

Character analysis:

Raju: Raju is the protagonist of the novel, *The Guide*. His affability coupled with the gift of gab earns him the sobriquet of 'railway Raju'. He is intuitive about his customers' needs and makes himself indispensable. Over the course of the story Raju dons several hats: first, as a tourist guide; second, as a manager of Nalini, the dancer and third, as the holy man in a village full of naive and superstitious people. He has the required cunning and sleight of hand to pull off all these roles successfully.

As railway Raju, he defrauds people by giving exaggerated descriptions of the tourist spots of Malgudi. He does not shy away from striking affair with a married woman who happened to be in marital distress. Nevertheless, his persistence and stratagems bring him rewards in whatever he decides to do. As Nalini's manager and lover, he was dogged by the spasms of jealousy pretty often. This leads to his crime of forgery of signature, which eventually earns him a two years sentence in jail. In his final avatar of a holy man, he doesn't flinch from exploiting the simple villagers of their innocence and honesty. He even "grew a beard and long hair to fall on his nape" to enhance his spiritual status in the eyes of villagers. However, to consider Raju as thoroughly evil would be sheer injustice to him.

Despite his cheating, Raju had some ennobling qualities which are enough to differentiate him from evil. The lies he tells to tourists was not to fulfil his selfish end, but solely to make his tourists' excursions meaningful. Raju has a genuine appreciation for Nalini's dancing talent and he does his best in realising Rosie's dream of dancing. He does not care for the family or society and accommodates

Rosie when she turns up at his house after Marco leaves her. Being in love and driven by jealousy, he lies to Rosie and even commits forgery.

Nevertheless, Raju truly redeems himself towards the end of the novel when he decides to take fasting in right earnest for the villagers who counted on him for his saintly capacities. Commenting on the character of Raju, Mary Beatina writes, “from the beginning of his career, Raju is an accommodator”, and that his “attempts to accommodate, mundane as they are, nonetheless prepares him for the transcendent life he eventually achieves”.