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THE
DWELLER





Notion Press

Old No. 38, New No. 6
McNichols Road, Chetpet
Chennai - 600 031

First Published by Notion Press 2019
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ISBN 978-1-64678-566-7

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CHAPTER 1



There are people in this world with the ability to control other people and their karma. Geniuses who have the power to lead other people. Leaders that decide the future for other people. Teachers who help people to decide for themselves. Lawyers who decide on behalf of their client. Managers who resolve the matters that pertain people working under them. The captain who orders his crew. The director who captains his cast. The surgeon under whose hands lies the patient. Doers with power to position themselves to decide, ploy and influence others. Working to fulfill the pleasures of others and indirectly theirs. All of them bound by their profession to perform their best and not falter. Not to take advantage of their position at the cost of their clients, for in their client's wellbeing lies their success.

But this is not a story about one of such people. This is a story about one person who places himself in such a

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situation that he can read minds and influence them, and unlike other psychiatrists, he does not do it as it is his profession... but it is his life. Thoughts of others are his hunting ground and you are the game!

Prabhat Narayan Rai was a normal built, dark skinned person with a middle-class family background. He had dark hair which was so well set that they would appear lifeless. His eyes were black, and nose pointed on which rested his almost square glasses with a black frame. He was a person who you would not notice in a crowd. Nor would you notice him if he were standing next to you. His features were so common to make him almost undistinguishable. Almost till the time he would smile. He had the most innocent, unpretentious smile that you would have ever seen. And what mostly would catch anyone's attention was the way his white teeth would contrast with this somber skin. You would not but draw an analogy to thriving life in a vast barren desert. It was perhaps his most valuable physical asset that would be noticed by a stranger. But the best part of it was that it was not worn out. It would not appear without reason. It was not as if he would do it to please others, as he knew that it did not attract people's attention. So, would you think!

But that was not how one would recognize Mr. Prabhat Narayan Rai. Infact with the above description one would never be able to make an acquaintance with Mr. Rai. For Mr. Rai was dynamic. Dynamic in his looks.

Ever-changing. He loved to change his get up with time. Sometimes a week, a fortnight, a month or even a day. He would change his eye-colour, tilt his nose, change his glasses, and undo his hair.... all except his skin colour and his smile. As to why he would not do the latter two it was obvious and why did he do the others you would gradually know.

Mr. Rai may have been from a middle-class background, but he was highly educated. He would believe that-

If one were to follow a path,

Let that path be made by oneself.

He was not an easy child. Easy not because he was dull or weak, but because he was a demanding idealist. He was a booklover, and not only did he enjoy reading books, but he enjoyed inculcating what they preached in his life. He was clever. Clever than any student in his class. So clever that he would not need to be attentive in class. The professors had a tough time keeping him interested in their words of wisdom. He would instead start drawing caricatures. Sometimes of himself, his teachers, friends and at times of characters from his school books. He was not interested in drawing already well-known cartoons. He preferred to draw his own world and in doing so he would be often observing them standing on his desk. It somehow made him see features extraordinaire, in a person from up there than you would see from normal altitude. Kind of what you would imagine if you would

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be trying to understand on what is going on in the mind of tiny tots playing on the ground.

This eventually led to him being a lonely soul even in a crowd. He did not connect with people. He would understand their point of view, but others did not seem to match his wavelength. That gradually turned him into an introvert. It would be difficult to enumerate on the many things he lost or failed to obtain due to this behaviour of his. But then there are people who achieve with the co-operation and blessings of others and there are some who achieve against the expectations and willingness of others; the latter is more difficult to be appreciated as he had achieved what you would have too, but in a way that you would have never thought possible.

‘Many times, I envy the person who gets his ambitions fulfilled. Ambitions very similar to mine, but I dare not venture on that path for the fear of dealing with obstacles; all alone with no one to fall unto prevents me.’ Perhaps the aloofness, if you may call that, helps fulfill goals and does not jumble the mind with the advices and well-wishes of people around.

He followed his schooling with a graduation from arts stream. He took that line because he knew that he would be reading the type of books he would not have read, if he had chosen any other stream. Mr. Rai was always a vivid reader. But he never had any favorites. He usually liked to read whatever he laid his hands on. That way he would come to know about subjects which he would never have known if he had made a choice of what he was

to read. When you are alert and something hits you, it may hit hard; but when something hits you unaware it hits you even harder. When watching a good movie, you have learnt about, you know that the movie will make a good impression on you; but when you watch something by chance and it turns out to be good, then it lingers in your mind for a longer time than the former.

