

Shoes

I have lived with some futile stories
told by the characters from a fiction.

Stories

of a pair of shoes

my grandfather wore

producing awe-inspiring noise

like the thunderbolts.

He was a gentleman.

My maternal grandfather, the royal male.

He was a government officer

honest to the core

pleased his bosses ,the Britishers,

and pleased his wife, the

Mem Sahab, wearing full-sleeved blouses,

imported raw-silks, *kundan* jewelry

chewing betel and *supari*.

One day, grandfather was no more.

My granny long lived, her head held high,

telling us umpteenth times

the story of her husband's

shoes.

I grew up, the fourth girl in
the house of half a dozen girls;
I dared to ask her once
why wasn't he a freedom fighter? Why
wasn't *Bapu* his ideal? Why did he
wear imported suits instead of the *Khaddar*?
That would have
held our heads high.

"How dare you? How dare you?"

The story of the *shoes*, the royal pair of shoes
was dribbled into my ears in chorus
this time, to shut
my mouth, then and there.

Our grandpa
if not a deity, was certainly a
venerated ancestral spirit.

I was fed the story of shoes
again, once I was a teen.
My father's polished pitch-black
shoes. Then I looked for many other,

farther words and shoes
that travelled along the disillusioned roads.
Throughout the long, tropical days of Odisha
our father floated inside us
like an invidious, old god, obliging
our brains with luminous words,
clamming our brains with the
tapping noise of the shoes.

Time rolled on.
Another pair of shoes appeared
in my providence,
crushed the
flowers of my other kingdom
where I was supposedly an empress.
Shoes, this time, shabby, unpolished
though.

I stopped planning the pages
of my poetry books
got lost amidst the missing lines
till I forgot the art of breathing.

Then I thought I could

overcome

the echoing tap-tap of the shoes
and chose to be a single-parent
one fine morning.

Now there is a pair of small shoes
neat and tidy, my son's shoes.
No bangs or traps
clasp my intellect with these shoes.
In the midst of the chasm's yawn
is there still a newer
and better dawn?

But
who knew? The
noiseless clamor of the shoes
had entered my head
like the early sun of summer
filtering into our rooms!!
Now I keep myself busy
sipping cinnamon herbal tea
eating almonds, listening to music
reading things of my interest.

I have heard
the edge of the shoes had
vanished decades ago
when I first began writing in
English without a flaw.

Does memory spare you?
Do the futile tales by futile
characters stand by you?
Do androgyny and patriarchy
give you the space
to think otherwise?

The lispng, curious clatter of all those
shoes haunts me now
in my long summer days.

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