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As Arnab Retires

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Arnab didn't wake up from his uncharacteristic sleep even after his car had reached the porch of his house. The driver, having been the victim of his master's hot temper several times, was in a dilemma; whether or not wake his master up. He remembered how unusually silent and calm his master had been since the time he entered the car from the headquarters of his news agency. There had been few phone calls and it was the first time he had seen his master not glued to his smartphone, browsing latest news events. The master didn't shout at him that night, and he was puzzled why. Seeing that his master is no longer the master he used to curse about, the driver dared to wake Arnab from his uncharacteristic sleep. He did wake up and much to the relief of his driver, he didn't scowl at his driver for disturbing him. Instead he gently got out of the car and looked at his house as though he was seeing it for the first time. It had been three days since he last came there. He opened the door and signalled to the driver to go home, after which he went inside. There was great silence all about his house and he felt uncomfortable as he had only brief encounters with silence in his hitherto life. Arnab began experiencing the pacifying power of silence. He started thinking what happened in his house three days before...

He was a bit frustrated that day as for the first time in his media career a phone-in caller voiced an outlook contradicting the stance he took in his debate. As always, his debating panel had become a pandemonium and he had to outcry his panelists to say, "we are opening up our phone lines and we are flooded with calls tonight....and our first caller tonight is Rakesh from Mumbai. Go on Rakesh, what do you think about this ridiculous highly condemnable remark made by the Loksabha MP that women should not be considered for nightshift jobs.". Rakesh, most expectedly an Arnab sycophant, did nothing but reiterate the same lines Arnab said to him, and he didn't forget the phone-in-caller-custom of extolling Arnab for discussing that topic. The second caller shocked everyone when he said "Arnab, I disagree with you on this" and he, much to the embarrassment of Arnab, stated convincingly why he disagreed with the so-said most-watched TV journalist in India. Adding salt to the wound, he criticised Arnab for not inviting sensible panelists instead of political loudspeakers. Arnab managed to say, "see, this is why I often say that unlike other channels we don't censor phone calls. We welcome counter views and healthy criticism unlike other channels". But those who are used to his cacophonous shows easily understood that he was bugged and embarrassed. However, Arnab rounded off his debate show giving his unanimous "unchallengeable" observation-" my view is that the MP's suggestion to not consider women for night-shift jobs is sexist and hence condemnable. The government is supposed to ensure safety for everyone at anytime, so government couldn't runaway from that responsibility by an action like this. Women empowerment is the need of the hour and that could be encouraged only by allowing women to work. I repeat, everyone

of us should encourage women to come to the open world. Let women do jobs they like, let women pursue their careers" Before leaving the news headquarters he checked last weeks TRP ratings to assure that his channel topped the list. However, the embarrassing phone call during the debate show kept him restive all through the rest of the night. When he reached home, it was almost midnight. He found his wife awake, doing some serious stuff on her laptop. He didn't disturb her as he went straight to his bedroom ,sat on the edge of the bed and started thinking about that phone call. He was awakened from his thoughts by his wife's voice.

"You don't want to eat?"

Without looking at her he replied, " I had"

'From where?" She asked.

"You want to know everything ? Please give me some peace. I had one hell of a night and back at home its the same."

"I want to talk with you" she sat besides him. She had her laptop on her lap.

"Are you deaf or what? I just told you I want some peace "

"Arnab,its important. I want to talk... Right now..that's why I stayed awake"

"OK.. Go on"

"I have told you about my plan to start a boutique and I have already found a suitable place at Noida...but you haven't yet talked a word about it"

"So what?"

"So whaaaaat! Arnab, its my dream project. I am waiting for your nod" She placed her hand on his shoulder but he shrugged it off.

"See the truth is I'm not interested in this boutique sort of thing. Why should you have to do this."

"Because its my passion ,my dream. This is to me what journalism is to you. You got that?". The unusual vigour of her voice surprised Arnab.

"Why do you have to shout? Where you learned this from Athithi?", he asked.

"From your debates" she replied instantly.

"What?" Arnab didn't get her.

"You asked me where did I get this habit of shouting. From your news hour debates where people have to out-shout each other" She said surcastically.

"Howdareyoutalkabout my show" Arnab was furious.

"Yeah its all your show and nothing else. You often claim you are the high priest of media activism. But people say yours is media outlash." Arnab was loosing his temper

"How dare you say that you b*****. What the heck you know about media and journalism. If mine is not good, then why am I the most-watched TV journalist in the country?"

"Tags you made for your self.... You know what you are? You are swelled-headed cocky egoist.... Yes you are.." She looked straight into his broiling eyes.

