

RAJU

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Raju is one of the most memorable creations of R.K. Narayan. He is the protagonist of the novel *The Guide*. The novel is, in fact, about Raju's transformation from an ordinary tourist guide to the spiritual guide of ignorant, superstitious masses of Malgudi. He is an acting character who plays a number of roles. It is only when he plays the role of a Swami that he develops a perspective of life and thus dies a martyr.

Born and brought up in a lower middle class family, in a neglected corner of Malgudi, Raju receives no formal education. His father condemns him in his early childhood as "clay-headed". But he has a special skill in understanding human nature. His early transformation from a book-seller to a tourist guide is largely due to this. The moment he sees Marco and Rosie alighting from the train, he knows that they are going to be his life long customers. He has learnt everything from life itself.

As a tourist guide, Raju is very popular. Tourists get down at Malgudi and search for 'Railway Raju'. Certain qualities of his nature endear him to all those who come into his contact, including Marco. His spontaneous love for all, his gay temperament and readiness to help people make him an admirable companion. He readily sacrifices his comforts and conveniences for a husband-troubled lady, Rosie. She is subjected to all sorts of insults and studied indifference. Raju cannot tolerate it. It is his deep sense of