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Osaka University

# A Golden Scene

Mohammad Moinuddin

On seashore a shining green oak tree, a fine gold chain tied around it<sup>1</sup> – Pushkin –

I was not a person of very good conduct during my childhood. I tormented the maid servants. I hated laziness very much, and because of that I specifically troubled lazy maids. *Okei* was such a lazy maid. If one asked her to peel an apple, while doing so, she would pause two or three times. If you didn't pin point her immediately she would continue stopping for long, looking here and there with the apple in one hand and the knife in the other. Any one who saw her would think that she had low ability of comprehension. I found her standing stupidly in the kitchen without doing anything, so often. In spite of being a child, with a little disgrace I would get enraged at her strangely and scold her bitterly, as "Hey, *Okei*, the day is short!" like an elderly person. Now, when I think of it, I feel my whole body is trembling as if with cold because of the words that I used to fling on her. Moreover, one day I called her and gave her my picture book that was full of images of hundreds of parading soldiers: soldiers riding horses, soldiers carrying flags in their hands, soldiers with guns on their shoulders and so on. I asked her to cut them out with a pair of scissors. That unskilled *Okei* could barely cut thirty pieces of pictures sitting from dawn to dusk without having her lunch. Yet, she had cut off General's half moustache, clipped off the hand of a soldier carrying a gun in such a manner that it looked like the paws of a bear. I scolded her for each and every mistake. It was summer and *Okei* used to sweat a lot. The pictures of the soldiers that she had cut were all wet with the sweat of her hands. On seeing this, I burst into anger and kicked her. As much as I understood I had, actually, kicked her on the shoulder, but *Okei* holding her right cheek by her hand burst into tears and said weepingly, "Even my parents have never kicked me on my face. I will remember this for ever." Her words were full of moan. It certainly, gave me a very bad feeling. As if it was her fate, I made her life very hard, thereafter. Even now, I am somewhat like that. I can not put up with stupid and bubble headed people.

Yesteryear, I was thrown out by my family. I was distressed within a night. Wandering from door to door, full of tears, taking each day as a new life, I had just begun to think that I would be able to earn my living through writing, but soon I fell sick. By the mercy of some people, I could rent a small house for the summer, near by a tidal sea side area<sup>2</sup> in Funabashi of Chiba Prefecture and some how managed to cook

for myself. Fighting with the night sweat that would leave my nightwear wet, night after night, I notwithstanding had to work. Every morning I could have nothing more than a bottle<sup>3</sup> of cold milk, which peculiarly gave me a feeling of happiness of being alive. I was suffering from severe headache and was exhausted; so much as the blooming oleander flowers in the corner of the backyard were giving me a feeling of fire bursting into flame.

It was around those days, when a policeman, the in-charge of checking the family register turned up at my door. He was a lean and short statured man of about forty years of age. Comparing my name written in the register minutely and repeatedly with my stubbly bearded face, he said, “Oh, aren’t you the little master of ...?” His words had a strong accent of my hometown, thence, “Yes”, I replied casually. “And you?”

The policeman with full of smile in his bony mouth replied,

“Oh! So it’s you. Perhaps, you have forgotten me, but I was a horse-wagon driver in K, almost twenty years before.”

K was the name of my birth place.

“As you can see, I have be-fallen in this world”, I responded without giving a smile.

“No problem”, responded the policeman with a pleasant smile and said, “If you write novels<sup>4</sup>, certainly you will make your way in this world.”

I gave a bitter smile.

“By the way”, the policeman uttered, lowering his voice, “*Okei* very often talks about you.”

“*Okei?*” I could not understand at that moment. “*Okei*, It’s *Okei!* You might have forgotten. She was a maid servant at your home---”

I remembered. Alas, I unconsciously moaned. Sitting there at the entrance<sup>5</sup> in a crouching position with my knees bent, my head dangled aside, and each of my ill treatment that I did with that slow and sluggish maid twenty years ago, floated into my mind, clearly. I was almost unable to bear this.

