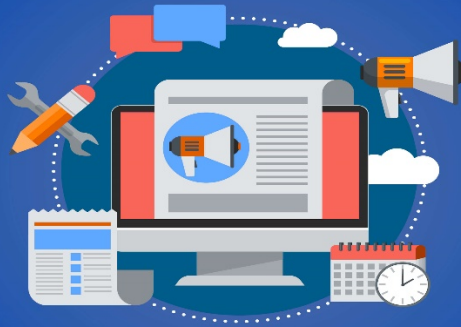


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Meeting

Suryendu Chaudhury

It was raining that day, when she first met her.

She was a good student throughout her academic career, she could have opted for a far better career but somehow, she chose to teach, that too in a primary school. Money had never been a bothering factor. She had inherited a lot. The only child of her parents, now she lived alone. The very thought of marriage had never occurred to her. If it was possible, she could have tied the knot with knowledge. Probably the quest of learning was a chunk of what made her personality.

It wasn't hard to read her face. But reading and understanding are two different aspects. She enjoyed it, the readers all perplexed looking like Question Marks. Her smiles probably meant something more as she smiled often and even at moments which demanded differently. Her eyes weren't that expressive and the specs above that nose concealed quite a bit. Not garrulous by nature, words did flow when they were meant (or probably didn't meant). Only that quivering of eyelids, a search or ...

Rains had often washed the streets; the puddles had caught the wheels. The drenched umbrellas, wet shoes, nothing much of a fascination. She had smiled though, a rain somewhat let loose rejuvenating the meadows. Monsoon had met spring, or the spring has been of a different entity, not known to the season cycle but definitely influenced by it. May be the moment was getting created, maybe she was she was getting that feeling; a surprise wasn't a possibility.

Her childhood sometimes became dense around those toys which she had preserved after inheritance from a little girl. It's hard to believe she was quite the menace in her childhood. Throughout her growing years changes were occurring in bits and pieces. A question was arising, which had the potential of becoming the Question. The eyes looked dissatisfied, looking for that about which they had some premonition but they hadn't caught sight of.

Last evening she had been engrossed in writing. She had the habit of writing diary, keeping track, but even her parents had never seen it. What she wrote in it? Nobody knew

except that writer and those pages. The angst involved in the search had to be expressed, was it not possible that the diary kept accounts for the same?

The chirping of birds was heard not; only that monotonous singing of the alarm clock. She drew the blinds. The sun glowed like a fading halo. She felt the need of some coffee. The first sip created a stir in her thoughts. She felt again the need of remembering something but what was that “thing”. She opened her diary once again but after a blank moment the diary closed, the pen was put back in the pen stand.

There were so many spelling mistakes in the class test copies, a few were exceptions. She knew she had taught diligently, but the poor performance of the students seemed to dishearten her. A class test copy appeared in her vision, all red marks, but that was the end of it, she had never been defeated since then. A voice had done the magic. There was no inspirational exuberance in that voice, only a provocation (Yes provocation) to know, simply to know.

A magic was happening somewhere. There wasn't anything spectacular about it. The only wait was for the revelation. That was the beginning and that was also an end. Time was the only specifically indeterminate factor about it. However, the show was in one way unique (though a vague term)- the magician and the spectator both were waiting to get surprised, as if they were One.

Nights went on in their usual errands. Searching through endless nights, more of an autopsy. Conrad might have referred to it as *Heart of Darkness* but what situation was out there was difficult to fathom. Only she knew about it, although she tried not to let the beans spill. A mystery was being conjured up, a mystery of finer elements; rudiments of that whole which... She felt a fatigue working up intently; however, the intent of a desperate search carried the movement. Nights cumulated growing thicker; it was so impervious it was impossible to detect even if it was darkness. Only she seemed to be waiting with the patience of a lifeless being.

She signed her name. It seems she had written a letter. The contents are not visible though. Whom was she writing to? A lizard on the wall had been glancing fixedly. She rose up from her writing table. She stood in front of the mirror. A face appeared staring glaringly at her. A pair of hands pulled down the specs from the image. The lips curved out a smile.

The eyes looked into the eyes with a note of tranquillity. Outside the clouds roared, but there it seemed a tempest had just been calmed!

The Principal was going through the letter which she had written. Her leave was sanctioned. She breathed a sigh of relief. What was the reason though couldn't be made out? She kept it very tight to be deciphered. However, her physiognomy suggested she had completed her act of thinking and now she wanted a representation. But what kind of representation?

In the evening she sat down at her writing desk. It was raining outside. She opened her diary and wrote: Meeting and continued thereafter.....

Bio note:

Suryendu Chaudhury, MA in English (2017-2019) from English Dept. of University of Calcutta. He has written over 700 poems and several short stories in English.