

Speaking in Moontongue

The wind was fresh on his face. The sky was slowly lighting up into a crisp dawn. The sea, changing color, took on a subdued translucency. He listened to the limpid cries of the dawn-birds. He wondered if it were possible to create music using only the different sounds of the birds. As he breathed in the dewy air, he felt an energy drawn inwards as if falling into a vortex of primordial, volatile memory lapse.

His stupor rose beyond words. Rose into higher dimensions within, opened doors, broke down walls and expanded the spaces within him into newer visions of incompleteness. Between the chaos and clarity, a motionless load hung in abeyance.

He started walking around aimlessly till he came across the morning *sabzee* bazaar. He felt a heady urge to enter the market. No charge. Admittance free... Sloppy crowd. He wanted to see what's left, what's discarded, what's no longer cherished, what's rubbish, what someone thinks is useful to someone else.

Today, he had plenty of time on him. He wanted to look around, to stray, be tempted, be repelled. The world seemed to be made of concentric circles of mockery. Why else, he thought, would Anusha not be with him today. Why would she have left such a gaping void in his life? Today, he is busy discovering a polygon of some fading yellow here, establishing a circle of silence there. But she had, for a very long time justified the rictus of his search in no uncertain terms. She was definitely not merely the grist of his lazy fantasy. Yet ...

Sessions with his psychiatrist, Dr. Rajesh Parikh wasn't getting him anywhere. He had by now shared a range of random eccentricities with the doctor. In spite of that, he had this curious sense of increasingly becoming a homo solitarius, filling himself with nothingness. He realized he had always avoided talking about Anusha who remained forever trapped in the random sequence of his unconscious geometry. Today, he had made up his mind; he'd stop avoiding Anusha, for a change.

'Please lie down', pointed Dr. Parikh, to the couch in the center, 'it seems the morning air is doing you a lot of good, Aman'.

‘Well, not so much as to get me back on work’, said Aman, somewhat worried.

‘Doesn’t matter... You’ll soon be back to your work with a vengeance’. He pulled a chair for himself and helping Aman lie in the proper position, prepared himself with a pad and a pen, asking Aman to go ahead with all that he felt, was tormenting him.

‘I have always been disturbed, Doctor, on some of the false turnings and treacheries in my life. However, all of them seemed to fall in place only once. And these memories have been so personal, private and dear that I have rarely ever talked about it with anyone in particular’.

Doctor Parikh waited in anticipation as Aman continued. ‘The events now seem to recede, to become locked away as if I had only dreamt of them. But when I met Anusha for the first time, I actually felt as if I had entered a myth. As if, the world had been re-invented during her first two-day stay with me... And, for me alone...’

‘What do you remember of those two days?’ Dr. Parikh tried to focus Aman’s memories on the specifics.

After a concentrated pause, a tiny smile, and almost whispering, Aman continued. ‘Very distinctly, the pretty shell that she had left for me, under my pillow with a tender message “like you a lot... take care”. The conical shell suddenly seemed to have a mysterious value, an inner history that needed to be unraveled. It seemed timelessly intelligent and I tried to exclude everything else from my experience except that face, except that smile. And the bottomless darkness!

‘ The jeans that would narrow and end just above her ankles... the curious little embarrassment in feeling completely free... the quick glances softened by a tiny little smile... the beautiful neck. And almost unforgettably, the Saturday night ... Her eyes sought mine. A shade of uncertainty... She let my fingers on the cool skin of her cheek. Then, a subtle declaration of inaccessibility... Our eyes lingered and hers conveyed both an indication and a warning and she fascinated and irritated me like an obscure poem. The shape of her breasts, the seductive beginning of soft curves, the contemplative pout... And the uncertain, inane giggle ... On occasions, her delicate wantonness was surprising. But behind that occasional daring, a

delicious ghost of innocence, perhaps even of virginity. I was filled with a strange, headlong, fabulous sense of having entered a legendary maze. I was allowed to find the lips, which remained unresponsive for sometime. Then, one small tremor of response ... The unforgettable midnight face and the bottomless darkness. And something slipped between me and my reality'.