



TRANSLATION OF HINDI STORY OF BHAGWANDASS MORWAL “MUKTI”

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Year's last month and month's final day.

It isn't that in this season for the first-time winter was so harsh. It does, but at this time it was acute. More than half the month has passed in needle like piercing winter. Rather that time people had forgotten taste of sunshine and face of sun. In all the four directions amidst dense spread fog the faces were smeared as if it was drizzling in September. Although this pattern was continuing since last week but in spite of weather's worthlessness nobody had any complaint.

No one knew when they reached with Joshi ji in his colony. The two drummers who had beaten drums with full absorption at the time of Joshiji's farewell sat aside one by one.

When the secretary of Manoranjan Club, Hari Babu urged them to beat drum again then one of them enquired reassuringly, "Bau ji, there will be no excess with us?"

"What are you talking about, once said, it is said," Hari Babu said them reassuringly.

"Look Bau ji, we too have little ones." second drummer almost pleaded.

"Yaar, faith is something," Hari Babu was terse this time.

"OK Bau ji, if your say so..... come on yaar, stand up." Coaxing his colleague first one replied. After this both the drummers slung their drums on their neck and shoulder, twisting them and started beating drums thinking, if in luck they would earn extra labor or else will not lose what was fixed.

For a long time, a group of two dozen or so people accompanying Joshi ji kept on dancing on the music of the drums. In Joshiji's colony different types of dances stolen from folk dances were performed for long. Viewing fish dance of Srinivasan from balconies and especially youngsters, whose mothers must have been Mrs. Joshi's homely friends, bit their fingers. Srinivasan twisted his biceps in such a manner that faded rest of folk dance. In the mean time Hari Babu dragged Joshi ji in center of the circle, and then Joshi ji swayed his hips twice or thrice. Anyhow, in thick of body numbing cold most of them had sweat dropping on their forehead.

Wiping the sweat from their forehead all guests of Joshiji's reached his guest room. Pictures of Karl Marx to Munshi Prem Chand hung on the walls and in glass almirahs adjoining walls carrying mementoes and certificates presented by tell tale signs of Joshiji's creativeness and personality. Everyone praised Joshi ji lavishly.

Meanwhile with pride Joshi ji introduced them to his personality along with his creations and told them which award he received on particular work from vice president. Also, which particular award he received from first citizen of country, His Excellency President. Also, the award he received from resident's welfare association and his creation which missed award from Sahitya Akademi and another award on his fiftieth anniversary was which was presented to him by his paternal home's corruption uprooting association. In this manner Joshi ji wasted half an hour of his guests in giving discourse of his creativity and personality.

Meanwhile as soon as Mrs. Joshi appeared before her guests with tea in tray, uneasiness spread in guest room. Although tea cups brought by Mrs. Joshi were in hands of guests but the disinterest with which they were sipped and music produced by them gave estimate that gulps out of these cups were difficult to pass through throat. It is not known who invented this undesirable drink that the cursed one appeared anytime, fit or not. Consider, in this shivering winter had they came to gulp this drink? They were waiting for the drink for which lips and their throat were parched. Although it was Tuesday and as it happens usually the holy natured people try to keep themselves apart from some habits, and it happened on that day also.

One by one used cups of tea were kept aside. Meanwhile it is not known how many times there was an eye contact on sly. Many times, the clock on the wall of guest room was watched along with wrist watches and many times worries were expressed amongst each other by indications about how long will they be kept waiting like this.

At last President of workers Cooperative Union on behalf of others expressing his worries for their first time asked, "Joshi ji brother, why there is delay now?"

"There is no delay, Pandit Ji, Siyaram has been sent. He must be coming" replied Joshi ji.

The joy and self-confidence along with which Joshi ji had talked about sending Siyaram, it washed the sullenness of guest room within no time. But before Joshi ji would have submitted himself to the general secretary of Union, Ujbak Singh slowly leaned towards Joshi ji and almost addressing to all, spoke, "You are daily consumer.....otherwise you must be having some of it always."

