

Discourses **IT** *with*



by
SAIN SUCHA

To
Khalid Sohail and Hamraz Ahsan
two other lost souls who hold their
Discourses with IT
and regularly give us sophisticated
trialogues.

Discourses with IT

Sain Sucha

Short Stories

Vudya Kitaban Förlag



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PREFACE

This book contains seven stories.

The stories are in the form of trialogues - discourses which take place between the narrator, the persons who are directly or indirectly involved, and IT.

Who, or what is IT?

Whenever a conversation proceeds between two or more persons, the very instant an element of ambiguity appears, a trialogue always develops - the audible dialogue which takes place between the persons who speak to each other directly, in which words and sentences are said and their obvious, accepted meanings are exchanged; and, the silent conversation which runs parallel to the audible one, in which each person tries to comprehend the essence of that conversation, and where the hidden meanings, over and above the obvious, are sought. The entity with which this silent conversation is conducted I have given the identity of IT.

In other words, IT always emerges whenever a complex dialogue occurs between two or more persons, or a monologue is conducted by a person.

IT can represent anything - an abstract entity, a real person or a feeling. There are two attributes which are essential to IT - IT never lies, and IT is omnipresent; although, quite often we are not aware of its presence, or

even when we feel its presence, we do not acknowledge it.

The seven ITs treated in these stories are Death, Longing, Fear, Memory, Lust, Him, and Life.

I look forward to the criticism from the readers, and thank them for any comments made by them, which will be much appreciated.

Sain Sucha,
September 4, 2019

THE OTHER SIDE

The older woman was at least ninety. She looked frail, but neither did she put much weight on the walking-stick nor did she seem to require help from the young woman escorting her. She studied me thoroughly with her lined, but shiny, eyes and said, "It is a long round trip. When we get there I will like you to wait while I am gone."

Any trip at her age was long, and I really hoped that it was not *the trip* she meant. Then the word *round trip* reverberated in my ears, but just to be on the safe side I asked, "Will both of you return or only one?"

What I actually wanted to say was, "... or only the young lady?" but decided against it.

"Both," she said in a tone, accompanied by a sardonic smile as if she expected me to get hurt

I was relieved.

The aged lady occupied the seat beside me, while the younger one sat behind us.

"It is about eighty kilometres from here towards the North. I am going to call upon my elder brother. He does not like long visits, so I shall stay for about an hour. I shall pay you when we get there by 'handicap coupons'. Then you shall wait, but will not be paid for the waiting time. I will not let society pay for my indulgence. And then we shall return."

She must have concluded that I was outside the society, otherwise she wouldn't have objected to society paying to one of its own members; besides, I wondered if the society was worse off than a taxi-driver and was about to start a lively argument, but then thought better of it. I was not going to get any other passenger in that area - they had their own taxi service. So, instead of driving eighty kilometres alone it was much better to wait for an hour and then accommodate the ladies.

Moreover, there was a chance that I might get a glimpse of the older brother of that ninety years old *kid-sister* I had sitting on my right. Old eccentric ninety-plus were my favourites.

I showed her my teeth and pulled the facial muscles to feign a smile.

"While I am away Anita shall keep you company. My brother does not like young people either, not even his grand-niece."

Experience must have taught her not to take chances in life by asking questions, so she kept her communication strictly to declarative statements.

I glanced at Anita in my rear-view mirror and caught her eyes for an instant. I wished that her grand-uncle would have a change of heart for just that one day and keep his sister much longer with him. With Anita providing me company I did not mind waiting longer, even without getting paid. Perhaps the old lady was

correct in asserting that the society must not be taxed for our indulgences.

I looked at the road ahead, disdainfully eyeing the other cars which were causing a delay in my waiting with Anita on the other side of eighty kilometres, and tried to concentrate on driving.

For some strange reason, I felt a chill make its way through my spine. It was June, the sun had baked the city since its rise, the window panes of the taxi were fully withdrawn, the fan for extra ventilation was running; yet, I felt cold. I cast a look at the relic on my right. She appeared to be in congress with some entities in her mind; a benign smile clung on her face.

"I like travelling on a day like this," she murmured to one of them.

"I like travelling on a... day like this," she said it again, but this time her face was turned towards me.

Suddenly I realised that even the first utterance was addressed to me.

"Oh yes, isn't it wonderful!" I chose a standard reply from my collection; pondering; at the same time, how a combination of simultaneous sweating and freezing can be described as *wonderful* in a positive sense - malaria was one known fever which produced such a condition. I had not been to the tropics for years, and love-bites on the neck by passionate human females were not supposed to transmit the parasite, but only bites from

blood-sucking female Anopheles mosquitoes. Those particular females did not thrive in this country.

The city traffic had fallen behind us, and we were speeding along the highway. In order to overtake the lorry ahead, I needed to change lanes. I glanced in the mirror. No other vehicle followed us. I looked at the road again. On the highway it was a clear view, yet there remained two black spots on the panorama in front. I concentrated. The spots did not belong to the scene outside the windscreen, but to the vision within my head. The spots seared. With reluctance I tried to trace their origin. My memory made me raise my eyes slowly towards the rear-view mirror, and I looked at her. She calmly sat in the seat behind, lost in her thoughts, but her two eyes stared at me through that mirror. Two big, blue, expressionless eyes which produced dark spots on my brain. I jerked my body, and tried to shake off that feeling. The old woman noticed my discomfort.

"Must be difficult to drive a whole day within the town in this heat," she made another statement

"It is always pleasant to come out to the countryside, especially when it is so lush green," I answered her anyhow.

"How long have you driven taxi?"

"About six years."

"Do you like it?"

She could ask questions too, but only when the decision making by the other party was irrelevant to her purpose.

"It is hard work, but not a dull job." Another one of my standard answers.

