

## REMINISCENCES

The clock chimes noontime as I enter into the deserted house in which I spent the most memorable days of my childhood. The abandoned Osmania University P-2 quarters hold, pent up within its ageing walls, my most cherished memories. The rooms have a thick coating of dust and I sneeze as the musty air tickles my nose. The sunbeams creep through the dull glass windows and illumine faintly the rooms.

I enter the hall and picture the big dining table that once occupied it. I see myself as a child of three years climbing on it to have tete a tete dinner with my grand father, the hallmark of childhood. He was a man of a huge stature, with an equally proportionate heart and a penchant for good food. He was always dressed in white and had a quite and compassionate look of majesty. He never refused me anything and I recollect him having got me a lamb and even rabbits when I happened to ask for them whimsically. I walk down the corridors into the open courtyard and recall the days I used to skip as a child and dance carefree under the shady trees. My new fancy for dancing intrigued my grandpa who, in order to encourage me, got a Bharatnatyam dress stitched for me. We visited the famous temple of Tanjavor and I posed like a professional dancer as the camera clicked away. I was then honoured with a shawl, which my grandpa draped around my shoulders, for my brilliant performance. This interest in dance evaporated the moment our trip came to an end.

I hear the birds twitter and take a deep breath of the fresh air. Weeds replace the hibiscus plants that once grew there and the once beautiful patio where we always celebrated Diwali is no more than a dump yard strewn with garbage and plastic bags.

I enter into my grandfather's room and look at the mouldy walls. I see an ugly gecko dart across the wall at my approach and I notice the crumbling plaster on the ceiling. This room was where I slept with my grandpa cradled in the nook of his arm, one leg across his big tummy and a hand reaching out to fondle his soft hair while I slumbered into sleep. This was the room in which I played as he watched on affectionately and even participated in my childish games to amuse me.

As time flew fast and I grew from a child to an adult – these early impressions of my life always remained with me. We met annually. When I had my vacations, and though the physical touch with him that I had shared as a child was no more, our emotional bondage was as strong as ever. Though unwell at that time, he used to give me a toothy smile and laugh, happy to see me again. His laughter and joy at seeing me are unforgettable memories. We used to spend the evenings sitting side by side and he used to watch me intently as I read out to him from a book. I knew he never followed what I read loud, but I did it nevertheless as it gave me a chance to be close to him. We never spoke much, but his mere presence and touch showed how much he cared. He was a man of few words but he had a great impact on my life.

A child crying outside stops my reverie and I look again through all the rooms, as if to etch the memories they carry into my mind. I wander back through the hall and finally step out into the open sunshine. The cool breeze refreshes me and I head homeward leaving behind a deserted house robbed of all its memories. I leave with all the memories to cherish them at leisure.

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