"Chowdhary Sahib, it is there, but very little. It will not wet your lips even."

"Any how gentleman, are we here to wet the throat? That will be a pretext for our army to be on the job. Siyaram has been sent for arrangements to wet the throat." Shastri ji this time took the support of principle wage less is better than jobless.

Joshi ji found strength in Shastriji's argument. Immediately he rose from his position and took out the bottle concealed from his wife behind the volumes of art creations, the very creation which missed the Sahitya Akademi Award narrowly.

"What is the matter Joshi ji! Oh Sahib, till the time Siyaram arrives, till then it is enough to cajole the heart." Almost snatching the bottle from the hands of Joshi ji, which contained whisky less than half the measure, Shastriji started opening the bottle while saying, "It seems to be a quality product."

"Pandit ji, what to say about quality, whatever is there is presented before you." acting ashamed Joshi ji almost bent.

As has been told before, holy spirited beings, who usually keep distance from these kinds of habits on Tuesday, had itching in their throats when they heard that it was a quality product.

In the meantime, Joshi ji brought some empty glasses and water.

As Joshi ji was senior person in age and president of Corporation Worker Union therefore it was his responsibility, duty and dharma to handle the responsibility with complete honesty for which he was eligible. Shastri ji directed all to keep their glasses in the circle and in whichever glass with whatever quantity he thought to be appropriate he poured. As Shastri ji had taken this responsibility so at the end he poured leftover drink in his own glass. The tempular vein of chief secretary of Union, Ujbak Singh twitched, seeing this honesty of Shastri ji. But he swallowed his anger thinking no matter when Siyaram arrives then he would distribute least quantity to this progeny of president, or else is not worthy of his name "Ujbak".

It happened exactly as it was bound to happen that means Joshiji's superior product wetting the throat entered into the stomach. The guestroom of Joshi ji was filled with strong smell of alcohol and smoke of cigarette-bidi. In spite of ashtray being kept in the centre of circle in the room, burnt matchstick and scattered cigarette butts were smiling.

A small insignificant peg started showing its influence. The whole room started sinking and swimming in intoxication of Joshiji's fine alcohol. As a result, dialogue and debate now confined to Joshiji's personal life. Due to experience and fulfilling the duty of seniority Shastri ji changed the subject, "Joshi ji, in the history of our corporation you are the first person in whose G.P.F rupees fifteen lakhs are amassed."

"Panditji, this is all because of our sahib's hard work and honesty else with dishonesty one cannot amass fifteen lakhs rupees." This sarcasm of Ujbak Singh anguished the inner self of Joshi ji.

"Yes, this is true Chowdhry Sahib, listen, we married our children by taking loan and what to talk about Joshi ji...."

"In that case, Sahib has not arranged any of his child's marriage. There are three daughters out of which two did love marriage. Third one is left, then one day you will come to know that she also just like other two relieved father of his duty... now tell, if sahib will not have fifteen lakhs rupees in G.P.F. then will you have?" Ujbak Singh gave first proof of his loud mouth.

Joshi ji did not reply. He kept mum thinking that it is not wise to over welcome a guest in his home. For that reason, he gave facial expression as if he had heard nothing.

"But friend Joshi ji, do tell us also some technique by which our G.P.F also swells to fifteen lakhs." He was the very same Shastri ji who in spite of being union president never addressed him anything below 'Sir'.

Joshi ji did not give any reply, but only at certain intervals he looked towards the roof of the room as if searching for something, instantly as if he remembered, "Aarey pakoras have finished, I will bring them just now."

Truly Joshi ji thus arrow hit on the right mark at the right time. Due to reference of pakoras the topic came to halt.

