

Sheikh Saaliq

The 'Hanging'

“From the clutches of darkness will rise the true resurrect.”

Time: Ere break of the day

My hands are tied to my back and I see a white rope in front of my eyes. I had heard people saying about how a noose looks like. They said it is usually manufactured in Nagpur from the richest fiber they produce in their country – for it holds your body long enough till they hear your neck break. These thick walls seem no alien to me. I have already spent more than a decade behind these walls – in a self-confined chamber. Twelve years to be precise. Oh! I forgot. It is called a Prison. They have also assigned a number for it – ‘Jail no 3’.

I see some people in front of me. I won't count them but it looks like they might be a pack of eight. One among them is wearing a white gown. Even I used to wear it once. That was a long time back. Standing next to him is a well attired gentleman holding a small clock in his hand. He looks calm and composed. Not even a mere expression on his face. The other six are no unfamiliar. In tanned uniforms they stand at a corner, staring at me. I wonder what they must be thinking this time – for a human soul will turn into a mere ‘Dead Body’ soon. I guess they are nervous. Some of them might be witnessing this scene for the first time in their life.

Behind me is a person. I haven't seen him yet. To what I have heard, he must be wearing a stripped white and black uniform with a skull cap on his head. If not all this, I am sure he must be having moustaches'. This is what they – the prisoners, usually talk about inside the cell. I only felt his touch when he tied my hands. I didn't even feel his shiver whilst he cuffed me. I guess he is no new to this Job – for they have recently done something same to a person. Yes, to a foreigner. He was ‘across the fence’ inhabitant.

The time is ticking fast. I know for what. I was informed about it in the wee hours of sun's radiance but who knows what tomorrow morning they will carry in their newspapers – as they have a trait to change the actual happenings. I bid an adieu to my mates. Some of them were asleep, dreaming what they have been aspiring for, since they became a part of these walls.

I had asked for a pen and paper earlier. Fortunately this wish of mine was considered for approval – for I wanted to write. Write for my family, a million mountains away –who in this winter chill, will be sipping *Nun-Chai* at this very moment with their arms cuddling a *Kangri*. I wanted to write for the apple orchards, in which I once used to roam, breathing open air with much pride – for I was free. I wanted to write for my son, who wants to be a cardiologist. I wanted to write for his smile. I wanted to write for my wife, her love and her support. I wanted to write for the narrow boulevards’ of my village, the calm and steady *Jhelum*, the sky high mountains and the spring blossoms of Almond. I wanted to write for my country.

My Urdu has never been so good. I often do mistakes in my writing but this was a free flow. A few lines and I was done. I put the time and date at the very top. It was 6:25 in the morning, 9 February 2013. I hope the date will be remembered.

As of now my mind is thinking of every possible thing. It roams back to the alleys where I come from. I can see *Tabassum* holding *Ghalib* close to her breasts – giving him the utmost care a son carves for. I can see my house. Its balcony painted in different colors. Its old windows waiting for an arrival. I can see my people, some of them in long black *Pherans*’ wearing skull caps. They are waiting in a queue outside my home. No they must be not waiting for an arrival – for they know the Country I am kept in all these years has a long history of not returning back people where they belong to. My people already have waited 28 years in hope, for an arrival. *Mabraaz* is yet to arrive.

My bare feet on the wooden planks give me a tinge of coldness. I stand tall, waiting. They ask me to hand them my spectacles – which were a companion to me since I became a guest in this land. I can see some people talking. I hear their whispers. I guess the time has come. I thought of what I did these years. It was a mere 20 meter Journey. A Journey from one room to another and this being the last – of no return.

The cold walls of the cell carry a sodden look. They want to speak something. I guess they want to tell me how they, 28 years before saw a handsome stature in a same dress in which I am now. I know they are witness to a Murder. The walls don’t lie like humans. They are testimony to what has happened before. They have already seen a burial. It would be no new to them, again. But they will treasure this witnessing – for they have to speak, Someday. Inside, I am humming the holy words. They give me courage. I stand tall – for I won’t bow nor will I cry. Isn’t this what I wanted? I will be a hero, soon. My name will be chanted to the loudest in the streets where I come from. *‘Shabeed’* is what they will call me.

He calls me *‘Baba’* - my son *Ghalib*. Far from her mother this time, he is sleeping at a relative’s house. I wonder can I get a last chance to see him. *Tabasum* also must be busy with her daily chores. I don’t know when she will get the news. I fear dying an unknown death. I want to see my family. One last glimpse will suffice but I know I will be deprived of it. The cold walls of the cell will be the last thing I can see.

The person standing behind me holds my arm. His touch is cold. He positions me like they want me to – a black cloth is put over my face.

I know I won't die – my people won't let me. My name will live – forever. It will light a torch – a torch of Revolution for the times to come. I won't die for nothing. With this thought I close my eyes and take a deep breath. I can see Kashmir.

I can see my hometown. I can see myself smelling the apples of our orchard – their fragrance intoxicates me. My *Kifayah* around my neck flutters in the air. *Ghalib*, from a distance is running towards me and *Tabasum* is smiling. She looks so happy. Her smile is enchanting. *Ghalib* insists me to play with him. He gets hold of my arm and hauls me with him – for he has waited much long to play cricket with his 'Baba'. I can hear him laughing. His laughter is endless – It reverberates. I am smiling.

I can feel something on my neck. The noose has been tightened. My heart turns heavy. The muteness around is broken by a rigorous sound. The lever has been pulled.

Silence falls. My feet turn cold – let loose they swing in the air.

I am hanged.

P.S: According to a friend, whom I met in Kashmir University:

My cousin was lodged next to the cell of Shabeed Afzal Guru Sahib and he in a meeting with his family members in the Jail said, "The authorities of Tihar Jail told Shabeed Afzal about his hanging only after the breaking of dawn. Infact when other inmates were transferred to different barracks till the hanging was completed; Shabeed Afzal Guru Sahib personally met him and bid a final goodbye to all other inmates."

NOTE: Afzal Guru was a Kashmiri citizen who was hanged by Indian Government on February 9, 2013 on the charges of attacking the Indian parliament in 2001. Many renowned activists and Journalist across India and whole Kashmir still believe Afzal was innocent and was framed in this guilt by Indian government.

(The work is a piece of Fiction.)