

AN ABHI'S SAGA

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As he woke up, Abhi discovered himself in the middle of a desert. The sun was burning above him in full strength. The reflecting rays from the silver white sands hurt his eyes blind. Abhi felt himself as he were Meursault,[1] the outsider. He tried to remember everything. And when the first recollection came, he was fully over come by fear. Next to it what came, it was the feelings of nausea.

It was late march,1971. The wave of anti-pakistan movement had touched his village too. With great surprise Abhi would stroll through market which was shifted in a field from it's usual place. The next moment he would find himself running with his mother across the yellow mastered field. The whole village was running towards uncertainty. It was already rainy season. They were living in a village not far from his own one. One day they were standing by the river. Something black was floating there, it was coming towards them. Soon they recognized the dead body, now as big as an elephant. Once more Abhi felt something in his throat.

"Abhi!" - he heard someone calling him.

First he saw a light, then appeared a human figure. As he recognized the figure, he was taken aback.

"You?"

"Yes, your ex-father."

"Why ex? You're still my father."

"No boy, I'm no more your father, and you are no more my son. We are dead. Simply dead."

"I understand you are dead, but I?"

"Get lost. Let's talk like man to man without emotion."

"And what would you like to tell?"

"I just want to know what hell you want me to die. For what?"

"I?"

"Yes, my boy."

"It's not true. You know how much I loved you."

"In spite of that you expected me to die every time, when you got a letter."

"But you were so old, so weak. I simply prepared myself. I didn't want anybody to see my tears."

So you did it. You wanted your old father to die."

"Oh no!" - the sound of his own voice woke Abhi.

He began to blink. He tried to find his father. But nobody was there but sand, wind and

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the sun. With a violent effort he sat upright, pressed his temples with his thumbs, and made an effort to think.

It was a summer day in Moscow. Abhi was walking in the wood. It was almost deserted. Only birds were singing now and then. Abhi was striding thinking his own thought. Suddenly he heard a crow cawing over his head. Then there were two, four and so on. In a few minute he found himself under a dark black cloud. A shiver of fear ran through his spine. He began to run, but the crows were faster. He took a piece of dry wood and made an violent effort to drive them. But it made the crows more ferocious. "Oh, they will hack out my eyes, they will tear me in pieces." He fell into a bottomless despair. He remained sanding. Time was standing too. The crows were circling over his head making a violent noise. Abhi was about to faint when he heard someone speaking nearby. The crows made one more circle and flew away. Abhi sat motionless for sometime. His fear dwindled at last. He stood up and ran home.

From that very moment Abhi began to think about death. Though it may come to anybody any time, people first think of their old. Abhi was not the exception. And from then on each letter, he received from home, doubled his heart beat. He had to prepare for a long time to open them. The uncertainty began to make him mad. And someday he could have wished the end of this tiring uncertainty. And Ivan Karamazov[2] was right for this time- "Who doesn't wish for his father's death?"

As he was thinking it was getting dirk. The infinitely extended desert became cooler. The full moon was jumping higher and higher. The sand was changing to sea by the moonlit. And Abhi was the only living being in that vast space. Though the train of thought still running through his brain, hunger, tiredness and unusual cold made Abhi sleep. And as he asleep, a dream came down to him from the moon.

Abhi was still a little boy. One day he was happened to quarrel with his play-mates and afraid of being scolded. So he hid in the bamboo bush near the house. It was getting dirk. He heard his mother calling him, but was so much enveloped by his thought that he forgot to answer. He was looking at the kadam tree, which was brunt by a thunder not so long ago. He was sad at the sight because he knew that God Krisna[3] used to come to that tree with his flute and dance as He played on it. Few years ago, when he was too little a boy, how many times he wanted to come here at night and dance with Krisna. But as soon as the night came down he fell asleep and could never find God. Today, when he is here, the tree is brunt and Krisna ceased to come here.

His sorrow turn into fear when e happened to see the tamarind. Though his uncle told him that the Taraka Rakshasi had long been killed by Rama,[4] Mamdo and other ghosts still might be there. He began to look for the moon. But with his great surprise the moon started to decrease. There appeared millions of stars in the sky. Suddenly the stars began to fall down as well as the sky, as if they were running to their initial state. At least time pushed Abhi six thousand years back. The bamboo bush transformed to a large field. How many men are there! And horses, elephants, swords, bows, arrows! The air is smelling blood, sweat and tears. Abhi would recognize the Kuruskhetra battle field. Bhima, Arjuna[5] and all other warriors are there. And brave Abhimannu[6] too. Suddenly he heard an invisible voice telling, "All men are like Abhimannu. He only knows how to enter into the circle. And there is no way-out for him but death, because he has to fight against thousands of enemies." "Nothing but death. Only way-out. Death." As Abhi woke up he heard someone uttering the very word < *DEATH* > in the deep of his mind.

Next morning when he woke up, Abhi could find himself in the heart of primeval forest. How green it was and how infinitely extended! And dinosaurs were there, and mammoths. And all other animals he ever heard of. There were trees and cylindrical, and spherical. And ellipsoidal and conical. As time went past thousands of animals and birds gathered there. As if Abhi was the only means of recreation in this zoo. When the sun stood on the high mountain all the beasts and birds began to sing. What a composition it was! No Mozart, no Beethoven can write it. They were not selected tunes. On the contrary it was the combination of all sounds one can hear. It was the sound of silence and the sound of thunder. And the range of frequencies was vibrating there from infrasonic to ultrasonic. It was a symphony of love and of separation; of life and of death. It was the symphony of creation and destruction. No man can create it, no one can learn. It was something which comes from the heart of the nature. As they were singing, they began to dance. There were dancing the beasts, and the birds, dancing the wind and the stars, dancing the trees and the moon. And it was Abhi who was looking alone. It was too late when at last ended the concert. All were tired and Abhi was too. And he lay on grass bed and fell asleep. And there came to him a new dream through the forest path.

