



STORIES WITH EVIL CHARACTERS

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Stories with Evil Characters

Suchitra is writing a story. Sitting in her room with doors closed, creating a world of her own, she is getting ready to write a story. A sheet of paper that she pulled out in haste from her Social Science notebook lies in front of her with a sentence, "Mother is an evil character". Writing the first sentence was easy for her. In fact all her stories begin by portraying somebody as an evil character.

That first sentence, for her, flows out from the tip of her pencil to be imprinted between the blue lines of her notebook. It is done with the ease of a little bird landing on the window-sill, tucking its feathers closer to itself and turning its head to look straight at her. Now, what is the next sentence? It is here that Suchitra is in real trouble. It is easy to imagine somebody as an evil character, but it has to be authenticated with valid evidences. It should be given a halo of truth, capable of standing on its own legs. Not enough being just a sentence, it should stand tall in the arena of literature and above all, the story starting with that sentence should immortalize its creator.

Her previous story began with the sentence "father is an evil character". She cried for long after writing those words. 'How painful is writing' she realized. When she stepped out of her room with swollen eyes her mother queried.

"Why is your face swollen up?"

She had written only one sentence but those words pained her. Yet she could not keep away from telling the truth that "Father is an evil character".

I stop writing. A sheet of paper that is half-written lies on the table, in front of me. I write in tiny letters because my story is about a ten-year-old writing a story. My letters should be small and soft like her. She is in front of me; no, not in front of me but in my mind. After writing seven stories based on evil characters she is writing the eighth one.

The first story was about a butcher. She met this character when she accompanied her father to the market. He smiled at her as he was cutting the meat with a big knife. She did not like his coy looks. How nice it would be if he chops his fingers off along with the meat, while glaring at me, she wished.

Neither what she hoped for happened nor was he perturbed while doing this heinous act. She turned away to free herself from his fixed glare. It was then that she noticed severed head of a goat hanging on a hook. Suddenly she felt dizzy.

With this incident she stopped eating non-vegetarian food. On reaching home she closed and bolted the door of her room and cried for a long time agonizing for the dead goat. When those helpless pair of eyes kept flashing in her mind she pulled out a sheet of paper from her Social Science notebook, took her pencil and wrote, yes, that very sentence... The butcher is an evil character. On realizing that her sentence was not as powerful as she wanted it to be, she added, "yes, really an evil character."

The magnitude and power of the word 'really' descended on her on that day. She completed her story within fifteen minutes. Paradoxical indeed, the story, like the sad end of the goat in front of the butcher, was put to an end by the Malayalam teacher herself or maybe it was a feat, inevitable in the history of literature. Anyway that inspired her to write more stories and it motivated her to keep her stories safely, away from the hands of the Malayalam butcher. The

story of the evil butcher was re-written. In the remake she portrayed the butcher's wife as a good character. She narrated how this lady saved an innocent goat from the sharp razors of her husband, at the risk of her own life. Female characters were generally good ones. Flawless, they fought valiantly and outlived the male characters. At that young age, Suchitra had not yet gone through the works of feminist writers like Sara Joseph or Gracy. Yet the same innate fervor that led these two writers made her also to write feminine stories. The fact that even the Malayalam teacher who killed her first story with the brutal nature of the butcher was not portrayed as an evil character is a fact to be made note of, in this context.

Her second journey in search of evil characters ended up one day, while returning from school. Saji was her class mate, true, her neighbor, friend, et al. But why did he call her "Fatty" in front of everyone. She was fat, it may be true; a phenomenon till unnoticed need not have been brought to the forefront of public attention by Saji. An unwanted provocation was indeed well braved. Throwing her school bag on to the floor, she pushed Saji on to the ground. Sitting on his stomach, she scratched his face. With a scarred face, she let him go off for introspection. As soon as she reached home, she closed the doors of the room, pulled out a page from her Social Science note book and wrote the sentence Saji is an evil character.

I stop once again. A question might arise, why is Suchitra pulling out pages only from her Social Science note book? Going ahead with the story without knowing this fact may be meaningless. A student of Standard V, she has 22 note books for various subjects. That included micro biology and quantum mechanics. Why is she not taking pages from these note books? The reason is simple; her Social Science teacher, Mini teacher, slim and soft spoken was a good character, the only one teacher out of the 15 who did not thrash her. Not only that, she is not going to find out waning of the Social Science note book or if the book itself disappears into a Black Hole. Suchitra made it sure that she writes a story about her sweet Mini teacher. But amidst evil characters where is the room for a sweet-natured teacher? Thus shoving this seed of thought along with various other unfulfilled aspirations deeper into her mind, unexpressed by words, she begins to write about Saji, the evil protagonist. While in a trauma to glide into the second sentence, after the easy first one, she heard a knock at the door. It was her mother who, as usual, interrupts while she was transcending the pains of creativity. Tucking the written sheet of paper under the bed she opens the door of the room.

