DR. RESHMA

Dr Reshma, besides being a Psychiatrist, is a Qualified Gynecologist with a vast experience in Reproductive Health, Hospital Administration and Public Health, in Indiaand abroad and has held several responsible positions in the government (State Programme Officer for National Programme for Control of Blindness, Assistant Medical Superintendent of Lok Nayak Hospital, Assistant Director, Directorate of Family Welfare,Delhi). She has been a **Gold Medalist & National Scholarship holder**, and honored with**Bidhan Chandra Roy Doctors State Award** for meritorious services, in its first year of inception in 1998. Presently a Senior CMO in Psychiatry Department of G.B. Pant Hospital, she is a Media Consultant, a Poetess and fiction–writer in many languages, including Urdu, in which also holds a Diploma. With a keen interest in music, she is currently engaged in compiling the archives of Hindi Film Music

The doc is a great one for quotes – some of her latest witticisms:

“Why ruin a good story with the truth?”

“As I said before, I never repeat myself”

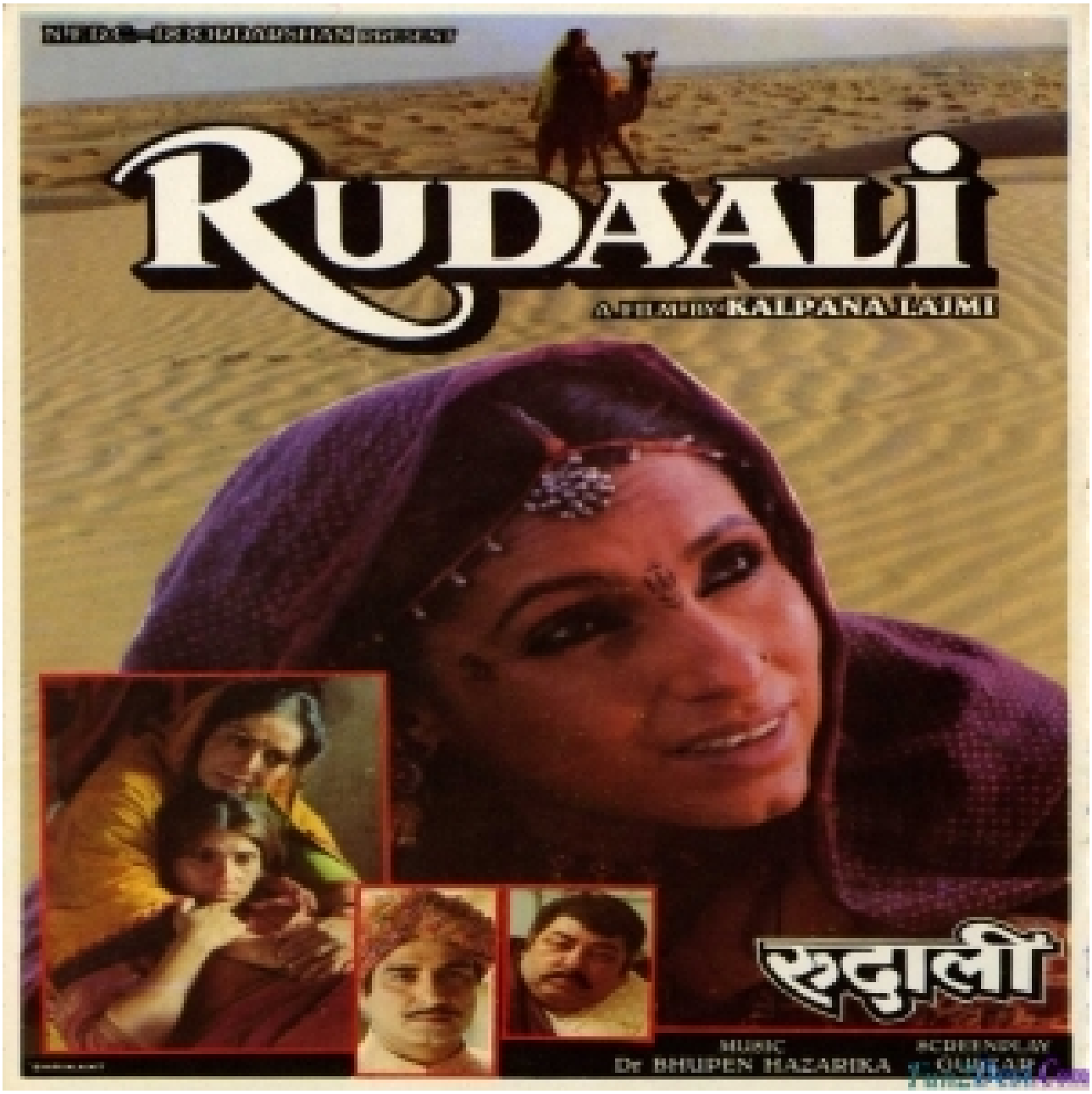
“Everybody has a right to My Opinion”

“Great professionals like me work on the “rocket principle – not that
I aim for the skies – but I don’t start working unless my tail is set on fire”

“If I had anything witty to say, I wouldn’t put it here”

“Why should I care about posterity? What’s posterity ever done for me?”

Folklore and Hindi Films



Folklore and Hindi Films

India is the largest film producing country in the world; it produces about 900 films annually. Indian films are not only seen in South Asia but also almost all parts of the world love to watch “the song and dance routine” of Bollywood. Indian films are popular in Russia, Canada, Australia, Middle East, United States and Mauritius just to name a few countries. Incidentally, Raj Kapoor a popular actor of the 1950s and 1960s attained the status of a folk hero in some parts of Soviet Union. His film Awaara in 1951 was highly acclaimed and popular not only in Russia but also in Africa and countries like Turkey.

Cinema opens a new window into culture by studying it we get a deeper understanding of the customs, behaviour patterns, values and arts and crafts of the Indian people. Deeper insights into the complex process of modernization, colonialism, nationalism and freedom and status of women can be acquired through Indian films. Cinema not only mirrors culture but also shapes it. By studying Indian cinema we can see how they have in turn shaped and promoted modernization, westernization, urbanization, secularism and emancipation of women.