I met a stream of slow-moving cars, and it took several minutes before I cleared them and regained a steady flow of my own.

"She is not very talkative," the old woman declared after a while.

"I thought that you were calling upon your brother?"

"Not him, I meant Anita."

That was a nice habit Anita had. I could think of many other ways of tiring that mouth of her than through the mere act of speech.

"Why not?" An unnecessary question slipped from my tongue.

"She has changed. Last year she tried to commit suicide."

"Did she really?" the second, consecutive, silly question.

She shook her silver braided head in affirmative.

"Took pills. Life is not easy for youth any longer."

"Did you have it easy in your youth?" I badly wanted to fill my mouth with chewing-gum, so that it would stop talking.

"We did not have any youth. I was born. I remember childhood, and suddenly I was working to assist my

parents, met my husband quite young, was married, had children, raised them, and one day I was old and put into a pension. A lot of other worries were there but *not how to spend my youth.*"

With that she retired to the confines of her mind, the serene smile was re-pasted on the face, and she looked at the spectacle beyond infinity.

The feeling returned. An ice-pick was gently drawn in line with my spinal cord. The hair at the back of my neck felt like bristles. To distract myself I bit my lower lip. Without looking at the mirror I knew that the two blue eyes still stared at me.

I also knew that IT was there. I had met IT before, but never like that. Never with IT sitting behind me. My hands sweated, my feet froze. Then I heard IT laugh – sand-corns filled my teeth, the taste of bitter almonds burst in my mouth, my chest ached, I heard a thousand pigs cry in agony.

"So! We meet again," IT whispered.

I kept my face straight and pretended that I did not hear.

"Glare at me, swear at me, but don't ever ignore me." IT whispered again in a deep coarse voice.

"Go to hell," I said nastily.

"What did you say?" The old woman retracted herself from across the horizon.

"I am sorry, I was talking to myself," I said to her apologetically.

"Not a very good habit when driving. You can lose your concentration and we may never get there."

"Well! *There* we shall all get one day, and *you* before both of us," I thought, but to appease her I said, "Don't do it so often, must be the weather."

"And in your case, you need no further telling to go to hell. The way you are sweating it appears that you are already there."

The old witch had a twisted sense of humour too.

A funny thing to be told that I was sweating in hell when my whole body was under the impression that I was sitting naked on an iceberg, drifting in the stormy North Sea.

I almost jumped when I heard from behind, "Could you play some music?"

It took me another second to realise that it was not IT but Anita who spoke.

"Oh yes, what would you like?" I said.

"Anything, just anything," she said.

"Play us a funeral march." IT said.

"I don't have any," was my spontaneous loud response.

"If you do not have any music then why did you ask me what would I like?" Anita enquired.

"I do not have the music which IT wants."

"It, which it?"

She looked a bit confused in the rear-view mirror.

"Well! Yes.... I meant"

I did not know what I meant

"Are you alright?" the lady beside me asked with an overdose of concern in her tone.

"Perhaps it is the heat. May I make a break for a few minutes, stretch my legs and get some fresh air?" I asked. "With all the windows open I thought that we were already drowning in the *fresh air*, and we have only driven for half an hour."

Women of ninety-plus were no longer among my favourites.

"But we can stop for a short while if that makes you more alert"

"Thanks a lot," said I, and stopped on a narrow woodland, off the main road.

As I opened the car's door the first recollection which hit me was of the days when I went track-running every morning. At that moment I badly wanted to take off my heavy shoes, and start running away from that car, away from the old lady, away from Anita, and far away from IT. I could not, of course, run away. Taxi drivers are not expected to desert aged women and suicide inclined young girls on small wood paths, in the middle of nowhere. But then a taxi driver ought not to be expected to drive customers home with IT whispering in his ears.

"What is wrong with me? Is it age?" I wondered.

I had come across IT many times before, but under quite different circumstances. I remembered when the old man was murdered, the temple was burnt, when cholera broke out in Lahore, the car crash in Afghanistan, the tyre burst in Luleå. IT was always there, but not once had I felt frightened, or even threatened.

"So, what was different before? Was it that I was younger, confident, reckless, prepared, or what?"

"No, none of that," I thought, as I performed jump-ups to put up a show for the bright-eye; which were watching me intensely.

"So, what is different?"

And then the answer came.

Suddenly I was immobile in the mid-air. I knew it then – the difference was that IT was there in the rear with me, but I did not know where. I had just felt IT's presence and heard it without knowing its whereabouts. Slowly I de-froze myself, and returned to the taxi.

"Do you always fall into catatonic trances when you exercise?" She seemed amused.

I wished that I was at the same place where occasional, spontaneous elimination of twisted, aged females was not considered as the capital crime.

"You must have worked as a dancer before, move your hips pretty smoothly."

I did not like being flirted with by darlings-over-ninety either.

"Nice of you to observe," was all I could say.

I started the engine and found the road again. There was dead silence in the car.

"Glare at me, swear at me, but don't ever ignore me." A few minutes later IT sang again, mockingly.

That time I was prepared. Without opening my lips I released the thought, "You know that I don't care for you. What do you want?"

"I know you don't, but admit first that had you scared today,"

"True, but just for a while. Where are you?"

I could not turn my head while driving, so I just asked silently.

"I am with Anita."

"Who is this Anita then?" was my reflex question.

"You better ask her," was the plain answer.

I lowered the speed as we cut through a small town. "Please, stop at one of the shops. Anita can buy some refreshments. Do you want some?"

I said I wanted a cold drink, and glided to a halt by a store, went out and opened the door for Anita. She stepped out.

"It will take a few minutes. I need to go to the toilet as well." She said politely and went in.

I paid extra attention to the word 'I', and was certain that she did not say 'We'.

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(Sain Sucha)