Abhi was strolling through the wood. It was very thick. Here and there were blossoms. Birds were singing. Deer were being seen now and then. The air was heavy with smoke, veda-song and sweet sandal scent. It was reminiscent of Ramayanian holy forest. Roaming about that holy place, Abhi came to a hut, where there was a fire in front of it. With great surprise Abhi saw a girl coming out of fire. A girl- no man can describe her beauty, it was not human, it was the divine beauty. Her face aflamed with kindness. Abhi was so astonished that he yawned for a while. As he came to himself he was ashamed as the girl, standing before, was naked.

"Abhi, why are you feeling shy?" - she asked.

"Oh" - Abhi tried to find out an answer.

"Don't you recognize me?"

"To tell the truth, it's for the first time I'm seeing you."

"I'm your mother."

"My mother!" Abhi's surprise knew no bound.

"Yes, I'm the mother of all livings and non-livings. I'm the mother nature."

"But what are you doing here?"

"I've come to talk to you."

"To me."

"Why not?"

"And what do you want to talk about?"

"First tell me, why were you ashamed?"

Abhi didn't answer. He looked at his toe.

"Answer me." - insisted the girl.

"Is it your manner to come to an unknown person naked?"

"Oh, that's that. But you know I didn't need to be dressed up and don't need it still now. It's you men dressed me up, and each of you did it as he liked. And every time, when one put on me some cloth, he first undressed me. Isn't it better to be naked than to be undressed every moment. Abhi, truth is always naked. It's you men tried to cover it with lie. In the long run one day you forgot it, you began to live in the world of lie,- yes in lie and so thick

it was that you even couldn't recognize your mother. Even if you don't know what is happening with you, with the mankind."

"What is with me? Nothing at all. It's just a bad dream. And the mankind has no business with this prehistoric forest."

"You are mistaken. It's not prehistoric. All, you are seeing, is post historic."

As she told this, she vanished in the air.

Next morning Abhi woke up in the middle of a ruined city. It reminded him of Mohenjo Daro[7]. Abhi got up and began to stride with the hope of meeting a human being here. Ruined houses were lying here and there. The roads were deserted. Time to time the beasts and birds were being seen. Foxes would be seen walking with their dogs. Abhi would find almost all the pet animals remained pet in this city. Only leadership has been changed. Instead of man here reigned wild animals. Abhi found a souvenir shop in the street. He entered the shop and saw people were being sold there. Abhi would recognize some of his old friends. Yes, there were all kinds of businessmen from billionaire to the BABUSHKA (grandma), who was selling bread in Moscow underground. Any animal could come to the shop and buy any man in unbelievable cheap price. As he came out he found himself lucky for not being a businessman in the past- life.

The last rays of the sun dwindling away. On and on the night was clutching the world with her black hands. Failing to find any shelter in the ruined city, Abhi came to the wood. When he was looking for a hut in the thick wood, a sweet voice called him.

"Abhi, it's you again? What are you doing here?"

"I'm looking for a cottage."

"But why do you need one?"

"Why? I want to have a sound sleep."

"Can't you have it beneath the sky?"

"Oh! no."

"What a mess!"

"A mess!"

"Yes. Why does a man always like to enclose himself in a limited space?"

"But what's the connection between my desire for a hut and man's enclosure?"

"O, you do not know? A roof over one's head symbols his enrichment as well as his imprisonment. But a piece of blue sky over his head symbols his liberty.

So be free and have a sound sleep beneath the stars."

Thus Abhi fell asleep under an old tree. At dead night he heard someone weeping. Then he felt the warm of tears on his body.

"Who is weeping there? Answer me please."

"Don't worry. I'm so glad to have you under my arms." - said the tree.

"But why are you weeping?" Are you so sad?"

"Oh no! On the contrary. Time it was, when people used to sleep under me. Some times they came one by one, sometimes in groups. And they told stories of different places and times. Sometimes I simply read their hearts. How happy I was then. All these happened thousands of years ago. And today, when I happen to meet you, my heart begins to sing, old days began to

flow through my blood. What a happiness it is! What a happiness! And my tears, they are not sorrow, they are longing for my old friends, for old days.”

As the tree finished talking, the sky came down. Abhi could feel her embrace. Stars were smiling. They were dancing hand in hand. It would remind Abhi the "DANCE" of Matisse. At the same time he would look for the smiling star, where the LITTLE PRINCE[8] lives.

Next day Abhi strolled through the city. Streets were crowded with animals. Here and there Abhi would find old buildings. As he was walking, his eyes fixed on a little sign-board **CARDIO-CENTER**. Driven by curiosity he entered into the center and was astounded by the sight which no man has ever seen. Some rabbits and mice were running to and fro in white apron and a man was lying on the operation table with his heart in a glass box. His heart was still functioning though he was totally unconscious. Coming closer Abhi would recognize the specialist, who used to kill poor rabbits and mice for his medical satisfaction.

Next building, where Abhi entered, was a computer center. The big room was flooded with white light. Robots were found hither and thither. In the middle of a room a man would be seen, sitting in classical Buddha style. His eyes were closed, but he was not sleeping. Neither was he brooding. Sign of torture was obvious on his face. Yes, he was forced to calculate some difficult problems. Poor computer engineer. One more prey of fate. And Abhi could recall this face from his old days.

The sun was sinking into the western sea. Abhi came to a garden. A man stood there in the middle of the garden with his legs into the earth. Almost all his hair was green. Some of them red little flowers at the end. Some plants were dancing around, some were simply taking care of him. Though his eyes were expression less, Abhi could read the pleasant state of his mind. And the good old botanist looked happy.