Folk ideas and folk motifs have also found its way in Indian cinema and have regularly been used in particularly in Indian film songs and dances. Several folk tunes for example songs sung by Latha Mangeshkar in the film directed by Gulzar Lekin, Yara sili sili and Kesariya Balama are based on popular folk tunes. S.D. Burman, highly inspired by the Baul singers of Bengal, also used several folk tunes of these Bhatiyali while composing music; this can be seen in a very popular song Sun mere bhandu re in the film Sujatha. One of the best and popular music composer, who has won the Oscar, A.R. Rehman is greatly influenced by folk tunes, (said to be composed by Ghazi Khan) that can be seen in his composition Limbuda in the film Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam. He also uses sufi music to large extent that is heavily popular not only in India but also the west.

Many dance numbers also borrow folk concepts and Saroj Khan the famous dance choreographer is heavily influenced by folk dance of India. This can be seen in the dance of the famous actor Sri Devi in Morni Baaga main boli aadhi raat ma in the film Lamhe. Hybridized folk dancing can also be seen in many other films like used in Jhanak Jhanak Payal Bhaje. Another form of dancing was also popularized by actor Vyjayanthimala who in the film New Delhi combined Bharat Natyam dance steps with Kathak dance and Bhangra, a Punjabi folk dance.

By studying Indian cinema we can enter productively into the

thought worlds and the performance worlds of other traditional arts such as the folk ones. Many Indian film directors from pioneers such as Dadasaheb Phalke to directors like Satyajit Raj, Ritwik Ghatak and Shyam Benegal have sought to employ creatively the visualizations and the colour symbolisms that can be seen in folk dance, music, mime and theatre. In the use of song, dance, humor, structure of narrative, the melodrama, the folk plays of Lavani, Tamasha of Maharastra, Jatra of Bengal, Bhavai of Gujarat, Nautanki of northern India and Terukuttu of Tamilnadu have had great influence on popular Indian filmmakers.

Perhaps the greatest influence of folk in films can be seen in the genre of mythology. The first Indian feature film Raja Harishchandra directed by Phalke was based on the mythology from the Ramayana. Phakle was highly influenced by the film the Life of Christ and he decided to make a mythological film. His 50 minute film Raja Harishchandra became immensely successful that saw its influence on many other films based on the same genre. The myth has a strong cultural- religious tradition and the Indian mind is deeply attached to it. This can be seen in later films like Jai Santoshi Maa which helped in resurrecting a little known provincial goddess to a grand overpowering level where new temples for her have sprung up in all over the country. Among the most popular myths have been from the epics Ramayana and Mahabharata and the countless tales connected with Lord Krisna. These have been repeated frequently and we can give a number of instances such as Shataram’s Surekha Haran, Vijay Bhatt’s Bharat Milap and the actor Dara Singh playing lord Hanuman in Bajrangbhali. Many animation films like Hanuman and Return of Hanuman are also being created now to find the audience amongst children and keen adults.

Mythological themes like good fighting and destroying evil (Sholay by Ramesh Sippy,) brothers uniting (Kabhi Khusi Kabhi Gam by Karan Johar), reincarnation (Om Shanti Om by Farah

Khan), sacrifice (Mother India by Bimal Roy) and tolerance (Bombay, and Roja by Mani Ratnam) can also be seen in films. Historical anecdotes and instances can be seen in films such as Mohenjadaro and Jodha Akbar.

Folklore legends about holy men and women (example Sant Tukaram and Savitri Satyavan),kings and queens (Mughal –e-Azam, Ruzia Sultana and Jodha Akbar) and even outlaws and dacoits (Reshma aur Shera by Sunil Dutt) can be seen in films. There are also stories about legendary love pairs who have lived and died for love which have been made into films such as Heer Ranjha, Sohni Mahiwal, Mirza Sahiban and Dhola Maru. Fantasy based and magic films were made by Kikubhai Desai as early as the 1930s. Today we see that Subhash Ghai and late Manmohan Desai have raised this genre to the opulent levels of grand, multistar films, good examples being Dharam Veer, Amar Akbar, Anthony and Parvarish. Pure fantasy films have also been made such as Alladin, Alibaba, Sindbad the Sailor and Thief of Baghdad. By and large, all the non myth genres in films have functioned as mythological by products, existing in a supernatural miracle world and promoting old world beliefs and superstitions.

Romeo, Juliet and Seven Clowns | Manohar Khushalani

The only thing this play had in common with Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet' is the story line on which the spoof is based. Thankfully, the names of characters had been kept the same as those in the classic, otherwise one would have been at a loss on how to relate to the title of the play. The story has been given the look and feel of a folk lore in the

tradition of romantic tales, such as those about; Umar-Marvi, Reshma-Shera, Sasi Punoh

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The Role of MEDIA in Prejudicing Fair Trial (Manohar Khushalani)

EDITORIAL

Arushi – Hemraj Murder Case

The Role of Media in Prejudicing Fair Trial – A case study

(L to R) Arushi – Victim | Hemraj – Victim| Nupur – Mother | Dr.Talwar – Father | Krishna – Compounder

Please Note the Title of this piece has the names of both

victims. Most media have called it the Arushi Murder case – as if the life of a domestic help is of little consequence. In some (rare) cases words such as murderer had been appended to the suspects. We are not a News Magazine so the merits of the case are not part of our purview but Media is definitely one of our concerns. The Sensationalisation of the unfortunate murder of Arushi and Hemraj has raised certain issues on Media's role in encroaching upon the rights of the individuals to receive fair treatment. On their rights to privacy – and the right of every accused to be considered innocent until he/she is conclusively proved to be guilty.

While the media is also a watchdog for ensuring fair trial and justice, must it not exercise self control and self censorship to ensure the dignity of the affected persons? Of course there are legal provisions when it comes to contempt. A Court report prejudicing fair trial may be of various forms. It is contempt if a newspaper report deters a person from giving witness in a court; if the report offers threats or is written in abusive language compelling a party to discontinue the court proceedings; and if the report discusses the merits of a case pending in court.

At present the case is not subjudice and therefore no such laws inhibit the media, that is why one feels some self censorship is required.

Most court journalism students must have studied the Dr. Samuel Sheppard case. By coincidence that gentleman too was a doctor. In the United States, in the famous Sheppard Case (1966) the judgment pronounced by a court was reversed twelve years later on the ground of prejudicial publicity.

Facts of the case were that Dr. Samuel Sheppard had served nearly ten years on his conviction of a charge of murdering his wife. Later in 1966 the court held that due to virulent publicity and a "carnival atmosphere" a fair trial was not possible. The US media persons were warned that trials were

were not like elections, to be won through public meetings radio, and newspapers. The media was also asked to show the increasingly prevalent

habit of making unfair and prejudicial comments on pending trials.

