



The Pied Piper Revisits

An old lady, aged between 65-68, is running away from the city. Her face is fear stricken. She often turns back to ensure that no one is following her. Amid her dishevelled hair, disarrayed clothes, and teary cheeks, her genteel mien shines that proves that she is rich and urbane. She leaves the city behind and comes to a large open field and then reaches a place where the forest starts. She slows down, looks here and there as she finds herself lost without a trace. Her face turns pale in fear.

She stumbles with tired steps. She picks herself up and runs. At a distance her eyes fall upon a person from behind. The person has long hair and has donned a long white robe. From behind, the person seems to be a woman. She approaches the person.

“E...ex...excuse me.”

The person does not turn.

“Excuse... me,” repeats the old lady.

No response!

“Hey, ex...excuse me. Would you... please help...me?”

The person turns to the lady. The lady is scared more than before. The person is a man, with a long beard, long locks combed backward, and is about fifty years old. She takes a few steps back.

“Yes, tell me,” the person says in a meek voice, as if waking from trance.

“Eh...eh...ok...sorry.”

“Don’t be afraid. Tell me what help you want.”

“Eh... eh ..., ...,” the lady fumbles for a word.

“You need help. Have faith. Don’t be afraid of me. I’m the Pied Piper.”

“The same Pied Piper... about whom... we read when... we’re young?” The old lady asks.

“Consider so. I’m one of the descendants of that Pied Piper.”

“Actually I don’t know where to start ? I feel sh...sh...shame in saying anything.” She bears a hangdog face.

The Pied Piper stands, thinks and brings one bowl of water.

“Have some water.”

The lady drinks water in one breath and thanks him.

“Yeah, tell me now. Let me see how I can help you.”

The lady says that she was raped by two persons and when her husband tried to save her, he was killed by the rogues. Now she has run away but fears they might come again and kill her also.

The Pied Piper closes his eyes.

“Have you reported about this to the police?”

“Yes,” replies the lady. “For some years both my husband and I had noticed that the rogues were following us. We reported about this to the police. But they did not take any action. And now this happened.”

“Ok. Don’t worry I will take your complaint to the police and fight for you,” assures the Pied Piper. “I’ll go along with you to the place where you live. Where are you from?”

“There, from that city”. The lady points to the city she ran away from.

The Pied Piper prepares a big bag. He puts a bowl, a plate, some clothes and a piper in his bag. He also takes some food with him. Both the Pied Piper and the lady walk back to the city.

After walking a long distance they enter the city. They pass by the houses, buildings, roads and streets. As they turn to an area, they see a mob of people circling and making a noise. Both the Pied Piper and the lady stride towards the mob and check what was going on. To their horror, they see people pelting stones on a woman who is in her late forties. She is bleeding and crying for help but none seems to listen to her. Her clothes have torn apart and she is half-naked.

The Pied Piper and the lady plead for mercy for the lady but no one listens.

“This witch has killed my husband,” one woman cries out while throwing a stone.

“She killed my seven-year old son also,” a man adds.

“I’m a poor and weak woman. How can I kill anyone?” The victim cries with folded hands.

“We don’t know anything. She killed many people. We’ll kill her. You leave from here. This is none of your business.” The people cry out at the Pied Piper and the lady.

“How can it be so? How can she kill so many people?” The Pied Piper pleads. “For God’s sake, leave her. Have mercy.”

But the mob threatens them away and throngs the hapless woman and continues pelting stones.

“Ah... ah...help ...save me.”

They both feel dejected and find themselves helpless. They have no option but to resume their journey. They walk and walk until the evening. They decide to rest for the night and resume their journey in the morning. They look around for shelter. They find a big house, apparently abandoned. The doors and windows are locked and the large verandah is full with dust and leaves fallen from the trees around the house. They stealthily move into the verandah. The Pied Piper takes out a sheet and offers it to the lady. The lady clears an area on the verandah to make room for them and spreads the sheet and lies down. The Pied Piper spreads a small cloth a little away from the lady and sits on it and leans onto the wall, resting.

It is late into the night and the moon is just ascending with dim shaft of cool light, as if it is the twentieth night of the lunar month. The night is silent except for the chirps of crickets from the grass and bushes. The old lady has fallen asleep and the Pied Piper is in his early slumber. Suddenly the Pied Piper hears steps of some persons. He jerks out of his slumber and looks

around to check. In the dim light, he sees two persons, a man and a woman coming out from the house opposite to where they were resting.

The man is holding a big plastic bag in his hand.

They come to a large dustbin placed by the municipality.

“Son, throw the bag in the dustbin,” the woman whispers. “Are you sure that the child is dead?”

“Yes, mom. Don’t worry. I’ve strangled the child myself.”

“Good. Now ensure that your wife does not disclose about this to anyone,” she instructs her son. “Bitch. She is giving birth to female babies only. Bitch.” She murmurs.

“Ok. I will.” Saying this, the man throws the bag in the dustbin, and they enter their house back and close the doors with great caution so that no one sees them.

