

## Girl, Specky too!

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Antim was feeling headache and pain in her eyes for couple of days. Her teacher called her father to the school. Teacher, “Sir, Antim is having continuous pain in her eyes and also headache , please take her to some doctor”.

Antim’s father took her to eyes specialist, the assistant made her sit before a mirror having reflection of letters to be read for test of eyes.

When Antim expressed helplessness to read the last three lines, the assistant put variety of glasses before her eyes. When she achieved comfort level, he retested her eyes with a big machine putting her chin on a small platform.

“Chaudhry Saheb”, yelled out the assistant, “the girl has myopia with -2 reading on tester”.

“What does it mean?”, Chaudhry Saheb looked perplexed.

“ I mean”, clarified the assistant, “that she will have to wear spectacles now onwards otherwise she will go blind”, he uttered in one breath. Antim’s father was petrified as if some lightning struck him “a girl and specky too”, barely escaped his lips. He fell into the feet of doctor.

“Doctor Saheb” he passionately appealed, “I have five daughters, she is the last one, only one is married . I can’t arrange for their wedding, who would marry a specky girl? She is ruined and I along with her”. He looked at Antim as if she was most horrible and abominable creature of this world.

He didn’t talk to her because he was quite assured that it was the fault of her previous birth, may be, she watched some sin with her eyes, (As elaborated by ponga pandit ji) the bitter fruit of that

sin beyond redemption resulted in weakness of eyesight; religion here interfered to utter disadvantage of helpless girl who was doubly cursed- one with specks and other the responsibility of the handicap on her. In couple of weeks, specks were ready for her, but she was not allowed to wear it before relatives or neighbours, only during studies. What will be the reputation of Chaudhry Saheb? He is one such person who has abundance of milk and butter at home and his daughter- specky? So Antim had to follow this strict regimen. She had to condition her eyes that way.

Myopia was getting cruel on her moreover, this selective practice told upon her eyes with an annually increasing number of spectacles. Her father lambasted her for such changes and suffocated little remains of confidence and self esteem in her. On that fateful day, she was least inclined to go home because, the very sight of her was a rabble rouser in her father; poor girl was scared of one who should be most helpful to her in such crisis of life. Antim's teacher noticed her brilliant student drowning in whirlpool of unwarranted circumstances, she questioned her, "Antim, why are you not going from school?"

Antim's incredible out burst into tears shocked the teacher. She was perhaps the only one before whom she could open up her heart. "Madam", she hoarsely cried, "I am specky ,so useless to my family, my father in particular."

The teacher was astonished with the response. She softly said, "What though, you are a good student and spectacles are no barrier in career except few."

"But in marriage", Antim shot a pathetic glance to her teacher, " My father's concern is not my career, only marriage ;in homes like ours, matrimony is sole career whether you like it or not", Antim exuded her bitterness.

Her teacher was now in mood to play her part, her duty to her student, in conciliatory tone she started, "Look darling, people give us choice when we are dependent on them; in reverse case, when we assume our responsibility, we dictate our own terms for us. Moreover,your other sisters are not specky. Are they married? Or at least ,happily married? If no, then don't care for it.Your first relation is with your soul, second with god and third with the world.You will shape up your life. You should feel happy that in shape of spectacles God has given you a chance to avoid quagmire of conventional matrimony and its disastrous consequences which your elder sister suffered when she was charred to death for dowry. You are brilliant, God has given you power of mind if denied power in eyes. Use your faculties ,earn your position with hard work and

patience;the moment you have a standing of your own, everybody including your father will appreciate you and your efforts. Don't depend on others but on you. Suffer your struggle because every good comes out of pain”.

The teacher now silenced herself to note reaction of Antim. Antim resolved to tread on new struggle, she was aware that things were not so easy rather intimidating but she had no other option and the reasonableness to agree on this remote possibility was worth a try.

Antim was wiping off the spectacles, her subordinates were awaiting her response, she wriggled out of her maelstrom and its bitter recollections, she composed herself and said, “Gentlemen, your director is ready for the new challenge, we will work as a team to cure female foeticide.”