Dr. Samuel Sheppard case, as reported in Plain Dealer, Cleveland, U.S.A. (17th November, 1966) gives an account of the reporter's experience of the proceedings in the courtroom:

Dr. Samuel Sheppard was found not guilty last night. in the 1954 slaying of his first wife MariiIyn.

Sheppard gleefully slammed his hand down on the trial table after Common Pleas Judge Russel J. Talty read the verdict

Sheppard had to be restrained in his joy by Defence Counsel F. Lee Bailey and co-Defence ~ Russel A. Seeman.

"""Sit down!" ordered Bailey, Sheppard sat down and burst into tears. A woman in the back — screamed, "Thank God"!

0ther women could be heard screaming in the corridor outside the second-floor courtroom •• the Cuyahoga County Criminal Courts Building.

Sheppard ' s second wife, Aiane, covered her face and sobbed..softly. She was sitting in the Second row of the seats in the smaIl courtroom jammed with nearly 60 spectators, 27 of them reporters.

As the jury was dismissed, Sheppard broke for the. rear of the courtroom, thrusting a sheriff's deputy aside "I'm going to see my wife", he said.

He leaned off the bar rail and embraced his wife, she threw her arms around him. "Oh, baby", he sobbed. "Oh, baby".

Leaping and pushing his way through the crowd that had amassed

in the corridor, the former osteopathic neurosurgeon shouted, “He’s my man!” and clasped the stocky Bailey around !he neck.

Bailey, who had worked to have Sheppard freed in 1964 on a writ of habeas corpus, looked on and beamed. This was the moment he had waited for – for 1,827 days, he had told the jury, ever since he became interested in the celebrated Sheppard case in 1961

Marilyn Sheppard, 31, died with more than 25 bone deep wounds in her head. She was four months pregnant with her second child.

Asleep in the next room was the Sheppard’s 7-year-old son, Chip, now a 19-year old freshman at Boston University. He testified in the current trial that he never awakened the night or morning of the murder.

Sheppard told authorities in 1954 that he was attacked and knocked out twice by one or more unknown assailants when he rushed to the rescue of his wife and later when he pursued a shadowy form to the beach behind the Lake Road home.

Sheppard was found guilty of second degree murder in 1954 after a 65-days trial, Sheppard served nearly ten years before he was released from prison on $10,000 bail by a U.S. district court in 1964.

The United States Supreme Court’s attack on prejudicial publicity has had its effect on the coverage of the mass media in most cases, since.

In Britain in the Michael Fagan case (1983), The Sunday Times was fined by the court because the paper published certain particulars about the accused when the trial was pending. The case was related to Michael Fagan who was alleged to have. intruded into the Queen’s bedroom.

In another English case, R.V.S. Thomson Newspapers (1968) it

was held that to publish a criminals antecedents, during the pendency court proceedings, against him; is contempt. There are definite reasons why trial by newspaper is prohibited: A trial by newspapers may influence the minds of witnesses. It may also compel a party to withdraw the suit It may prejudice public mind against somebody who might later turn out to be innocent.

Let us not forget that in the present case a small girl has lost her right to live – a father has lost his daughter – a mother has lost her daughter – a father is accused of killing his own progeny – a domestic help who has lost his life also must have a family in Nepal – an employee is accused of killing his employers daughter – so many others are alleged to be involved. In the eyes of law all are innocent until proved guilty.

The media's role is of course to ensure that investigations remain on course to the extent that it does not prejudice public mind. But questions one must ask: Is it fair for a TV soap to use the story as fodder for its script writers? Does it prejudice public mind even if the producer claims that all characters are fictitious and any resemblance to a real person a figment of viewer's imagination? Has our reporting been fair to people affected by the tragedy? Has it ensured the personal dignity of the innocent? Because we still don't know who is guilty and who is innocent.

Manohar Khushalani

27th June, 2008

Footnote: Opinion makers and decision makers read StageBuzz. One day after the above editorial was published some newspapers changed the nomenclature of their headline by calling it an Arushi-Hemraj case in place of Arushi only Murder Case. Hemraj's existence was recognised as a victim. Also atleast one major National newspaper brought out an

empathy article for the accused. Finally the dentist has been allowed to mourn his daughter as an aggrieved father and not as a killer.

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- Water and Environment Profile

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Acting Fraternity

Play: Kurukshetra and After

Manohar Khushalani	Charu Malhotra	Nidhi Sharma
Parvesh Haryani	Ruchita Puri	Shreya Sharma
Suryakanthi Tripathi	Rashmi Vaidialingam	

Play: Empire Builders

Manohar Khushalani	Sanjeev Sahay	Sushmita Mukherjee
Virendra Saxena	Rajesh Khare	Swamy
Tanuja Chaturvedi		

Play: To Anchor A Cloud

Manohar Khushalani	Manish Manoja	Dilip Hiro
Joya John	Mala Kumar	Sanyam
Anju Malhotra	S. Somamasundaram	

Play: Accidental Death of an Anarchist

Manohar Khushalani	Chandrashekhar	Tapush Chanda
Ragini Prakash Sen	Anuradha Kapoor	Susheel
Ravi Shanker	Taneja	

Backend Team

HOLLYWOOD DIARY – Colonel Kurtz vs. Moses

HOLLYWOOD DIARY
Colonel Kurtz vs. Moses

by

Naveen Gupta

If destiny were femme fatale that lures fate, then passing away of 84 years old Charlton Heston on 5th April 2008 out of Alzheimer related

complications drove this irony all the bit closer in the film noir that is life! On April 3,2008, two days before Heston's death, Marlon Brando would have celebrated his 84th birthday!

Above: Charlton Heston as Mark Antony 1950

No two actors united by death and life in the month of April were such diverse practitioners of their craft or political activists of causes they held dear to their heart. And yet there were remarkable similarities in their lives that compel a look.HOLLYWOOD DIARY – Colonel Kurtz vs. Moses

Marlon Brando was born April 3,1924 (the very same day Doris Day, the all American sweetheart of 50s and 60s was born) to alcoholic parents as the youngest of three children in Omaha, Nebraska. His mother Dorothy Brando was a community theatre actress and mentor to a very gifted Henry Fonda, then in his teens, when not drunk! It was this troubled legacy that moulded Brando into an enigmatic rebel in real life or on screen!

