

## ***The Guide: Notes & Annotations* (part-1)**

[BA (Hons.), Part-3, Paper-VII]

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1. **“My daughter is married to my own sister’s son, and so there is no problem”** (P-6): This bit of information supplied by Velan to Raju introduces one of the key concerns of the novel: marriage. Narayan intends to introduce here the non-problematic traditional marriage as to be later subverted by the problematic marriage as in the case of Rosie and Marco. Many of the lower caste people in Tamilnadu, especially in the rural areas, held a girl’s marriage with her maternal cousin auspicious. The convention, as followed at the time when this novel was written, was losing much of its importance, as the novel shows. In the newly growing towns as Narayan’s Malgudi as well as in the cities like Madras a Marco casts aside the convention of marrying a near kin or an already known person in favour of marrying through newspaper advertisements: a legacy of the colonial past of India. However, this question apart, this traditional, non-problematic marriage of Velan’s daughter, together with the ideal marriage between Raju’s father and mother, should be viewed as the yardstick to judge the nature and importance of Rosie’s marriage with Marco. Raju’s mother, the regular Indian housewife, remains faithful to her husband, bearing a son and living a good conjugal life, accepting the patriarchal rule of her husband in the family. Pitted against it is Rosie’s relation with Marco, in which she forever

strives for freedom in the form of utilising her dancing talent, only to be denied by Marco. It is a loveless marriage without an issue. It is a marriage full of acting: 'Let me serve you both (Raju and Marco). And I will be the last to eat, like a good housewife' (p-77). It is a marriage in which the husband wants a loveless devotion from the wife: as Marco speaks of Joseph, 'That Joseph is a wonderful man...he does everything for me at the right time. That's how I want things to be...' Obviously, only an illegitimate relationship with Raju can give Rosie some relief from this torture. In fact, this marriage is a product of the hybridisation of the post-colonial India in which the old values were breaking up in a developing society.

2. **'It's not considered proper form to pay too many visits to a son-in-law'** (p-6): Velan's observation hints at one of the facets of a patriarchal Indian society in which the family of the groom always poses a social superiority over that of the bride and the corresponding support this pretension receives from the latter who are concerned with the safety of their daughter or sister.
3. **'Why did she call herself Rosie? She did not come from a foreign land...one of the thousand names we have in our country'** (p-9): The way Rosie's mother chose to name her daughter 'Rosie' shows the average Indian's crazy for anything foreign, a typical feature in a country ruled by foreigners for over two hundred years. However, Narayan's choice of names for his characters shows his purposefulness: names do imply something for him, in this novel particularly. While Raju's name does not sound more than average, not do so of Rosie's or Marco's. Raju's not more than common name helps him to build an intimacy with others on a fast footing. On the other hand, Rosie's husband's dressing like a member of an expedition, with thick coloured glasses, thick jacket, and a thick helmet over which was perpetually

stretched a green, shiny, waterproof cover, earns him the name 'Marco' from Raju, after the first European traveller to Asia, Marco Polo. In fact, Raju's naming him such hints at one very important point: the spurt in touring activities in the post-colonial era. The era saw great enthusiasm among the European in unearthing and exposing before the world the cultural heritage of the colonised countries, especially those in South Asia and South America. This heritage, having been neglected for years by the natives was then exposed for tourists. However, it was true that the knowledge of the locals about the heritage was always greater than the explorers, as Raju's was better than Marco's about the sights in and around Malgudi. But this local knowledge always lacked proper exposure which always had to depend upon books like Marco's *The Cultural History of South India* for exposure. The adopted name of Rosie, 'Nalini', too, has symbolic significance. Meaning 'lotus', it refers to Rosie's rebirth as a renowned dancer from her muddy situations, her coming of a *devdasi* family (the women of which were perpetually exploited sexually by high caste Brahmins and others of the temple authorities and held as prostitutes), her incompatible marriage with Marco and her muddled illegitimate relationship with Raju.

4. **'Instead of calling herself Rosie, she could more logically have called him Marco Polo'** (p-9)/...**I wanted to call this man Marco at first sight, and I have not bothered to associate him with any other name since.'** (p-10): Refer to 3.