"Stop you b*****." He shouted at her but she didn't flinch. She was setting a blaze to hier pent-up emotions. She continued,

"And what more you are the greatest pretender I have ever seen. Today on your show you spoke about empowering women and letting them do the jobs they like and the whole nation doesn't know that the same Arnab is shouting at his wife at the same night

only because she wanted to start a boutique. Great! Your admirers across the country praise you for your 'desi first stand' but they don't know that their Arnab is planning to send his son to Harvard. On TV you preach respecting women and at home you call me a b****. You know-

"-stop it I say. I heard you enough. Whatever you say I won't agree with your plan of making a boutique". Arnab said in a furious tone.

"Is that final?" She asked.

"Yeah" he replied.

"Then I think its better for us to part ways" she said, simmering herself down.

"What do you mean?" Arnab was taken aback.

"I can't put up with this anymore. I am going" she said very defiantly.

"Going where?" He asked.

"Why should you care about it. I am going and that's all"

"Well its your decision. But what about our son"

"I am sure he'll come with me once he finishes his boarding. I don't think he'll like to be with a terrible father like you"

Arnab was silent. She continued,

You know what you may be the No.1 TV anchor in the country but you have never been a good husband , you are a failed father....and what worse you have never been true to yourself. At least for once, take off that media garb and just be yourself"

Arnab was awoken from his thoughts by the ringing of his cellphone. It was his close colleague in the media who was calling him. He didn't attend the call. He knew what was that phone call for. He found that there were 126 missed calls. He knew what all those phone calls had to ask him. He dialled his wife's number but her phone was switched off. He felt uneasy but he wasn't as uneasy as he had been over the last two days. His wife leaving him was too much for him but what disturbed him most was her uncanny yet striking words about him. On the next day his wife him Arnab's debate-show was less cacophonous and people wondered why he was unusually calm and restrained. The second day Arnab didn't appear on the news hour debate and rumours went around different media circles about his absence. Some even went on to say that Arnab was undergoing a vocal therapy to increase the pitch of his already high-pitched voice. Thrashing away all rumours, Arnab made the decision of his life. And his decision was such an absolute shock for many viewers across the country that most of them dismissed it as a false news.

Arnab, now reposing on a couch, texted to his wife-" Athithi, I realize that I didn't care for you, nor to our son. Fame was all I was after for. But now I feel it was a meaningless pursuit. I didn't listened to you, didn't care for you....but that doesn't mean i never loved you. However I've made the decision. Come back.. Waiting for you"

He then switched the TV on and tuned in his channel. The flash news was running in broad black letters- "The Media Giant resigns, The whole nation shocked". The reports were all about this national event of Arnab resigning from his job. Reporters were seen

talking about their experiences with This Media Giant. Some were found weeping while speaking. It was not just his channel some, but all the national and regional channels were reporting the great loss occurred to the Fourth Estate. Rumours had no ends.. Everyone, from street's men to media pundits, speculated on the possible reasons for Arnab's resignation.

The news spread like wildfire among the seemingly civilized public. Some said that its an international event and that Reuters would be covering it. Social networking sites were flooded with statusupdates and internet memes. Prime minister also shared his sense of "national loss" though his confidants found him breathing easily, feeling relieved that he and his government would no longer be subjected to Arnab's primetime "media whipping". (He had learned that when the whole nation felt enlivened upon hearing his independence day speech, Arnab was disappointed with the speech as a result of which the nation apparently turned their position. Perhaps that won't happen again) So was the case with all the top brass politicians.

Arnab, seemingly unaffected by all this media harakiri , checked his phone again and found that a new msg had come.His wife's reply. "Am the happiest one in the world. Will be there by night. But u shouldn't have quit the job". He texted her back - " No. Its not just because of u that I quit this job. I looked into myself and realized that I had never been a responsible journalist. Fame, name and TRP were all I was after for. I hope if I take a break I could be myself again and I might be able to become the eager responsible journalist that I was when I entered this field"

Arnab tuned in his channel. The debate was on. It was no less noisy than it had been during his stint as the moderator. The topic,as expected, was this- The MediaGiant Quits. Was Arnab the greatest media journalist ever. The panel was large and full of Arnab sycophants. Hearing them extolling him , Arnab laughed. He dialled the call-in number of the show. The listening public all across the country bent forward when they saw Arnab's image in the caller's space on the TV screens. They were all eager to hear from Arnab.

Arnab spoke- "Good evening everyone. My decision to quit was personal. Thanks for all your love. And one humble request t the moderator. Please stop discussing this topic and take up some other topic"

The channel accepted his request and they changed the topic of debate. The new topic was, "Is Arnab the most popular yet the most humble TV Journalist?"

Arnab couldn't help controlling his laugh.