Charlton Heston was born as John Charles Carter on October 4,1923 in Evanston, Illinois.His mother remarried a certain Chester Heston, and the ten year boy was rechristened Charlton Heston. Brando's parents separated, when he eleven, and Dorothy Brando moved to her mother's home with her three children in California. Though the Brandos reunited after two years, but the young boy was fast becoming a discipline problem, something Marlon acknowledged in his 1994 autobiography, "**Songs that my mother taught me,**"-"…when you are a child who is unwanted or unwelcome…you look for an identity that will be acceptable!" so young Brando experimented with alternate identities, pretending and thus acting to deal with demons in his teen years.

Heston had no such demons, instead the young boy developed a robust

sense of confidence as a defense mechanism, that contributed his charismatic sense of self on screen in the good roles he played or the over the top performances he delivered.

Above:Brando as the iconic Don Vito Corleone in The Godfather (1972).

Brando's abusive father in order to curb Bud Jr. sent him to the same military academy, where he had been educated. Marlon excelled in theatre but in his final year he was expelled for insubordinate and delinquent behaviour! He retuned home to dig ditches as a summer job arranged by his father, whereas Charlton at 17 won a drama scholarship to Northwestern University. Brando went to New York, where one sister was trying to be a painter and the other had appeared as an actress on Broadway. In New York, Brando plunged headlong into New School Dramatic Workshop with Stella Adler and later at Actors' Studio with Lee Strassberg, honing his techniques of the 'Stanislavski System', or 'The Method'. This new acting style by proposed and developed by Russian dramaturg, Konstantin Stanislavski; exhorting its disciples to call upon one's internalized memories and emotions as means to express truth in a portrayal.In 1944,a knee injury exempted Brando from active duty in world war II, but Heston spent two years as a radio operator & gunner with a B-25 Bomber squadron in Alaskan Aleutian Islands. He married his Northwestern classmate, Lydia Marie Clarke; his wife for next 64 years till death did them part.

In 1948,the Hestons move to New York (leaving behind managing of a playhouse in North Carolina) where Charlton was offered supporting role in a Broadway revival of Antony and Cleopatra, Marlon was by now already big time as Stanley Kowalski in **Streetcar named Desire**, written by Tennessee Williams and directed by Elia Kazan.Brando was the third choice for the role after John Garfield and Burt Lancaster had turned down Kowalski.Brando wore tight fitting blue jeans and torn T-shirt for the part of a brute, which has left its singular impact on fashion and glamour industries of America, and in turn the entire

world! To this day, Brando's animal cry of "Stella-aaah!" twice in the play resonates in the mind of every actor, trained or untrained.
In 1950,Heston moved to TV, seeing him in CBS production of **Wuthering Heights**, producer Hal B.Wallis of **Casablanca**fame offered hi a movie role. Heston's idealistic wife reminded him that they were in the big city to pursue theatre and TV, not movies! Heston cajoled her,"…well maybe for one film to see what it is like…." Meanwhile Brando was preparing with real paraplegics in a hospital ward to gain first hand experience for his debut in Stanley Kramer's **The Men**, the public was astonished to learn that the actor was not a paraplegic but paid actor. Heston was also lauded for his debut in film noir **Dark City**, which brought him to the notice of CecilB.Demille.

But now for next 4 years every actor alive would dwarf in front of Brando, as he would be successively be nominated for Oscars. His first hammer blow was screen adaptation of **A street car named Desire** (1951), where the rest of his co-actors, Vivien Leigh, Kim Hunter and Karl Malden walked away with Oscars! Bogart beat Brando for his role in **The African Queen**. The film also bagged the award for art Direction, out of the 12 nominations it got. Brando in reality hated Kowalski,"…he had the brutal aggressiveness…I hate…I am afraid of it…" But in his long career people were going to confuse the man with the sensational characters he created, it was something Kazan had mentioned to Williams,"In addition to his gifts as an actor…he has great physical appeal and sensuality." Brando would become a prisoner in his own gilded cage. Brando was brilliant as Emiliano Zapata in **Viva Zapata** (1952) and as Marc Antony in **Julius Caesar** (1953), he snagged the usual nominations, but the Oscar evaded him. Then came his role as Terry Malloy in **On the Waterfront**(1954), not only did he win his first Oscar, but bagged the golden Globe, Cannes Film Festival Prize, BAFTA and New York film critics award. He still remains the only American actor to have won BAFTA thrice consecutively, from 1953-55. Marlon Brando had not only arrived, but was now the premier acting talent in the world!

Above: Charlton Heston (left) with Marlon Brando, James Baldwin, and Harry Belafonte at Civil Rights March 1963

Charlton Heston meanwhile essayed a circus manager in 1952 best picture Oscar winner **The Greatest Show On Earth**, lost the Oscar winning role of Sefton in **Stalag 17** to William Holden but hit pay dirt in 1956, portraying Moses in Demille's classic T**he Ten Commandments**. Demille gave him the iconic role because 6ft3in tall square jawed Heston, resembled Michelangelo's Moses! Heston played larger than life heroes, who led masses, whereas Brando played the loner, the protagonist who was an anti-social. His characters had no code, except a commitment to style of life, in which he was betrayed by those he trusted, his own! Remember the improvised back of taxi scene with Rod Steiger in **On the Waterfront**, where his Terry Malloy laments:"oh Charlie, oh Charlie! You don't understand, I could have had class….I could have been a contender…I could have been somebody…instead of a bum…which what I am!" He struck a universal chord because Brando lamented for all our failed hopes. The Brando mystique grew from the persona of the gangster leader and outlaw with vulnerability of a Byronic hero. He was the first angry young man, the delinquent and tough rolled into one. be it Terry Malloy or Stanley Kowalski. If there were any doubts about his charismatic acting, they were put to rest in Kramer's **The Wild One** (1954) essaying Johnny Strabler. It would be another 18 years when Brando would pull a coup like that.

In **The Wild One**, Brando gave birth to rebel mixed up teenager in a first motorcycle film, where his leather clad bike gang leader terrorizes a small town with the tagline,"…nobody tells me what to do!" When a mom in the movie wonders what Brando's rebelling against, he fixes her between the eyes with the response , "..Whaddya got?" Not only crew cut T-shirts, jeans and leather jackets sold like never before but an entire bad boy brigade sprang up that aped and copied Brando-James Dean, Elvis Presley, John Lennon, Albert Finney and John Osbourne whose play Look back in anger, gave rise to the "Kitchen Sink" movement on the English Stage.

