



MARUT
THE DESCENDANT OF YAMMA

VIBHAV

(1)

I switched on recorder: - *My name is Iraj Shavaran and I am purposeful.*

Mr.Kapoor was dead.

Nothing mournful, but he was friendly, even when he is a dead body now.

PERFECTLY STILL. PERFECTLY HARMLESS.

A corpse is nothing but a sweet structure of clay, something that never bothers unlike the zombies that you see on the TV. A corpse is a real friend. They never run behind you to eat you. In fact, they are perfect friends that never demands and never complains.

I believe that the perfect moment to die is when you say, "IT'S ENOUGH", no I am not promoting Suicide here, but Mr. Kapoor went the same way. One night he slept and didn't wake up the next morning. Everyone said it was a peaceful way to die, a less troublesome way. Which I beg to differ, after the departure of Mrs. Kapoor, Mr. Kapoor stopped talking to anyone, neither with his son nor the grand children. Eventually his son dropped by to say hello and realized that he got late by sixty three hours.

People who don't use their head don't require one. I think it should have been his son who should have died not Mr. Kapoor, but who am I to judge, moreover I've faith in *The Shimla Killer*, the news channels these days have lost their touch of creativity with names. It has been eight people now who died in the last thirty days. A killer is on the loose, well seven people, Mr. Kapoor as we know of died of natural consequences.

"Can you do it?" My mother injected from behind. This was the first time I was performing **Antyesti or AntimShanskar**, the rites literally means "last sacrifice", usually involve cremation of the body . In the absence of my father, she thought I should learn the family business after turning nineteen.

We got Mr.Kapoor's body on September twenty seventh; I guess I should say that Mom and Tripathi Aunty got the body not me; they run the *Shavgrah*, house of the dead, a morgue where they prepare a body for funeral rites.

"Give him sometime" Mrs.Tripathi said, looking at me expectantly, "it must be the smell" she reasoned.

"Yeah. It smells like detergent powder" I said. "He not IT" Mom interrupted. "Yes. He smells like detergent power" I corrected myself. Mr.Kapoor didn't care if I consider him a thing, he was dead anyways, but mom was particular about my pronouns. I washed my hands with the sanitizer. After it I wore the white rubber gloves wondering how long I had been

dreaming for this day.

Finally, it was my turn and Mr.Kapoor was still unconscious. Very cooperative of him.

Mr. Kapoor lay quietly on the bamboo stretcher. I grabbed his arms and pulled it straight. Rigor mortis makes a body so stiff that you can barely move it, due to the absence of the warmth of blood the underneath muscles hardens like the dough without water.

Then I turned his legs to the south, which is considered as the direction of the dead, Yama's adobe according to Hinduism. I lit an oil lamp and placed it near the body, which should be kept burning continuously for the first three days following death. But we could skip that part as Mr. Kapoor didn't have much time. As he has been dead for almost three days.

I have an addiction, a very sweet addiction...not of cigarettes. In the late afternoon I ate rice with vegetarian soup for the lunch. Oh! I loved its gravy- But now my hunger had grown further than food and I was hungry for something else. My sweet strong appetite had started pinching and poking with the silent slithering consistently croaking craves to Kill - the most intense need. The Want whispers louder now; the cruel CREATURE, the deadly damaging ENTITY inside me encroached me for the foreplay, but not now, for now, I had to control. It was one of my rules.

If the dead is male or a widow then generally white cloth is used, and in case of a married woman with her husband still alive or a young unmarried girl, then the body is dressed either in red or yellow - I have used a white cloth.

I applied sacred ash, the *bhasma* is the forehead of Mr Kapoor as he was a worshipper of Lord Shiva (Saivites), but if he would have been a worshipper Lord Vishnu (Vaishnava), then I would have applied sandalwood paste to his forehead.

I clutched Mr.Kapoor's jaws to open his mouth and poured three droplets of holy Ganges water in his mouth. Then I placed a Basil leaf, *tulsi* on his tongue. It's a notion that the divine Ganges and Basil helps the deceased to attain salvation after death.

