

The Guide: the Story and Analysis

The Guide (1958) is one of the most acclaimed novels of R. K. Narayan. The fiction describes the vicissitudes of life through its protagonist Raju, who undergoes a series of transformations, from a tour guide to a convicted prisoner to one of the greatest holy men of the country.

The protagonist of the novel, Raju, is a tour guide in the town of Malgudi. His imagination to weave stories and his eloquence make him very popular, thereby earning him the moniker of 'Railway Raju'. It so happens that Raju meets Rosie, and her husband, Marco as their tour guide but soon gets closed to Rosie as all wasn't well in the married life of Rosie and Marco. Rosie has the talent of classical dancing which is often ridiculed by Marco. Marco who has come to Malgudi to research cave painting and temples scattered over the surroundings of Malgudi remains so preoccupied that Rosie finds emotional affability and availability in Raju.

Raju encourages Rosie to take up dancing; and soon they strike up an affair behind Marco's back. As it turns out, Marco leaves Rosie behind in Malgudi which makes Rosie and Raju living together in Raju's house. Despite all the backlash from family and neighbours, Raju and Rosie work undeterred towards Rosie's dancing-career. Soon after, Rosie becomes Nalini, the famous dancer and Raju her manager. After a trail of success parties, Raju's jealousy and Raju's final act of deception where he forges Nalini's signature, everything comes crashing down for Raju as he ends up in jail for the sentence of two years. Meanwhile, Rosie keeps on rising in her career as a dancer.

Upon his release from Jail, Raju ends up in a village and soon attracts village people who revere him as a spiritual master. Raju realises that he has nowhere to go, he plays along and sinks into the role of a saint. When a severe drought afflicts the village, Raju is unwittingly drawn into undertaking a two week fast on behalf of the villagers to bring about rains. Raju couldn't carry on the deceit for long and tells the truth to Velan, his first follower. Velan remains unchanged in his reverence for Raju. Finally, Raju decides to undertake fast in earnest as a way of repaying Velan's and villagers' faith in him. The fasting of the holy man for rains spread like wildfire; soon media from all over arrive in the village to broadcast the story. On the final day of his fast, Raju with Velan's help reaches the river to hold his vigil as he has done every day throughout the fast. On the brink of unconsciousness, he looks to the horizon and tells Velan that he feels rain coming over the hills.

(To be continued...)