In 1958,Brando giving credo to his unpredictability in playing honest roles accepted to portray a confused Nazi officer in **The Young Lions** and turned down the role of Judah Ben-Hur so did Burt Lancaster and

Rock Hudson. Heston had previously purveyed historical roles as diverse as Buffalo Bill in **The Pony Express** (1953) and Andrew Jackson in **The President's Lady** (1953), so after completing **The Buccaneer** (1958) Heston stepped in as fourth choice as lead in **Ben-Hur** (1958). The rest is history! The film went to gross $37 million in 1959, and Heston would like Brando would be identified with the biblical epic, bagging the best actor Oscar out of the eleven awards the film got. In 1958, Heston portrayed a righteous Mexican detective against Orson Welles, in the film noir **Touch of Evil,** helmed by Welles; critics hail it as Heston's best role ever. But **Ben-Hur** meant that Heston was going to be one-person Hollywood trek through the pages of World History. His solid frame, granite carved profile and voice to match intimidated opponents with a glare. His was righteous anger commanding respect and conveying integrity even in villainous roles. He glorified the power of the individual in sync with Middle America's vision of how the world should be.

Above:Marlon Brando as Colonel Kurtz in Apocalypse Now (1979).

The epics with Heston in lead flew thick and fast; **El Cid** (1961) **55 Days at Peking** (1963) as Michelangelo in **The agony and the ecstasy**, as John the Baptist in **The greatest story ever told,**along with Major Amos Dundee in **Major Dundee** (all in 1965) and General Gordon in **Khartoum**(1966). French critic Michael Mourlet infamously rhapsodized-"… Charlton Heston is an axiom of the cinema!" Heston crowned of 1965 by becoming the President of Screen Actors' Guild for next 6 years, when only 42.Brando was now burning his candle at both ends and was dissipating fast. He snagged another Oscar nomination for **Sayonara** (1967) but the 60s were a whole new ball game for Brando. He started the decade by forming Pennebraker named for his mother; and produced, directed and starred in psychological revenge western **One eyed Jacks** (1961).

But Brando was in a hurry to kill his rebel image and thus followed **The Ugly American** (1963) and the brilliant **Reflections in a golden** eye (1967), where John Huston directed him as the stifled homosexual Major Penderton.But he also did movies like **The Appaloosa** (1966) summed up by late Pauline Kael as"…. the dog of a movie about a horse." for money. Brando's two failed marriages, numerous affairs and a new penchant for quarrelling with old time friends such as Sam Spiegel,

who had produced On the Waterfront, during the shooting of **The Chase** (1968), kept him in tabloids, but his crown was gone. He had been voted as the top box-office star from 1953-59,now in the late 60s, Brando was a had been.

Heston was brilliant as Colonel George Taylor in **The Planet of the Apes** (1968) as Marc Antony in technicolour **JuliusCaesar** (1970) science fiction film of apocalyptic horror in **Soylent Green** (1971). And while Brando's epitaphs were being carved by critics, starting with Truman Capote (way back in 1957), Hollis Alpert, David Susskind and Dwight MacDonald for not returning to stage and abandoning craft for money. Then came the year 1972; Brando declined a young Francis Ford Coppola to portray Don Vito Corleone in **The Godfather**. Brando said, "It is about mafia…. I wont glorify mafia!" Mario Puzo sent a letter to Brando to reconsider as the author felt that only Brando could do justice to the job. Coppola convinced Brando for a make-up test, which Brando did himself. The results of the audition left Paramount chief, Charles Bludhorn, stumped! Brando boycotted the ceremony, becoming the second actor after George C.Scott to refuse an Oscar for best actor. He sent a Native American activist Sacheen Littlefeather to read his protest against stereotypical portrayal of Red Indians by Hollywood and TV. Brando was in the eye of storm once again, on 14th October 1972. **Last Tango in Paris**, premièred. Bertolucci's masterpiece had a 20-year-old Jeanne (Maria Schneider) entering into a no questions asked sexual relationship with 45 years old American expatriate Paul, grieving after his wife's suicide. The film's so called eroticism overshadowed Brando's academy award nominated performance. An embittered Brando limited by his burgeoning weight now became ever more contemptuous of his profession and worked infrequently.

Heston continued to deliver blockbusters **The Omega Man** (1973) **Earthquake** (1974) and an ever-increasing number of cameos, supporting roles and also on theatre. In 1978, Brando became Jor-El in **Superman**, as he got a pay cheque of $3.7 million for just two weeks work. In 1979, Coppola tried to give Brando's uneven career a lift by offering him the role of iconic Colonel Walter Kurtz in **Apocalypse Now**, fashioned on Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness. An overweight Brando would parade around the set, little knowing about the book or his lines. Coppola shot him in shadows with improvised dialogues in the cult classic. To utter the tagline of the character with a close-up, Coppola had to shell out the$75,000 for an hour's work in which the cranky Brando just had to say, "The horror! The horror!" Brando argued on his part in his 1994 autobiography that Coppola had agreed to let him rewrite the script, but it was Brando's insight that Kurtz have a

bald pate and lighting be so devised that the maniacal colonel's eyes were emphasized. In 1980, Brando retired after locking horns with temperamental George C.Scott in the thriller The Formula.

Both Brando and Heston spoke openly against racism and were active supporters of civil rights movement. Heston campaigned for Adlai Stevenson and John F. Kennedy; and during the civil rights march held in Washington D.C. in 1963,Heston, Brando, Harry Belafonte, Sidney Poitier, James Garner, Burt Lancaster and Paul Newman represented Hollywood. In 1968, Brando cancelled his lead role in The Arrangement, due to Dr. King's slaying and his express desire to devote more time to civil rights movement. The assassination of Robert Kennedy that year, saw Heston the liberal democrat support President Johnson's Gun Control Act and oppose Vietnam War. Brando even funded Black Panthers Party and stopped when the radical group advocated indiscriminate violence for the revolution.

Above:Brando as Emiliano Zapata in a trailer for the 1952 film Viva Zapata!

