

CHARACTERS IN *THE GUIDE*

RAJU

Raju, the protagonist of the novel seems to have a dual personality. His character can be explored in different phases in the novel -- As a tourist guide, he tells lies and cheats the tourists for his personal benefit. Even when he does not have the knowledge about a certain place, he makes ambiguous statements about it and never says 'no'. However, he does this to make their trip more enjoyable and meaningful. By his wit, eloquence, knowledge and common-sense, he impresses the tourists and intuitively comprehends their needs.

In his relationship with Rosie, he is morally corrupt, self-centered, possessive, jealous and exploits her both emotionally and monetarily but at the same time, he gives her what she could not get from her husband. While her husband always ignores and humiliates her and when he even forsakes her, Raju remains very warm, caring and understanding, recognizes her innate dancing talent, motivates her to become a renowned dancer and adds a new meaning to her life. However, this relationship spoils his entire career and life.

As Marco's guide, on one hand, Raju is very co-operative, affable and helps him at every step but on the other hand, he tries every strategy to seduce his wife.

When Raju forges Rosie's signature, he is incarcerated and declared a criminal. However, the behaviour of this criminal in the prison is 'ideal'; he helps everyone, keeping them busy and in high spirits.

He is very close and deeply attached to his mother; he sobs and cries when she leaves him, but when it's time to choose between Rosie and his mother, he goes for Rosie.

When the role of a saint is thrust upon him, he is more of a hypocrite exploiting the honesty and simplicity of the innocent villagers; improvising and perfectly acting his part, making impressive, aphoristic statements, getting free food and respect and dealing strategically with the quarrel-situation to avoid the police. But, at the same

time he seems to work like a philanthropist for the well-being of the villagers. The collective blind faith of the villagers transform him; he forgets that he is an actor playing a role. The role becomes a reality, when he gets ready to become a martyr for the cause of the villagers.

Raju possesses a unique capacity to adapt himself to all kinds of situations. He is a genial, self-made man, extrovert, loves life and lives every moment as it comes to him. The dichotomy in his character seems very complex but sustains the interest of the reader throughout the novel.

ROSIE

Rosie, a very charming and attractive lady, belongs to the family of Devdasis, a post-graduate in Economics, marries Marco and considers herself to be fortunate as her husband belongs to the upper strata of society.

As Marco's wife, she is very devoted, warm and caring, but very soon she discovers that their interests are poles apart. She chooses a different kind of life for herself, but remains emotionally attached to her husband, even after he deserts her. Later on, she feels guilty that she has betrayed her husband's trust. Even while staying with Raju, she constantly thinks of Marco, cuts his picture from a *Weekly* magazine and pastes it on her mirror. When she leaves Malgudi, she sells all her possessions except the "most precious" thing, i.e. Marco's book, which she carries with her.

Rosie's passion for dance is so strong that she drifts towards Raju and is indifferent to the fact that Raju is exploiting her. Her own perseverance and Raju's motivation makes her a very successful dancer and for this she is grateful to Raju. Although, she hates Raju for his act of forgery, yet she is determined to spend her entire fortune for his legal battle. She has given up dancing, but just to raise funds for Raju, she takes up dancing again. She breaks down when she goes to meet Raju in the prison. This shows that she is a good human being.

Despite the fact that Rosie has committed adultery, the reader seems to like her for her strong determination to achieve her goal, for her indifference to the

materialistic values of life, and for her vitality, warmth, passionate and co-operative nature.

MARCO

Marco, Rosie's wealthy husband is an academician and researcher, totally dedicated to the study of culture and art. He is so much engrossed with 'the dead and decaying things' that he has no time to spare for his 'living' wife, who is a 'true embodiment of art'.

He seems to be a typical man of a patriarchal society, who wants Rosie only to be a very caring housewife, catering to the needs of the family and living like his shadow, with no identity of her own. He has a very traditional mind set; he does not consider dancing as a 'great art' but demeans it by equating it with "street acrobatics". He thinks that a woman belonging to a 'good family' should not become a dancer. Warmth, understanding and compromising nature--qualities which are prerequisites for a successful conjugal life are lacking in him.

At the same time, he feels that the most important thing in a good relationship is "trust". When Rosie accepts the fact that she has adulterous relations with Raju, and sincerely begs for his forgiveness, he abandons her, as she has betrayed his trust.

He is very honest and sincere too; he acknowledges his gratitude to Raju in his newly published book, despite the fact that Raju has cheated him. He even returns Rosie's jewellery. However, he informs the police about Raju's act of forgery because he wants to teach him a lesson for seducing his wife.

One can say that Marco is an introvert, self-centered, slightly conservative, eccentric, harsh but a righteous man.

VELAN

Velan is a naive, innocent, simple, honest, clear-hearted and illiterate villager. He is the first person whom Raju encounters sitting beside an ancient shrine. Raju's facade and style of speech makes Velan feel that he is above ordinary, a godly-man, so he confides in him. On getting logical and philosophical answers to his problem, he becomes Raju's sincere disciple and makes the credible villagers also do the same.

Velan's blind faith in Raju does not shake, even when he tells him the truth about his past life; he has a grave expression on his face, but he continues to venerate him as a saint. He, along with the other villagers, is superstitious enough to believe that the fast of the pure-hearted saint can bring rain. He observes a symbolic fast along with him. As Swamiji's health deteriorates, he gets extremely concerned. It is Velan's blind faith which brings about a transformation in Raju, who very sincerely resolves to sacrifice his life for the innocent villagers. As the novel begins with Raju's talks with Velan; it ends also with Swami Raju's last words to him, "Velan, it's raining in the hills"

RAJU'S MOTHER

Raju's mother is a typical mother of the patriarchal Indian society; she is totally devoted towards her family and fulfils her responsibilities with utmost care. She is very affectionate, grooms up her son Raju as a pampered child and narrates tales to him from Indian epics. She co-operates with her husband and at times acts like a nagging wife. She is a very religious lady, reads prayers and sits before God in meditation. When Rosie comes to stay with them, initially she is compassionate and hospitable. However, later on, as she does not approve of Raju-Rosie relationship, she speaks harshly to her and tries every trick to drive her out of the house. When she decides to leave Raju, she is very sad and there is extraordinary consideration in her voice when she advises him to be very careful about his health. She is distraught when Raju is imprisoned. She is a kind-hearted, considerate lady, empathizes with the pain of others but cannot tolerate wrong things.

RAJU'S MATERNAL UNCLE

Raju's maternal uncle drops 'like a bolt from the blue' in the novel. He is physically strong, a big land owner and a kind of general advisor and director of Raju's important family matters. He is very stern, a strict disciplinarian; Raju used to be scared of him even in his childhood. He is called by Raju's mother to admonish Raju and help her to get rid of Rosie. He, too, is contemptuous of Raju-Rosie relationship. He warns Raju to drive away Rosie from their house and threatens him with dire

consequences using very harsh and abusive language. When he does not succeed in his attempt, he asks his sister to accompany him to his village. He says that as long as he is alive, he will never let his sister down. He proves himself to be a very responsible, caring and affectionate brother.