I Am A Stranger

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THE last born child of the year passed by, leaving me confused.

I journeyed in the car which bore the mark of a nation. I sat on the shoulder of the youth and enjoyed the song of freedom, liberty and independence that erupted from his earphone. I walked with the hunger-stricken, grubby kid who was selling flags painted with the colour of the rain-washed field and of the dying sun. I stood on the highest roof and saw the flag of a nation violently shaken by the wind. I saw it plunging into darkness when the sun fell. It was faintly visible in the scanty moonlight; it didn't look too well. I danced on stage with a pretty girl in red-green saree. It was thrilling to see thousands of people celebrating and dancing with me. I noticed the nation-lover who was one of the roadsters; a little smarter though. I saw him being pushed up by the people; aye... he did speak for the people.

But, none felt my presence, none saw me. I was the phantom of the opera. Every song, every dance, every speech was dedicated to me without knowing who I was or am. And it deeply irritated me. How long can I accept songs of praises, dances of bravery and speeches of freedom for things that I have never done or won't ever do?

I then decided to blow away the fog of ignorance from their minds by revealing myself. How?

That word or rather question bugged me for nearly a week and then an answer struck me. I found out an inexperienced writer. 'Inexperienced' because people with no experience accept new thoughts without foreseeing the peril ahead. The first day I made a home for myself in his heart when he saw a bleeding art of victory day. The second day I pumped my description into his blood. The third day, he discussed it with his teacher and friends. It took him three more days to gather himself. On the seventh day he sat down to write. Everything I said or am going to say is through him. Poor fellow! He shouldn't be blamed for my strange revelation and the strangeness in me. Sometimes the most natural things seem most unreal. And that's what I am, 'strange, misinterpreted and manipulated.'

They call me 'PATRIOTISM'. They blame me for hacking and chopping the world's land. They blame me for guarding those chopped pieces with boundaries, iron-locks and loud toys. They blame me for stabbing their brothers. They blame me for raping their mothers, daughters and sisters.

When they become criminals I become their refuge. They hide in my shadow. And there are some fools who call this slashing, slicing, stabbing, slaying, shooting, raping 'PATRIOTISM' and celebrate in memory of such butcheries. This foolery when done to the utmost enrages me. My anger rises like the mighty tide. Alas! I am moved to anger the slowest, calmed quickest. The great One made me that way. I lose my anger when I consider that they don't know me. Can anybody know you more than yourself? How can they know me better than myself?

I am not hatred, revenge and refusal. I am love, forgiveness and acceptance.

I don't bear grudge against my enemies. I heap so much love for them that they forget their enmity. And even if they stab me, they do so with utter anguish in their hearts. To avenge my mother's death, I don't murder another mother; nor do I kill the murderer. Call me treacherous but that would just lose me another mother and a brother. I choose to gain a family instead. I don't refuse what others say but I say what I feel and I am always accepted.

Are you so different? Some may still be wondering. Yes, I am. I am neither a person nor an object. I am a thought; and an idea often misunderstood. They named me 'nationalism', 'patriotism' but in the way they implement me, I am extended tribalism. I don't piss, quarrel, fight and bite like a dog to mark my territory. I rather prefer to be like a flower, imparting fragrance and mark boundaries. I am the love which makes you lie on your mother's lap. And I never pull you away from there. I am the lost memories of bygone days when you played under the thick and untidy banyan. I am your love for yourself and all that is yours. I am the urge in you that asks you to do things great and make the rest of the world marvel at your culture, tradition, belief, people, family, teachers, companions and you. But I never ask you to destroy. I ask you to build.

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