



About Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/about/>

Archive: <http://www.the-criterion.com/archive/>

Contact Us: <http://www.the-criterion.com/contact/>

Editorial Board: <http://www.the-criterion.com/editorial-board/>

Submission: <http://www.the-criterion.com/submission/>

FAQ: <http://www.the-criterion.com/fa/>



ISSN 2278-9529

Galaxy: International Multidisciplinary Research Journal
www.galaxyimrj.com

The Justice of the Supreme Being

Ramesh Chandra Tiwari
Bahraich, UP, India

I

‘Why did you demolish my wall?’ demanded Maiku heatedly.

Bhallar glared angrily at him and replied, ‘What made you erect it in my absence? It didn’t occur to you that this wall divides your land from mine?’

‘Why, my wall is in! Do you think I still ought to have consulted you?’

‘The wall is inside your share of land, you cunning liar!’

‘Where do you think it is, then - in yours?’

‘Yes, two feet on my side of the dividing line!’

‘Well, why quarrel?’ suggested Maiku. ‘Let me measure the width of your plot.’

But Bhallar raised the question, ‘You think I’m not sure that this wall doesn’t leave me a 60 ft wide parcel here.’

‘I too am not less sure. This wall is not located on or outside the property line.’

‘Look, these bricks are lying on my land – carry them off right now!’

‘How dare you dictate to me like that? Wait, you’ll pay damages too.’

‘You need damages?’ shouted Bhallar. ‘I’ve something more for you.’ And with that he rushed Maiku and hit him with a stick.

‘You rat!’ screamed Maiku. Then he snatched a bamboo stick and assaulted Bhallar. They went at each other furiously and didn’t stop until one of them sustained a serious injury to the head and the other cracked a bone in his arm.

II

Maiku had been an active supporter of the ruling party, so he was well known to the local MLA, Jata Shanker. In the evening he went to his residence with confident expectation that he would be a help. It was very cold. The MLA and a few of his followers were sitting in front of a log fire on the veranda. As he reached the stairs, the MLA got up to receive him and offered him a chair to sit on. He sat down and began to warm his hands.

After a short while the leader looked at him. ‘Is anything wrong, Maiku?’ he asked. ‘You look worried.’

Maiku untied his scarf and threw his head beneath his eyes. ‘Look at it, babusaheb [a title of respect],’ he said in a quavering voice.

‘Who has dared to wound you?’ cried the MLA.

‘You know Bhallar?’

‘The man who has purchased a plot on the north side of your plot in Vikas Khand, you mean?’

‘That’s it. And on the south side of my plot is Ranjeet’s house. The three plots were sold to us by a property dealer. They each measure 75 feet by 60 feet and face west - towards the street that goes to the main road. Yesterday morning, I started to build a wall along the dividing line between my plot and Bhallar’s with no intention of encroaching a bit on his property. I did no wrong; and he must have had no cause for complaint, either. On the contrary, he demolished the wall late in the evening, of which thing I came to know today in the morning, when I went to the site. Cement covered bricks of the smashed wall were lying around and Bhallar was watching them with an angry expression on his face. When I asked why he did that, he growled like a dog, flew at me with a baton and finally hit me on the head. He didn’t listen to me. He simply said that his share of the land was smaller. When I asked him to measure the plots, he took no notice of this advice too. Babusaheb, I must have my wall rebuilt right where it was and damages paid to me by that rascal.’

‘You’ll certainly have,’ Jata Shanker consoled him. ‘You go to the Vikasnagar police station tomorrow and lodge an FIR against him. I’ll phone them up and tell them to help you rebuild the wall. By the way, you’ve had a very bad neighbour. I’ve known Bhallar; he’s an opposition party supporter and a ruffian. Mind you need a good wall along his plot.’

‘Thanks a lot, babusaheb. You have been extremely kind to me.’ So saying, Maiku rose and walked away. All the way, he kept picturing to himself how, in response to his complaint, the police would arrive at the site, beat Bhallar and shout insult at him if he didn’t compensate him for the loss.

III

Maiku was too impatient to take a sound sleep that night. He got up early in the morning, dressed himself and left for the police station. On reaching there, he made directly for the SO’s chamber, under the impression that he would treat him kindly. But when he entered, an angry looking young man in Khaki, sitting at a large table, looked up at him with a harsh frown. ‘Hey!’ he shouted. ‘What’s the trouble?’

‘Sir, I’ve come from...’

But before Maiku could say something more, the in charge broke in, saying, ‘You’re Maiku, aren’t you?’

