

INDISCRETIONS AND FATALITIES

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FOREWORD

Octavia E. Butler once said, “Every story I create, creates me. I write to create myself.” For every author all our creations at some point or the other are a reflection of our own self or more likely a concoction of me and my unknown self. Yet, those and this literary work is certainly not an autobiography neither the autobiography I wish I had. Frankly, I don’t have the courage to write one. As an archetypal icon of a perfect middleclass I possess and display all the overt virtues and covert vices that my socio-economic category has acquired but repudiated publicly over the ages. As a perfect repertoire of my classification I preserve illusions only to humanize them in their true colours and camouflage the harsh realities by de-humanizing their forms. I won’t swear on how much of this book is real and how little of this is imaginary because that should not be the matter of objective consideration for any reader. What should matter are the maze of characters and the haze of their interactions and non-interactions.

Okay, let me put it this way. Story-telling for me as well as for many others in my trade is like the case of “fly-fishing” described by author Jerome K. Jerome in his famous novel *Three men in a Boat*. There is a conscientious fellow who always exaggerates his hauls whenever he goes for fishing and yet he never inflates those figures by more than twenty-five percent. When

he manages to catch forty fishes he proudly declares the number to be fifty to friends and relatives and likewise. And then he even more proudly goes on to declare, "But I will not lie any more than that, because it is sinful to lie." My book is a follower of a similar moralistic principle where I unhesitantly draw my own line of thus far and no further. Adding on twenty-five to fifty percent of imagination to my mind is perfectly alright and I may candidly admit that I have committed no sin in adding this much of non-reality to reality to make this book readable for the readers. And that is certainly well within the permissible limits of effluent emissions.

Economist and Nobel laureate Gary Becker once suggested that all human dishonesties are based on a simple cost-benefit analysis or what Tim Harford in his book *The Logic of Life* termed as SMORC [Simple Model of Rational Crime]. Evidently, the facts and incidents described in this book are not mine but borrowed from other people's life---people whom I know closely or people with whom I have interacted quite intimately. And the reason for this dishonesty is my simple cost-benefit analysis. The cost of disclosing my closest kept secrets even at this age are too heavy against just the benefit of feeling myself psychologically relieved. And let me tell you this dishonesty is not an exclusivity of my narrations that fill up the following pages but a feature of all small time and big time authors which is rather pompously described as creative liberty. As the old saying goes Facts are for the people who lack the imagination to create their own truth.

Story-telling is after all as much an art as a sly kind of voyeurism where characters are created to be observed

rather obtrusively and then slaughtered on the altar of public likes and dislikes; at least that's what the authors believe they are. Yet every story has the potential of churning the hearts of readers as much as being thrown in the litter bin in disgust. What is that observation or that decantation which succeeds in moving the hearts and minds of the readers is an alchemy that very few have really mastered. I am certainly not one of them. But an author is never the once bitten twice shy type who would put a hold on his so-called adventurism despite umpteen numbers of reverses. And there lies the scope of one more re-look at the same old story of human beings and their ever-changing relationship with the surroundings.

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PROLOGUE

I stand transfixed, alone, amidst an unending meadow of blooming mustard flowers. The ocean of golden yellow undulates, almost imperceptibly, in the crisp morning air of Keonjhar, a remote corner of tribal India. Almost in a desolating contrast the azure blue sky hangs down very low, tantalizingly touching the scattered heaps of jagged rocks and their unmindful vegetation. A lone dragonfly hovers around my outstretched hands like a lone-wolf challenging the near surreal settings. My scarecrow waistline delectably dissects the picture-frame exactly into two halves of golden and blue or more precisely into golden yellow and cerulean blue.

Pablo Picasso had, for a considerable period of his artistic life, experimented with geometric figures and their juxtaposition with the living shapes. He discreetly used living colours on geometric shapes and outlandish colours on living objects. If his aim was to erase the border between the living and non-living, he failed, as the two shapes refused to dissolve their distinct identities. But their colours mingled generously to establish the fact that colours transcend barriers and create a world of magic realism if allowed a free run.

Watch carefully. Colours are just like imaginations. Unbridled and feral, they travel uncharted paths, discover hidden orifices and congeal with facts that are still in their molten state. Colours transform the hue

of life, uplift or expand the genre of consciousness and challenge the parameters of social rectitude. Colours, like imaginations, are uncompromising yet unfettered; relentless yet spontaneous. Like imaginations, colour oozes through our skin and race through our veins. But, wait a minute! Why am I talking so much about colours or, for that matter imagination? I am certainly not a painter. I might have had my usual flurry with the brush like millions of other kids of my generation. That was all. But imaginations.....well, yes.

Imaginations are indeed required to deal with the complexities and inextricabilities of modern urban industrial culture or the refulgence of conscience. Imaginations are also required for the moral and psychological process of self-rehabilitation because social reconstruction is not an extraneous moral value but an integrative function of our imaginations. You may not be inclined to accept Joseph Conrad's view that Fiction is nothing but human history but what transforms history into fiction is the touch of imagination or the flamboyance of colours. So, like William Wordsworth I shall not hesitate to bank upon my freedom of colours or my power of imagination to portray reality as a historical event or lay the foundations of history on the pillars of reality.

