At the exciting stage, Raju committed a forgery by signing a letter to grab jewelery meant for Rosie left by Marco. He was jailed for two year.

After release from the jail he took shelter in an ancient temple of village Mangala.

Velan, the headman of the village takes him to be a wandering sadhu, and due to respect by the velan and villagers he play a new role of a saint. Also he play a role of “Mr. Know all” for the villagers who addressed him as swami.

But a twist occurs in the life of Raju , famine hit the region, he had to undergo a fast for twelve days and on the twelfth day he fainted down. But while he was weak predicted the arrival of rain which come true coincidentally.

Readers must decide for themselves about the reality and depth of Raju’s transformation by the end of the novel.

Raju's mother

A traditional Indian woman who defines herself in terms of her domestic role.

She is developed more fully as a character than is her husband, about whom she complains frequently.

Her initial, albeit reluctant, acceptance of the low-caste Rosie into her house and Rosie's affection for her indicate that she is a positive character.

Raju's failure to heal their relationship or to build her a new home when he becomes wealthy tends to undercut his character.

When she calls in her imperious brother to deal with Rosie, she reveals the weakness of the traditional Indian woman, who relies on domineering males to resolve problems.

Rosie

Rosie is the daughter of a dancer (Devdasi) and therefore belongs to a lower caste.

She is a woman of independent mind and thinking. To break the chain of orthodox customs she obtained M.A. degree in Economics.

She did not marriage Marco out of love but because of his social status. But marriage turns disastrous since her husband didn't allow her passion of dancing. She finds no love and sympathy from her husband.

She found hope in Raju as her companion who understands her and supports her in her ambition.

Attains popularity as a dancer (Nalini) by performing on the stage. She becomes the national star of Bharat Natyam.

But later in this profession of busy schedule she founds herself as a performing monkey. At times she remembers Marco and feels guilty for her unfaithfulness.

But a hard turn waits for her when Raju arrested by police on the charges of forgery. She blames her own karma for this condition.

She also realizes Rajus's forgery was out of his greed. Yet she tries hard to save Raju by employing a lawyer.

Raju's two years imprisonment made her leave Malgudi and persue her art single handedly and succeed without Raju.

At times she appears to be a mature woman but at other, she behaves like a child. She is more of a dreamer than real. Materialism is not of her concern.

She is an agitated soul and suffers from an inferiority complex because of her low birth. At last, she decides to live alone, abandoning Raju also.

Marco

Marco is Rosie's husband. He expected from his wife understanding, mature behavior and capacity to live independently.

She wants love from Marco but he had no time even for looking to the needs of his wife. He never respects her desires as she always wanted to be a dancer.

Marco hates dancing and he always insults her by calling her daughter of a dancer and she felt inferior to him despite her education.

However, he is very honest and sincere scholar. His sincerity towards his work leads him to get his book published.

He left jewelry for Rosie even when he knows that she already left him and not going to live with him. Marco is an unsuccessful husband but a successful scholar.

Velan

Velan is a superstitious man who believes in saints and miracles because during 60s of 20th century India, most of the villagers believe in these things, they think only God or their disciple can save them from their poverty, and other calamities.

Velan was expecting the same from Raju. He is a good friend of Raju, but he got blind by the edification and preaches of Raju,

he still believed in Raju when he told the truth of his past life, and he said It does not matter what a man was instead what matters the most is what a man is. It shows his immense faith in Raju.

Velan's Sister

Velan's Sister is the third woman character in the novel. She is a minor character but she played a major role in Raju's life of a saint.

It was she who makes Raju popular in the village by accepting the proposal of the groom that his brother chooses for her. This transformation surprised Velan and confirms him that Raju is a holy man.

Gaffur

A Chauffeur and a good friend of Raju. Extremely shrewed in his profession. He also takes vehicle of old models and turns into a new models.

Raju employs him for Rosie and Marco. But when Gaffur realises intimate relations of Rosie and Raju he cautions Raju.

Later he advises Raju to sent Rosie back to her husband and returns to her original business.

Raju refuses to listen to him resultantly Gaffur went away from him.

A Star Lawyer:

A lawyer from Madras employed by Rosie to plead the case of Raju.

He charges 750 Rs.. A day besides railway fare and other expenses.

THE GUIDE

R. K. NARAYAN



Themes of the Novel

Exposing Hypocrisy

Hypocrisy is one of the major themes of the novel.

[Raju](#) is a hypocritical character from the very beginning of his life.

As a tour guide- misinforms the tourists , makes stories out of thin air as he pleases as a tour guide.

He helps [Rosie](#) only for his own interest

In the end poses as a swami as part of another one of his trickeries.

