

SHORT STORY

1.

Pencil– The Decimator

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It was the month of May, I peeped out of the window of my little shabby mud house. I saw the vivid picture of the earth as wallpaper printed with the sky touching mountains, dense forests, fast flowing streams, lush green meadows, fascinating flowers, birds singing on the branch's, the blue sky dotted with milky clouds, and a pond down the hillock with full of golden fishes swimming in the light blue water. In the mean time, I sighted a nightingale singing on the willow branch nearby. I was alarmed to see my father so excited; I immediately rushed towards courtyard to confirm what the matter was. Hey my son, the people outside the Masjid were talking about Yousef peer's son. He handed over the newspaper to me and I saw it was a Ph.D notification of peer Majid that had published. On hearing this, I looked his eyes were wet and tears were trickling down through the hairs of his pepper and salt beard. He said, "My dear Danni (Danish), a ram is a ram and a cockerel is a cockerel" My sister sighed and said, "Don't dream of high skies, Majid's father is a school teacher, our—a poor farmer."

Next day at cockcrow time, someone knocked the door and I left the quilt. I came out with half closed eyes in the breeze, listing to the morning chorus of the birds, I went straight to the fast flowing, coolest stream nearby. After washing and cleaning my face, I came back and saw father was smoking pipe; oxen were given feed and a plough was ready to cultivate our field for rice seeding. Sister was busy nearby the hearth and salt tea was boiling in samovar (heated metal container). I take my cup of tea; father took the plough on

his shoulder and told me to bring a shovel with me. Sister took the long hoe; I the shovel and we went to help our father in the fields. On the road while going to field, I saw Bashir mama was roaming here and there with a pen and a white paper in his hand and was asking people for his application to be written. As he saw me, he rushed towards me with a cheerful face handed over the pen and paper to me and said, "Beta (Son) Danish: could you write an application for me as I had to apply for bank loan" I being the only literate person among the whole dynasty, had to do the work. In return, he praised, prayed for my future kissed my forehead and said, "May you live long and be always successful in your life!" After returning back from the days tough works, I saw a swift car was coming from my opposite side and stopped nearby me. As the man came out of the car, I didn't recognise at first sight that it is professor Majid wearing a black coat pant, white shirt and purple tie, black shoes and was just an English Man. "Is it Danish, what you done to yourself?", he said. He asked me for lift, but I denied because of my half torn shirt and mud ridden trousers. However, he insisted and pushed me in to the car and asked about my family, our doings and advised me to go for research. He further told me that he will help me the most. Before letting me to come out of the car, he said to me, "you are a PG student and it is never too late to start." On sharing Majid's advice with my family, father said that yousef peer's was a helpful person and his son will definitely help you and will never be wrong.

Few days later, I was sitting on the homemade rug in my courtyard under the shadow of a walnut tree and all of sudden a walnut dropped on my shoulder. In reaction, I looked upwards and saw a nightingale and a crow was dancing on the adjacent branches. After breaking and eating the walnut, I felt asleep and dreamed of my past days when I was just ten years of age collecting the fallen walnuts and my mother who was alive; came to me with a glass of milk and put a lantern in my hand and said to me "Beta (son); hard work always pays; now take the walnuts to the market and buy a new cap for your father." I shook my head, felt little bit energized and walked miles to meet professor Majid at his home. After taking tea, I requested him to bring a Ph.D form for me. He assured me that he will fulfil all the requirements by himself. Then I appeared in the Ph.D entrance, got selected and started to work under the guidance and supervision of Prof. Majid.

Three years later, I submitted my thesis and left the hostel to help my father in harvesting and sat in an outdated public bus. While on the backward journey to the home, I peeped out of the broken window and saw the earth had changed its colour from green to golden. Trees had shed their leaves, fruits had ripened, cicadas were buzzing, grasshoppers were jumping in the air, crickets were singing, and people were busy in cutting and binding the paddy. Some had stored the grains in wooden barns while others were making haystacks like mini-mountains in the fields. I saw some boys were playing hide and seek and some were busy in catching dragonflies and moths to cut their wings and legs. I kept salient, but Shakespeare was still alive in me who has brilliantly said, "As flies to the wonton boys are we to the gods, they kill us for their sport." (King Lear Act 4, Scene 1, Line 32-37)

After waiting for a year, the day came in my life when sun rose from north for me as I had qualified NET and Ph.D was

awarded to me. After showing my result notification to my father and sister, I realised that they were happy on my success. I was dreaming of good days and same was true for my family. After few days, my sister said to me, "Daddy was telling me that Danish is now grown up, I have to search for a pious daughter -in - Law." What you say? I kept salient and she knew silence is half consent. Yes she said, What about Zara – our relative? I blushed a bit and it proved to me that love and cough can't be hidden. For the whole night I was thinking about my past days when we were playing childhood game of hopscotch together. Date was fixed and marriage taken place in simple and best way and I began to live a social life. But days became harder and harder for me as I was not earning that much of money so that I make my family happy.

Finally after waiting for years PSC had advertised a notification for the recruitment of various lecturer posts and I applied for the same. After waiting couple of months, the shortlisted candidates for interview has been notified and I found my name among the toppers as my academic merit was excellent. For me it was now do and die situation as this was my first and last chance as I was approaching to the upper limit required for any government service. Therefore, I worked hard to get selected and on the eve of my interview date, I went to Majid and requested for the coat pent along with tie and he offered me the same along with best wishes. He said, "I hope tomorrow you will be a lecturer Insha'Allah". For the whole night, I was just thinking how to satisfy the interviewers and early in the morning I offer prayer and had taken wished of my family and left for interview. After reaching the place where it was scheduled, I saw every candidate was stepping here and there with a books in their hands and my heart was beating at its full pace. Now it was my turn to get into the room and as soon as I entered in to the room, I was

relaxed because one among the experts was the one who had awarded me ph. D degree. Therefore, it was golden opportunity for me to get selected. They asked me several questions and I gave satisfactory answers to the questions and the expert said, "Well done ". I was cock sure that I will be selected, but there was a doubt in my mind which was echoing again and again to me that the experts were given pencil to mark instead of a pen which could be easily erased and change from Danish to Dilawar. He was the last candidate in the short list, but his maternal uncle was well reputed officer and mine was a poor farmer.

As selection list came out, I found my doubt had changed in to reality and my name did not exist anywhere. All my dreams ruined and I wept for days and I became a psychiatric patient. The list was such a shock to my father from which he never came out and left us in the hands of God and died with this grief. The only thing which was echoing in my mind was

that had the experts were given a pen to mark, the situation would have been different. Thanks to my beloved wife who said to me, "Everything is written with a permanent marker by the angles of God on the book which will be offered to you on dooms day and justice will be done to you and punished will be the people who ruined your dreams on the Earth". I feel sorry to my dear sister not to offer her a golden ring on her marriage ceremony. I also fell sorry to my sweet son not to admit his in a good school.

The condition of my tormented self increased and I started to take Psychotherapies. Frustration in me was touching its heights and one day I left for the railway station which was thirty miles from my home. Instead of going straight to the station, I jumped on the railway track and was looking on the watch which was a gift given to me by my beloved wife on the marriage day. The watch never deceived me like her and I kept waking till.....

"Dedicated to all those scholars who became victim of social Injustice"

