

Father

Flashback- "Smack", the slap flew towards me with unimaginable acceleration, or so do I remember, that I fell sliding on the ground, my smooth round cheek developed four valleys, not a word came out from my mouth, breathing heavily, I just sobbed, my father then sat down on the big metal storage box, slurping down the tea that my mother had just brought. With open arms came my mother to calm me down, to shower her love trying to reverse the tragedy that just happened with me. I quickly pushed her back looking at her as if I was trying to say 'betrayal!, you did that to me, you are responsible for this tyranny.'

I was born in a joint family of 6 adults, we were atheists except my mother, who did away with all the religious rituals and *pooja* as it was not allowed in our house. For some reason maybe because atheism is uncommon, when you are atheist you feel uplifted from the general society, it feels like holding a higher ground in terms of intelligence or morals, that you are the enlightened ones and others are still caught in this web of idol worshipping and illogical rituals, which is obviously not true, you can be as dumb and as illogical in things even you are atheist. See the reason is even sounding dumb enough. So anyways, as a small kid, I was this a bit shy, carefree person, intelligent(contested) if you base it on the grades who used to love eating food and many times have gotten in trouble because of it. In the family my grandfather was the head person, the arching figure, the Zeus who said something and it had to be done even if you do not agree to it. He had passed the baton to my uncle and father but still he had to be asked or at least informed before any major decisions, finances in particular. In particular my father besides my uncle is a bit hesitant to talk my grandpa because of the nature of the upbringing they had; my grandfather was strict in his nature and would resort to beating as a corrective measure, moreover he never indulged in to what would be called as parenting, he was just the bread earner for the family. That did not mean he did not care at all, he put emphasis on study and cared about their well-being. This relation between them makes me bring to my own with my father.

As a small kid I was a bit scared of my father, to me he was this not so friendly person whom I interacted with only when he asked me something or someone asked me to convey something to him. I usually tried not to be in the same room with him. I did not share things with him, I would tell it to my mother who in turn would tell it to him. I know he loved me but this gap from my side arose maybe because of the lack of quality time spent together, he was a busy man, he would go in the morning when I would also go to school and mostly came late at night when I was fast asleep. Despite this I had, though little, share of fun with him. I remember he would take me on small bike trips around the neighbourhood. He would grab my small hands and lift me up in the air and rest me on the tank of his bike, he would then kickstart the bike, and the enfield bike would make the classic thumping sound "dag dag dag dag...." and then I would pull the accelerator "dagrrrrrrr dagrrrrrrrrrrr dagrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr", bringing a wide smile on my face. He would often bring for me the chocolates and ice cream that I absolutely loved. He fulfilled the superficial needs. Yet still the deep connection that I shared with my mom was not there with my father. There was this difference in touch. The physical touch with my mom was way more than my father, she would hug me when I came back from school, she would kiss me in joy, she would clasp me when things were going wrong, she would feed me from her hands and bathe me sometimes, all these were missing from my father's side. Since he was busy he did not have much time for me, even during

Sundays he would be busy at times; the few times we sat together was on the dinner or at lunch or when he was teaching me maths or making me read newspapers, and when I made a mistake he would give those gentle taps “pattt” on the top of your head, which were not hurtful physically but emotionally, his touches were rough, mostly they did not come for regular display of love.

I remember this one time when I fetched some water with me and splashed it over the burning earthen stove in the kitchen on which my mother was cooking food, it was so fun to tease my mother, little did I know that this soon was to turn into a horrible nightmare. She yelled “ Suno zara, hey listen” calling my father, telling her what I did. As soon as I heard that yell, I knew in that moment something bad was to go down; my heart started racing, my face turned pale, my eyes all stretched, senses all enhanced, I swiftly ran and hid behind the gate of a storeroom nearby. First my father did some rounds here and there, then my mother started looking for me calling my name again and again but I did not respond, this went on for ten fifteen minutes and lo’ at last after many calls I was found by my father- “Smack” the slap flew towards me with unimaginable acceleration..... .