

words. It was neither hatred nor contempt. Ribha tried to make a bridge but her son and daughter-in-law were too old to pay heed to her.

Abhi was getting older. He slept at night between his parents but had never seen them talking to each other. Sometimes when he tried to feel queer, asked his parents about the reason. The day he got admission in school that day only he felt their parents' presence at a single time. But not a single conversation between them could be heard. He felt the difference from the other boys in his class. He questioned his parents but they could not give him any reply. They had no issue. But they could not talk to each other. He asked his grandmother, but she also avoided the question. The boy played alone in the room.

When he became of an age of 6, he felt a grudge against his parents. He did not like the difference from his other friends. His mind was always occupied with the thoughts why his parents did not talk to each other? "Why do they live together then? Why don't they show their thumbs to each other to be friends again?" He cried once or twice, or it might be thrice. But his cries had to be soaked by the pillow and the pillow cover.

One day he became adamant. That day he decided not to go back to his home, to his parents. Only he thought about his poor old dear grandma. He had no other to think about. He stealthily came out of the school gate befooling the gate-keeper on the street. He was too old to decide in which way to go. But still he started his little steps on the dirty road. He felt a void in his mind, desolation, negligence, hatred, contempt, a mind never to go back to his selfish parents. He looked here and there and again started. Suddenly the little eyes were attracted by the chocolates in the jars across the road. He rushed towards the shop on the other side of the road. He had no other views in his mind. His mouth was watering. As soon as he was on the middle of the road, a car could not stop suddenly and gave the little boy a push. The child was thrown at a yard's distance. Crowd gathered around him. He lost his sense and was bleeding incessantly. His I-Card was on his breast. A very brave young boy identified him and with the help of others took him to the hospital. He called his parents and gave news to his school also. His parents rushed to the hospital within fifteen minutes. Ishika was crying. Ananta could not understand what to do. Abhi was in the ICU. Ananta thanked the young boy. The Principal of his school came with other two teachers. It was a pathetic situation to console his parents.

Two days the ICU kept the boy in it and detached his parents from him as if only it cared for the boy. Ananta and Ishika spent their days and nights sitting on the bench in front of the ICU. Some of their friends and relatives came with some food for them but they could hardly eat. They were still the sinners. They did not talk to each other. Even they met the doctor individually. They had really won. They had their ego in their minds. They should not and did not stoop to each other. They sat in two

corners on the bench.

That night the boy's condition became more critical. The doctors and the nurses rushed speedily. They entered the ICU and came out of it with a face of anxiety. Two new doctors also came to assist the others. Ananta and Ishika were the silent observers of the scene. But still they did not come closer. They did not stoop to each other. The doctor came out of the ICU after a busy night at the dawn washing his hands with a bloody towel and stood before Ananta and Ishika. They stood on their feet. They asked the doctor about the condition of their son. The doctor put the palm of his right arm on Ananta's steady and proud shoulder, stood for a while, and went away.



The Secret Life of Adarsh Dev

- N D Dani

(All of us have fantasies. Life would be so boring without them. But few have the frequency, intensity and duration of the fantasies of Adarsh Dev, the protagonist of this story. Adarsh Dev has a rich but secret fantasy life which may overtake his 'real' life anytime, anywhere. However, since one can't live in fantasies for ever, no matter how pleasant and exciting they are, one has got to return to the everyday humdrum life. But then one is free to take off again into the more familiar and exciting world of fantasies. Welcome to Adarsh Dev's secret life--of fantasies.)

The whiff of perfume from the girl that Adarsh just passed was so intoxicating. Suddenly everybody, all the young girls and boys walking hand-in-hand in the plush corridor of the Wave Mall disappeared. But the girl sitting alone – probably waiting for her boyfriend – on one of the two-chairs-and-a-table set in front of the Barista coffee shop in the poshest mall of the town assumed the looks of a twenty-something girl student with sharp features and sharper mind before Adarsh Dev. As a student Adarsh had seen bright young girls swoon in the class of his psychology professor back in the seventies. He had decided to be a university professor of either psychology or philosophy. Professor Dhameeja cast a veritable spell on his students, particularly the girls, with his stunning lectures on Freud and Jung and with his handsome features. Adarsh had made up his mind. He would be a professor. He was no mean student himself. But life had other plans for him. His father died suddenly and his dream of doing a PhD from Princeton University in psychology also died with his businessman father. He moved into his

father's business shoes to support his mother and two college going siblings. But today seeing this twenty-something sitting alone, the desire came back.

