

CHAPTER-9

A TALE TO TELL

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INTRODUCTION

It all started coming into our mind when we were meant to stay in a room bickering about what to do next and imagining questions like why dad is in all the time? Why Girja and Kanta Bai was not coming to do chores? Why our houses were being stocked? Etc. It was an altogether awkward and stressful situation and nobody had answers to these endless questions. Shopping, dining, traveling etc. all went flying out of the window when nature took its toll and going out even for daily needs felt like getting ready for war. Masks, sanitizers, tissues became the count of necessities and substituted so called luxurious supplies. Suddenly, the whole world became a severe patient of OCD and the supreme authorities stopped working calling it an emergency. I too was doing cleaning, scrubbing, moping, washing and sanitizing every nook and corner of our house as “Meko bil kul riks ni lene ka hain”.

Dealing this chaotic situation was a slow and steady process of analyzing, prioritizing and accepting the harsh reality. The beginning of these days felt like

'Hakuna Matata': No more assignments and lab duties, not looking after my tiny pets (cancer cells) and the best part was there was no exam notification. Now, the versatile chemistry lab, called Kitchen was my work place. Our life-saving instant food packs were sitting in the shelves; resting and watching us perform experiments with vegetables and sauces. Every day, new recipes were explored with a tint of innovation and the traditional recipes were elevated with modern touch. Our long lost talents like gardening, sketching, stone art resurfaced and new hobbies such as cooking, blogging contributed to the most beautiful moments and quality time of my life. Now, we are living a life that our ancestors lived, except that we've adjusted it in our favor. After all, comfort is human beings' first necessity.

But, gradually, this Jumanji phase also jaundiced us with procrastination, placid life-style and made us couch potato. The disciplines of 9 to 5 rush in office gear replaced with electronic functioning in the carefree Pyjama. 10 years ago, while studying in high

school, there was a chapter in English literature entitled 'The Fun They Had' which discussed the story of e-learning in the year 2020. The irony of situation is that this is 2020 and my brother is continuing his education virtually. *In-silico* platform has turned out to a new hub of information, opportunities and a stage to organize multi- facet events.

It has provided me a chance to attend numerous national as well as international conferences, webinars and insighted me to learn new languages, skills & techniques. This lockdown phase delivered me an elbow room for the preparation of scholarly examinations and further shaping my future. The most comic and remarkable memory formed during this pandemic was our birthday celebration where we three siblings turned 15, 20 and 25 years old. Reminiscing golden moments of our childhood, when our birthdays were celebrated in a similar manner with homemade cakes, delicious delicacies, balloons, fairy tale lightings, singing, dancing with our loved ones.

Before this, we never understood the urgency of missed calls or an unanswered message meant nothing of concern in front of our work, but maybe now, after things get back to normal every hug, kiss, smile, and phone call will mean more to us. Every time we ignore a call we will think twice: 'What if it's the last time I may be talking?' Hilarious isn't it? Unstoppable are now stoppable against their will.

We never pressed for breaks even when there were terrorist attacks and Tsunami but today we all are stopped and are at a standstill as if time has stopped. When the government waved their wand and spoke the magic word 'lockdown' and everything came to a standstill and frozen to its spot. This pandemic has taught me something that we all knew and posted in our Face book, Instagram, Whatsapp status etc. i.e., "nothing is permanent". Was this saying so difficult to be understood that it took an epidemic of such dimensions to make us understand it? People were posting pictures of clean air in Mumbai and Delhi but still we don't understand it's us who destroyed nature

and now we are receiving the consequences like a boomerang. We destroyed forests to build concrete jungles, now those jungles look empty, lifeless, and dystopian.

At this stage of catharsis, I realized that we all were prisoners of our past actions, criminals who have wronged all those innocent living beings walking on all fours or even those who once flew free in the sky but at the end became dead because of human greed. Now the tables have turned. Humans, who monopolized freedom at the cost of other creatures' freedom are bound against their will in their houses with fear of death looming over and all other creatures are moving around, free of any fear. They don't know why their butchers are so scared; little do they understand that we humans are very selfish creatures. They think why they are still alive, usually by this time they would be marinated and roasted for somebody's meal.

It's kind of funny that we the social animals who has achieved mountain heights in all spheres, is now envious of the freedom these innocent creatures

enjoy. The same brown liquid (alcohol) producing factory which once manufactured the reason for divorce, family destruction and violence is now manufacturing the only available remedy (sanitizers) to save our families and mankind. It is said history repeats itself again and again. This is a great example—1720 (Plague of Marseille), 1820 (Cholera Pandemic), 1920 (Spanish Flu), and now 2020! Will this race who has a masterpiece called brain understand from their mistakes or will we continue to live in our own little bubble where everything is okay?

Yes, I am the generation who underwent COVID-19, suffered quarantine, travelled the journey from vacation to vaccination and came out pretty much matured.