“Is she happy?” such an impudent question stumbled out of my mouth, while suddenly raising my head. I recall that, certainly an obsequious smile like that of a criminal as well as an accused had come on my lips.

“Yeah, some how”, replying cheerfully with no sign of worry, he wiped the sweat of his forehead with a handkerchief and said, “If you don’t mind, next time I will bring her to express our gratitude towards you”.

I just jumped up on my feet. No! No! It’s not needed, I refused it bluntly. I was feeling an inexpressible sense of humiliation and my body was trembling in agony.

But the policeman was cheerful.

“My children; the eldest son, you know, is working at this railway station. After him, there is a boy, then a girl, and another girl who is just eight years old and has entered into elementary school this year. Now it’s a relief. *Okei* too struggled a lot. What to say, well, certainly there was something different in her approach. It was because she learned managing the households from a high class family like that of yours.” Blushing slightly, he gave a smile and continued, “It’s all by your grace. *Okei* keeps talking about you. In the next holiday, I will certainly bring her along with me so that she can express her gratitude towards you.” suddenly the policeman became serious and said, “Then, excuse me for today. Take care.”

Three days had passed; I was more worried about money than my work. I could not bear to be just closed in the house all the time; hence I decided to go out. As I opened the door to go out towards the beach holding a bamboo walking stick in my hand, I found three people; parents in *Yukata*<sup>6</sup> and a girl child in red western cloth, standing in a row as beautifully as in a picture. It’s *Okei*’s family.

I shouted in a loud and angry voice so strangely that even I myself had never expected. “Have you come? Today, I have to go out for some work. I am sorry but, please come some other day.”

*Okei* had become a gentle middle-aged house wife. The eight years old girl child was looking alike *Okei* when she had been a maid. She kept staring at me with foolish and vague eyes. Before *Okei* could even utter a single word, I ran away with a heavy heart, towards the beach. Slashing the wildly grown grasses on the seashore with my bamboo stick and stamping my every step upon the ground, I crossed the seashore and went straight towards the market without turning even once. What on earth was I doing in the market? Just looking at the posters out side the small theatres as well as peeping in the display windows of garment shops, and so on. Clicking my tongue on the teeth I could hear a whisper from some corner of my heart, saying, you have lost, you have lost. No, it can’t be. After shaking my whole body vehemently, I went on walking. It continued for about thirty minutes and then I turned back towards my house.

Reaching at the seashore, I stopped for a while.

Look, what a peaceful scene it is! *Okei*, her husband and the child, three of them were enjoying and laughing while skimming stones into the sea. Their voice could be heard to the place where I was standing. “Certainly” the policeman after throwing the stone with his full might, said “Isn’t he very intelligent, he will be a great person very soon.” “Of course, of course” *Okei*’s proud rejoicing voice came. “He was different from others since his childhood. He always treated even the inferior people with kindness and benevolence.”

I found myself crying while standing there. The feeling of intense excitement melted away through my tears, making me euphoric.

I have lost. This is good. I have to accept it. Their victory will sparkle on my tomorrow.

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<sup>1</sup> In order to keep the originality of Dazai Osamu's writing, this translation is done directly from the Japanese text and Pushkin's original work has not been referred.

<sup>2</sup> The Japanese word used is *doro no umi* which direct translation would be "Muddy Sea", but as per our findings, the Funabashi sea side which is mentioned in the story indicates to a "Tidal Area"

<sup>3</sup> During that period, the volume of such a bottle was 180 ml.

<sup>4</sup> The Japanese word used in the story could mean both short and long length novel.

<sup>5</sup> The Japanese word used in the story is *shikidai* that stands for a kind of platform in side the house near by entryway where one receives a visitor. This can be found in a traditional Japanese house.

<sup>6</sup> A kind of traditional Japanese clothing made of cotton and is worn during the summer.