With the break of dawn, the Pied Piper and the lady wake up. The Pied Piper tells all about the incident he saw the last night to the lady. She says that they should complain about this also to the police and expose the culprits.

The Pied Piper agrees with the lady. They both take out the dead child from the dustbin and finding a central place in the city, they make call to the people. In the beginning people are reluctant to listen to them but slowly they start stopping by and listen to them. They narrate about the rape, stoning of the woman to death, and strangulation of the female child who was killed within a few hours after she was born.

Soon a large number of people begin to gather, the crowd grows by the hours and soon turns into a sea of people. The wave could be easily felt.

Seeing the strength of the people, the government, the police, the political leaders, the religious leaders and the court deign to come to them. They arrange for a discussion where all people are allowed to raise their concerns and it is decided that whatever comes out unanimously will become a law.

The Pied Piper lays the dead body of the newly born child who was killed for no fault of hers. He narrates how her father and grandmother killed the baby, a hapless lady is stoned to death and an old lady is raped. But none gets justice.

“But no one lodged any complaint,” one of the policemen says. “How can we take any action and against whom?”

“I’m making the complaint. Why don’t you take my complaint?” Says the Pied Piper.

“You seem to be from some other place. Where are you from?” The policeman asks.

“I’m from the jungle which is at the end of this city.”

“See, you are an outsider. You should better not say anything,” the policeman retorts. “How can you talk about a right here? Stop instigating people narrating these types of emotional stories. It’d be better for you.”

“What? You’re threatening me?”

“I lodged a complaint against those who used to tease me,” the old lady speaks in a harsh voice.

“See, what happened to me?”

“What happened to you?” Another policeman says frivolously. Policemen and others smile.

“You’re smiling? Shame on you?” One person from the crowd says.

“Where’s your husband?” A religious leader speaks up. “This is the responsibility of your husband to protect you. And not the policemen’s or anyone else’s.”

“He was killed by those rascals,” says the lady in broken words.

“Who killed?” A third policeman asks.

“Those who tried to rape me.” The lady sobs.

“Tried to rape?” The religious leader mischievously asks.

“Who raped me,” The old lady bursts into tears.

The Pied Piper tries to say something but the policemen stop him from saying anything.

“What will be our future then?” Another person from the crowd asks.

“Well, we will lodge a complaint,” a religious leader says in a casual way.

“We’ll present the case to the court,” a policeman says.

“And the court will take its own course,” the lawyers say. “Only then justice may be done.”

“But it may take too long to give justice,” a third person from the crowd raises the voice.

“Maybe. But this is the process of law. What can we do?”

Two policemen turn to the Pied Piper. “Do you see that these people who had no voice until now are raising questions after questions? This is only because of you. Go from here immediately or else we’ll put you behind the bars along with the culprits.”

“I’d come here to help people get justice but I see it is too difficult.”

“Why you bother about these people?” Cries out a religious leader.

“They’re well and happy.”

“We cannot guarantee that no incident takes place,” a policeman says. “It may happen anywhere.”

“And what about the lady who was stoned to death.”

“You’re crossing your limit.” A religious leader cries out. “This is very much in our culture. That when a lady turns a witch, we stone her to death. How dare you say a single word against our culture?”

“What is all going on?” Pleads the Pied Piper. “I’m trying to make you understand what is wrong and what is right? And you people are objecting again and again.”

“You’re the one who gathered this crowd,” accuse the policemen. “We had to come down to talk on such nonsense things.”

“You talk against our culture,” a religious leader says.

“You raised people against us. This is illegal,” say the policemen and the lawyers.

“You don’t belong to our community, our city,” cries out a political leader.

“You’re an outsider and you’re fighting for our people? We’ll fight for them. You need not bother.”

“Leave from here right now.” They all cry out in one voice.

One of them pushes the Pied Piper. A man from the crowd runs to hold the Pied Piper.

“If you do not do justice. You’ll lament one day.”

“We say, you leave this place. Immediately!”

“You people will lament. I warn you,” says the Pied Piper.

The person holding the Pied Piper takes him away. Tears have dried up in the old lady’s eyes. The mother whose child was killed is in deep grief. Others too are silent and hopeless. Slowly the crowd disperses.

It’s evening. The sun has just set. Women are putting on the lights in their houses. A slow music is heard from a faraway distance. The music is very lucid and sweet. Gradually the decibel rises. The music fills the whole atmosphere, it creates a strange echo. The music and its echo. Echo and music. Music, echo. Echo, music. The women in their houses stop for a moment to listen to the sweet and magical music. They are hypnotized by the music. They come out of their houses and walk after the Pied Piper. A girl, a teenager, a woman. Many girls, many women. Girls and women. Young and old. Rich and poor. All walk after the Pied Piper. As he passes from streets to streets the female folks come out of their houses. It’s strange that the men folks do not guess what is going on as if they are deaf to the sound and blind to their women going out. The Pied Piper plays the music and takes all the women along with him. He walks away from the city, to the forest from where he came. He enters into the deepest recesses of the forest and vanishes with all female folks forever.

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