But I don't believe in salvation? At times I feel the only respectable thing for our race to leave everything behind and walk to its end. Throw up on this meaningless life, delete ourselves from where we are, because earth is nothing more than a mortal mental jail of this immortal universe where humans are the dumped as prisoners left to breed and suffer. Never mind now came the most important part of the ritual. The last part.

"ॐ सूर्याय पुत्राय विद्महे महाकालाय धीमहि । तन्नो यमः प्रचोदयात् ।" , I chanted. Mom and Tripathi aunty repeated the mantra with me. I am no expert in Sanskrit but mom says, after saying Yama's manta, the lord of the dead graciously accepts the soul of the dead and grants them peace. But as much as I know he is the king of *Patala*, the hell not *Swarga* the heaven, so is

my mother unknowingly sending all the souls for torture!

Don't get her wrong though, she is a sensitive lovely woman, she doesn't even makes jokes about the dead paying off our mortgages even when they couldn't.

"Good work" my mom said. There was a sense of hesitation and disapproval in her voice, I could sense, "It was a neat work" Mrs.Tripathi cheered. I liked that, NEATNESS was important. Cleanliness is next to deadliness, I almost laughed inside.

"Iraj," my mom said, "Go change your dress. We will now perform Mr. Kapoor's funeral" she ordered.

"Sure" I said thinking about the tidiness of my work, it was only namesake. Last night the latest victim of the Shimla killer, *Hiran Sahni*, had been found near the City Center Mall and I heard Mom saying to Tripathi aunty that the body was gruesomely mutilated as if it were bitten by a wild animal, and cleaning it would be a heck of a task.

I removed the gloves and the mouthpiece. Then threw it in the dustbin.

In the absence of death there is no secrecy in living. That is the reason a dead body has no secrets in it- It reveals everything. Even scientists prefer studying the living beings more than dead beings. Dead bodies are innocent because they are not living, because they can't die anymore. Death and life are processes that are connected, and are incomplete without each other. Life takes death and death takes life. Nature puts a barrier to our desires, especially over not dying, forever youth, eternal life, painless world- all these wants only suits the books not reality. Because people won't die, the new born would be endangered. Because then the immortal humans will claim their possession over everything, like they do in their mortal life. That is why nature has put an end to human desires of ever living.

Life is working whereas death is resting. Life is day whereas death is night. People say 'life is short' but have they done anything more than life? Definitely not, yet they fail to understand life, because they never understood death. They only feared it. FEAR- it always tell you the presence of danger. But never tells you the nature of it. Earthquake, accidents, wars, these are danger. But why is that? Fear fails to tell that. Fear never gives knowledge but only prevents it. It sits deep inside our heart that every time it appears on our face, the heart trembles. Accidents and earthquakes don't happen to scare us but to tell us that life is not permanent. So don't fear death but make an effort to understand it.

Life is nothing more than a dream. Ask yourself, while sleeping doesn't your dreams feel real? Don't you feel alive in dreams? But when you wake up you realize it was just another dream. Question yourself; while sleeping did you suspect the reality of your dream? Did you already know that you were dreaming while at sleep? You never suspect the reality of your dream, because you are so deep in sleep that everything seems real.

Those who understand life and death together know that life is just another dream maybe a big one, which lasts for several years. But as you wake up in the morning realizing what you

saw was just a dream, one day you will die and see that you woke out of yet another dream, called life. And it would be a different scenario after death, but it would be as real as life is now for you. And there would be no leftover traces in your consciousness.

The fear of dying is a constant feeling that the bullet of death is reaching you second by second. So be prepared for it. And could you be prepared to die? Yes, by living totally and freely in as possible way as you can because no matter what everybody wants to have a pleasant dream? Don't be scared let death come, welcome it. Because it always comes at the right time, because you now know everything that you should have known, and you have done everything you should have done. There is no point living beyond that. Because the time has come to wake up from the pleasant dream you had been dreaming for years. As death come you realize there is no point breathing more, there is no point for dreaming anymore, because now the past had faded and the future had collapsed.

I imagined mutilating Mr.Kapoor's body.

