

Hope

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Never a poet, I opened my account yesterday. When I look through my apartment window, it's a heap of rubbles beneath. Weeks before, there was a grassy patch there, with sprinkles of wild flowers. They're gone, now that a parking lot is coming up. Well no – today I saw some red and green shoots, sprouting up from a corner.

And that stirred up the unthinkable in me – I penned down my poetic tribute 'Hope'.

The first person I wanted to confide to was my poetry guru, Sumeet. Till the other day we would sit in the coffee house and discuss all hues of poetry, from Pablo Neruda to Joy Goswami over cuppas. Our housemaid, Radha, as usual, was cursing the sparrows while cleaning up the twigs and straws accumulated by them on the window sill. Signaling her to tone down, I dialed my pal.

"Hello Sumeet, I wrote a poem at last!" I triumphantly announced.

"Wow – I knew you'd finally make it!" He said, in cheerless monotone.

"In case you're interested –" I eyed my masterpiece sheepishly.

"Well, I'll call back later," he mumbled. "Have to rush to the office now."

"S-o-o soon?"

"Yeah – this bloody recession, you know! The company is downsizing and you're never sure about your ass." He sounded despondent.

Good bye hope – at least for now.

Still buoyant, I dialed my sister Rinku, my ardent fan until her marriage.

"Hello sis, what's up?" I started cautiously.

"N-nothing. Just fine."

"What's that? Were you crying?"

"N-no, what made you think so?"

"Come on, Rinki!" I pointedly asked, "Did he... beat you up again?"

"*Beat you up again!*" She mocked, "Need I repeat? Dead drunk, as usual."

"May I come and –" I was fuming.

"You may not!" She interrupted. "You've done your bit – have secured a prosperous groom for your sister. The rest is her destiny."

"But can't I –"

"Help? Sure – Keep mum! Let dad and mom have no inkling," she snapped and hung up.

So my 'hope' had another rebuff! God – is it so impossible to convey the message of the sprouts – that life is not a lost cause and there's light at the end of tunnel?

Well – how could I have forgotten Priya, my sweetheart! Never mind she’s not a poetry buff, my words would for sure find a reverberation in her sensitive heart.

“Hi darling, couldn’t see you for some time – how’re things?” I asked. I could hardly wait to hear her cherished voice, after eons it seemed.

“Fine.” She was rather circumspect in her reply, “What’s new?”

“Wrote a poem on hope – want to hear?” I blurted it all in one go.

“Great – but will hear it in person, when I call on you tomorrow evening.”

“Coming tomorrow?” I could hardly suppress my excitement.

“Yeah, to invite you. I’m marrying my boss.”

“Don’t say! He’s thirty years older than you are!”

“Yeah – but rich and understanding. I always fought shy of telling you I’ve a brother in asylum and a senile mother, both my dependents. He’ll now take care of that.”

“Can’t do it to me!” I wailed.

“True, dear – I can’t kill a sensitive and creative soul that’s you with my albatross. Well, looking forward to meeting you and listening to your poetry tomorrow. Bye.”

Time froze. When I came back to myself, I found the piece of paper, my ‘hope’, soggy with briny drops. I lifted it affectionately, shredded it into pieces and consigned it into the waste paper basket.

It’s morning. I woke up amidst chirping. The sparrow couple is busy filling the window sill with shreds of my ‘hope’ – in their untiring quest to build a nest.