However, within this framework, Mr. Rai had a choice. He was not found of books that dealt with science of medicine, laws of constitution, nature, books on bookkeeping, economies of the market, etc. He was interested in the human mind. Its evolution; its functions; what motivates it and what does not; the way it develops; the memory and how it recollects. Whatever he missed out, he found in his relationship with his books. He would read, study and observe people and test them with his knowledge. He would try to draw up a picture of what the person would be as a child. Lists the person's likes and dislikes; study his walk, posture and handwriting; the handshake the clothing the laughter, the smile, the movement of hands, the speech voice pattern, expressions; all helped him give a face to the character he was studying. He would stimulate the rage within a person and try to calm him. He would record the responses different people would give to his questions. Study of the zodiac signs and their influence on the person was what helped him in his endeavour. He even took to meditation, which on some sub-conscious level would dawn ideas on him as to how he could master his art.

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Palmistry and astronomy became his interesting subjects. He would read about them at length and apply his knowledge to his small acquaintances. Smart enough never to shower his entire intelligence on one person or anyone at a length; for he knew that there was a lot to learn before he could deliver his masterpiece.

CHAPTER 2



After graduation, Mr. Rai went on to do his Ph.D. with motivation as his field of research. By that time, he had only his father to look out for. His mother had expired during his graduation years. His mother had never understood his line of study due to her lack of education. His father, Mr. Rai senior was a very busy man. He intended to make a lot of money; not to enjoy the pleasure of life but to repay his debts which he had borrowed and lost in the stock market. He had often tried to explain the financial situation to Prabhat, but Prabhat had always turned a deaf ear to him. He did not understand the importance of saving; rather he was not interested in learning how long it was before he would be homeless; although it was not put to him so bluntly. His father did try hard to clear his debts, but the amount was too huge for him to square off in his remaining lifetime.

Finally, the toll took him.

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Though, Prabhat was working as a tutor, his earnings were not enough to pay his father's debts. The interest on the sum had become as much as a burden as the principal. The landlord who was also the moneylender would not just be satisfied with receiving his apartment back. He wanted a substantial sum of his money back. Mr. Rai knew that it would take half his lifetime if he had to pay back. He was willing to let go off the house, but he was not willing to enter the debt trap alike his father. All negotiations with the landlord would end in only one direction.

Mr. Sahih, the landlord, had as one of his tenants a Mr. Govindan who happened to be connected with the Bombay underworld. Mr. Sahih wanted his flat occupied by Mr. Govindan back as he was being threatened by a rival gang which was instrumental in lending money to him; he in turn lent to people like Mr. Rai senior. Mr. Sahih was in a tight spot and he knew that the only way Govindan would vacate his apartment was if he did not live in it or out of it. Sahih was ready to supply any ammunition for the job if needed and he was willing to forgive the debt in addition to rewarding Mr. Rai with a handsome sum.

Life can be quite an experience, especially if you are willing to flow along with it. People plan and pursue their path and at times they are so focused on their goals that they tend to miss some of the greatest opportunities that come by. Unaware of where they would have been if

only, they had not been so rigid and so against exploring themselves and other avenues. And those who were daring enough to be different, at times, wonder how effortlessly things have fallen into right places, cannot do much but express surprise at their fortune and be grateful for the same.

Life is change and change is what makes it so interesting. People who do not change ever do get to experience the excitement they have been missing in their monotonous life. Options at crossroads require a decision and some of the options lead to a yet unexplored path. And it is the fear of the unexpected and the fear of failure that prevents us from making that choice. With a lifetime debt on one hand and a gun in the other Mr. Rai was made to choose. The former would give him no freedom to express his knowledge. The latter may give him time to do so, but he was not sure if he wanted to do it. If he would be comfortable with it, knowing particularly well that it was never what he ever wanted to be or what he would be proud of. Out of the two, the latter would be a change, experimental, whereas the other would be a safer path. But surely there would be some unnoticed avenue, a small lane, which could not have been seen in the circumstances, which appear to have taken place a bit too fast for you to decipher with a clear mind.

He said he would do it but needed time for preparation. Mr. Sahih agreed.