In the beginning of my biology class, I prospered the practice of mutilation. Mutilation never brought me much pleasure than those subtle sounds of the knife slicing out the body part like hands, leg, and torso which has successfully kept me enthusiastic for years. Anatomy allured me a lot. I wholeheartedly dissected hundreds of frogs, lizards, mice and snakes. Cutting out their heads, peeling off their skins, watching them inside, it was like acoustic music to me, controlling the secretion of stress hormones in my heinous head. Their bodies were like containers to me, boring and stupid from outside, like junk boxes that are kept at the corners, but once they are cut open, they suddenly become interesting and reveal everything that is hidden inside. I never realized that I was killing, to me it was as naive as a boy playing with Legos, construct and deconstruct. They were never real to me but toys. Kids of my age were fond of dolls and their dirt whereas I was passionate about serial killers. Though, I never liked what they did, but how they did it always amused me.

Their *work*.

Their *life styles*.

Their *kills*.

I removed my apron and wore a white *Kurta*. I don't have a taste for Lucknow's *Chikenkari*, just a plain white one is apt for me. And I hope I didn't mislead you, *The Shimla Killer*, was nothing but a Tiger that had escaped the Kufri Zoo. I know you are disappointed, I am too.

(2)

OUR MORGUE had a simple name, *Shavgrah*. Nothing different nothing unique. Simple as its work and meaning. I know you may think running a morgue must be a silly business, but you are probably not considering that India is a runner up on the population list. And there are too many agents of deaths moving active around us, twenty four-seven. Murder. Accident. Bombings. Heartbreaks. *More people more deaths, countless lists of clients.*

I had been helping Mom and Mrs. Tripathi at the *Shavgrah*, ever since I had no idea what I was doing. Perhaps this is why Dad left us; maybe he got horrified by mom's family business. Back when *Nanaji*, maternal grandfather was doing it, it was under proprietorship but now the laws has changed and it is run under the state's license.

In the beginning I was appointed with locking and unlocking the gates of the *Shavgrah*, nothing interesting for a nine year old. Back then I would spend my days running behind the Honeyguides, trying to catch them, locating their nests and stealing their eggs, because they had a habit of destroying their own eggs. Once, mom saw me strangling the bird who was about to break the eggs, she scolded me and told me it was to kill someone, so I let the Honeyguide go. That's when I came to an understanding that the CRY of the ENTITY living inside me had to be hidden even from my own mother. Luckily after that I was ordered to enter the room where the dead bodies were operated, as a punishment to be in mom's constant vision. And due to my good behaviour I and regularly feeding the Honeyguides I got a job to dispose up the septic garbage and leftovers during the operating process. Soon after that I was promoted to cleaning up the dead, shaving and scrubbing them, changing their clothes.

I came out of the washroom with a smile on my face. I would get to see fire today. *Was it July second, my b'day?* First a dead body now fire.

From childhood FIRE has been on my interest list. I would envision fire- growing on trees more than leaves, floating on rivers more than fishes, flying in the air more than birds and walking on the earth more than humans. 'Go die in fire' was the dearest among the catalog of verbal abuse I would use in my boyhood. I had always been attached to fire, as much as a body is attached to the soul- *a pyromaniac!*

"Iraj" shouted Mrs.Tripathi, it sounded more like *EERAAJ*.

"Coming" I responded collecting the plastic jug. As I frisked towards Mr. Kapoor the oil inside sloshed- Gasoline! I touched my back pocket making sure that I the lighter was still there.

Mom and Mrs. Tripathi had constructed a rectangular structure, a well adjusted pile of

timber. One over the other, making a stable bed platform for Mr. Kapoor's body. It must have been a tiresome work I am sure.

I wrapped a dry cloth over the tip of a branch to place fire, and then I poured the liquid on it. If you think from the point of view of a murderer then burning away the dead body, is far better than burying it. It eliminates the evidence of murder, the fingerprints and the crime scene. Everything that leads to a murder is *poof!* All gone.

Fire which has always been a benefactor to humanity helps with the anxiety, a cure for the savaging stressful mind and certainly an exit from dark passages of my brain.

