

## “Monsoon Wedding” Parte III

Mira Nair, Director (2001)

It's raining in Delhi! There is water everywhere! But life goes on.

*A barefoot boy, lying on his belly in the street, enjoys the rain.*

*A cycle rickshaw driver and his – very wet – passengers in Old Delhi.*

*A street vendor carries coconut slices on a tray in the rain.*

*A Sikh cyclist rides a bicycle through the downpour. Note the ubiquitous Delhi motorized rickshaws in the background.*

The wedding canopy is under construction. Perched high up, Dubey's men are positioning bamboo poles, lashing them together with a rope.

Hemant and Aditi meet in a restaurant. When he arrives, he gives her a kiss on the cheek. Sitting down, he says, “I'm glad I got some exercise. All I've been doing is eating and eating. I'm sorry I woke you up this early, but this is the only time we're going to have on our own. There are just so many ceremonies. Half the time I don't even know who's who.”

“I know what you mean.”

He begins, “I wanted to talk to you about... I want to know what's on your mind.”

Hemant is making an honest effort to understand why his future wife is being so distant.

“Sleep,” she answers, evasively. “That's all that's on my mind right now.”

He looks a little disappointed.

“I saw you with your family yesterday,” he says. “You guys are so close. Sometimes I worry about how it will be for you in America. You might feel so alone.”

She shrugs. “I'm sure I can handle it. It'll be really nice to get away from this damn place.”

“Why? You don't like Delhi?”

“No, no, I love India. I don't care. America's going to be new for me anyway.”

He takes her hand, with its big engagement ring, and says, “My fiancée...” She pulls it away, yawning.

“Sorry,” she explains. “I'm just not a morning person.”

He doesn't answer.

Sprawled on the bed, Lalit is on the phone, making plans to play golf later in the day. He says he'll be there "100%." He hangs up and yells to his wife, "Pimmi? What are you doing in there?"

"Nothing," she answers from the bathroom.

"I know very well what you're doing." He goes up to the closed bathroom door and raps on it lightly.

"Come on out."

She comes out, curlers in her hair, seeming agitated. As he enters, he complains, "If you're going to smoke, at least use a better air freshener."

"I was a little tense," she defends herself.

With the toothbrush in his hand, Lalit snaps, "What are you tense about? You're going shopping! I'm the one who should be tense."

"I'm doing it for our darling daughter. You saw how much they gave us? We can't look bad in front of our in-laws."

"Pimmi goes shopping again!" he comments sarcastically.

"And I'm telling you: it's going to cost us."

"So what? I'll arrange the money like I've been organizing everything else."

"You've organized everything else?! Who's been nonstop on her toes for days? Just tell me that. Some gratitude!"

"We are so grateful, dear Pimmi," replies Lalit sarcastically. "Thank you so much for working so hard."

She leaves the room with her purse, dressed and ready to go shopping. He yells after her, "Take out your curlers at least!"

"Oh, no!" she exclaims, remembering that she hasn't fixed her hair. "This wedding is driving me crazy!"

In the kitchen, Alice is washing dishes. A small garland of marigolds is draped over a wooden cross on the wall. Hesitating for a moment at the threshold, Dubey walks in through the open door. She turns around.

"Today will be a long day," he says, making the sign for *namaste*.

“May I have a glass of water?” he asks politely in Hindi. “I’m very thirsty.”

Alice turns shyly to look at him. Without saying a word, she takes a glass and dips it in the jug.

“What is your good name?” he asks.\*

“Alice.”

“Alice,” he repeats. “It’s an English name.”

*\*He means her first name. This is actually an archaic British term.*

“Where are you from?” he asks gently.

“Bihar,” she replies, turning back to continue working at the sink.

He doesn’t know how to respond and just continues with his loud slurping and gulping.

“What’s your name?” she asks.

Dubey is so surprised that he chokes on his water.

He ponders for a moment: there are so many different ways he could answer. He decides on the formal way: “Parabatlal Kanhaiyalal Dubey.” She offers him a broad smile in response.

Wiping her wet hands on the edge of her sari, she takes the card and reads it. “I work in Event Management,” he explains, adding that the card “has the address to send mail through the computer.” That is impressive! But Alice might not understand what he means...

“Hmmm,” she replies. “Email?”

Oh, she’s a modern, educated girl and that pleases him. “You know? Yes!” he answers, grinning.

Alice holds out the card to return it to him. “Keep it!” he insists. “Take some more.” He rummages through his little case to find some extra ones.

“This is fine,” she says.

In slow motion, she turns back to the sink. We hear sensuous music plays as she tucks the card into her saree blouse. He observes her silently, with a contented expression. “Tell me you love me,” he murmurs, dazed.

“What?!” She turns to stare at him.

He backpedals quickly: “Have you seen the movie *Tell Me You Love Me?*”

“Yes,” she says, disappointed, getting back to her work.