'Haven't you changed yet? Tea is ready since long, what were you doing here?' Though the interrogation was a rude one it did give her some time for thought. And that respite altered the direction of the story. After tea, she continued to satiate the pangs of her creativity. Her first sentence 'Saji is an evil character' continued to implore her for a deconstruction, for a change for better. Instead it helped her to climb up from the base role of a creator to that of the lofty world of a critic. It led her to further troubles as she was transformed into both the convict and the judge at the same time. Passing through the first phase of her deconstruction, a realization dawned on her. Is there not an aspect of unjustified inaccuracy in my first sentence? Didn't Saji tell the truth?

At this juncture, she stealthily goes to the bedroom to stand in front of the full-size mirror fixed on the cupboard. Critically analyzing herself from her back and from the front, she stood looking at her figure in front of the mirror. Wait. Let me analyze my protagonist with my aging eyes. A little on the fatter side, true,

but only a cartoonist can call her a fatty. Her face exuded the grace of childishness, podgy fingers, and plump arms like that of a baby. She always had a child-like demeanor that attracts attention and love from others.

A ten-minute analysis was not in favor of the writer. Back in her room, she sat in front of the table, disconcerted. The first sentence pleaded for a change of letters. 'No, I will not correct it' she said vehemently to herself. 'Saji is indeed an evil character'. The anguish that was taking root while in front of the mirror outgrew in the form of cruelty towards Saji. Without any further rethinking she continued writing. The act of pounding on him and making scratches on his face was conveniently forgotten — such trivial acts, in your creative moments, usually plunge deep down into the whirlpool of oblivion, .

Later, many evil characters unfolded from the tip of her pencil. Due to fear of elaboration those stories are not described here.

'Father is an evil character.' This sentence became a stepping stone in her literary life. She cried for a long time. She fondly remembered the way her father used to pamper her. At times when her mother used to pet her younger brother, she used to look at it with envy. Those times it was none other than her father who used to give her, her due. He used to bring chocolates for her while returning from office and was a timely mediator to reduce the intensity of punishments given by mother for not finishing her homework. Even with all these positive thoughts about him, she had to write that father is An Evil Character.

Here the writer's interruption is inevitable. The context for portraying her most beloved father as an evil character has to be understood. For that, the layout of the place where it all happened has to be described. My protagonist may not be aware of the reality behind the superficial. Though she has been informed about this topic in many lessons in microbiology, Suchitra, the 10 year old is totally ignorant about the nuances of macro-biology.

Let us delve deeper. There are two cots in the bedroom. One is a double cot. It was here that she used to sleep with her mother and father. Where? No doubt, right in the middle. It was while leading this happy life with the top-of-the-world feeling, that the uninvited intruder, her younger brother was born. Things became topsy-turvy after that. One day when she reached home after school she saw a new cot placed close to the wall with a bed sheet full of cartoon characters spread over it. Father was always complaining of lack of sleep due to Nandu's wails and due to lack of space. Maybe he wants to move separately on to the new bed and have a good night's sleep. Nandu will also accompany him if he gives up on his own, his bad habit of suckling, she thought. In a spree of thoughts to create a world for women or to give prominence to women folk Suchitra hardly realized what was in store for her.

Her father lifted her and told her: 'From today, my little darling will be sleeping on this cot with a bed that has lot of cartoon characters of Mickey Mouse and Tom and Jerry. It will take you to the wonderland of dreams.' These words, he told her while he was swinging her around holding her high in his arms. But the reality in the message dropped her down. Who would want a Mickey Mouse at the expense of all other little delights, she pondered. While she was lying among the 'burnt cinders of her dreams' (I have put it in quotes because the little writer herself had used the term in one of her stories), she hadn't embarked on her literary career. Had she started writing earlier, father would have already tumbled down on to a sheet of paper as an evil character.

A year later, after getting accustomed to her new place of sleep and on realizing

the advantages of sleeping alone did this incident take place.