At last, I placed the fire. Very slowly it began dancing on the branch like a belly dancer. I silently crouched and stove up the platform. The neighborhood said Mr. Kapoor died a peaceful death, but according to me he died a tragic death. Nobody from his family had come to attend his final rites.

You see, fire comes in slowly but goes out very fast. That is why I surged some honorable amount of gasoline beneath the wooden platform. And while doing so I dared to look into the flames, carefully listening to its voice, *a howling echo of rage.*

Life's law is everything that eats, excretes, breathes and reproduces is living. For instance, People eat, excrete, breathe and reproduce, hence People are living things.

Fire is also living thing. It chews all the flammable objects, like plastic and paper, and then leaves behind black ash as waste. Without air it dies, just like humans, oxygen supports its existence as well. Fire expands, kerosene being its energy drink, reproduces a new fire, as people give birth to another.

Fire even talks the shrieking echoes of the flames, trying to tell something.

Fire is alive...Totally Alive!

The flames were authentically astonishing. There were no tears, no one to mourn. Death has always been the final chapter of time and the first chapter of eternity. 'Happy eternity' I said earnestly.

Am I good? Are my thoughts justified? Or Am I evil? Is there someone known as GOD? If yes, where is he? And what makes god, a GOD? We call him omniscient, as he knows everything and his knowledge is complete, but he does not seem to care. We call him omnipresent, as he is present in all places at all times but never comes when a victim prays. We call him merciful, but good people don't need mercy, as they are eminent. So he is not omnipotent because he is trying too hard but can't defeat evil. We say if he really tries he can! Then why is he not trying? Then he must be malevolent. Because he can defeat evil

but he is not trying, He is not trying because he can't, because he is a fabrication. So why do we call him god him god? There is no god; but if there is one then he is nothing more than a kid with a candy, and he is innocent, very innocent indeed. Why don't people ask the obvious questions? Must be because they are satisfied with what they do for a living and they find it difficult, maybe they are lazy and have commitment issues. They run behind perfection; fear being imperfect and end up losing everything they once had. Whereas I never chased perfection because I know there was nothing as such. Imperfection makes us human. It suits ME. It suits my personality and I wanted to be self. I found satisfaction in the only thing I could devote myself to. There was no place I would rather be; nothing else I would rather be doing. I don't know if there was an ENTITY in me or not, all I know was that something acted through ME.

Today Mr. Kapoor lost everything or maybe this world lost Mr. Kapoor. I switched off my recorder and kept it inside my pocket hiding it from mom's eyes.

"Let's go home" mom said as the fire died out. What an emotional scene!

"Yeah" I exhaled feeling the sense of freedom.

"You have an assignment to complete" Mom said or maybe asked, I don't know, sometimes she talks in tones I fail to understand. But yes, I almost forgot about it. Sometimes college gets heavy, especially when you are a first year student. So much work to do and no time to relax, that's why I choose History honors at Indian Institute of Advance Studies- it gives me ample of time to sleep in the class.

"Yes" I tried responding in her own unexplainable tone.

"What's the topic?" Tripathi Aunty asked. She is like a mother to me, don't confuse these are not my words but this is what she told me once. Maybe because she has no child of her own but as long as it fetches me sneakers and few bucks I don't mind it at all.

"An eminent personality". I am pretty sure mom wants me to write about Gandhiji but I have someone really different in mind.

"So Gandhiji I believe or maybe Bhagat Singh?" Mom used the obvious two options. "No someone old." Mom snatched a quick look at me, guessing what I had in mind. "Ashoka?" Mrs. Tripathi asked, after giving it a good thought. Her mouth was hung open in an expectation for me to say a yes, "No", I disappointed her, "someone older" I repeated, "Who?" she closed her mouth then blinked her eyes.

"Vibhishan" I had my own reasons.

“Vibhishan!” mom agitated as if it broke her concentration, “The younger brother of Raavan, Vibhishan?” she asked again, “Yes, mom.”

“Just because Vibhishan’s nick name was Iraj, doesn’t mean you have to write about him. I’ve told you numerous times that we didn’t know the history behind your name when we named you”

“He was a rakshasa, an evil right?” Mrs. Tripathi questioned and I nodded in assurance. We came out of the morgue and locked the doors. “Do you know what rakshasa used to do?” Mom turned towards Mrs. Tripathi in a jiffy, but then answered herself; she does that sometimes, “they used to eat people.” She said angrily.