Immobilized, he stares at her, completely smitten, head over heels in love.

She turns to him slowly. “What happened?”

“Nothing happened. I must be going.” He grabs the glass and slurps it down, splashing water.

Before he goes, he offers a final grin, radiating happiness. She smiles in turn.

Alone, Alice takes the business card out of her blouse and examines it with care.

Under a blazing red canopy, Dubey is daydreaming and eating marigold petals. At his side, Tameez-ud-din snips the stems off the flowers.

“Tell me something,” Dubey says in Hindi. “How many weddings have I organized so far?” Tameez-ud-din pauses to think, but Dubey answers his own question: “At least 150 or 175.” His employee resumes work.

“How come I’m not married yet?” Dubey muses, nibbling on petals. “My poor mother has grown old saying: ‘Son, get me a daughter-in-law.’ Now I’ve done my thinking. I’ll put an end to my lonesome vagabond life. I’ll find myself a decent, simple girl and begin life as a family man.”

Tameez-ud-din looks up to the sky and smiles to himself. A second employee, Yadav, is listening, as he works on the garlands.

Dubey goes on, “The hope now is that the next tent Dubey puts up has Dubey entering as the groom.”

His employees exclaim, “Bravo!” But they are just mocking him. “I swear: pure genius,” says Tameez-ud-din.

The moment is ruined. “Do I pay you to sit on your ass?” asks Dubey. “Get to work.

From off-screen, Lalit yells, “Dubey!”

Lalit is standing inside the half-completed wedding tent. On the fabric, we see the shadow of a worker high up in the bamboo.

“Shit!” Lalit says, hitting his forehead in frustration.

“Dubey!” Lalit calls again.

“Coming, sir!” But then Dubey mutters under his breath, “Not a minute of peace.”

They stand under the bamboo skeleton of the tent.

“This is the limit,” says Lalit angrily, in Hindi, “A white tent?”

“Yes, sir.”

“What’s with the white tent?”

“It is the fashion these days,” explains Dubey patiently.

“Smart ass,” replies Lalit. “A white tent! Is this a wedding or a funeral? I only have one daughter.”

Actually, his daughter Aditi has made it seem a bit like a funeral.

“I don’t want a white tent. Put up a colorful tent. Red, yellow, green, blue.”

“Okay, okay,” says Dubey, wobbling his head. Turning to his worker, he instructs, “Get this tent down. It’s not wanted.” To make his point, he adds, “He wants the old look.”

For good measure, Lalit repeats, disgustedly, “Get it down.”

“What about the waterproofing?” asks Lalit.

“It was never discussed,” replies Dubey.

“What do you mean?”

“The peacocks have stopped dancing. It won’t rain,” Dubey reassures his client.

“Peacocks? Have you been smoking pot?”

“Okay, sir, advance,” Dubey replies. Just then, white fabric from the tent falls on his head. He ignores it.

“Advance? What for?”

“The waterproofing, meaning more money.” He pauses, then goes on, “In foreign countries, deal is deal.” Lalit tries to argue with him, but Dubey, being an adept businessman, is prepared. He shows

their contract to Lalit. “See, everything in foreign style. In writing. The number of plates and spoons. But no waterproofing. You want more? Pay more. Deal is deal.”

“How much?”

Dubey calculates it on his wristwatch, which is also a calculator, pecking out the numbers with his finger. “\$5,000. Two lakhs.\* Exactly and approximately.”

“Eh? I’m not a non-resident Indian.”

“Your garden is huge. Well, your daughter is like my daughter. Advance, sir.”

*\*The equivalent in rupees of \$5,000.*

As Lalit counts out the bills from his wallet, Dubey continues, “Today we work. Tomorrow, holiday. Strike, day after. Then our wedding.”

“This is all I have now,” apologizes Lalit, handing over his cash to him. Dubey starts to protest, but Lalit insists, “I’ll give you the rest later!” and walks away.

“This won’t even pay for a rope,” mutters Dubey bitterly.

Meanwhile, the women — the bride, her mother, her aunties, cousins, and nieces — are in the Karol Bagh area of Delhi, which is choked with cars, stores and people. They hustle through the crowds on their way to buy saris for the wedding.

As soon as they enter a store, Aditi announces that she wants a popsicle and leaves. The salesman shows them different saris, and they check them by running the fabric between their fingers.

The salesman asks which is the bride and Pimmi tells him that she went for a popsicle.

Aditi has found a phone booth, but Ria appears outside, rapping on the glass. “What are you doing?” she asks. “They’re waiting for your approval inside.”

Ria gives her a kiss and gently says, “Come.”

“I don’t really know what Hemant thinks, what he expects of me.”

“So then call *him*, instead of calling Vikram,” Ria responds, impatiently. “Now please go inside before those aunties come out and start dancing on our heads.”

