

HRS 151
Study Guide for
The Guide

OVERVIEW: This is the most straightforward of the novels assigned for the course, primarily due to the fact that the author emulates most of the conventions of English novel writing with which many students will already be familiar. The only complexity is the fact that storylines from several different time periods are intertwined and ultimately converge. This outline of the novel guide isolates these different strands of the narrative to make it easier to keep track of them.

Strand 1: Raju the Holy Ascetic

- Chapter 1 begins by initiating this strand of the story line by describing Raju's encounter with the peasant Velan on the bank of a river near an abandoned shrine. The narrative flashes back briefly to Raju's conversation with a barber a few days earlier, clarifying that Raju has just come out of prison. The remainder of the chapter then switches back and forth between describing Raju's further encounters with Velan & the beginning of strand 2a (see below), clearly establishing a rhythm that will persist throughout most of the novel.
- The second half of chapter 2 (p. 20-26) and most of chapter 4 pursue this line of the story as Raju becomes more and more involved with Velan, settling into the identity of holy ascetic that Velan has bestowed upon him.
- Chapter 6 adds a new element to the narrative—a persistent drought plaguing the land—which tests how far Raju is willing to go in playing the ascetic role, culminating in the events of chapter 11, which conclude the novel. The end of chapter 6 (p.87) and beginning of chapter 11 (p.184) clarify the time and setting for the telling of story's second strand, which explains Raju's early life up to his time in prison.

Strand 2a: Raju the Tour Guide

- A few pages into chapter 1, Narayan abruptly initiates the second strand of the story line with the statement, "My troubles would not have started (Raju said in the course of narrating his life-story to this man who was called Velan at a later stage) but for Rosie" (p.4). Chapters 6 & 11 will later clarify the details of this "later stage."
- This second strand continues interspersed with the first strand of the story, as Raju tells of his childhood and the formative events of his childhood that led to his becoming a popular tour guide, in two middle sections of chapter 1 (p.4-8, 12-14), the first half of chapter 2 (p.16-20), all of chapter 3, and the middle of chapter 4 (35-36).
- The same story takes up the whole of chapters 5 & 7 as Raju meets Rosie & her husband (whom he persistently refers to as "Marco" even though this is not the man's actual name—see p.5).

Strand 2b: Raju the Show Manager & Prison Inmate

- The longest unbroken stretch of the narrative, chapters 8-10 describe the ruin of Raju's career as a tour guide; his new role as Rosie's manager when she takes up dancing as a professional career; the events that lead to his ending up in prison for an act of fraud; and the way in which he passes his time in prison.