Time came when the day meets night, the sun meets the moon. As the angry sun sank into the sea, jumped out the moon- cool and quite. Moon beams were playing everywhere. Nature grew silvery. The lake nearby looked like a mirror. One ore moon was there in the lake sleeping under silvery water. Abhi bent over the lake. A human face peered at him. How delightful it is to see own face after a long time. Abhi would remember the girl, who used to call him **NARCISSUS**. Abhi bent a little more to his him clearly. As his shadow grew quite, a drop of water broke it. Every time, when Abhi was about to get his picture, a water drop broke it. At last Abhi lost his temper and turned back. With great surprise he saw his mother standing behind him. Her eyes were full of tears.

”Oh! At last you have the time to look at me.”

”Why? I am always glad to see you.” said Abhi.

”Don't lie. Didn't you know I was dying?”

”Yes.”

”Why didn't you come then, if you are so glad to see me?”

”You know I was very busy with my thesis.”

”Can a man be so busy not to see his mother in her death-bed?”

”I thought you've changed. I was afraid of breaking the picture of you, which I have in my mind.”

”You coward. Don't you find it ridiculous to change reality by illusion?”

”But it is not illusion. It's fact. Here you are just a little younger and healthy.

Is it bad to find one's other young and healthy?"

"That's past. Present is the reality. And reality is that I was ill. And your duty was to come to see e. Abhi, you should but face reality and reality only. No matter it is pleasant or sorrowful. Happiness always accompanied by sorrow and vice versa. Don't you remember, every time, when you were proposed to go home to see me, you had to lie. You had to create thousands of logics. Didn't you find them troublesome? And to keep a smiling face of mine you had to torment your conscience. My boy, please, be brave and come. Face the reality manly. Are you coming?"

"But cannot you wait a little, say two more months. So many things I have still to do? You see you'll get better."

His mother did not answer. She began to tie and untie the corner of his sharee. Her eyes grew indifferent. There was neither agony nor ecstasy. They were like mirror, they were dead eyes. At last she broke silence. "Don't worry my boy. Go with your study. At my age parents should simply die so that their children do not feel uneasy. It's our duty to clear your future. Don't try to contradict. I love you too much to be selfish. Be happy."

Abhi tried to say something, but his mother disappeared within a wink. Abhi turned to the lake, but the lake also vanished. Now a big mirror was standing before him. He found his face as well as his mind in it. His face was pale, eyes were lifeless. And his mind? There were nothing human. There were fish, snake, wolf. There were wildness, hatred. But above all there was indifference. There was neither affection nor love. It was real hell. "What is hell?" As was told by Starets Zossima[9] "It lies in suffering from being unable to love any more." No. Abhi was not in the hell, but he was carrying hell in his heart. He could not stand anymore. He needed love to extinguish the fire, burning his heart. He did not know where to go, where to seek his happiness? He thought it might be in hermitage. So he made up his mind and moved towards the thick wood.

Time was going with the stormy wind and Abhi was running after time. As he was looking for a place to bury his burning heart, he came to a meadow, which began with the sea and ended in thick wood, surrounded by hills from three sides. A nude tree was standing at the middle of the meadow with three or four leaves at the top. And it was hard to tell either the tree was dying or going towards life after a marathon war with death. There was a big glass house under the tree, where a girl would be seen. Abhi would remember her face. It was the girl whom did he love. As in the past days, Abhi began to think that that girl was the source, the guarantee of his happiness. He began to call her by name. He would call louder and louder. But the girl would not hear. Vacuum does not carry sound. Abhi came nearer, he tried to catch her sight. But all were in vain. They were as indifferent as they were before. Now they were more dead than ever. Abhi would not keep himself. He gave a cry. His cry echoed on the sea, on the wood, on the hills. His cry would break the glass house. Now he ran towards the house. But where is his sweet-heart? There stood his girl, bearing his child in her womb. Abhi wanted to flee away. But alas! The sea, the wood, the hills had long been disappeared. Under his feet were hot sands, above his head the burning sun. There are but silvery sands all over the world. No where to hide, no where to flee. There is no way out. "NO" a cry came out from the deep of his heart.

"Abhi, is there anything wrong?" his girl asked him.

"NO darling, it's all right."
"We are going to have a daughter."
"Really."
"What's the matter? Aren't you happy?"

Abhi did not answer. He pulled her towards him and gave a long kiss on her mouth. He has found his happiness.

No, he was mistaken. His happiness was just a miracle. "COME SHARP MOTHER DYING" bold letters of the telegram were laughing at him from the table. His wink less sight watched the letters again and again. At last the letters took a geometric figure: first they began to grow up, now it was as big as a demon. Next moment it grew smaller. When it became small enough, it entered into his heart. The expansion process began. Abhi could not see it, but he could feel. His heart grew heavier. At last the time came when there was no room for happiness in his heart. Now it is full of sorrow, now there are but tears, sweat and blood in his unhappy heart.

Abhi would remember the day, when he went home last time. He would see the flash-back of that day. It was a nice april day He had almost solved his problems in Moscow. At last he could decide to visit his sick father. All the problems and economical, and social and political were far behind. That was the time when he could smile again. How happy he was to be able to back home again. "30 DIED MORE THAN 50 WOUNDED TERRIBLE BUS ACCIDENT ON DHAKA-ARICHA ROAD" he was received in Dhaka by this news. Next day he bought a ticket to his town. He sat near the window. At last and the houses and the trees began to move. His town was coming towards him in a high speed.

The sun was hanging in the western sky like a ripe orange. The lingering rays of the departing sun were dancing in the paddy field. Country girls were found with pitchers. Cow boys were backing home with their cattle. The sound of their pipe gave the scene a melancholic tone.

It was getting dark when he reached his village. Some boys were playing by the road. They came to him as he crossed the road.