No sooner did the plate of pakoras entered the guest room surrounded with mild smell of alcohol and smoke, almost dozen hands attacked, till the plate became conscious, pakoras were in the grip of hands which returned to their own territory. Amidst this ruckus and loot those hands which were behind, as a result of their foolishness suffered the loss. Here one after another the plate of pakoras were consumed,

there the last evening of the year was losing its patience. Suddenly when the clock hung in the centre of wall struck then all the eyes in the room became glued to the arms of the clock.

"Joshi ji, brother, it is half past seven and there is no trace of your Hanuman even at a distance." Many streams of worries were stretched on Shastriji's temple.

"By this time even Hanumanji brought herbs from Himalayas." Ujbak Singh gave argument in accordance to his knowledge.

"I have not even informed at home and one has to reach at home in this severe cold," Hari babu spoke as the representative of everybody's worry this time.

Then same Srinivasan whose fish dance had mesmerized from corporation to Joshiji's colony's women folk stood and said, "Sir, I'll go and look. Just tell me at which shop Siyaram would have gone?"

"Just after moving out and turning rightwards there is a red light, after walking hundred yards to its left there is third block of main market, there itself going inwards, its sixth or seventh shop. If it isn't still found then ask someone."

After hearing the map described by Joshi ji, Srinivasan inspiration was reduced to rubble. He had more of a pity than anger on his foolishness that why did he put his finger in the pie. But now as this responsibility was taken it had to be fulfilled and if because of him everybody could reach home earlier by an hour or half an hour then at least everybody would pray for his longevity.

As Shrimati Joshi once again entered the guest room with plate full of pakoras, now this time from vexed and perplexed hands, the pakoras fell down from Mrs. Joshi's hand. In this unexpected and improbable incident, this time those hands won the battlefield that had missed to touch the pakoras previously. As the plate fell, Joshi ji took a long breath thinking it is for better. At least, for some time these people will be involved in snatching pakoras from each other.

It is not known that when Shrimati Joshi indicated Joshi ji on sly that he followed his wife ignoring the piercing eyes of the pakoras on the carpet.

"What was the need to buy this trouble! Somehow this last day also could not be avoided."

Entering the kitchen Shrimati Joshi was annoyed with her husband in such a manner that Joshi ji was tongue tied. In spite of it, controlling himself he said, "What to avoid, this is corporation's customs continuing from years, ...and then I have been to other people place for years, at least today they also have a right."

"Who denies the right but some etiquettes and time is to be thought about. Two hours have passed and nobody is willing to leave."

"Dear, they may leave but where the hell is Siyaram."

"Why, what happened to Siyaram?" Shrimati Joshi asked with amazement.

"What will happen, all this is because of him. He has gone to market but now his whereabouts are unknown, full two hours have passed."

Joshiji's face became contorted due to irritation. "Market! For what has he gone to market? I had bought goods at day time?"

"You understand everything. Listen he has gone to take bottle, it is not known that something might have happened on the way ... without any reason, on last day I will be facing criticism."

"Nothing will happen, he will not come now. He might have fled with money. These peons-veons are very shrewd. Seeing money he might have turned dishonest. You have been told to many times that this drinks business should be at someone else place, this is a home with children."

"You are getting annoyed unnecessarily. It is a matter of a day, who is bothered afterwards."

"Still this arrangement couldn't be elsewhere."

"Maya, why don't you realize? For whole life, this was elsewhere, and someone else has been arranging. O.K. Tell me, had you ever seen a get together like this at our home?"

"Get-togethers are not held but you have developed a wrong habit. It is not known from where you developed this free addiction."

"How do I make you understand Maya, daily I do not buy myself and drink. What do you think the bottle continuing from last four days had been bought by me, No, our Ajay in defence ...?"

"All right, All right, Ajay Bhai Sahib!"

Immediately Shrimati Joshi completed the sentence.

"Yes-yes, same, last Sunday there was get together at his place, this half bottle is a leftover from there. It was good that I saw it first otherwise Ramesh Mehta would have taken it" Joshi Ji explained to his wife with victorious expression.

