

The Guide: Notes & Annotations (p-2)

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

Mr. Subrata Kumar Das

Head, Dept. of English

VSJ College, Rajnagar

subrata.hcu@gmail.com

5. **‘A man who preferred to dress like a permanent tourist was just a guide passionately looked for all his life’ (p-10):** This is Raju’s immediate reaction on meeting Marco at the Malgudi railway station, as related to Velan. Marco’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. Raju’s reaction has at its base the fast changing in India: the post-colonial era. Whereas in the past the tours and travels were limited to few places of worship to seek *punya* (god’s holy blessing), the concept of tourism suffered a drastic change in the post-colonial world. With new heritage sites discovered, communications like railways and roadways expanded, and with the government taking earnest steps in promoting tourism to fill its confers, people began to take tours to distant places, and with these rose the concept of the guide. In the novel, Raju utilises to the full the coming of railways and the travellers’ craze for the Mempi Hills, the mythical Sarayu river and other sites in and around Malgudi. With whatever he has read in his spare time from scrapes and with his presence of mind and manipulating ability, Raju, the guide, establishes himself as a renowned one. His taking his tourists on a site-seeking on Gaffur’s car is a predecessor of what one knows today as package tour.

***Narayan, R.K. *The Guide*: Chennai: Indian Thought Publication, 2005 rpt.

6. **‘Don’t laugh at my railway associations. The railways got into my blood very early in life’ (p-10):** Refer to 11.

7. **‘pyol’ (p-12):** platform built alone a house and facing the street.

8. **‘He felt like an actor who was always expected to utter the right sentence’ (p-14):**

The sentence sheds light on Narayan’s ironic attitude to his protagonist. The novelist becomes a third person omniscient narrator when he narrates Raju’s present, and accordingly shifts into an ironic treatment of him to highlight Raju’s basically fraudulent nature and the fact that the status of a guru is being thrust upon him. For example, at the very outset, when Velan looks alternatively at the face of Raju, sitting cross-legged, the latter strokes his chin to feel the presence of any apostolic beard. The same artificiality is seen in the ‘Guru’ when he confuses the story of Devaka, or when he recoils at Velan’s attempt of touching his feet while remaining fully aware of its implication: ‘He felt he was attaining the status of a saint’ (p-16), or when he thinks a little later, ‘I wish I had asked him what the age of the girl (Velan’s maiden sister) was.’ The simple villager Velan’s judging him as a *sadhu* from the light of experience in his eyes and the gradual rise towards a pontifical status do elate him, but the self-consciousness does never leave him. And nor does Narayan leave his ironic attitude so soon. Even while discoursing on *Bhagwat-Gita* to the villagers Raju thinks on preparing a delicacy, and when the villagers virtually push him towards the fast, he thinks that had he known that he would be led on towards this, he would give them a different formula: that all villagers should give him *bonda* to eat for fifteen days. This self-consciousness does achieve a different proportion at the end when the fake guru becomes conscious of the nobleness in the fast: ‘For the first time in his life he was

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making an earnest effort...' The novelist is no longer ironic, and the fake guru achieves the status of a real saint.

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