Now, let those imaginations flow; flow as if freedom was never a myth. That, the ever-raging dialectics between the worlds of appearance and reality, matter and spirit, evil and good, death and divine life, never existed. Let the imaginations, through an intuitive process of self-discovery and awareness of the infinite, ascend from the unconscious state to the wakeful state of inward expansion and synthesis.

CHAPTER

ONE

1

Me, moi, mich, is an enigma that has haunted us, the mankind, through ages. We all at some point of time or other have been shaken up by the realization of two me's, one coasting directly on top of the other. Yes, most of the time they do move in tandem. But sometimes they seem to be two different people. And here lies the struggle to be one singular me. Yes, I am the me, moi, mich. No matter what I say or do I am still the unmistakable me. But who exactly am I, remains as the ultimate unanswered question.

Daniel C. Dennett in his book *Darwin's Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the meaning of life* said, "If it is true that human minds are themselves to a very great degree the creations of memes, then we cannot sustain the polarity of vision we considered earlier; it cannot be memes versus us because earlier infestations of memes have already played a major role in determining who or what we are. The independent mind struggling to protect itself from alien and dangerous memes is a myth. There is a persisting tension between the biological imperative of our genes on the one hand and the cultural imperative

of our memes on the other, but we would be foolish to side with our genes; that would be to commit the most egregious error of pop sociology. Besides as we have already noted, what makes us special is that we alone among species, can rise above the imperatives of our genes—thanks to the lifting cranes of our memes.”

Even if you are in disagreement with the first part of Daniel C. Dennett’s ideas, there is no doubt that you would be in agreement about his observations on the second. We and we alone stand up to self-criticism as much as we take the liberty of self-indulgence. We and we alone welcome, or at least agree to self-cleanse as much as we go on to promote self-aggrandizement. If that be the laying down of the platform there is no harm in laying bare the ‘we’ within us through the crests and troughs of events involving the quintessential me.

I have already declared in my Foreword that my book is a follower of a very ‘strong moralistic principle’ where in an unhesitant way I draw my own line of thus far and no further. Adding on twenty-five to fifty percent of imagination to my mind is perfectly alright and I may candidly admit that I have committed no sin in adding this much of non-reality to reality to make this book readable for the readers. And let me tell you that this is certainly well within the permissible limits of effluent emissions. To guess that this was a clever ploy to take away the readers from the simple division between philosophizing and blubbery would not really be too wide off the mark. It might seem somewhat like covering the yawning gap between German idealism and German romanticism by graceful remarks of Spinozism. But whether readers would believe it or not the invocations of literary texts

and themes that are narrated in the following chapters are by no means intended in an illustrative or exemplary fashion. Rather it is imperative that literature, besides history, assist in making philosophical argument, since the doubling of reality as fiction is a fundamental aspect of reality itself. The ensuing temptation is to reduce fiction either to reality or subjective fantasy, or alternatively, to vaporize reality in favour of a universal reign of fiction, which in turn becomes skittish or a whimsical game, as devoid of the comic as it is of the tragic.

Stephen Medcalf in his book *The Coincidence of Myth and Fact* once suggested that the fusion of existence, event, and fiction as myth was enacted as early as by Christ himself, who can for this reason be taken as the highest imaginative artist of all, working ideally with the real because he worked really with the ideal. According to him, Jesus Christ built his death, the terrible inexhaustible death of the king, out of utility. On one hand, the myths of willing sacrifice and of reigning from the tree express something perfectly real about his approach to death; on the other, there is the basest utility, the political decision: 'It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people'---although that too, as St. John saw, can be made symbolic---and a death in which the sufferer is peculiarly the passive object.

One can suggest that the attribution of 'real' tends to be used to reinforce the existential, and not bandied as an alternative to it, whether in the mode of emphatically affirming existence, or in the mode of denoting an intensely acute degree of existence. If in one case it may be described as 'it really exists,' on the other one can at best describe as 'it was a very real experience,' as if

certain beings in space and time impinge in their beingness rather more insistently than others. A fountain of liquid gold may be logically possible, if quite beyond the reach of current technology, and ill-advised at a time of economic scarcity. But what about a square circle? Perhaps in some non-finite universe one could imagine that circle might be squared. In many more ways than one fiction is a feast of imaginations that despite not being real is never dissociated from reality. Fictions about me have a far greater degree of this dynamic symbiosis between real and reality in the truest sense of the term.

Fyodor Dostoevsky in his novella *The Double* has portrayed what happens when the pulls of our inner impulses and pressures of our social role create a constant conflict within us. There is a petty clerk named Golyadkin who tries to overcome his social mediocrity and gain public attention. There is another Golyadkin who is haunted by his double who is ambiguously at once a projection of his missing self as well as a clerk with all the features of social mediocrity. The constant conflict that beseeches the attention of one Golyadkin by another Golyadkin's double ultimately becomes so widespread that every other clerk in the office becomes potentially one's double and one is as uncannily haunted by his real other as by one's own missing selfhood. And this portrayal makes us to conclude that the modern bureaucratic world no longer receives one person by offering to one a virtuous and honorable role which one could play non-identically, according to one's capabilities. Instead, it demands that one suppress his modest or higher capabilities in order to become a mere cog in a machine.