"Then it is fine. Ok, listen now, bring two hundred and fifty grams of gram flour more"

"Two hundred and fifty grams more...! What happened to that half kilogram that I had already brought?"

"I ate it ..." This time Shrimati Joshi lost control. "This whole platoon that you have stationed here, are you not watching them munching. Plate on plate is being consumed, above all you are asking more ..."

"OK ignore it, by the way what is left?" Joshi ji asked on guessing the delicacy of time.

"Might be some two hundred grams."

"All right, it is enough for now. I don't know where Siyaram has vanished!"

Instead of expressing concern for Siyaram's well-being, Joshi ji expressed doubt due to fear of non committing attitude of platoon at his home.

"Where would have he died, he might have absconded with money," Shrimati Joshi strengthened her doubt once more.

"No-No, Siyaram cannot do this at all. How many times have you asked him to bring goods, has he ever cheated you, and moreover have I to him ..." Joshi ji paused while stating. He picked up the plate of pakoras and went out of the kitchen.

No sooner did the husband turned back, Shrimati Joshi took a long breath, as if she was saved from being robbed in broad day light. Within her heart she prayed for Siyaram to return safely and engaged herself in making pakoras.

On seeing the pulled down face of Joshi ji, Shastri ji gauged his worry. For this he tried to divert the attention of the room," Joshi ji, if you have written something new, let's hear!"

"Yes Sir, narrate your same joke which was printed in the newspaper last month." This time cashier of corporation workers union, Khanna requested expressing his literary interest.

"Ok-Ok, that satire which was printed in Desh Times." Joshi ji said rectifying Khanna's literary interest and wisdom. "Yes-yes, whatever, satire-watire."

Joshi ji got anguished over who made a foolish person with such a literary taste a union cashier, one who does not known difference between a joke and a satire.

"Alright, not that one... yes, I have written a new satire yesterday itself, I'll narrate it while saying this Joshi ji respecting the feelings of his wise audience quickly stood up and leaped, picking up shred of paper from the table and return back to sit on his place.

But before Joshi ji presented the trailer of his literary accomplishments to these foolish debauch literary analytics, Khanna interrupted once again, "Sir, narrate it lyrically. After many days a good piece will be heard."

This time Joshiji's head started spinning. One should be thankful that he neither tore his hair nor shouted from top of his flat.

"Joshi ji, start quickly. It should not be that when Siyaram arrives and whole fun is spoiled." Shastri ji cautioned towards probable interruption.

Joshi ji unwillingly opened folds of paper and had just finished the first paragraph that what was feared happened.

"Look, our Siyaram has come." Srinivasan gave the auspicious information while entering the room.

"Joshi ji, the leftover part might be heard else while." glow returned on Shastriji's face. This information of Srinivasan pulled the whole guest room from fading age, and banged to the threshold of youth. Those who had turned down their glasses in hopeless wisp, they also positioned themselves. Holy spirited people those who tried to distant themselves from such vices on Tuesday, their eyes rekindled.

By the time Siyaram entered the guestroom, Joshi ji kept two large plates of pakoras, some snacks and jug full of water in the centre of the circle. Like a disciplined soldier no one dared to touch the pakoras this time. What was the use of chewing dry pakoras in vain? It is a matter of few seconds, when these pakoras would go down the throat without being driven.

On these occasions, moments of waiting become endless. About this Joshiji's eager room be asked, no one can reply better than it.

"Pal, Srinivasan, where is your Siyaram?" Ujbak Singh's patience truly gave away this time.

"Sir, he is just coming."

And before Ujbak Singh or someone else would have remarked upon Srinivasan's information, Siyaram was standing on the door.

"Come on Siyaram, you are a limit. Buddy we thought something else." Shastri ji said scrutinizing the bag held in the hands of Siyaram.

"Big boss, what to do, it was a mess." Siyaram caressed his temple as he returned.

"Tomorrow is a dry day, there will be a crowd and more over today is pay day." Joshi ji said embalming Siyaram honesty with innocence.

