

RODO

My father had a fine watch. The case was made of some shining metal with a flute bezel. The bracelet was made of stainless steel with sexy buckles. A handsome crown managed its elegant hands. Its mother – of – pearl dial also had a day and date feature.

In summer 1980, when a local vernacular movie, "ORU THALAI RAAGAM" (meaning one-sided love!) got released it instantly became a sensation. The movie OTR became a golden jubilee hit (50 weeks) mesmerising almost all age groups, more particularly the young audience, and I was also a hapless victim! The movie had such a strangling effect on me that, I repeated the movie, 4 times officially (with the knowledge of my parents) and 53 times unofficially. For the money part of it, I had to literally tow the maxim, "beg, steal or borrow". As the begging / borrowing part was not a possibility, I chose the other. My father's proud possession fetched me sixty-five rupees, good enough for those 53 times, sitting in the front bench. As my father kept turning the house topsy-turvy searching for his lost treasure, I was busy indulging in the silver- screen, trying to identify myself!

Going for a movie with the entire family had always been a Diwali to us. We wait for this bi - annual affair with extraordinary expectations as it would conclude with a dinner at some local hotel. This time, my father chose to take our

family to the same theatre which screened OTR, but for a different movie. During intermission, my brother insisted on a pop-corn and my father had to go and get it for us. As he did not return even after the movie started after the interval, my mom insisted me to go and see for him. I reached the refreshment stall only to see a commotion going around, with my father at centre stage, raising his voice in bitter rage. When I tried to return, the pop-corn wala suddenly pointed his fingers towards me and said something to my father. Before I could recognise anything, I had my father's palm prints written all over my face. The reason for his provocation and the repercussion was the watch on the pop-corn wala's wrist, which I had traded for those 53 tickets. Needless to say that our outing got aborted pre maturely and right through our return, I was constantly feeling my father's *fist of fury*, over all parts of my body but I was convinced that I received what I deserved!

After that day, he often remembered that episode and reflected his wrath upon me, both in words as well as in action. Time and again, he used to tell this story to everyone he knew (at times, even to some strangers), be it neighbours, friends or relatives but the narration would not be about selling the watch for movie tickets but trading it for less. His prime grievance would always be that I had been such a moron to trade a diamond as cut-glass! Somehow I always believed that this sinful act of mine had etched a permanent mark in his mind and heart that he could neither forget nor forgive me. Apart from the constant assaults on my stupidity, the lavish praise

about its glory coupled with my deep sense of guilt had only developed a deep hatred inside me, not against my father but against that watch. The fire of revenge was smugly lit inside but kept beneath in sim mode.

My date with the watches started with my first income. My first investment (expenditure) from a bountiful salary of Rs.850/- as a trainee in IAF, was a Titan watch, which I gifted to my brother. As I progressed in life, so did my desire for watches. When it was time to upgrade my watch collection to the Swiss league, I was arrogantly adamant about the brand that haunted me over years and finally I brought home the legend. Not as a wrist watch but as a wall clock, only to hang it in public (in all meanings)! Thus, the stupidest revenge ever, had been successfully avenged!

I expected my father to get mad at me on seeing his most cherished brand being brutally executed in the hall. Instead he hugged me and said, "Well done my son! Now you deserve one for yourself". He also winked and whispered, "By the way, did I tell you that the watch you sold was a fake and the replicator had made a blunder spelling mistake?" and I quipped, "Never mind pa! It's more precious than the original!!!"