The author works in the imagery of a crocodile, which refers to hypocrisy

The crocodile stories used to go around in the Mangala village for a long time

Dishonesty

The protagonist, Raju, has always been a dishonest character throughout his life.

As a child, he eats the green peppermints from his father's shop even though he was strictly forbidden to.

he becomes a tour guide who misinforms and misguides his tourists to get more money

He misleads Rosie to fall in love with him

Coming out of prison, he poses as a sage at a ruined shrine

Even as he fasts, he eats a stack of food hidden away in an aluminum pot on the very first day.

Interaction of Romance and Reality

The coming of the railway to Malgudi is symbolic of the impact of an industrial and urban society on a predominantly simple, agricultural community with its new problems which would mean the undoing of the old days of living and the cherished values of life.

The tamarind tree which was the seat of Raju's boyhood and of village cartmen who unyoked their bullocks for the night is now full of lorries packed under it—for there is brisk activity because of the laying of the railway track.

We see that Raju who grew up in a decent home has now picked up terms of abuse from the railwaymen and the father's words 'just my misfortune' sound ominous in the light of the impending disaster.

The railway meant the ruining of Raju and his old mother—a small shopkeeper's son becomes a railway guide, starts living by his wits, runs into Rosie and Marco, two tourists, gets emotionally entangled, neglects honest means of making a living, and brings ruin upon himself as well as a married woman.

The interaction of romance and reality has a meaning in The Guide.

The thesis that R. K. Narayan presents in the novel is that neither immorality nor commercial motives pay in life.

Characters like Raju and Rosie suffer because of certain inherent defect in their temperament.

But Narayan is an optimist; he is a positive thinker. He believes, like Keats, that suffering is a 'veil of soul-making'. It is in and through suffering that Raju and Rosie attain the state of self-purification.

Rosie's final return to Madras to re-dedicate herself to the practice of traditional classic dance is 'born out of the same spiritual motivation'.

And so is the transformation of Raju into a true Swami, 'the progress of the typical individual consciousness in the guide from its narrow egocentricity to the ultimate archetypal awareness of cosmic consciousness.'

Transformation

When Raju finishes telling his life story to [Velan](#), Raju expects Velan should stop believing in him and yet he pours his heart out to Velan, shows some sort of growth in his character.

At the very end, out of extreme hunger Raju starts to fast sincerely and avoid all thoughts regarding tongue and stomach. It helps him concentrate and that ends his hunger.

When the doctors and the government go all out to save the swami on the dawn of the 12th day, Raju goes out to perform his daily routine at 6 am climbing down the steps to the river with the help of two men on both sides.

He stands in the knee deep water and faces the mountain muttering his prayer while Velan and the other man continues to hold him and he says, “Velan, it’s raining in the hills. I can feel it coming up under my feet, up my legs-“ and he sags down.

Here the water can mean purity and rain may literally on its way but there is no way to know for sure as the author ends it just like that.

Rosie is another character in the novel who goes through transformation as well.

Her change of names mark her transformation. Named Rosie, she is a wife longing for a scholar of husband's love and attention, a passionate dancer waiting on her husband's approval, later becoming a renowned dancer with a help of Raju and a girl falling in love with hypocrite of a man.

But named Nalini, she is a mature independent woman who chooses to live alone peacefully, even leaving behind her dancing career and Raju.

Other Themes:

- Love and Passion
- Gender and Nation
- Religion and Spirituality
- Blending of Indian Mythology
- Modernity and life of Malgudi

Narrative Technique, language and Style in The Guide:

In most of Narayan's novels, the narration moves forward chronologically. There is no looking backward or forward, no probing of the subconscious or the unconscious.

According to Paul Varghese, "Narayan's is the simplest form of prose fiction- the story which records a succession of events. There is no hiatus between character and plot; both are inseparably knit together. The qualities the novelist attributes to these characters determine the action, and the action in turn progressively changes the characters and thus the story is carried forward to the end.

In other words, as a good story-teller, Narayan sees to it that his story has a beginning, a middle and an end. The end of his novel is a solution to the problem which sets the events moving; the end achieves that completeness towards which the action has been moving and beyond which the action cannot progress. This end very often consists either in a balance of forces and counter-forces or in death or both."

The Guide, however, is an exception in this respect. The narrative technique Narayan has followed in this novel is different from that of the other novels.

In The Guide, however, part of the story is told by the author and part in the first person by the protagonist Raju himself. The novel begins with Raju's release from prison.

From the start of the novel we feel the presents, the tactful, effective presence of the idea shaping the density of the detail.