"OK folks, he has arrived otherwise we had presumed that we would have to go from Joshiji's place as it is." Spoke Haribabu.

"Siyaram hurry up. Dear, strength is lost." Shastri ji instead of giving order requested Siyaram and again addressed all the guests, "Come on, those who did not receive before, they should put their glasses forth."

As and when empty glasses were put forth Shastri ji like before taking undue advantage of honesty and seniority stealthily also included his glass in them.

Ujbak Singh's eyes were continuously following Shastri ji, therefore without losing a moment he addressed Siyaram, in a commanding tone, "Bring buddy, Siyaram, one has to go home too," It means just before Shastriji's hand could reach Siyaram, Ujbak Singh hands reached there. But look at Siyaram what is desired by whole guest room, he was not willing to take it out.

Now Ujbak Singh lost self-control, "Siyaram buddy, on one hand you have returned after two hours on the other you are playing pranks."

But instead of giving bag to Shastri ji or Ujbak Singh, Siyaram forwarded it to Joshi ji.

But what's this!

Just as Joshi ji dug his hand in the bag it seemed his hands has been caught by some unseen power. Joshi ji could neither pull his hand out nor keep it in.

"Joshi ji for how long you will tantalize... hurry up!" Ujbak Singh lost his patience completely.

Joshi ji face was discolored as he pulled his hand out of the bag, the breath of whole room was struck in the throat. The shine which was in their eyes few moments back disappeared. No one could understand what the matter was.

At last, Shastri ji tried to control the situation and asked, "Siyaram, had the goods exhausted while waiting for your turn?"

"No Big Boss, there was stock of goods from all over the world. Someone would have been there to take."

"Then, why this half a bottle only? The story is beyond my comprehension, Buddy?"

"I would have bought the whole of shop, but my ability was limited."

"Buddy, what is the interference of your ability here. Party has been thrown by Joshi ji ... money is being spent by Joshi ji and you are saying..."

"Sahib, I am also saying the same thing ... am I talking Persian. My lord, whatever money I will have, I will bring accordingly." Siyaram tried to pacify irritation of Ujbak Singh.

"This means that Joshi ji gave you money for only half a bottle." Shastri ji said glaring and pinpricking Siyaram's balloon of honesty.

"Big boss, he did not give for even half a bottle..., I had some money..."

"But Siyaram, I had told you to take money when you turn back." while giving explanation Joshi ji tried to handle the situation.

"Sahib you hadn't given... and then have I any rupee printing machine with me..."

"Why, didn't you get pay today?"

"Sahib, I had got."

"Then why didn't you bring?" This time Joshi ji attacked Siyaram. Siyaram did not say anything.

"Siyaram, didn't you have trust on Sahib that"

"Big boss, it is not the matter of trust, actually ..."

"Actually, what?"

"Pay was received by our Sahib also. Now tell me for rupees three hundred or four hundred how long a poor person would have visited to his place. Now otherwise he has left the corporation,"

"Buddy you are saying as if, for him you bought daily from yourself!" Ujbak Singh very cleverly coaxed Siyaram.

"Chowdhry Sahib, there is some twist in Siyaram's word." Suddenly this doubt of Shastri ji gave birth to tension in whole guestroom.

"Junior Sahib, why do you want me to open my mouth? If it is one time affair then I would tell you, but what to do, thinking that Sahib may be helpful someday I pacified myself. Who knows in exchange of service he may give some favor, but there was no benefit. Aarey, to employ my eldest son in the service of corporation he asked for thirty thousand rupees unabashedly and you say that I do not trust him." Siyaram gave vent to emotions pent up since years.

Joshi ji guestroom was drenched with silence. "Siyaram, do you know what are you saying, about whom?" Shastri ji said to Siyaram in almost tone full of caution.

"Big boss, I am not talking about my angel, I am talking about our own Joshi ji."

"And you must have given thirty thousand." Ujbak Singh said tossing a wicked smile to Siyaram.

