


PERSPECTIVE

No more masquerade...

*"Take a bow, the night is over
This masquerade is getting older
Light are low, the curtains down
There's no one here...
Say your lines but do you feel them
Do you mean what you say when there's no
one around
Watching you, watching me, one lonely star..."*

A mask is more than an objet d'art made by the able hands of an artisan, hung on the walls of an atelier or an uptown art shop for the connoisseurs to rave, the critic to piece passionate reviews about, sending kudos to the artist, appreciating creative exuberance at its finest!

If every book is an autobiography, every artwork is a reflection of the artists' inner being, and for masks perhaps, this is even truer. But they are more than just works of passion - a form taking the shape from the pulp of papier-mâché into a tigress head, or a wooden block chiselled and polished with lacquer giving it the final appearance of a Greek demigod.

Masks are an everyday reality because the life we lead sees us wearing them in one form or the other, everyday.

Does that equate to the world being full



losing our very identity.

In primitive times, cavemen of Almeria drew images of the animals they hunted, their belief that once capable of having a two-dimensional depiction of the three dimensional four-legged walking beasts, they shall have the super-human strength to overpower the animals. Once hunted, they fashioned masks from the animal skulls, a flashy display of their power, and their humble homage to the gods.

As culture progressed, masks were used in performances and for impersonations, which could not be done unless concealed and veiled behind a mask, as an open mimicry was perceived to have deadly consequences.

Traditions have it, that honey gatherers of the Sunderbans wear masks at the back of their heads in a hope to deceive a pouncing tiger, which according to legend, attacks only from the rear.

May be all of us are like that. The duality of our existence is possibly to deter the pouncing tiger which is life leaping on us. At the back of our plastic smiles, we often hide a solemn sigh; behind our jovial laughter we shield ominous darkness. And then there are times when the mask we wear



our inner being but a image that we project for the sake of universal acceptance.

Popular culture spreads the notion that a lip colour can not only add a shade to those luscious, well maintained lips, it can also grab the attention of the opposite sex, and as one pouts, rule over his senses. And then there is the famed endorsement that shows how those very lips 'accidentally' stamp an impression on the starched white shirt of the gentleman one accidentally bumps into.

The man in question is not free from such notions either. The toothpaste bought a week earlier guarantees fresher breath, which the damsel with pouty lips is bound to take notice, while the life-changing 'bump' takes place.

The dress we wear, the way we accessorise...masks, you say? Perhaps not. But our consumer driven world promises that giving the right look - or donning the right mask - one can win over the Chair of the board meeting and the woman in question with equal prowess.

Irrespective of what we feel inside, our

outer self must shout a perceived notion of sheer perfection. There is no place for weakness or frail, human emotions. We must rise with every occasion, out do ourselves in everything we do; our stellar performance should be like a rock, hard enough to read out the news of the passing of one's spouse in front of millions glued to their seats waiting for the next big infotainment.

The everyday roles that we play see us take up masks. At one go we are a caring father, a callous husband, an office executive and maybe a companion with a funny bone whom everyone loves to share their Thursday evening Mojito with.

Masks, you ask? Possibly yes.

Masks we wear in life give us the ability to immerse in a false belief, to project an image of ourselves, which more often than not, is in reality, non-existing. It helps to feed our ego, necessary to continue life as we know it. It helps us fulfil the various roles expected from us. If not to guile, the figurative masks that we don at least help us be who we aspire to become, sometimes at the price of



personifies what is within us. Sometimes, the mask we wear is no mask at all.

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