"Let's help you." one of them proposed.
"Thank you, it's very light."

But they did not hear. Abhi could not but give them his suitcase and started for home.

"I knew he would come as he heard the news." Abhi heard someone telling this.
"What's the matter? Is there anything wrong with my father?"
"No, no. Don't worry. They are waiting for you."
On the way he met a middle-aged man.
"Hello, how are you?" Abhi asked.
"Oh, fine. Have you heard the news there?"

Abhi did not say anything. He only nodded and walked forward. He is not a believer. May be he had faith in God as a child. But as soon as he grew up, he lost his faith and became atheist. For a long time he did not remember God. For a long time he did not pray to him. But now, as his home coming closer, he began to pray. Now he was ready to sacrifice everything to see his father alive. At last he entered into his favorite bamboo

bush. Moths were blinking everywhere, insects were singing while the frogs were playing on saxophone. And when he was passing under the tamarind an owl hooted loudly. At last Abhi came home. No lamp was burning there. His mother was lying on a mat on the veranda. His sister, niece and sister-in-law would also be seen there sitting beside her in the dim light of dusk.

"Who's there?" his sister-in-law asked.

"Me" Abhi answered calmly not to break that ghostly atmosphere.

"Mother, look, who has come?"

"Ma, it's me, your Abhi."

"Oh!"

And a silence came down. Insects stopped singing and the frogs stopped playing on saxophone. A gentle breeze, which was blowing making a sho-sho sound in the bamboo leaves, also stopped to blow. There was silence everywhere, dead silence. The whole house was enveloped by that dead silence. And Abhi could hear only the sound of silence. The reception, which Abhi got, was beyond his thought. He was damn tired. It was too hot. He began to sweat. He took off his shirt and sat on a chair beneath the jack-fruit tree. What a strange! No one was inviting him to wash himself or enter the room. No one was making any effort to let his father know about his arrival. Neither his father was calling anybody to ask either Abhi came, as he did it in sleep. "What does it mean? Is there anything really wrong?" As he was brooding on these questions, a pathetic cry of a bitch broke that tiresome silence. Next time someone's footstep could be heard clearly. Then his immediate elder brother would come towards him and sit beside him on the stair.

"When have you come?" he asked.

It was very hot. But he was wearing a cap. It was obvious that he was trying to cover his clean shaved head.

"About half an hour ago. When did it happen?"

"What?" the shade of sorrow and fear could be seen in his brother's eyes.

"Don't think me a fool. At least I know our funeral rites." Abhi told curtly.

"He died on 31 March."

"Oh!" Abhi took a long breath.

He could hear his mother weeping silently. His sister and niece also began to sob. Heavy atmosphere of the night grew heavier.

Abhi had been at home for five weeks. For the first time since he left home, he tried to devote all his vacation to his family. All other vacations, he came home, he spent with his friends, his comrades. But now, losing his father, he understood that he needs his family as well as they need him. All of a sudden he grew adult. His father seemed to him a big, old tree. And he with all his brothers and sister were the saplings under him. When the tree dies, saplings find them beneath the sun, beneath the sky and they try to reach the sun one earlier than the other. And the same thing happened to Abhi and his brothers. Suddenly they felt that there is nobody over their head and they are their masters. The time came when they should take care of themselves. So Abhi decided to spend his vacation with his family.

His father was everywhere. Abhi saw him sleeping on his bed, or brooding before alter, or simply standing and smiling in a corner of the house. The time, which lasted only five weeks, and the space, surrounded by the boundary of their house, were full of his father's image. Every evening, when he lit the lamp over his grave, Abhi saw his smiling eyes in the dark.

At last the day came, when he had to leave his country. He got up early in the morning to welcome the morning sun, bathed and tried to have his food. His mother was sitting before him.

"Last time, when you left home, your father was alive. You promised him to come back within a year. And you needed more than a year and a half to visit us. And he is no more with us."

Please ma, I wanted to, but couldn't. And you know why?" Abhi answered.

"When are you coming again?"

"I think after two months. At least by the end of this year."

"I'm afraid, you'll have to face new problems. And when you will be here next time, you won't find me alive."

"Don't say so. After three years I will come back for ever and we will be happy again."

His mother did not utter a word. Tears could be seen in her eyes, tears of sorrow and tears of happiness.

Since that time three years have gone, but Abhi could not keep his word. He could not go home, because either he had not enough time or he had not enough money. About one year ago he came to know about her heart stroke. Since that time his mother was lying on bed. Day by day she was losing her sense, her power to recognize anybody. And about two months ago his mother had her fifth heart stroke. Since then she has been senseless. What is it? Is it life? Is it death? No. It is neither death nor life. It is something in between. She is not dead which does not mean she is alive. It is a tug of war between life and death. And both are damn tired after a long struggle. No one is going to make way for the other, at the same time no one is trying to over come the other. Here and death and life forgot their enmity, their contradiction. They decided not to disturb one another and have a sound sleep in a strong embracement.

Now and then Abhi receives letters from his brother and sister. He also writes them. Sometimes they remember the days, when their mother was young. She liked to travel. Everytime, when she had a leisure, she used to travel through the holy places from Kashmir to Kannya Kumarika. What a irony of fate! It is his mother, who did not know to pass her time sitting or without uttering a word, now lying on bed with two vacant eyes. At last Abhi finished his academical education. The time arrived, when he should leave Moscow. "WHEN ARE YOU GOING?" every two of his friends would ask him. "WHEN?" "ARE YOU GOING TO LEAVE MOSCOW?" he would ask himself. "What should be the answer? Does he know it? No, he doesn't. Who does?" His fate may be. At least he wants to leave it to his fate. Why not we do it as he pleases? Let the answer be mystery.