Aditi hands her the popsicle and Ria heads back to the sari store. The passenger of a cycle rickshaw calls out, “Hey, you want a lift, baby?” Then he extends his lips to her, closing his eyes. Ria gestures back at him with her popsicle, unfazed by the overtures of Delhi’s incorrigible men.

Back at the house, the breeze blows banners dyed in vivid red. Garlanded with marigolds, Dubey is admiring his handiwork and, contented, he chews on flowers.

Inside, Ayesha and Varun are practicing a Bollywood dance number to perform at the party the evening before the wedding. When little Aliyah gets in the way, Ayesha barks at her to sit down. On the side table beside Aliyah, we see a photograph of Ria’s deceased father.

CAPTION: *Varun and Ayesha practice their dance moves.*

As they are practicing, Rahul appears. Ayesha says, “Hi, sexy,” and dances over to him, wrapping the *dupatta* around him and pulling him towards her. She purrs, “So, Sydney boy, can you move like this?”

Poor Varun: he has been abandoned. Ayesha sways provocatively, with Rahul captive in her *dupatta*. But, abruptly, she pushes Rahul back onto a chair, and he asks casually, “What’s going on, guys?”

Ayesha dances up to him, but Varun grabs the back of her jeans and pulls her back. “Come on, that’s enough.”

When she ignores him, Varun angrily stops the record player, saying, “No more interruptions! We’ll never get this right.” He smacks his forehead in frustration.

“What is it, Rahul?” Ayesha asks. “We’re rehearsing for the *sangeet*.\* What do you want?” She acts as if Rahul is responsible for the interruption.

*\*At the sangeet, one of the many events preceding a traditional Punjabi wedding, the women of the wedding party sing to the bride to educate her about what is to come. Traditionally, men don’t participate, but that is changing!*

Dubey and his crew are hanging lights in the garden.

“Put them up properly,” Dubey instructs.

Tameez-ud-din is at the top of a ladder, while Dubey supervises with one foot on the lowest rung.

Inside the house, Alice is cleaning. As she polishes the mirror of the vanity, something catches her eye. It's a necklace: a string of pearls with jewels embedded in the pendant.

Just outside, Dubey, perched on a ladder, is scolding his employees: “Not a single flower in place yet!” Then, through the window, he notices Alice.

He sees her pick up the necklace and look around to make sure no one is close by. Dubey gawks, his jaw hanging open. He takes off his sunglasses to get a better look.

Alice is trying the necklace on. She tilts her head and slips it on. Dubey has come down off the ladder. He squats outside the window, gazing at Alice. He's holding a bunch of flowers, still fresh from the shop, wrapped in cellophane.

Next, as Dubey watches, she reaches for a *bindi*\* which she affixes to her forehead.

*\*A bindi is a jewel or colored dot placed in the middle of the forehead, between the eyebrows.*

Now, she puts a heavy gold anklet around her ankle. Dubey is transfixed.

Alice stands with a hand on her hip, admiring herself in the mirror, imagining herself a wealthy woman. Alice's moment of fantasy makes Dubey smile.

Noticing that something has distracted him, Tameez-ud-din comes close to Dubey, leaning in behind him to see.

Alice, completely lost in her fantasy, puts on a pair of heavy jeweled earrings. Tameez-ud-din mutters something and leaves.

Entranced, Alice lets down her hair, which has been tightly coiled. With a smile, Dubey savors the scent of the flowers, though they are still wrapped in cellophane. Cellophane is no barrier to their fragrance for a man this much in love!

Alice strikes a coquettish pose with her finger on her chin. By now, Dubey has surrendered completely.

She covers her mouth with the veil of her sari, and bites it.

But now Alice comes back to reality. She remembers who she is and what her duties are. She removes the veil, she takes off the earrings and replaces them in the red box with the purple lining, where they belong. As Dubey watches her, she removes the necklace, too.

But Tameez-ud-din is back, and he's brought his co-workers. They hang over the railing of the stairs and look into the room where Alice is putting away the jewelry. What they see is a servant with her hand in a jewelry box.

"I knew it!" exclaims Tameez-ud-din, pointing at Alice through the window. "She's a thief!" Startled, Alice turns and sees the four men outside the window.

Dubey, not sure what's happening, turns to Tameez-ud-din, then looks back at Alice.

The girl, in a panic, stands with her back against the wall, the *bindi* still on her forehead, clutching the rosary that she always wears around her neck.

We see the men from Alice's point of view: Dubey is frowning; the others leer. An extreme close-up shows her fear.

Enraged, Dubey pulls Tameez-ud-din down off the ladder and kicks him. Then he jumps to the ground and begins to punch his astonished employee, yelling, "Motherfucker!" The intimate moment he shared with Alice has been tainted. **And the insinuation that she could be a thief angers him.**

Dubey pulls Yadav off the railing, too, yelling, "Motherfuckers! She's not stealing! Fucking assholes!" His angry gaze could punch holes in steel.