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## Perspective Changed

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Sharda sat there with her hands stuck to her forehead, large blank eyes filled with tears, and two of her kids Neelu and Deepak huddled next to her. Her long black curly tresses open and falling on her back like coiled serpents, her wrists bearing large scratches from her broken bangles and her white saree wrapped like a shroud around her tired and limp body. She had not the energy to look at the howling faces of her children. People from neighborhood had stopped looking for the dead body of her husband in the debris of her large palatial burnt down house.

Vinay, her husband worked in a company as an officer and Sharda, a graduate took care of the house and children. They both had built the house piece by piece and now it was there razed to ground in cinders and ashes intermingling Vinay with in itself. Vinay's mother stayed in the village along with his brother who owned a shop there. All too soon, Sharda had to leave the village house because she refused to sign away Vinay's job to his younger brother for the sake of her children's education. Her decision helped her children fructify into well-educated human beings abounding in human values. Her daughter a doctorate in chemistry and her son, a professor. Both her children happily married and she peacefully at home after a voluntary retirement. Sharda used her retirement money to buy a flat near her daughter's house.

One day her daughter called her and requested Sharda to take care of her granddaughters because she had to urgently leave for one of her friend's house. Intrigued, Sharda inquired if all was well. Neelu told her about the tragic death of her friend's husband. Instantaneously, Sharda expressed her desire to go and see Venus along with her. Shocked and numbed at the sudden demise of Venus' husband Neelu promptly agreed to take her mother along without any query.

On reaching there, Neelu and Venus hugged hard and wept like little girls. Sharda herself in tears separated them and began speaking to Venus, "Venus only I can truly empathize with your heart wrenching tragedy. Things have already happened, but I just want to tell you something that will help you go ahead in your life and take care of your infant daughter appropriately". Then Sharda began, as if in a reverie and Neelu listened intently. For Neelu it was as if she was getting a key to a closed room. She said, "when I left the house of my in-laws, I had nothing, but only a trunk, my children and little money. I had only one thing on mind, to instill human values in my children and to make them highly educated. In all the chaos, and responsibility on my young shoulders, Venus, I forgot to live and smile, and today, my Neelu cannot smile because I was fiercely busy in educating them. However, I could not give her the most meaningful thing of life .... A smile and happiness. Whatever the tragedy be, Venus, please teach your daughter to smile. Make her a happy child.

I never dressed up properly because I thought life was over for me. I beat Neelu so mercilessly one day, when she brought someone else's red bindi, put it on my forehead, and asked me to wear a bright colored saree. I should have at least put a black bindi but I didn't. Venus, girls want to see their mothers beautiful, please dear, dress up beautifully for your daughter's sake, she will learn to love colors. In a heart-wrenching incident one day I summoned Neelu and Deepu to my presence because they had kept tit bits of food in the Almira and ants were infesting it. On reprimanding, they told me they had kept the food for their father so that he can eat when he comes. I lied to my little ones about the demise of their father and later they had a very hard time accepting it. Venus, do not lie to your daughter about the demise of her father, tell her the truth so that she can accept it and get on with life faster. My Neelu and Deepu had a very tough time accepting the reality”.

Venus looked at Sharda as if she was reading some life manual. Tears rolled from Neelu's eyes as all the knots in her mind had come undone.. She felt herself overwhelmed with love for her mother. In the meantime, Venus' daughter Ananya woke up from sleep in her lap and in days for the first time Venus smiled towards her and cooed, “oh so you have woken up, “and Ananya gave back the most charming toothless grin anybody had seen in days.

Sharda looked at Venus and Ananya and heaved a sigh of relief as if she had given her own life a second chance, a changed perspective.

**Bio note:**

Dr Geetanjali Rathore has completed her PhD from Banastahli University. Her research work is pertaining to the Gender Portrayal in the works of Ismat Chughtai, Qurratulain Hyder and Tehmina

Durrani. Other areas of her interest include gender studies, Victorian poetry, and queer literature, modern and postmodern drama.