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Mr. Rai vacated his house and started staying in a lodge. He started to grow stubble; changed to middle parting of his hair; started wearing glasses although his sight was perfect. He also bought a few books on medicine and began studying them. He began practicing shooting. He was no good. He could only get the target from a point-blank range. All his shots could not even touch the target chart. But he enjoyed it – the power of the gun. The feeling of firing it, loading it and setting it free again. He enjoyed the dominance; when something in his control and would blow or subside at his will. Through the books on medicine, he began enumerating other ways of accomplishing his task without the use of the gun. And most important of all he started devising his plan. He looked at the options he had and tried to figure out how and what the reactions would be in each choice. It was a difficult process. Until now Mr. Rai had experimented with the reactions of people and had been mostly successful; but those were times where there was nothing at stake. Alas! This was not one of those times. Now he could not falter in his art; for if he did, it would lead to dire consequences for which he was not prepared. It was a game where he had to foresee his opponent's moves. Like in chess, he had to be the grandmaster. For each move of his he had to check out the options available to this contender and if any of the options would lead to a checkmate sort of a situation, from where there would absolutely be no hope for recovery. With one plan in his mind and seven ways to execute it, he thought he was ready for the kill.

One morning he went to Mr. Sahih and told him he would be through with his task by next day, when he would be collecting his dough. Mr. Sahih agreed to keep it ready by that night.

Mr. Rai had been keeping an eye on the timings during which Govindan would be at home. Govindan was a huge man with a big belly and an equally big face. He had an imposing figure. Mr. Rai arrived at 2040 hours at Govindan's house. Since Govindan recollected him as one of his former neighbourhood members, he was welcomed to his house. Mr. Rai had heard a lot about Govindan and knew well about his short temper. He told him about his purpose of meeting him and everything, up to the intentions of Mr. Sahih; even revealing the gun and handing it over to Govindan. After two hours of talk amidst the dinner, he had infuriated Govindan just enough so that the rage within his mind would conceal his power of reasoning. He had placed his right pawn. The placement was just right. Mr. Rai had been successful in clouding the thoughts of Govindan so that all that he could think of was setting the records straight with Mr. Sahih or rather setting Mr. Sahih straight.

Govindan did have men at his disposal. Men who provided him security and did other chores as per his orders. But when someone has become so bold to challenge Govindan, then Govindan would rather give him the reply himself, than send one of his men. He took his gun and made a move alone towards Mr. Sahih's house

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along with Mr. Rai. Once there, there was no time for questions or explanations. Everything was clear cut in Govindan's mind as explained by Mr. Rai. It was either Govindan's life or Mr. Sahih's existence. The moment both came face to face two shots were heard. One hit Mr. Sahih in his left arm and the other his chest. He stopped breathing within no time. Govindan stood there kicking the corpse and swearing at it, as Mr. Rai searched the room. In no time Mr. Rai left with a bag followed by Govindan.

The police closed the file concluding it to be one of the gangster encounters where the members of rival gang shot one of the other gangs.

CHAPTER 3



Some months had passed. Mr. Rai was now living at Nasik. Nasik was a happening place with the convergence of economics, religion and the Bombayite attitude. The climate would be a little cooler but that did not make it less thriving than Mumbai.

Mr. Rai found a rented room and helped himself with the money he had got. A lot of it remained unspent as his needs were quite simple. For a living he became a part time tutor. Part time because most of the time he spent in the study of his interest. His interest at times required him to make the rounds of his home city. He would do so carefree as he knew that though people might recollect a normal built young person as Mr. Rai; no one would imagine him to be an elderly gentleman with a walking stick and white hair accompanied by a long white beard.

Normally, such a person would not be recognized even in Nasik; for Nasik happened to be more accustomed

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crew cut haired, well shaven healthy-looking stud, who used to have a string around his neck to support his golden framed spectacles.

Here in Nasik, he met Dev. Dev was a domestic servant who worked in the houses in the vicinity. He was born, brought up and un-educated in Nasik. He was also Mr. Rai's helper. Dev came from a poor family background and was given up by his family as they could not cope up with his mental illness. Dev's IQ was tested to be much below the average and as a result of it he could not cope up with the demands and responsibilities of a normal person. He trailed his peers. But he lagged only in mental capabilities. Physically he was much more fit and healthy than his peers. They would ignite the fire within Dev and watch himself burn. This lack of emotional control and restraint and dependency on his parents made his parents give up hope for him and eventually him. His stubbornness and physical strength were too much for his family to handle.

Dev found solace in his domestic work away from his house, earning his simple living and speaking his mind. Speaking his mind and voicing his opinions, no matter how untrue and way off the mark they were; or how much they hurt the opposite person to whom they were addressed; for it did not bother him. In no way would that affect his livelihood as if it were not one house that he would be sweeping it would be another that he would be washing. This security had made him arrogant and

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