By 80s, Heston opposed affirmative action, supported gun rights and became a Republican from Democrat and campaigned for Reagan, Bush Sr. and Bush.Jr. But his indignation remained righteous; in 1992 he stunned a Time Warner Annual meeting by reading Rapper Ice-T's lyrics aloud from the song 'Cop Killer', from an album released by the company. The song preached killing police and sodomizing women. Heston stood tall, like Moses and asked, "If Adolf Hitler came back with a hot movie synopsis, every studio in town be after it…would Warner's be among them?" Warner Bros. pulled the song from the album. He was the patriarch of being politically incorrect, and wont bow down!
Brando was attacked for his anti-semitism in 1996 on Larry King Live, telling the host "Hollywood is owned by Jews," and yet in 1946, Brando was in Ben Hecht's Zionist play **A Flag is born**, fought for Israel's establishment and smuggling of holocaust survivors to Palestine.
Hollywood's Jew bosses looked the other way at Don Corleone. Family

problems and ambivalent sexuality was not Heston's cup of tea, in 1990, Brando's look-alike eldest born Christian shot and killed the Tahitian lover of his half-sister Cheyenne. Christian was found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to 10 years, but the great mumbler spoke for an hour in a rambling account of how his ex-wife and he had failed Christian! Cheyenne in 1995, hanged herself at 25 in Tahiti and Brando's third wife and the dead girl's mother Tarita went public with her memoirs Marlon, my love and torment, accusing Brando of sexually abusing Cheyenne! Saddened by these incidents Brando returned to screen despite his obesity, difficulty to memorize his lines and childish demands on set, he continued to turn Oscar nominated **A dry white season** (1989) **The Freshman**(1990) **Don Juan DeMarco** (1995) and as Max in The Score (2001) with his disciple DeNiro, where he was unduly tough on the director Frank Oz, the legendary co-producer of **Seasme Street**, as 'Miss Piggy.' Heston remained in demand from his cameo in Wayne' World 2 till Tim Burton's remake of **Planet of the Apes**. But Heston had been defending the redneck and political incorrectness as President of National Rifle Association from 1998,fighting hip replacement and prostrate remission despite Chemotherapy. In 2000 convention of NRA, Heston Moses like raised a rifle over his head and dared democrat presidential candidate Al Gore to take it away, " from my cold dead hands!" Gore lost the blue-collar votes to George Bush in an election so close that any set back was perilous! Obama and Clinton 8 years later are still asserting the right to bear arms, despite countless school and university campus shootings. Moses was an ardent supporter of Second Amendment, and who defy Moses!
In 2002, Heston went public with his Alzheimer's disease and yet a year later received Presidential Medal of Honor from the President at White house. Till Brando called it quits on 1st July, 2004 at 80, he was to be further maligned in Brando Unzipped by Darwin Porter, as being lover of Christan Marquand, Laurence Olivier, Cary Grant, Wally Cox, Rock Hudson, Stewart Granger and Marilyn Monroe. But Brando's neighbour Jack Nicholson had summed up his influence, " There's no one before or since like Marlon Brando….enormous and flawless…like Picasso! He changed my life!"

Heston survived unkind intellectuals like Michael Moore who ambushed him on tape while filming for Bowling in Columbine, or that babe eye candy George Clooney who joked about his Alzheimer's, with his Moses like dignity. But in former First lady Nancy Reagan's eulogy sums up the kind of a person Chuck was, " I will never forget Chuck as a Hero on the big screen…but a hero in life…in whatever he was doing!"

Heston played great roles whereas Brando was the greatest actor alive, and as these old world heroes finish one by one in this world of mediocrity, I mourn for them, for they were part of my childhood

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The Benefit of Doubt

T H E B E N E F I T O F D O U B T

(written in 1993 – way before the cyber-era)

by Dr. Reshma

I could hardly wait to get home. How one begins to take one's marriage for granted, even the caring and belonging, would have never struck me, had it not been for these last three months of separation, spent in Jabalpur. The old magic having been revived, I was palpitating like a newly-wedded groom headed for the nuptial bliss! I was too lost in my own little world to notice the cab screeching to a halt, or the driver waiting impatiently for his fare.

The latter, I disposed off quickly, and without even bothering to collect the change, literally leaped to the front door, intending to knock Chitra out with my sudden appearance! I was dying to see the expression on her face at that moment, and had purposely not intimated the time of my arrival to her.

But my meticulously planned-out romantic encounter turned out to be a damp squib after all, as the door was answered by our maid! Worse still, she was not even aware of her memsaab's whereabouts at that early hour. Completely deflated, I re-

entered the cold house all by myself, and stretching out on my bed, dialled Swati, Anu & Priya in quick succession. But my attempts to trace Chitra came to a naught, and the eagerness to be with her got laced with a hint of irritation. Where could she be, I thought, a trifle disappointed. Though I could, from all conventional standards, be considered a loving and caring partner, I was unfortunately far too possessive about my wife, and disliked sharing her with anyone else.

Not that Chitra had ever given me a cause for complaint through all our years of marriage. It was just me I guess. For some strange, inexplicable reason, I had always harbored a feeling of insecurity vis-a-vis her, and been forever ready to jump to irrational conclusions. And worse, despite being aware of it, had been unable to do anything about it.

Barring this trait of mine, we had a reasonably good marriage going. And were certainly qualified to win any made-for-each-other contest; the absence of children notwithstanding. A clean chit from the doctors to both of us had diminished our anxieties to some extent, and we had decided to wait patiently for our little guest – whenever it chose to arrive…

The tiredness of the journey was compounded by my convoluted thoughts, and I was almost dozing when something soft and feathery tickled me. I woke up to find Chitra lying next to me, her lips on my forehead, and drew her close, with an urgency bordering on near-violence.

“Where have you been my love? Lord, how I’ve missed you these past few months!” I groaned. “And even if this doesn’t sound very original, let me say it one more time – I can’t live without you, and my little nymph, you better believe that!”

But just as I began lending credence to those lofty statements, I also noticed that it was a different Chitra that lay encircled in my arms. This was not the person I had left

behind. The change was too subtle for me to define, but something was certainly missing somewhere. Perhaps that faraway look in her eyes… perhaps an uncharacteristic absent-mindedness in her demeanor… she was certainly not all there.

"Hey! Who dared to claim my wife's presence at 9.00 A.M. in the morning, depriving me of…" I decided to lose no further moments in making up for the ones already lost, and quickly engaged myself in sealing her responses! Not very successfully though, for she did manage to wriggle one out.

"Sorry for turning your pleasant surprise into a rude shock Akshay, but Swati and I were out shopping – just some knick-knacks you know…"

Her explanations continued, and I suddenly realized why she wasn't looking at me in the eye. For hadn't Swati informed me in the morning that she was off to her daughter's school? I couldn't help wondering what Chitra was up to… what was she hiding behind that lie?

I quickly banished the thought and warned myself – no, I wasn't going to let that green monster near her again. It had tormented us enough in the past; enough, in fact, to actually hurt Chitra on several occasions. But not any more. In any case, this was too insignificant a matter to merit any further attention on my part.