"So what do you think of Jung's concept of the collective unconscious, Jyoti?" asked Professor Adarsh Dev to his brightest student in the Wave Mall, all alone.

"Sir, your brilliant lectures on Jung have made everything crystal clear. I haven't heard any professor in our department explain Jung the way you did", the girl-student was gushing with admiration for Professor Adarsh Dev's intellectual brilliance.

But Adarsh Dev wanted to hear more from this pretty student of psychology in his MA class. "What do you particularly like in my lectures, Jyoti?" "Sir, you are simply marvellous. Your brilliance, your clarity and your capacity to explain difficult writers like Freud and Jung with the help of everyday examples makes these writers look so easy. I wish I had you in our BA classes. Professor Pal is such a bore," the girl seemed like she was not going to stop. Then suddenly Professor Adarsh Dev heard himself singing a popular film song from his college days to the girl. "Sarkar hua pyar, khata hum se hui hai/ Ab dil mein tumhi tum ho, ye jaan bhi teri hai."

"Sir, are you crazy? What are you saying?"

"Don't be so cruel, honey. I know you love me." The girl in the mall gave sweet-cum-frowning looks. This encouraged Professor Adarsh Dev to sing louder a la Rajendra Kumar in the movie 'Suraj' to his Vaijanthimala, "Ab cheer kei is dil ko keh do/ To dikha doon main/ Gustakhi maaf, gustakhi maaf."

"So you are hear, Adarsh! I have been looking all over the mall for you. And have you had your coffee?" Mrs Dev looked concerned. "Are you alright, Dev? I told you to see Dr Jalota but you don't listen to me. Come along. We have to buy things for the boys. They will give us hell if we don't," Mrs Dev almost pulled her hubby affectionately towards the 'Children's Corner'.

"Honey, while I am looking for some toys for Raja and Chhotu, will you buy woollen gloves for yourself. The winter is here and you don't have a new pair of woollen gloves." Mrs Dev looked so concerned. Adarsh Dev came out of the 'Children's Corner' and moved towards the "Woollens"

"Now, give me my gloves, Anjali," said Dr Dev to the stunningly beautiful nurse. "I must take a look at the textile magnet's tumour. He is a personal friend of Mr Modi. The Prime Minister has twice telephoned me to request that I take the patient under my wings." Dr Adarsh Dev, the world-renowned oncologist in India, moved closer to the industrialist in the plush OT of AIIMS. Hirubhai Adani was lying unconscious on the operation table.

"Sir, Dr Cairn and Dr Mitterand have arrived from USA and France and

will be at AIIMS any moment now,” informed the pretty nurse.

“Please bring them in immediately.” There were hurried exchanges of greetings in the operation room. “Didn't know you were back at AIIMS, Dr Dev. Read the collection of your lectures on surgical oncology delivered at Harvard. They are simply brilliant,” Dr Cairn, the American Nobel laureate known for his work on brain tumours, looked in awe at this oncology genius of India. “You are very kind, Dr Cairn,” Dr Adarsh Dev tried to brush off the gushing praise. “But why did they invite us to AIIMS when they have the world's best surgeon known for his difficult surgeries of even Secondary brain tumours. Carrying coals to Newcastle. “*Nous sommes si petits avant que le Dr Adarsh Dev,*” (We are so small before Dr Adarsh Dev.) Dr Mitterand, from Institut de Paris pour le Cancer, who spoke English fluently but always switched over to his mother tongue whenever he turned emotional, paid the ultimate tribute to this Cancer genius of India. “No, no, two heads are always better than one and here we have three heads,” whispered Dr Adarsh Dev, in his characteristically modest manner. He asked the intern to go ahead with Craniotomy. “Make your cut in the skull as small as possible, please,” Dr Dev instructed the intern.”