Or- since this is to invert the order in which we are aware of the two things we feel the detail, solid, convincing, natural as it is, representing and illustrating the conception – and doing so lightly, economically, directly:

This interesting, novel technique keeps up the curiosity of the readers alive, regarding both the present and the past of Raju.

It leads the native freshness and makes it vigorous and interesting. As Raju's present and past are cleverly jumbled, there is a constant impression of suspension and anticipation.

The zig-zag narration give a piquancy to the novel without in any way confusing the reader. In this way, Raju becomes his own critic, and we are enabled "to see the action as Raju sees the earlier Raju Drunk". In this way, the present and the past are juxtaposed, each illuminating the other in this complex, original and unique technique Narayan has used in this novel.

Narayan's English:

Narayan undoubtedly writes English with a distinct Indian colouring, which makes its presence felt in a number of ways.

One can make an extensive analysis of Narayan's use of Indianisms, which include words from Tamil, Sanskrit and Hindi, as for example, "Dhoti", "Pyol", "Jutka", "Salt" etc. Translations of Tamil expressions like "worshipping room", "dinning leaf" and "sitting plank" as well as certain coinages like "led about by a nose-rope like a bullock" and "half-arm shirt" can also be found in his works, apart from compound words like "semi-interest", "bull-calf", "dung-cake", "betel nut-spittle", "nose-screw", "stitching master", "foreign-returned people", "slow-witted", "red-tapists" and collocations like "even if I have seven births, I won't be able to repay my debt to you" and "what sin have I committed to observe these harsh words".

Narayan makes use of direct translations from Indian idioms and expressions such as "My professor will eat me up", "to the dust pot with your silly customs" and "The unbeaten brat will remain unlettered".

***The Guide* by R.K Narayan – Significance of the title**

R.K Narayan's novel, *The Guide*, is the journey of a common man from being a charlatan tourist guide to a purified soul transformed into a spiritual guide, ready to sacrifice his life for the welfare of the common people.

Raju, the guide is fated to be a guide by chance and temperament. He gives false information, cheats the tourists successfully and becomes famous as a tourist guide.

His popularity as a tourist guide brings him in contact with Rosie and Marco; and Raju starts a new phase of life as an adulterous lover and a theatrical impresario.

However, Rosie's obsession with dance results in alienation and loss of communication. Raju feels bewildered and beset. His love, jealousy and possessiveness motivate him to hide Marco's book and copy Rosie's signature.

Basically he does not want her to realize Marco's generosity. This choice of his, ironically leads to his imprisonment. In fact he is so used to playing roles that he does not realize the extent of his act.

When he is sitting bored and lonely near a dilapidated temple after his release from jail, a villager called Velan - impressed by his saintly appearance - is encouraged to unburden himself, looking for advice and guidance.

Raju on the other hand is tempted to play the role of the swami because “it was in his nature to get involved in other people’s interest and activities”

But the affection and devotion of the peasants transform Raju to such an extent that he assumes the role of a spiritual guide too seriously.

The unshakeable faith of the people of Mangal transforms Raju into an instrument of their will.

When he is called upon to fast by his devotees, and thus to bring rains to the parched land, he realizes that, “he had worked himself into a position from which he could not get out.”

He makes an attempt to confess to Velan all about his notorious past. But Velan’s rustic discipline towards him is so deep that he refuses to believe him.

Then Raju becomes aware about the fact that something has changed within himself: “ if by avoiding food I should help the trees bloom, and the grass grow, why not do it thoroughly?”

For the first time in his life he has been making an earnest effort outside money and love. It reveals the spiritual achievement of Raju.

The novel thus concludes in the magnitude of his spiritual gain and the title attains an elevated significance.

Raju is initially entrapped in the illusory world when the materialistic philosophy guides and governs his life.

By the end of the novel, Raju attains that selfless state like a saint, which sets the stage for his release from all the worldly shackles.

Conclusively, *The Guide* is the story of the protagonist's journey through life. It is his journey through a maze of illusions and the attainment of the ultimate universal truth.

He is transformed into a spiritual leader because he has escaped from the coils of mortality.

Concept of Indianness in 'The Guide'

- 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.
- The main characters of this novel are Raju, Rosie and Marco.
- 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. Hospitality of Indians is a well known trait all over the world.
- Narayan has given a clear picture of India at the time of narration without idealizing the country and he has not also condemned it.
- The poverty of India has been reflected with a personal touch of the author.
- The villagers are shown as suffering from poverty and ignorance and their illiteracy has been reflected as the root cause for all their sufferings. There are as gullible and kind hearted as any Indian village habitats.