Abhi would remember his school life. He was in class seven, when he first read Chekhov "Selected Stories". Then Leo Tolstoy "Father Siergii and Other Stories". By and by he read Dostoyevsky, Gorki, Turgenev, Bunin and other Russian and Soviet writers. Thus

he loved this country, it's vast land. Of course he was very disappointed when he came here. No doubt, at first sight, people were happy, without anxiety, without troubles. But if one observed them carefully, he could find a constant fear in their eyes. There was a gulf of difference between his imagination and reality. But his love for this country is too great that no reality, no disappointment can make him cease to love her. And with a hope to meet new Russia with new Dostoyevsky he decided to stay here. Time was losing in the womb of the past. Life was becoming more and more boring. There was no sign of any new Dostoyevsky. Abhi was tired of this monotonous life. And to cheer up a little, he decided to play his hundredth birthday anniversary. So one evening he invited some of his friends. Though it was one of the last years of twentieth century, everyone would find a poster "HUNDREDTH BIRTHDAY ANNIVERSARY OF ABHI, DECEMBER 25, 2064."

"Thus we are going to celebrate my hundredth birthday. I would like late "X" to say something on this occasion." Abhi would declare.

"Dear friends," late "X" would begin, "we've gathered here to celebrate Abhi's hundredth birthday anniversary. As you know, he was the last pimp of the world. He was a man, completely lacking of human qualities. I've never seen a man more egotistic than he. Abhi the man left his pregnant girl and madly looked for his child left. That time he resembled Siddhartha[10] the boatman. Every colored child, living in Moscow, seemed to be his. What an agony it was! At last he was fully detached from the society. He imprisoned himself in a small room. Many years have passed since he saw a human face, even his own one. He refused to take food, he refused to meet anybody. And one day, when his room was ceased to give any sign of life, his curious neighbors opened the room with the help of some police. With their great surprise, they found there nothing but futility. Since then nobody saw him any more. Abhi, will you please tell us what happened to you that time?"

"It's a long story." Abhi would begin, "Those days I was mentally upset. Hunger and thrust made me dead weak. I was upset because of Anton too. Anton the little boy of my girl. How did he loved me. He waited for me as well as his mother. And every time, when I went there, he came to me with a ball. "won't you play with me?" he used to ask and without giving me a chance to answer, threw the ball. One day, when his mother was preparing his bath, he told, "I know your secret." "And what's that?" He came close to me and whispered into my ear, "You, with my mother, are going to have a baby." After a while he came again and whispered, "Mama told grandma that you are going to marry her." I wanted to ask, "Do you want it?" But his bright eyes told me that he was yearning for that moment. How many years passed since I have seen him last. But his bright eyes always haunt me, they stare at me from every corner of my room as the little prince[11] looks at the pilot from his little star. Thus I was bearing my time. One evening I was so loaded up with these thoughts that I lost my sense. When I woke up, I found myself I don't know where. I heard someone speaking about me. At last I realize that I was dead. They were trying to find me a place. Where? They were discussing where to parcel me: heaven or hell. Though the majority wanted to send me to hell, some did not agree. They said, "This man was

always honest before his conscience. And still now he is sure of his honesty. Of course he did many wrong in his life, but he always did it for some thing great. He could not achieve them, but it was not his fault. It was bad luck, which followed him like shadow." It isn't all. Both in heaven and hell people had their society. And they refuse his asylum as an unsocial being. So they decided to build a cell between heaven and hell, where I was left later. On one hand it is a punishment which he merits by deed. On the other hand it is some kind of award, as he always likes to be alone. He deserves this too due to his honesty." they would say to themselves. Since then I am living in this nowhere land and enjoying my terrific < L O N E L I N E S S > .

"Abhi," some "Y" would say, "Don't you think this story is a sad one for your hundredth birthday? Cheer up man. For your health."

A strong storm of knock pushed the door open.

"Enough of that to play dead", a man in uniform would say. "Now please leave the room free and let people sleep."

One thousand one hundred and six days have passed since his father's death. And the universe expanded more than three light-years. The distribution density of his sorrow decreased as well. Now even the date of his father's death does not mean to him anything. His life was a continuous adaptation. He enjoyed his failure as well as his success. As Alexander Blok[12] wrote:

"I accept you failure
And success, to you my regard"

His philosophy of life was to take it as it comes, live it as it be lived. He didn't like to change it, because it might be undemocratic. He did never ask "Am I happy?" At the same time he did not ask "Am I unhappy?" To him happiness was not a thing people should look for. It was (and is) something one should feel, enjoy. So what he did was to find something, make his heart delightful, in all events of life: no matter it was failure or success.

He was passing through a terrible war: a war, has been taking place in his life for about twenty five years. "How to live?" was the point of contradiction. There were thousands of ways, but he didn't know which was the best. There was no unique solution of this problem. "If a man can live some different lives at the same time" he would often think. But alas! man is a physical body, and the Pauli principle is valid here. He wished to try a family life and he did it. And he found it interesting. Who says there is no posterity in eternity - Hermann Hesse? Is it really that? But he found a charm in eternity: it was it's harmony. Many men live a monotonous life. They get up in the morning, take their tea, read daily papers and so on , so on. Every day they do the one and the same thing. It is like a broken record, be played over and over again. Is their nothing new? Nothing, if we do live in the three dimensional space. But in reality men do live in time also, that is they live in four dimensional space-time. So the same sun seems to us new every morning, nobody gets bored looking at the same moon. Same with the life, with man, whom do you live with. Time is changing, and life is changing. And Abhi could find it interesting to live with some people, to be one of them.