Now he gained in confidence. ‘Yes, sir,’ he answered politely.

‘Where’s your plot and what’s your home address? Do you know where Bhallar lives? And what’s your complaint?’

Maiku told him the three addresses and all about the dispute. The station officer wrote that down on a sheet of paper and asked him to sign it.

When it was over, he put the document in a file. ‘Well, you may go now,’ he said. ‘I’ll send police to your plot tomorrow.’

IV

He arrived at his plot early the next day. The bricks were still lying all over the ground. He gazed at them for a while and then started pacing restlessly up and down, waiting for the police. Meanwhile, Bhallar appeared on the road, and with that a motorcycle stopped there, too. Two police officers carrying guns on their back dismounted. Maiku was very happy. He came up and saluted them but they did not pay attention to him. One officer made his way towards Maiku’s plot and the other one towards Bhallar’s.

Suddenly one of the constables turned. ‘Hey you, come over here!’ he called. ‘Are you Maiku?’

‘Yes sir,’ said Maiku, walking towards him.

‘Which plot is yours?’ asked the officer.

‘On which you’re standing, sir.’

‘Then you are certainly in the wrong,’ he said, nodding his head.

‘Why, sir?’

‘The area of this one looks greater than the area of that one across the demolished wall, while your complaint says they both equal each other.’

‘But, sir...’

‘Shut up!’ the officer bellowed. ‘Go and gather those bricks!’

‘Sir, you could measure the width of my plot between Ranjeet’s house and the outer edge of the wall remains yourself. It’s a bit less than 60 feet wide.’

‘You cheat! Come with us to the station - our truncheon will teach you to tell a lie! You think police will do as you wish? Well, where’re the title deeds of your plot?’

‘I must go to fetch them, but I won’t be long, sir,’ said Maiku and hurried off.

He had hardly climbed up the street when an idea struck him. He stopped, turned round and motioned to the officer. The officer conceded and walked slowly over to him.

‘I’ve an important matter to discuss, sir,’ Maiku whispered to him. ‘Would you like to come along with me?’

They began to walk along the street, talking. Maiku, meanwhile, took some banknotes from his pocket and, unseen by anyone else, put them into the cop’s.

‘My house isn’t far from here,’ continued Maiku. ‘I’m just coming back with the documents. But a word of request, sir: let me have my legal share; I don’t ask you for a bit more.’

Then he quickened his pace, leaving the policeman behind. The policeman soon turned back, too.

Not long after Maiku arrived. He reached into his pocket and drew out a roll of stamps. ‘Here are the deeds, sir,’ he said, walking towards the cops. ‘Look at them. I’ll be hanged, sir, if it turns out that I am wrong.’

One of the officers took the papers from him, glanced cursorily at them and then gave them back to him. After that they held a brief conversation in a low voice.

‘Come here, you!’ shouted a cop, pointing at Bhallar.

Bhallar walked slowly towards them with a worried look on his face; and as he reached them, the cop turned to him. ‘Why did you pull his wall down?’ he asked.

‘That wall was inside my property line by two feet, sir,’ replied Bhallar.

‘Even so, you shouldn’t have done it yourself. You know, you’ve taken the law into your own hands. Oh, yes - you hit him too?’

‘S-sir,’ he stammered with fear, ‘when I asked him to m-move...’

‘Shut up, you knave!’ yelled the cop. ‘You’ve wronged a gentleman and caused him financial loss too. Well, come to the police station at your earliest convenience, or heaven have mercy on your bones!’

So saying, he turned his attention back to his companion. ‘We need to get going,’ he murmured, touching him on the arm.

The two then went to their motorbike and drove away.

V

Bhallar went worriedly to his house. There he got ready for the police station and set off down the road. When he reached there, the two cops met him in the compound. They asked him to sit on a cement platform and also instructed him to stay there till the SO needed him.

He sat thinking, particularly about those questions which he imagined the SO might ask him. But hours went by and nobody came up to him. As darkness fell, his patience began to wear thin – for he had to turn back. He finally got up and walked into the barracks where he saw one of the officers lying on a cot. He edged nervously closer to him.

‘Sir I’ve been waiting a long time,’ he said in a low frightened voice. ‘Could you tell me when my case will be heard?’

‘Your case will be heard!’ the officer shot back. ‘You mean we need to hear your case despite the fact that we’ve already found you guilty of the offence? You’re going to be arrested, man! They’re drafting a charge sheet, you know.’