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And yet, as the days passed, I was forced to change my opinion; and became almost convinced that I wasn't jumping to any wrong conclusions. Not this time.

I may have been the jealous possessive type. But then, how many benefits of doubt was a wife supposed to get? Thrice, she hadn't been able to explain her by-now-frequent disappearing acts. Yes, I too had started checking up on her more often –

but her own alibis were invariably falling flat.

And she knew it.

What had happened to cause those dark circles under her eyes? My radiant Chitra seemed, but a pale shadow of her previous self – so withdrawn. I had been carefully controlled about my own queries so far, but it was almost a month since my return! And worst of all were her constant excuses to hold me at bay, even at nights. Something was surely troubling her. But what? Or who?

Was it another man?

I could contain myself no longer, and decided to put an end to the suspense – by following her on days that she was supposed to be "running some errands". And ended up feeling even further confused.

For her destination was always the same – Dr. Rathi's Nursing Home.

Hmm… so this was it! A doctor? So overcome was I with jealousy, that the possibility of her being sick did not even cross my mind. Perhaps, because whenever I'd express a concern regarding her health, she had brushed it away ever so casually, attributing everything to "just a headache".

Giving her one more benefit of doubt, I showed up at Dr. Rathi's one morning, and introduced myself as Chitra's husband. The direct approach always worked best for me.

But I wasn't at all prepared for the bombshell that followed. I sat numbstruck, as it tore me apart, and listened to a whole lot of technical jargon, without registering much. Dr. Rathi patiently explained everything and I kept nodding correctly, hoping that I was coming up with all the right questions.

The information wasn't adding up to much. The doctor seemed

ignorant about the exact duration of my absence. And that probably accounted for several of the missing links. The rest resulted from my helplessly ruffled state.

Hoping that Chitra had her own reasons for withholding certain facts from the medical practitioner, I too did not enlighten him, and decided to maintain status quo.

“Well Mr. Mhatre,” the doctor finally smiled warmly as he winded up and shook my hand, “Best of luck! I’m sure it’ll all work out fine in the end. Don’t just believe in miracles, depend on them. Good day!”

Dazed, I stepped out of the clinic, and abandoned the idea of going to work, somehow dragging myself home. Where I tried lending a semblance of order to the various pieces of jigsaw just received. Fortunately, Chitra was actually away to a kitty – brunch this time, and I had the much needed solitude to sort myself out, having been much too stunned at the clinic to be able to think rationally.

The facts sunk in slowly… and gravely… so Chitra had conceived in my absence… but instead of growing normally, the pregnancy had developed into a “mole” – a potentially cancerous tumor… the initial symptoms being similar, the diagnosis was possible only after sophisticated investigations… but once the abortion was performed, what followed was even more traumatic… repeated urine tests, x-rays, biopsies… to make sure that it had not turned malignant.

And of-course, abstinence. A pregnancy under such conditions was disastrous for the follow-up.

At long last, things began falling into place; and it was almost afternoon when I finally set out for my office. My forehead deeply creased, I failed to notice the post-man, and nearly crashed into him, before absent-mindedly collecting the mail.

“Met Dr. Rathi today.” I announced that night as Chitra entered the bedroom, coming straight to the point as usual.

“Perhaps I’m entitled to an explanation. N O W?”

I was only pretending, but color drained out from her face completely; and if I hadn’t supported her, she would surely have collapsed. Everything that had remained pent-up inside her for so long, came flowing out now, as I held her in my arms, and stroked her hair gently.

It took a long while for her sobbing to cease completely. When her eyes finally rose to meet mine, they were darkly shadowed. I decided to put her at ease immediately.

“My darling, my love”, I murmured softly against her, almost crushing her to me this time. “How could you go through it all alone?”

She stared disbelievingly as I continued. “You little fool! Why didn’t you let me know in Jabalpur? Why? I would have left everything to be with you. You thought a baby would be more precious to me than YOU?”

Her tear-ravaged face regained some of its color, but her eyes were still clouded.

“You… know… everything…? Dr. Rathi… didn’t… I mean… didn’t… he… tell you… anything else?”

“Of-course he did…” I paused dramatically for effect, and continued with a grim look on my face,” he was afraid it might not to be a mole next time. The condition is not very common you know!”

For a moment she looked completely nonplussed. Then her face cleared, and for the first time since my return, I saw her relax fully.

I continued further. “You nut! Don’t you realize what this means? That *we* are *both* capable of producing those adorable little brats!”

I stole a sideways glance at her, and noticed the last vestiges of doubt finally melt away from her eyes. The guarded look was gone; and in its place, had appeared a serenity, that made the recently enacted scene completely worth my while. I gave her an understanding smile.

And then we held each other’s hands and laughed. As we had never laughed before.Till tears ran down our cheeks. I knew I was hysterical. She seemed exhausted.

Later, I made sure she was sound asleep, before gently covering her with a blanket, and setting out for a walk.

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It was close to midnight, and the streets were deserted. All was quiet at that late winter hour, save for the watchman’s occasional whistle. A thick fog seemed suspended in the air, enclosing, and isolating the rare life-forms that had dared to venture out.

Hands buried deep inside my pockets, I turned up the collar of my parka to shield myself against the bitter cold, and began an aimless meandering, ruminating over the subject that had been plaguing my mind, for what seemed ages. I could not believe that it had all begun just this morning!

As a stray dog howled somewhere, my fingers involuntarily reached out for the letter lying safely cocooned within the recesses of my pocket.

“My dear Chitra,” it began, “I have not been able to forgive myself till now…”

I had read it so many times since receiving it that afternoon, that the words were nearly ringing in my ears.

"…Though we were both to blame for what happened, I should have stayed back to see you through the painful procedure, instead of running away like a coward…"

The words continued to shatter the quiet stillness of my mind.

"…When is Akshay returning? I know I should not risk sending this, but I am being selfish again…"

The visibility was almost nil, but I didn't need any light, to read what was almost etched in my memory.

"…and so", it ended, "if I don't hear from you this time, I promise to never ever bother you again. And believe me, it is a gentleman's promise *this* time…"

What did the stress on "*this*" mean? Had this other guy made an earlier promise but not fulfilled it? Could only one partner ever be responsible for a situation like that? Had Chitra been unfaithful in a conscious, cold-blooded manner?

I could not bear to raise any more unanswered questions; nor decide whether there was any need to get them answered anymore?