This is the time when this story could be told else. As Abhi confessed earlier, he was very frustrated for a long time and not once the possibility of committing suicide appeared

to him as a solution of all these agonies. And had the incident been taken place I would have to continue this saga as follows:

Once upon a time there was a village in Bangladesh. It was as nice as other villages of this country. A vast field was in the south of this village. It was sometimes covered with green, sometimes with yellow. Again during the time of rainy season it turned into infinitely extended sea. Then it became the kingdom of different kinds of fishes while in the dry season here reigned the cattle and different kinds of birds. The northern part of the village was washed by a river, a tiny one. In the rainy season one could find big boats, sailing in it, while in winter you could find cattle grazing there. Here, on the bank of this river, there lived well-to-do family with stores full of golden rice, cow-house full of cows and pond full of fishes. The life of the family was as quiet and as continuous as the river. But the time began to change, changed the country, changed it's people: communal madness divided the country. The madness of the people maddened the river. It grew ferocious, began to destroy the villages and cities. And the time came, when the river washed up the family house, so they had to shift the house deep into the village. Though after the partition the family remained on the rails of prosperity, it had to go through a constant mental pressure, inherent in religious (political) minority. In this family, short after a communal riot all over the country and short before the Indo-Pak war of 1965 was born Abhi. He was physically weak and mentally strange from the very days of his childhood. In his own word: "I'm in a eternal fight. I've been fighting from dawn to dusk and again from dusk to dawn. I'm always in fight. I get up fighting and I lie down fighting also. It's a vast battle-field. It is in me and it is out of me. Thousands of 'why' are attacking me every moment. They are like Raktabeez.[13] What can you do? As soon as you eliminate one, two, three, four even more of them arise. And you are always getting tired and more tired in this war. It is terrible. It is unbearable to fight for yourself, by yourself, against yourself, inside yourself and outside yourself. You will get mad and once again mad, but you cannot get rid of it. And I am fighting, fighting from dawn to dusk, for me, against me, with me, in me, out of me. I am fighting, fighting from dusk to dawn, for me, against me, with me, in me, out of me. Every day the fight is deepening, every day I am more and more involving in it, every day I am moving far and far from the beginning, as well as from the end, every day I am losing the entrance, as well as the exit. Every day I am living in war, every day I am dying in war, every day I am losing in war. Every day and again every day. War is me. And I am war. And today and yesterday and tomorrow. Every day. War. Life. Life. War. They are inter-related. They are inter-dependent. Life begins from war and life ends in war. War begins from life and war ends in life. And life and war will continue in me as long as I am alive. Death, only death can bring an end. And life ends in death and war ends in death. War. Life. Death. Today. Yesterday. Tomorrow. Yesterday. Today. Life. War. Death. Here. There. Now. Then. Every day. Every where. And life. And war. And death....." His main problem was the problem of understanding. Neither people did understand him nor did he make them understand. So, from the very begin of his childhood up to his death, he found himself alone and alien all over the world. Not once he thought that he was born by mistake and this world is not his place. And not once he thought to commit suicide. But why suicide? As he told: "Life is mine and I am to decide either to live me or not. I don't want God to take my life. I don't like to give Him any chance. So better to commit suicide that to wait for a natural death, allotted and arranged by God." I don't like to repeat all he had already told you. I'll better tell you what did his compatriots think about him. They thought that

the modern and free western life had an ill influence upon him. Specially after the fall of communism, when he became close to existentialist philosophy, and especially the writings of Dostoyevsky, Kafka, Camus and Sartre had so strong an influence upon him that he lost the meaning of life and in the long run went crazy. And one morning, as I entered into his room, I found him lying dead in his bed, reddened with blood. A dagger, stabbing in the center of his heart, was looking upward. From then on I am living the life of Abhi as was requested by him to continue it after his death. But as all these told above and specially the so called suicide did not take place, as Abhi is still alive with all his strangeness and madness, I would better withdraw myself from the stage and leave Abhi to continue his saga himself.

"What a nice time it is!" Abhi told himself. "What a beautiful night!" It was in Pereslavl-Zalesky. Abhi was living there in a cot in the pine-forest, near the lake. Now, in winter, there is no difference between the lake and the forest. All are white. Here was snow and there was snow. Snow was under your feet and snow was over your head. For three days it had been snowing. Snow was falling from the sky. Snow was falling from the sun. Snow was falling from the moon. Snow was falling from the stars. Last three days there was but snow every where: and in the sky, and in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars. Falling snow made a great wall, connecting the earth with the stars. And only tonight, after three snowy days and three snowy nights, Abhi was walking alone on the lake. The sky was in festive dress. Red, gold and green clouds were floating there. Dark blue sky. In that very sky red clouds and gold clouds and green clouds were flying with pink, yellow and orange cherubs on their back. Time to time the cherubs were jumping from cloud to cloud. Between them the stars were staring. And the stars were in festive mood. There were red stars and green stars. There were violet stars and white stars. There was a fair colors. In the middle of all that the full moon was hanging like an orange. How happy Abhi was! On and on his childhood was coming to him. His village, people, trees, yellow-green field with zigzag paths, the river with sailed boats..... People were coming, people were going. He would see the rush of people, coming from India after liberation. They were both old and new: those, who left the country during the war and those, who left just after partition. They all were dreaming to build a secular Bangladesh, a nothing like the sun country. But alas! it took only three and a half of a year to break their dream. And again the Hindu minority came out, began their way. They began to leave the country, the old ones and the new ones. Hundreds of houses will never be lighted at dusk, nobody will hear the bells be tolled there again. New people with new tradition will rule there. The harmony was broken, the tradition was broken. Today nobody can return him his childhood, his village, the lost harmony of his village. The lost symphony, once played in his village, will never be played again. Looking at the trees he would remember his won garden. They had a little garden behind their bed room. First his brothers planted there, then he. Every year it was expanding little by little. They needed to cut some plants. But they didn't. Every tree, every plant was the witness of time. Their lives were connected with those, who planted them. Every time, when he sat under some trees, he remembered his brothers, father... the trees spread their smell. Who knows men better than a tree? Many years after some "X" had left the country, they still say, "*This is "X"'s house, this tree is of "X".*" Poor new comers! They will never became the true owners, at least within the next one or two generation. And as soon as Abhi remembered the trees he became gloomy. The trees always haunt him. Here, in Moscow, he leads not too bad a life. He has his work, his friends, his girl, soon they will have a daughter. But trees are