Bhallar was terrified. ‘Take pity on me,’ he beseeched. ‘I’ve committed no crime. The wall was unlawful, believe you me! Oh, I’ve got some rupees on me- take them, if you please, and do what’s fair and impartial: I won’t ask you to favour me.’

So saying, he put them into his pocket and waited for his answer.

‘Well...,’ the constable paused, thinking, ‘I’m going to plead with the in-charge not to take any action; until then, you wait for me outside.’

They exited through different doors. The constable went to the office and Bhallar stood waiting once again; but, to his astonishment, he saw him coming back all too soon.

‘Bhallar, you’re free now,’ said the constable as he stopped opposite him. ‘The SO has agreed.’

‘Thank you very much for your kind help,’ said Bhallar. Then, with a respectful bow, he hurried away.

VI

Maiku was very happy that day because he had assumed that Bhallar would be in custody and that the police would come the following day to grant him the right to rebuild the wall. But all that happened the next day was he waited and waited, but the police did not come and he, meanwhile, came to know that Bhallar was at home. He gave up hope and began to think what to do. At last, he thought it reasonable to go to Jata Shanker again.

‘The police didn’t help me,’ he said to Jata Shanker, as he met him at his bungalow.

‘Didn’t help you?’ the MLA asked innocently.

‘Believe me, babusaheb, they did not! They came round yesterday but materially did nothing.’ Then, when he proceeded to tell him the whole story, he became very emotional.

‘I wish you had come to me at once,’ said the MLA with an affectation of regret.

‘But I never thought they’d deceive me,’ answered Maiku.

‘Anyway,’ the MLA went on, ‘don’t worry - they’ll each be served with a suspension. Meanwhile, file a lawsuit against Bhallar. You know Babu Awadh Bihari? Perhaps you do. Here, I’m going to write a letter for him. Take it and go to him. He’s a wonderful lawyer and a party activist as well. You know, he’s always been a great help to our people. I’ll exert my influence to make him get you a decree.’

VII

It was a cold evening. The sun had gone down. Maiku was at the gate of a mansion. He pushed open the gate and, as he walked towards the doorway, he was struck by the magnificence and grandeur that his eyes met on every side. He trod on the doorstep and pressed the doorbell hesitantly. Shortly afterwards the door opened and a lad appeared. He led him into a large room where the lawyer was sitting at his table, turning over the leaves of a file. Two other young men, who looked like his juniors, were busy with desk jobs. As he said hello to the lawyer, he looked up from his file and then bade him come closer.

‘I think I’ve seen you somewhere before,’ the lawyer said, looking Maiku straight in the face.

‘Do you know Jata Shanker?’ asked Maiku with a view to giving him a hint.

‘Oh yeah, you’re Maiku, aren’t you? You know, babusaheb has told me all about you and your case over the phone. Some Bhallar isn’t letting you build a wall, isn’t that so?’

‘Exactly, sir! I see no remedy for his villainy.’

‘You’ve come to a right place now. Take a chair, sign these documents and provide me with your title deed. You’ll see how he comes to beg for a compromise.’

Having signed the documents, Maiku looked at the lawyer. ‘Would you let me know how much your fees would be?’ he asked.

‘Oh, brother!’ said the lawyer. ‘Do you think I’ll charge you for a simple suit? I can be of some help to you is itself a fee. However, if you wish, you may pay something towards the expenses only.’

‘That’s very kind of you, sir. Well, how much to pay for that?’

‘Not much - only ten thousand will do,’ replied the lawyer, pretending the amount was insignificant.

Maiku felt a shock go through him, for his services at this price seemed to him to be terribly expensive. But it was difficult for him to decline, because it involved the MLA's interest. He faced a dilemma about whether or not to accept it. He sat thinking for a few moments. A whole series of events ran through his mind. He thought of Bhallar and his rigid attitudes, which, at last, compelled him to agree on that.

'Well, sir, here's five thousand. Take it and start proceedings. Tomorrow you'll get the rest along with the deeds.'

'You needn't worry,' the lawyer said. 'I'll make the court pass judgement in your favour and as for Bhallar, he'll fear even your name.'

'Thank you, sir,' said Maiku and with that he got up to leave.

VIII

Bhallar and Maiku fell into the trap of the judicial system and were so busy bribing for a decree that they found no time to visit their plots thereafter. In the meantime, cashing in on their absence, Ranjeet installed a north facing door that opened into Maiku's property.

One morning, when Maiku visited the site, the new development drove him mad. 'Ranjeet, Ranjeet!' he called out.