She wanted to give her story the title "Female harassment" at that instance. When she woke up suddenly from her sleep she heard the sound of her father and mother testing their might on each other. Her father was harming her mother, lying on top of her, the glimpse that she could catch in the dim light of the room. The thought of her pouncing on Saji came to her mind. Mother was crying softly lest she would wake up the children, she thought. Will father kill her mother? She was apprehensive and fearful. Closing her eyes tightly she tried hard to fall asleep. Slowly, the sounds diminished and she slid into a slumber.

Morning came, and on waking up she remembered the incident and went to look for her mother. Her mother was fixing breakfast as usual as if nothing had happened. She went close to her mother and looked if there were scars on her mother's face and finding none, concluded that may be father would not have been able to scratch her face as she did to Saji. Yet, consoling her mother was her duty, she thought, especially, as a representative from the world of women - the oppressed class. So she asked her mother. 'Father hurt you in the night, isn't it?'

'Father? Hurting?' her mother asked in return. Suchitra did not like the stance of Seelavathi, the mythological loyal wife, taken by her mother. 'Gone are the days of Seelavathi and Savithri. These are times of feminism and female writers she retorted in her mind.

'I saw father hurting you and you were crying softly without making any noise'

'So, where you awake then?' she asked with a smile on her face and her hands on her head.

'Oh, this mother!' Suchitra portrayed her mother in her story, as one who was inflicted with pain. Silently bearing with grace all harassments posed by her husband, the woman finally fight for her liberation. On getting the apt sentence Suchitra runs to the room. The one who was harassing her mother the whole night was in the drawing room reading newspaper pretending to be innocent. She pulls out a sheet from her notebook (yes from her Social Science notebook only), wrote the very first sentence 'Father is an evil character'. Quickly memories rushed to her mind and she started crying bitterly.

She had concealed all her stories under the bed, since she realized that protecting her creations from the eagle eyes of her mother was essential. She did it with the zeal and valiance of a nouveau writer who has started writing postmodern stories ardently defending his works. It was a routine to take census of all her works every day after returning from school. Four more stories will make it fit to be given to a post modern critic for a preface and then to get it published as an anthology, she decided. 'To climb up the ladder of success in the field of literature a lot of gimmicks have to be done, a lot of people have to be met'; these were her apprehensions. As she was dreaming of becoming a known literary figure, fate would have it that an incident that charred all her aspirations took place. All her dreams were burnt down to ashes. (The cliché 'charred aspirations' is not authored by my story writer).

Now let me play the role of a newspaper journalist. On packing her daughter off to school and her husband to office mother was trying to lull the suckled baby to sleep so that she could continue with her daily chores of washing and so on. Nandu with his stomach full, was ready to hit the sack, promptly assisted by his mother who was rolling her fingers on his head invoking the God of sleep. On pulling out the bed sheet of Suchitra for washing it, a sheet of paper fell down. Picking up the paper, she moved towards the window to read; if it was

something essential and to keep it safe. On top of the sheet was written, 'Female Harassment'. Anxiously she skimmed through the lines and was shocked to see the first sentence, 'Father is an evil character.' It forced her to read further, and the initial shock has ended with a smile and then to a laughter. She quickly decided to scan her fingers under the bed for further revelations. With a single story Suchitra became a permanent glory in the horizons of literature. The little writer's works came out one by one and smiled at her. After reading all the nine stories she was about to tear them off. But suddenly it occurred to her that she should make the 'evil character' read the story about him. So she folded them and kept it safe in her cupboard.

The tigress that returned from her prowl for raw materials for stories, realized that her cubs have been taken away. She ran to the kitchen screaming

'Where are my stories?'

The kidnapper had not beautified the cubs. She asked 'Oh that, are they stories?'

'Yes, where are they?'

'What type of stories are they?' Mother asked with a smile on her face. That question sounded silly like what kids are they to a mother.

'What all have you written. I tore them off.'

'Tore them?..... My stories?' Suchitra could not control her agony. The estrangement and insensitivity of the postmodern writers are confined to their stories alone. In personal life, they are full of emotions and senses like any other human being made of flesh and bones. Or else why mix up the creations and the personal life of the creator. Crying aloud she ran to her room bolted the door and lay down crying. She did not open the door even though her mother kept knocking at it repeatedly. After a while she got up, pulled a sheet of paper from her Social Science notebook and started writing under the banner 'Female butcher' and her very first sentence was naturally 'Mother is an evil character'.

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