“Oh! They were murderers?” Mrs. Tripathi said.

“No” I responded; don’t insult him by branding him a murderer, “he was a cannibal.”

“What’s that?” Mrs. Tripathi was an innocent woman to know the cruelty about this world.

“The Ekpe. Mgbe. Also known as the leopard society from in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Nigeria is considered to be the oldest group to have started the concept of cannibalism. Although it existed through the Paleolithic times, and even during the medieval times, Alauddin khilji had a human meat market. But the first recorded document belongs to the secret society- known as the leopards. As the name goes, males of that group would dress up as leopards, wearing not only skins but also their jaws and claws. They would attack travelers who would pass by. The victims' flesh would be cut from their bodies and distributed to members of the secret society. According to their beliefs, the ritual cannibalism would strengthen both members of the secret society as well as their entire tribe” I answered.

“Do they teach all his in history books” Mrs. Tripathi sounded concerned.

“No” I laughed a little, “but we have read about Tarzan in fiction. He belonged to that tribe”

I added, “*“औहदे अर्विबिसने अत्तेमल्लोन्वेयो उरे इन्हेग्रे अत्लन्दो ऋणम्”*” meaning “Oh dear Vibhishan eat them all once you are in the great land of Ram” this is a line from the Agastya Ramayana, “Raavan says this to Vibhishan once Ram invited him to join hands. Raavan knew Vibhishan being a cannibal was forced by his need to eat human flesh, thus would eat out the Vanra Sena. *Vanra* means forest, *Sena* means people. The people of the forest.”

“But still Raavan lost the battle!” Mrs Tripathi intervened.

“Yes. Because after Lord Hanuman understood the real reason behind the rapid decline of his crew, he kept Vibhishan occupied with the flesh of dead Martyrs of Rama” the weather outside was gorgeous, the fading blue sky above looked silent and peaceful, with no clouds, storm or birds to uglify its view.

“Ohhk. This is why Hanumanji is shown ripping his chest revealing the image of lord Ram inside him” Mrs Tripathi connected wittily, “Exactly” it’s a lovely feeling when people get your point, “It a depiction showing the warriors served Lord Ram not only in life but also in death.”

Mom didn’t say a word. She just kept a distance walking towards our three years old grey Santro. It was quite possible that she didn’t even hear a single word we exchanged. She likes to keep her margin.

“You are an intelligent boy Iraj” Tripathi aunty complimented, “I knew you were into Murderers but I didn’t know this much”

“I am not into murderers but *Serial...*” Mom disrupted, “Iraj we understood, get in the car” mom ordered with a straight expression. I know it sounds like she got irritated but I know she is just upset and nothing else. “Just like The Shimla Killer” Mrs. Tripathi lipped opening the door.

I smiled keeping my head down, thinking about a joke - that how cannibalism solve world hunger and overpopulation, the greatest two problems at the same time. But I restricted it from sharing it with mom; she was not a fan of dark humor.

Today whatever my delirious dark side did, I don’t want to give it much thought. But thinking about not thinking something crucial as this, would make me feel like a total idiot.

Sun with all its GRACIOUSNESS had fallen back a long ago, and now was the time to go home, the place where I know nobody would follow me, the place which was a lot safer than the outside world - my corner, my home. We had organized my house quite well; welcoming wide hallways, old-fashioned parquet floor with a blend of deep browns, and the walls were the greens of summer gardens meeting a bold white baseboard. The banister was a twirl of a branch, tamed by the carpenter's hand, its grain flowing as water might, in waves of comforting woodland hues. It had a total of three rooms with a modular kitchen and a decumbent balcony. Beneath everything was the basement, which I considered ‘my fun room’. This is where we would keep the dead body inside deep fridge overnight if received them in emergencies. I would spend most of my leisure time there- reading, washing photographs and painting. And often find myself in the company of cats desperately mating on the windows, yet if you take a stroll I am sure, you could never guess, it is owned by a sociopath.