The door opened and Ranjeet emerged. 'Maiku, what's the matter?' he asked. 'You look upset.'

'I look upset, and you don't know why! What do you mean by this door? You're going to block it off immediately.'

'Shut up! There's a three feet wide lane between our plots.'

'Do you have any evidence?'

'Who do you think you are asking me for evidence?'

'You're going too far, Ranjeet!' Maiku warned him.

'I'm Ranjeet, not Bhallar, and don't you forget it!' Ranjeet exploded.

'But this is absolutely unlawful, or else you wouldn't have left it until any future.'

'I was the first to buy a plot of land here, and I agreed to buy it on the condition that the property-dealer provided me with a lane in addition to the street at the front.'

'Yes there's the provision of an additional lane but it's located along the back of our plots and not on any side of them.'

'Devil, you see things through the wall!' groaned Ranjeet. 'Where's that lane behind my house?'

‘That space has been covered over by your backyard, blocking off our way to the neighbouring colony,’ Maiku countered in a firm voice. ‘The property-dealer divided up the whole strip of the land equally between you, me and Bhallar. He planned a street in front of them with a 3-foot wide alley behind them. They both run north-south.’

‘What a fine story!’

‘This is all a story? I’ve concrete evidence to prove it, mind.’

‘Mind your neck, you! I’ll wrench it if...’

‘So you’ll hit me for speaking the truth, will you?’

‘And what am I – a liar?’

‘It’s blatantly obvious...’

‘You arrogant sonofabitch! I’ll teach you to call me a liar!’

‘Can your threats change fiction into truth, by the way?’

‘They can change your foul mouth. Wait it’ll never open again!’

So saying, Ranjeet gave a roar of rage and punched Maiku in the face.

IX

Maiku stood bleeding, his legs failing him. He staggered a few yards, and fell onto a pile of bricks with a moan. He lay thinking of Bhallar, of Ranjeet, of Jata Shanker and also of the police and the advocate. They looked like giants to him, eager to devour his land, his money, his peace. But as he lifted his eyes to seek help from the Lord, he felt a hand on his shoulder. He stood up and to his astonishment he saw Bhallar standing behind him.

‘I’ve important things to say to you,’ began Bhallar, ‘and hope you’ll approve of my idea.’

‘Approve of your idea!’ exclaimed Maiku.

‘I feel very sorry for you, brother. You know...’

‘Don’t make fun of me, Bhallar! Perhaps half...’ And now he couldn’t finish the sentence because his voice suddenly choked, his eyes brimmed over with tears. It took a few seconds before he could gather himself to speak again. ‘What was I talking about? Oh, yes - half my plot would probably meet your needs. Don’t hesitate, Bhallar. Take it. Mind you don’t touch the other half – for it belongs to the gentleman who has a better claim to that.’ He paused for a moment once again to choke back a sob. Then he raised his voice. ‘Ranjeet! Come here – occupy

30 feet instead of 3. I don't mind giving you half the lot now. Come on, enjoy a full highway! Oh, don't leave it too late!

So shouting he fell over again, with blood and tears streaming down his face. Bhallar, overcome with pity and remorse, stood gazing reflectively at him. Soon after that, people started approaching them and little by little, a huge crowd gathered there.

Bhallar bent forward and held Maiku by the arms. 'Get up, Maiku!' he whispered. 'Let's forget our differences. You know, when you were arguing with Ranjeet, an idea struck me. Look at it! I soon went home to get this tape measure. You know what I did with it? You'll certainly be astonished to learn that Ranjeet's house measured 62 feet in width instead of 60; and this is why our shares don't fit in the remaining space. Look, he's already encroached on your lot by 2 feet and is still trying for more. Anyway, don't lose heart – stand up and trust me to help you. As for the encroached-upon land, I don't think we can get that back. We could have done something if you had noticed it during the construction of his house. But don't worry about that – we'll share the loss between us. Besides, depend upon it I'll not let him have designs on any further piece of your land, despite the fact that he's a distant relative of the MLA, Jata Shanker.'

Maiku stirred and tried to rise. 'Ranjeet is a relative of Jata Shanker?' he asked in astonishment. Then he sat, covering his head with his hands and shouting 'Jata Shanker! Jata Shanker!'

'Maiku, don't worry,' assured an onlooker, 'you have nothing to fear from Jata Shanker. You build a wall close to Ranjeet's house and count on us – we'll help you. And if need be, we'll topple that door too.'

The crowd broke into chants of 'We are with you, Maiku!'

When worldly justice turns a blind eye, heavenly justice comes into play.