

Saligrama K. Aithal

Eastward Blows the Tempest

What can, after all, a President, Prime Minister, or a Government do, if the people of a Rama Rajya couldn't love their neighbors? Can anyone make the people love their neighbors?

Why talk about neighbors? Within the family in one Rama Rajya, --there is no proof to believe it is different elsewhere-- husbands and wives pull the rugs from under each other's feet, fight with one another and shake houses to their foundations, turn them into houses of wax—*lakshagriha*-- and set them on fire.

Pots and pans turn into weapons. Chairs and tables, too. Anything the hands could reach.

Sometimes the fight results in injuries and death—murder and suicide.

Children become helpless witnesses. They suffer the deepest wounds, as they don't know which side to take. Mostly, they take the side of their mothers, but their heart aches for their fathers' plight.

When little children become sacrificial goats, where is the hope?

One—husband or wife-- could leave the other and live separately in peace.

More easily said than done.

One or the other or both stand to lose—property, money, social status, and most of all the children.

To escape from her current conditions, Sujata was at a loss what to do in the one Rama Rajya.

Lay shattered her dream: a lovely penthouse with a large bedroom with a balcony in a tall multi-storied condominium in a big city overseeing the sea; the bedroom dimly lit by candles; a parrot in a cage; fish in a tank; flower plants in every corner; fragrance filling the air; a kind and handsome lover-- always humming like a honeybee, the body barely covered with minimal dress, inviting to fulfill all desire at a gentle gesture or a welcome look.

Suddenly, her imagination took a sharp turn. She removed from her thought a kind and loving man.

They looked all alike: vile and wicked.

Her heart was filled with rage and anger towards the whole race of men.

She gave her dream a twist on the timely advice of her innermost thoughts.

In place of the man of her dreams, she created a sexual abuser, predator, and a monster.

She looked for a suitable name.

A fictional name wouldn't serve her purpose.

It was then the #MeToo movement had reached Rama Rajya.

In setting provided by #MeToo, a real name and person struck her mind to use for maximum effect of her work.

It was time for revenge!

Politics secretly played a part in her search for a name.

Revenge against her former boss in a government post known across the land: Abhay Sarkar!

Her story became a quick hit with a protagonist with a name and a fame.

Who doesn't love a story defaming a man of repute?

Women similarly positioned and sharing the same political bias followed her with similar stories to smear the man's name and bring him down.

In a deft move, they killed two birds with one stone.

When the news reached Sujata's husband, he rushed to her, dying but not yet dead.

He a short pause and wondered if she should be left to face her fate. It proved to be a transitory thought.

Without a clue to Sujata's intentions or goals, he spoke with alarm, worried about the trouble the couple and their child have to face, "O, Sujata, did all this happen as you say it? It sounds to me like a story you spin. You have given free rein

to your imagination and political bias. In any case, how often do I have to tell you *na bruat satyam apriyam*, if what you said is the truth?"

"Leave me alone! I can take care of myself, you stupid!" Sujata said.

Ajmal, her husband said, "Don't I know it, Sujata?"

He quietly went into the kitchen and brought her dinner.

He prepared the bed and led her to it.

The two went to sleep together, and, in a short while, they were in a tight embrace.

Early in the morning, Ajmal brought her a cup of tea.

"You know I have found a way out of this mess," he said. "I suggest you must immediately let it be known that it was all a story, a work of imagination, fiction pure and simple. Hasn't Abhay himself accused you that it was a figment of your imagination? You announce that the resemblance to reality is accidental."

"In my view," Ajmal went on to say, "Sujata, you are not to blame. Unfortunately, sex is a blessing and a curse, inside the workplace or outside. You don't know how and where it makes its appearance. You recall how we became its prey. You cannot lay down strict rules for the said impulse. Anyway, everything in life is so for that matter. Mistakes can occur. Wrong assumptions could be made. Once the misconduct or whatever you call it occurs between adults, they may regret and even try to put the blame on the other. Both men and women must try to exercise care; if things go

wrong both of them have to take responsibility and blame the make-up, eye-brow threading, eye-lash extension, hairstyle, half-covered body, or the perfume, . The best thing is to stop one making accusations against the other. We go through so many traumas in life and we should make every attempt not to let them overpower us. We have to sail on.”

“How do I retract?” Sujata asked Ajmal, despairingly.

“Leave the matter to me,” Ajmal said.

The thought if Ajmal was making a scheme to ditch her crossed her mind, momentarily.

By then Ajmal had already left the bedroom and gone into his study. He had started making telephone calls and writing e-mails to smooth things out.



Saligrama K. Aithal has published five collections of short stories *Many in One*, *One in Many*, *Inside India*, *Overlapping Worlds*, and *Passage to More than India*. He has enough number of short stories for a sixth collection, and poems sufficient for a volume. His publications include a literary biography *Riyana: The Child Once Everyone was*, and a study of Toni Morrison's fiction *Toni Morrison Novelist*.

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