

herbs, yuk. I'm lucky, though, that my uncle doesn't join them crazies in Jerusalem who rub their knees on the cobblestones of the Via Dolorosa, chanting, then screaming and burping the name of Lord, all the while they're bleeding like hell, believing they're offering themselves to Him in sacrifice. If religion isn't the opium of the people as the commies claim, it certainly drives some mobs round the bend. Look at the millions of Muslims circling the black Kaaba in Mecca, and they must do it 7 times anti-clockwise to prove their faith in Allah. That massive cube is supposed to have been built by Abraham and his second son Ishmael when the *ladder* decided to settle in Arabia.

If you want to be religious, be quiet about it is what I says, why do you need to show off in front of all and sundry, specially on Sundays in the case of Christians? As for the Jews, they line up against that huge Wailing Wall, which stands just behind the Dome of the Rock, praying and stuffing little paper wishes inside its nooks and crannies.

I would prefer to own a little voodoo doll so that I could stick needles in it and punish those nasty brats that bug me at school, all of it in the privacy of my room.

Thank Goddess the following morning, Berky woke up full of pep and I pretended not to have witnessed anything funny. This I call lying by omission and I have to grit my teeth, coz it's damn hard not to tell your uncle what *beserkness* he can come out with.

Religion and all them godforsaken do's and don'ts aside, that last morning spent in the Galilee was just lover-ly, on account that we took a little boat and sailed with the wind, taking in the sun. We came back, I, with a nice tan, and Berky, beetroot red, but he did it to please me, coz he hates to expose himself. He can really be cute, specially when he's frying for my sake, the poor thing.

---

## Personal Pleasantries

- Rosaline Jamir

---

**L**ife has serious miseries, amidst which, we also experience personal pleasantries that prop us. The incidents narrated are for those who believe in sharing lighter moments, such that another creative muse, via the elegant English Language.

## Family Fumbles

A wife and her husband of twenty-two years live on a hillock at the border-end of the city, in their home-state. About fifteen years back an odd-on in the family, still makes everyone laugh aloud about, when recollected. The wife was serving, as the manager in the government Industries Office in the city, while her hubby was a home-agriculturist. Their two sons were aged five and seven, when the family faced a family fumble. The couple had their own share of disgruntles as any normal husband and wife, but the main reason for the un-peace was the hubby's

love to liquor away the evenings, neglecting all else. There, came a time when the wife was really annoyed with her hubby for, forever romancing with liquor, now 24x7. Her anger was justifiable; 'cause after a heady day in office, she had to home-head, where nonstop household chores awaited her hand. Besides, her two young sons had to be lesson tutored, no matter how drained out she was. Marriage means partnership; so it was understandable when the wife, insisted, that her hubby extend a helping hand, in lesson tutoring the sons. But the hubby breezed away his wife's say. The romance as a young couple which was knotted by marriage was slowly knotting into a mayhem. Day in, and day out, the couple affronted each other, while the children were around. In the climax of quarrels the wife often yelled that she would divorce her hubby. So it was divorce! Every dawn, thru' noon, onto nightly-divorce! Not a single day passed without uttering 'wobbly divorce.' The hubby stayed put, unresponsive. During the times, when their parents quarreled the elder son sat sober while the younger son, skipped around, signing disinterestedness.

Then D-day dawned. On this fine morning, the younger son up from bed refused to go to school. He was just not in the mood; moody because there was to be an English dictation test and he hadn't learnt anything. He had refrained from telling his parents about the test the previous eve, because he had wanted to laze away. As the clock ticked 8am, his father gave in to the little one's wishes of absenting in school that day. Infuriated, more by her hubby's softness, in such circumstances, and at a loss for the worst words to him, the wife turned around and threatened the young one, that she would tie up his hands and legs with coconut ropes and room-lock him for the day, if he did not school. Un-blinking, red in face, the little one, to his mother yelled "Try tying and locking me up? I will divorce you!....Whatever the word means?" Stunned wife and hubby, pressing the caution button, fixed the family fumble.

## Groaning Grammar

There is this rollicking experience of a grammar class, some five decades back, Uncle and his best friend still reminisce. They refer to it as Groaning Grammar!

Uncle and his best friend were students of the 4<sup>th</sup> standard in the only school in their native village. The school was run by a single teacher who, taught all the subjects (a reminder of Goldsmith's *The Village School-Master*. Truly, the characters were very alike). One day the teacher assigned home-work to all the students for the following day; that to memorise a grammar sentence which included a noun. Those days one compulsory custom, for all young men of an age-group was to reside in the village community hall for social and personal welfare. Back in the hall that eve, uncle right away said that he would memorise that sentence, '*I am a boy.*' Since it would be monotonous to memorise the same sentence by the two of them, uncle advised his friend to study, the sentence '*I am a girl.*' It was simple, with a single noun. The friend adamantly negated saying, he was a boy, and didn't want to be teased by their classmates. He opted to memorise '*The book is on the table.*' Uncle

knowing, that his friend wasn't very bright, casually remarked that, the sentence had two nouns, and would be an up-hill task in an overnight for the latter. Determined he could learn it, the friend divided the sentence into three parts: '*The book is / on the / table*' and began memorising the first half, '*The book is.*'

About 8pm, against a backdrop of repeated pathetic whispers of '*The book is*' uncle tucked himself goodnight having learnt his select. About midnight, uncle suddenly woke hearing groans and grunts, some arrangement of noises! Withdrawing the blanket from his head, he sighted his friend, leaning against the bamboo wall of the hall, clutching his waist and feverishly repeating '*on the.*' "Pointless studying" uncle said to his friend "cause you have yet to learn, the 3<sup>rd</sup> part- '*table,*' when by then, you will have forgotten the 1<sup>st</sup> part- '*The book is,*' so better that to sleep the left hours to daylight and energise yourself to face the teacher's frill and frown." And sure indeed the next day while Teacher prized uncle, the best friend posed punished... all for Groaning Grammar!

## Jungle Jangle

We were jungle, jangling. In about an hour or so, we would reach the camping site. Well, nothing was really planned. The evening before, a few of our villagers had come by, visiting us at our government allotted quarter. The talks centred round, the harvest of season, which was round the corner, the month of November to be exact. Ultimately the conversation turned to possibilities of hunting wildlife since it was the '*in-season.*' The thrill to hunt was propped even more by two Shikari-Sambhus who were relating stories of the past year's heroic hunting experiences. Of the two, one was very aged, (seventy plus) who was more than eager to go. Despite our presumptions we agreed to take him along, decidedly for company. The wild desire to hunt wildlife lit, friends and family numbering eleven of us, onward marched the very next day. We left home about 2pm trudging stretches of miles, how long none could measure. We had walked for almost four hours by now, on narrow stony slipping paths, zeroing into dense grass, drowned in a 1000 sounds, across two hills.

The camping site was a roughly constructed thatch house, two-roomed and a bamboo platform giving a valley view. By the time we reached, the sun was fading, so some of us decided to pot and pan the evening meal while others prepared for the hunt. Silence being the code of the serene forests, all of us went about the chores in as much stark silence as we could. By 9pm supper done, the Shikari-Sambhus and to-be Shikaris staked the best lay-out trap. In between that time, one of the 19-20 yr old young man, requested an uncle for the loan of his .22 gun; the young man said that he just want to see around the thick green, for surety at shots by his hand. The old man who was dozing, (the night's daily) suddenly sat up and casually remarked to the young man, "*It'd be useless for you to go gunning. You'd only bring back yourself!*" (Old man was actually hinting that the young man would be no good with the gun, so it was pointless trying a shot; he would sure return empty-handed) The young man who had just