trees, they are unsubstantiated. Brothers, sister, mother.... he can meet them anywhere of the world. But the trees: they cannot walk, they cannot fly, they cannot write, they cannot speak. They can only see and hear. They need to be understood, they need to be felt. To lose the trees is to lose the history, to lose the trees is to lose reminiscence, to lose the harmony, to lose the symphony. It is same to lose one's father, mother... everything which is connected with one's roots. But who will return him his trees? Who will return him the lost symphony? Who? Who? Who? It is only then he saw that the sky lost his color. The clouds red, gold and green vanished. No cherubs were playing more. And the stars also hid. The sky is ash now. It is gloomy again. Abhi was so helpless, so sad that he was about to burst into tears. Just then he saw a light far behind the lake. Some one told him, "*What's with you? Don't be sad. Don't give up. Don't lose your heart.*" But Abhi could not answer. His heart was burning, his head was burning. Then the light told, "*OK, then give me all your sorrow. Be glad man. Be happy.*" And Abhi would see it was the sun talking to him. It was now burning because Abhi gave him his sorrow. It burns because people always give him their sorrows. *I love you old, kind sun.*

Night was black and thick. A little misting rain fell. Abhi was walking alone along the margin of the wheat fields. A reptile would be heard moving nearby. An owl was hooting at the other end of the world. Darkness and uncertainty sat cross-legged on the trees. Little by little Abhi was sinking into fathomless fear. It is the time when one needs some one to be beside him. And as there was no possibility to find any one nearby, Abhi simply phoned God, who is always supposed to be at the other end of the line.

This God is a very queer thing. As a little boy Abhi thought God should be like his father, who always fulfills his demands. But when he grew up, he found that his father is not the one who can do every thing for him. So he needed a stronger one to be his God. But at last he could understand that no one is too strong to solve all his problems, no one but he can do it only. So he interpreted the famous speech "*God helps those, who help themselves*" as "*Help thyself and be your God*".

But now, when the fear and darkness were swallowing him, he could not but call God. He remembered his father, a pious man. It is easy to live when one believes in God. He would remember, when he or his brothers went to his father to say good-bye before any kinds of journey, or to pray his blessing before examinations, he simply stood before the alter and as Abhi thinks now, prayed to God to look after his children, and thus keeping them under God's care went with his own business. But Abhi cannot do it, not an atheist either. Because they have no God to look after their children, they have no one to ask anything to do for them. Some times he becomes enchanted by the might of God, how can He hear and bear all these requests. But other time he becomes angry when he thinks God is always spying after him, He is following him every where no matter either he is going to study or make love. In the language of modern politics He would be a great dictator and His state would be a totalitarian one. And so though sometimes it is tough to do without God, he prefers it to to be with Him.

The river fell asleep. She wakes up before the sun breaks out when the first train goes past blowing a heart-pounded whistle. During the day she carries crafts, people, goods. She carries news from the high lands to the sea: the news of life and the news of death. And all day long she flows and flows, all day long she murmurs and murmurs. And after a hard day when the sun feels tired and sinks into it, the moon jumps up, twinkle the stars and the river goes on with cold wind on her breast. Ships and boats move like the ghost-house. At last they also vanish. And only then the night covers her with her thick

black blanket, and she falls asleep.

Thus the river was sleeping. Abhi sat by the window. On his right laid the river, on his left the rail line. Both were sleeping. No moon, no stars, there was the sky alone: dark, gloomy naked sky. Abhi was thinking of his mother. He has gotten a letter today. It carried the news of his mother's death. And Abhi was thinking of his mother. The sky was dark It was black. Nothing was there in the sky but his mother. The picture of his mother was in the sky, the odor of his mother hung upon the air. His mother was every where. She was in the river, she was on the rail line, she was in the moon, in the stars, in the sky. She was in him and she was out of him. She was in his heart, and she was in his mind. She was in front of him and she was behind him. And Abhi was fully enveloped by his mother from in and out. He was sitting by the window, he was thinking of his mother. And today after his mother's death he felt free, he felt root-less and free. Now nothing is connecting him with his forefathers, nothing is connecting him with the mankind. He is one and all alone. He was feeling free. And he was feeling himself like a root, a new link towards the new generations. God is shape-less, not because He has no shape, but because He has many shapes. And Abhi became root-less not because he lost his last root, but because he gained many new ones. And Abhi was sitting, looking at the sky, at his mother, smelling her odor in the air. He was thinking of his mother. The river was sleeping, the road was sleeping, mother was sleeping. The river does not die, the road does not die and one's mother does not die. They do not begin, and they do not end. They only go. They only live from past to present, from present to future, from generation to generation. They live in you, in me. And rivers do not die, roads do not die and mothers do not die. They live in us. Abhi was looking at the river, he was looking at the road, he was looking at his mother. He was looking at the eternal life. He was thinking. He was talking to them. Mother's picture was in the sky, her odor hung hot upon the air.

As Abhi fell asleep, a dream came to him. It came from the river, it came from the rail line, it came through the half-open window. Abhi found himself in a populated court. It was full of known faces. Judges, dressed in black and white, were staring at him. There was nothing but hatred and anger in their glances. And Abhi was standing there at a loss not knowing what for he was waiting. At last the process was opened and Abhi came to know that he is going to be judged for not to be repentant at his mother's death. Abhi looked at the auditorium. It was full of his friends. Now nobody is looking at him. Their eyes were searching something on the floor. They were all sorry for him, but they were unable to do anything for him also. And Abhi felt sorry. It was he who failed to make them understand. And it should be he who has to pay for that.

