

Fragments of Memory in the Times of War: Dispatches from Unconscious by Ameen Fayaz

Dispatch 3

The beast slouched through the Wullar and civilized itself. Curtains were pulled down. Darkness spread throughout the Valley. The sun was completely eclipsed for a long time. Falcons lost their way and went far away from the center. I saw this all happening with my own naked eyes. I had no glasses then. But life moved on though with difficulty. I had then heard of the beast but never saw it. People even changed their beliefs. You know that was the time of unreason and unbelief. If you have doubts about what I am saying ask the Jhelim or the Wullar or the forests around. There are ample evidences of what the one eyed beast did. I had not done *The Second Coming* of W B Yeats then .But other traditions, our own traditions on the story of that beast, I had heard about. I slept a long slumber expecting that the harm could be kept away. I saw the shadows following me day and night but being myself a shadow and an illusion I never allowed them to have a reason against me though once I had a close shave had Allah himself not saved us. You know I could have developed a very good friendship with you had you too opened up to the question like the morning which gradually allows the sun to enlighten the whole universe. What is morning without the sun? What is the sun without morning? How long shall the darkness prevail and when shall the beast surrender before the Last Man? Have you heard of that big tree called Chinar which does not allow grass to grow under its big branches? What shall the people do if they want to grow vegetables on the patch of land turned barren by the branches of the Chinar? Simple. Either to keep it and have no vegetable or to cut it and have vegetables. But this is not the time of logic and reason. Reason has changed its dynamics. It has been replaced by the unreason. Do you find any scope for the wisdom of old people in a land that now allows young men to roam about streets barren, desolate and frustrated? I wish you could have come with me for a tour in that ghetto where words do not have any meaning but misdeeds and foul play have. The most dangerous of all the slums and ghettos is the ghetto of human mind. I have it. So has everybody. It is in this very ghetto that the beast mentioned above actually is born. Hell is born there and heaven is born there. It works faster than the virus you talk about these days with these computer science guys of our age. Once the software of this ghetto is infected, it travels faster than light and corrupts the memory of people anywhere and anytime. I had long tried to disinfect the ghetto of my mind by some disinfectants I had read and heard about. But it is still there. I tried forgetfulness and unlearning also in the mountains. But it is still there. The problem with the Beast was that his mental ghetto could not stop the virus and it went viral wherever he went and it spread disaster and left everybody high and dry by his effectiveness and skill. Bulls would chase me away in my dreams during the times of the beast. Sometimes I just would wake up in the night with sweat beads rolling down my

face because of the dream and I would hear my father eavesdropping that it was better to be home than to mix with the people as that was the time of shadows. Everybody had this element of fear and still have. The beast would get news and views about everybody and his decisions would be harsher if one did not surrender or change immediately. Chop, chop and chop over a shop in the market! Sweet Jhelim runs softly till I end my acts of chopping. The message would go like this. A buthcher had been invited specially for this purpose. The fish in the Jhelim were very happy that night. They got around 120 kgs of human flesh and hot blood to drink. I heard these whispers long after. Do you hear me or not? The language in the times of war used for communication is either through gestures or whispers. Talk one cannot. Speech is completely forbidden. Hear the whispers and see what happened all around. The whispers are still in the air. The beast once decreed that special arrangements for complete darkness be made and any sign of light be eradicated. His bidding was done that night. The candle bearers at many places were simply eradicated. This is not the time of light. I told the Jhelim once that the beast should not be allowed to drink water. It said, no. A big NO. Perhaps the Jhelim too was scared. It had seen enough of bloodshed done by the beast on its banks. I had of late fallen in love with the moon and the sun envied me. It drove me crazy with every passing day never allowing my soul rest and peace. Love is such an enriching thing after all. I was never afraid of the beast. I knew that the only thing it can do to me is to kill me but I would never allow it to change my conviction and dedication to the cause of my love. Who knew what would happen? Whether the beast would be consumed by the love or the love would be consumed by the beast? One had no knowledge. God alone is Omniscient and all powerful. “Had Allah not replaced one class of people by another, the world would have been full of lawlessness and anarchy?” I see this view of history coming true always. Don't you see that fire of candle having darkness underneath? I have promised you full details of what the beast did to air, soil, water and fire. Come someday over a cup of tea and write page after page .We poets do not explain the things; we only throw hints and make suggestion. If you are intelligent enough, collect the details and see HOW YOU HAVE MISSED THE STORY ALREADY?

Ameen Fayaz is a teacher in English with the University of Kashmir, India.

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