Wasn't it too late for that? For everything? I suddenly felt a strong urge to smoke.

Rapid strides took me to a nearby kiosk still open, where I lit a cigarette; and arriving at a spontaneous decision, suddenly consigned the tormenting words on that paper to the flames of the matches.

No, I shook my head, muttering to myself… Chitra wasn't going to suffer anymore… for as long as she lived…

However long that was. I decided to save the last benefit of doubt. For myself.

T H E U N F I N I S H E D S A G A

A Love Story

By

Reshma

A shiver ran down my spine as I thought of the evening ahead. My nerves were over-wrought, I was flicking the menu without anything making sense, I'd looked at my watch an endless number of times, and I'd just lit my sixth Marlboro. I was nervous. These were turning out to be the longest fifteen minutes of my life. A waiter materialized as soon as I replaced the menu, and if my behavior surprised him, his training prevented him from revealing it. My blank look prompted a one-sided discussion on aperitifs, and he certainly looked relieved when I settled for a dry martini.

She'd said eight, and it was still only ten-to, but rather than pace restlessly in my penthouse, I'd chosen to be amongst people. And therefore shown up a full half-hour earlier. The drink, when it arrived, helped, and as I allowed the soft strains of music to take over and penetrate my being, I found myself relaxing a little. And it was in this partly euphoric state that I spotted her at the entrance.

She hadn’t changed at all – there was no mistaking the statuesque figure – the same proud carriage, head held high, chin up – she might have been conducting a demo at some finishing school. My heart did a quick somersault at the nostalgic sight, and threatened to leap right out. I rose jerkily.

How did one greet someone after all of twenty-six years, I wondered, as she reached me in measured strides. I made a tentative move to offer my hand, changed my mind, and stood there variously shaping my lips without producing any sound. All those carefully rehearsed opening lines deserted me as I shuffled on my two left feet.

“Time seems to have treated you well!” She eased my discomfiture with an understanding smile. No, even I hadn’t changed at all, and least of all, in my responses towards her. I may have traversed from a gauche teenager to a questionably mature 48-year old, but she still retained the ability to tie me up in knots; and hold all the threads.

I returned a wan smile. “But as always, time saved its best for you! You look absolutely wonderful!”

And I wasn’t exaggerating. In fact, I couldn’t help feeling a trifle disappointed. Her appearance had somehow upset me. I hated to acknowledge it, but deep within me had been lurking a hope that she too would have been unable to find happiness without me. But her serenity, her radiant, dignified demeanor threw me completely off gear. I aborted any ideas I might have entertained of raking up the past, or at least posing as the poor-old-martyr. Even though it was true, why hold her to an emotional ransom when she seemed to be doing so well in life. Going through the motions of ordering drinks and dinner and keeping up a polite conversation wasn’t easy, but I did it. Both her children, it turned out, were long settled, and it was for her elder daughter, who had recently delivered a baby boy, that she was visiting New York. The irony of fate… if only her parents had shared her broad-mindedness about marrying their daughter to an immigrant… if only…

Something snapped inside me. Something fragile that I’d held on to…

for so long… and I felt the same sense of loss as when I had first boarded that plane, more than a quarter of a century ago. Scenes swam before me… scenes typical of those times… when elopements were taboo, and arranged marriages the order of the day. Foreign lands were distant, mysterious entities, beset with too many unknown factors for "well-bred, homely" girls…

"Hello Jayant, this is Neelima! Remember me? I am visiting your city. Want to meet me at Florentine's on Friday night at eight? I'll be waiting."

Not remember her! I must have played back that precise message on my answering machine dozens of times… Her voice had jolted me right out of my comfortable existence, to take me back to another lifetime. Almost.

"Huh, did you say something?" I suddenly returned to the present. "Snap out of it man, I say!"

Her voice broke my reverie. Was I really so transparent? At twenty-two, when I had left India for this land of opportunities, a penniless young man, I hadn't blamed Neelima's parents for keeping her back. After all, what I was offering them were dreams, mere dreams; and I had always been such a poor salesman. My hopes were finally dashed when I learnt of her marriage to an army-man, and from then on I'd left her alone, never attempting to unearth anything more about her.

"I'm really very happy for you." I did manage to snap out of it completely, and finally heaved a sigh of immense relief – as if a heavy load had just lifted itself off. All these years, spent, proving myself to the whole world, but most of all, to her, to them – that I was worth it after all… too busy to enter matrimony… waiting… somehow, to discover her remorse when she finally met the suave, successful person that I had turned into… All that, and so much else was washed away, as I stood up, feeling cleansed and light-headed, and shook her hand. There was sincerity and genuineness, as I wished her all the best in life, before finally parting… once again.

* * *

“Dear Jayant, God knows I have no right to come marching back into your life like this – and I wouldn’t, in fact, have even met you, if fate hadn’t intervened in a most opportune manner. But when my daughter’s friends mentioned you, I couldn’t resist the temptation. Calling up during working hours was intentional; I knew you wouldn’t be there and therefore wanted to give you the choice of ignoring my message without any embarrassment.

I would have left you alone if you hadn’t shown up. But then you did. And what had begun out of sheer curiosity gave way to something much deeper once we met, and I realized that you had never married. The evening was spent in banalities, when there was so much more to exchange. If this is destiny giving us one more chance, I do not want to thwart it this time.

Too long have I lived with facades, but not any more. Captain Samant and I realized soon after marriage, what a gigantic mistake it had been. Two nice, but completely incompatible souls trapped together. Till heaven do us part? But I was only twenty, and optimistic, and both children followed in quick succession, supposedly to bolster the relationship. Add to that, the uncertainty of war, the long intervening years of separation, and the hope was kept alive.

But the tumultuous journey from Captain to Colonel was just what it was – a charade to maintain appearances. It was only when Parul got married and Rishabh, too, moved off, having joined the Army, that the masks came crumbling down and I began to experience a severe vacuum. Societal pressures kept me from walking out of that hollow institution, till my grandson provided a temporary respite. And these past eight weeks have brought home to me what I’ve been missing without realizing it – the peace, the quiet, the feeling of being free… incomplete, yes, but nevertheless, free… I know I could never return to him now – knew it, even before I met you, so have no qualms about that.

But now… I’m wondering… could two incomplete beings attempt once again? After all, what more is there to lose? Waiting… Neelima” I folded the letter with trembling fingers, swallowed the lump in my

throat, and reached for the phone.e.