"What to do...? It had to be given. Aarey If not I, someone else would have. Therefore, I thought money is transient. At least child's life became secured. I pacified myself thinking that Sahib was presented with alcohol worth thirty thousand."

This revelation of Siyaram spread such silence in the room that breath being emitted out of nostrils could be heard clearly.

Once again Shastri ji complying with duty of seniority almost giving direction to everybody, "Come dear come, why are you wasting your time in such a cold." saying this Shastri ji was the first one to exit out of Joshiji's guest room.

Joshi ji was watching everyone leaving his home one by one. He did not dare to step ahead and halt them.

With the plate of pakoras in hand, Shrimati Joshi standing at the door could not understand anything. She could not understand that suddenly how this platoon was awakened. She forgot that she had come to Joshi ji to inform that gram flour had exhausted.

Already kept platter of pakoras and almost two dozen empty glasses kept in the centre of the room, started clamoring due to kicks of feet crossing them. One by one everybody irritated and ashamed came out of the room.

The unclear words of Shastri ji, Ujbak, Haribabu and cashier Khanna preceding faster from his home, kept on striking Joshiji's ears. Then suddenly someone awaked him from asleep by shaking fiercely. Siyaram's cycle's bell is well known to Joshi ji. How can he forget the voice which informed from years of goods being brought from Musalsal Bazar, Now the music of familiarity has dissolved in this voice in a manner that the day the ears did not hear it, it felt something was amiss. Hearing constantly the ringing bell of cycle, Joshi ji felt as if Siyaram wanted to hurriedly disappear splitting the crowd.

Joshi ji almost ran up to the window and opened it suddenly and looked into the fog spreading afar. Yellowness of the neon bulbs spread along with the fog. Joshiji's eyes were searching Siyaram till a long distance. But he could not see any cycle. Without closing the window, he returned to the same place and sat where he was sitting few moments back.

Time and again the voice of cycle bell was echoing in the ears of Joshi ji. In the smoke clad room whensoever's his sight fell upon, so called symbols of respect and rewards, and then the noise of bell became shrill. In the meantime, it is not known whose glass Joshi ji picked and after breaking the seal of half the bottle brought by Siyaram, filled a full glass and drank in one gulp. Tearing the throat, alcohol dissolved in all the nerves in few seconds. In no time alcohol started affecting. Joshi ji called his wife addressing, "Maya \$\$\$"

Wife came running.

Seeing Joshi ji aloof, resting his back on the wall in lonely room, his wife understood that Joshi ji had drunk more than required. She lifted Joshi ji with support and dashed him on the bed. After this he was not conscious about when did he sleep?

In the morning, Shrimati Joshi scolded Joshi ji in an annoyed tone, for after drinking alcohol he was talking nonsense. Since he had retired now, therefore seeing his age, he should stop drinking.

"Maya you are saying right, now I should not do all this." promising his wife Joshi ji proceeded towards bathroom.

Suddenly one day at evening, Joshi ji was perplexed in Siyaram's memory. He told about his trouble to his wife, then wife went inside immediately and following the duty of wife, presented before Joshi ji same half a bottle of wine which she had concealed without his knowledge. Joshi ji did not trust his eyes for some time. Therefore, he asked for one empty glass from his wife and poured all the leftover whisky in it, telling his wife he drank in one breath, "Maya Darling, excuse me! Enough, it is last time today otherwise bastard Siyaram will be troubling the whole life."

Joshiji's lips became twisted due to the sharpness of alcohol. Wife was constantly gazing at him, who knows when it would be required to dash him on the bed. But this time neither he was intoxicated due to alcohol nor did his wife had to take him to the bed, instead Joshi ji with lots of confidence stood up from his place, after standing he picked up empty bottle and after staring it for a while and throwing it from the window fell on his bed with a thud.

Shrimati Joshi was surprised a bit at this action of husband but she did not say anything. Quietly she covered husband's feet with quilt and went to the kitchen smiling.