“What do you want, Sir,” we have some latest designs in male cardigans. They arrived yesterday only. Would like to take a look?” the salesgirl spoke in a cultivated honeyed voice.

“No, thank you, I will have a pair of woollen gloves and a woollen cap, please”

The news stall in the Mall made Adarsh Dev stop. Window shopping for English language newspapers was Dev's old hobby from his college days when he browsed for free the day's newspapers at the railway station Wheeler's book stall in his town. Mrs Dev was back and seeing her hubby window shop at the news stand smiled affectionately. “Ok, Dev, will you carry on with your browsing for a while so I can finish my grocery shopping,” Dev shook his head in affirmation. His eye caught a news item on the front page of The Hindu. “India's efforts to get a permanent seat on the Security Council stymied again.”

“There rests the case for India, Mr Chairman, Sir,” Indian representative Adarsh Dev finished his speech in the General assembly with a flourish. Even after speaking for seven hours Adarsh Dev, India's representative to the United Nations, was as fresh as a person in the morning. The audience of the august assembly broke into a loud applause and a Standing Ovation was given to the Indian representative. Ban-Ki-Moon, the Secretary-General himself came down from his raised perch to congratulate Adarsh Dev, for arguing India's case for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. What Indian politics and economics had not been able to achieve for India, Adarsh Dev, had achieved with his silver-tongued speech in the packed General assembly

auditorium. Ban-Ki-Moon had earlier convened a special session of the General assembly to listen to Adarsh Dev argue India's case. The audience hardly knew that they had sat spell-bound for seven hours and now the dawn was breaking, literally. The General Assembly met again soon after its members had their morning ablutions and tea. All the permanent members, except of course the People's Republic of China, voted in favour of giving a permanent seat to India in the Security Council. The staff of the Indian Embassy in the USA was ecstatic with the achievement of Adarsh Dev in his first posting to the General Assembly. "This is simply wonderful, isn't it?" asked Renuka, a bright young and pretty IFS officer in the Indian Embassy in America. She couldn't suppress her amazement, "Sir has achieved the impossible. We lobbied for ten years but nothing came out of our efforts. And here Sir has pulled off a rabbit, no less, with his oratory at the General assembly. What do you think, Hegde? Will he get a Bharat Ratna for his contribution?" "Without a shadow of doubt. Sir, fully deserves it. We are now a member of the exclusive club," Hegde, another IFS officer was equally ecstatic and wonder-struck. "Thank you everybody, particularly USA, Russia, France and Germany for including us in the Security Council as a permanent member," Adarsh Dev, ever so soft-spoken and courteous bowed to the audience. To the staff at the Indian embassy, he was a picture of humility. "All this is because of your backing. Although I knew my oratory would carry the day. They trained me so well in public oration at my alma mater, the City Montessori School, back in India. The credit for what India has achieved today goes to the CMS School, Ghantaghar" declared Adarsh Dev with perfect modesty.

"That man said CMS, Ghantaghar. How funny!" a woman who passed Dev said to her husband.

Mrs Dev seemed to be taking rather long. Dev knew Rashmi never bought things in a hurry. She was a great haggler in the pre-departmental store days. Though the Big departmental stores sounded the death knell of bargaining, Rashmi never took the first thing in sight. She selected the best groceries. This naturally took time. Knowing his wife's practice, Dev decided to get inside a shop that had the portraits of the famous men and women. The smile of Mona Lisa caught his eye. "Oh yes, Eliot called 'Hamlet' the smile of Mona Lisa," recalled Dev as his mind went back to his University days. The next was the portrait of Amitabh Bachchan, popularly known as the Big B. Under the bearded face of the Big B was a caption in bold letters, "Big B ki dadhi ke peechhey kya hai."

"Ladies and gentlemen, we have the privilege of having Mr Adarsh Dev, the GK Wizard on the hot seat today. Please give him a big hand," came on the booming voice of Amitabh Bachchan, the host of Kaun Banega Shatkoti Mahamani, the latest edition of KBC. "And now Mr Dev, get