Abhi would remember everything. He would remember how they protested - "*How can you say?*" when he informed them of his mother's death. Yes, he told them about it as if nothing had happened. But it does not mean that he did not love his mother or he is not sorry for her death. But how can he make these people understand that for him death is not the same, as it is for them. Life cannot be darted out from nothing, as well as it cannot be vanished into nothing. If for them life, beginning from one singularity ends in another, for him there does not exist any singularity. For him before birth life also exists, as well as after death, only it remains in physically zero-state. Nothing can be created and nothing can be destroyed. A physically zero-state life becomes visual through birth, reaches it's climax during the so called living period and again turns to zero-state life through his death. To die does not mean to become nothing, but to become something

invisible, imaginary, non-physical. Actually, when a child begins to play with toy, he dreams to have a baby. And he carries on this dream through all his life. So when he gets a child, it can be taken as the continuation of his thoughts, in other words the imaginary existence becomes a real one. On the other hand, when a man dies, he only ceases to exist physically. He leaves everything behind him. And other people think of him, remember him. Thus he continues to live an imaginary life. After all life and death are the opposite sides of the same coin. When life advances along the one rail, death follows him along the other. They are not only twin, they are more than that. If a man can speak of day and night in the same tone, why cannot he speak of life and death in the same way? So Abhi cannot find the cause of dissatisfaction, when he speaks of death or birth so easily. So when he was asked to defend himself in the court, he repeated his logic. But he noticed that nobody was listening to him, they are so afraid of losing their old faith! So . . . He was waiting to be sentenced.

And he was sentenced. He was sentenced to death. Some people came and took him to a dark cell. He was told that some morning someone will open the door, and when he would take his bath he will be taken to the firing squad. And now he may rest and pray to God. Then they went out locking the door behind them. Thus he was left alone. The cell was too little to pace or to move. Only two little holes were there on the roof. Through one hole the sun peers at him to say "*Good morning!*", while through the other it comes to bade "*Good bye!*". Then the night falls outside the cell (in the cell the night has an endless reign). And Abhi begins to wait for the dawn when some one will come to open the door. One night went by, and then the second. And at last Abhi lost the number of those terrible nights. The morning sun and the evening sun went past through the window in procession. And so many years have passed that Abhi thought that all the judges and all his friends already died, because no man can live so long in open air. He felt gloomy and bored. He felt tired of this life. So one morning, when the first ray of the sun came through the hole, he kicked the door with a terrible cry. His cry joined with the whistle of the morning train. Abhi opened his eyes. The river surface was glittering in the morning sun, a train was going away singing the song of life.

Now abhi is sitting by the window in a small town of Moscow suburb. Now-a-days it is his most favorite business to look at the trains and the ships. Each train, coming from Moscow brings him the news of his coming daughter and each train, leaving for Moscow takes his greetings to his girl. It seems, if one day any train will not arrive or leave in due time he will not simply bear it. Each sunset says him about the end of one more day of longing, which vanishes in the womb of the past taking with him the image of Meursault[14] or Mathieu[15] living in Abhi. And each sunrise comes to him with the image of Robert Jordan[16] and Henry[17], the real lovers of life. The new sun brings him closer with his coming daughter. And at last the day came, when his daughter came to light. He looked at her, he looked at the sky, he smelt the air. Now there was no picture of his mother in the sky. The sky was covered with the image of Monica, the new born kid. The air was heavy with her childish odor. Abhi forgot all his sorrows. He once again fell in love with life. Now his life acquires a new name, his love acquires a new name. And it was the name of his new born kid "*Monica*". Abhi looked at her, he looked at the sky. And he felt his life is going to give birth of a new Herzog[18] who after a struggle for peace in an artificial life came to realize that bliss lies in a real life with all its problems. Happiness is not to be sought out, it is to be felt and in agony and in ecstasy. So Abhi got up, entered into the human forest and lost in the crowd.

*Abhi was never a hero and never desires to be one. In the company he is always a listener, but when he is alone he talks and talks, he talks to himself, he argues with himself **always, all the time**. He is one of them, who suffer and enjoy the sufferings, seek pleasure in melancholy. All his life, when he reads something, he hears his unuttered words in their tongue. Many nights he weeps for his father, for his mother, for them whom does he love. Time and again he lays on a gigantic wave till morn before he can finally get asleep. Some nights he rows a little boat to some distant **galaxy** to have a cup of tea under the bamboo bush. Some nights in dream he goes home, but never can he reach the real one. My dreams also do never take me home. Will my writings help me to reach the goal? I believe they will at least help me to regain the past lost for ever.*

Bijan Saha

Dubna, 1994 - 1995

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- [1] A. Camus: The Outsider
 - [2] F. Dostoyevsky: The Karamazov Brothers
 - [3] An avatar of Vishnu and a popular Hindu deity
 - [4] An avatar of Vishnu
 - [5] The heroes of the Mahabharata
 - [6] Son of Arjuna, killed in an illigal war
 - [7] An ancient indian city
 - [8] Saint-Exupery: The Little Prince
 - [9] F. Dostoyevsky: The Karamazov Brothers
 - [10] H. Hesse: Siddhartha
 - [11] Saint-Exupery: The Little Prince
 - [12] A. Blok: Spring
 - [13] Demon from the Chandī. Every drop of his blood, dropped on the earth, gave birth to a new Raktabeez
 - [14] A. Camus: The Outsider
 - [15] J-P. Sartre: Iron in the Soul
 - [16] E. Hemingway: For Whom the Bell Tolls
 - [17] E. Hemingway: A Farewell to Arms
 - [18] S. Bellow: Herzog