

The Perils of Rehab

satire and photo by Dhon Keyothi
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Readers who retain a memory unimpaired by legal advice, and those with an ability to recall misdeeds and embarrassments, may remember Dhon and his fading mentor, the Beloved One. How the sea snake has twisted since that depraved and profitable time!

BO lost his job, house, boats, restaurant, observatory, swimming pool, gold-plated lavatory, cars, trucks, private island accommodation, international holidays and servants, along with his mind; and the people lost their biggest liability, along with the treasury.

Responding to the winds and currents of history, Keyothi decided it was time to cut expenditure, divorce a few wives and enter rehab. Oh what a rehab it was! Dhon defeated the needle, the foil, the bottle, the cap, the cup, the saucer, the teaspoon, the knife, the fork, and the tightly rolled hundred dollar bill.

Dessicated, un-oiled and powder free, Keyothi emerges - a cosmetician's nightmare with his perceptive powers warped by unaccustomed sobriety. He scans the Island of Blood.

At first it's all deja vu - women, judged responsible for the sins of their men, being arrested, tortured and whipped in the streets. But then the Dhon notices something entirely new - glued to low res TV screens, an ethnically cohesive population sits enthralled by the airconditioned inertia of their elected misrepresentatives!

On the buildings and magus around them, countless slaves toil happily in the heat. They heave supplies in and haul waste out, while the cohesive clans tackle more skilful tasks like pressing buttons on remote control units, and raising food to their mouths and mobile phones to their ears.

'Things seem comfortably organised,' mumbles the Dhon in a voice so low that barely half the street hears.

On the writhing magu, cars and motorbikes chase pedestrians and cyclists to the verge of extinction. Mindful of the small print in his insurance policies, Keyothi ducks into a secluded doorway and pulls open a heavy wooden gate to be smitten with the full weight of population density statistics for Blood Island - an avalanche of snoring Bangladeshis!

'Sleeping standing up! I smell the customs of the infidel!' yells the Dhon from beneath the waking men who build the country. Our unaddled hero fumes with nationalist pride. 'Where's the immigration officials when you need them!' he cries to the heavens. 'Well-bribed with our return airfares,' mutter the slaves as they stagger off.

Keyothi contemplates corruption and its attractive remunerations, just as the air fills with floating US dollars betraying the presence of a passing radhun from Resort Rajje, a fantasy kingdom of great luxury and greed lurking in impenetrable parts of the country.

Another resort radhun approaches from the opposite direction and when they meet near our hero, the rain of dollars becomes a blizzard. Traffic stops and horns blare while homeless children scoop armfuls of greenbacks from the air. Within seconds, a low emission truck mounted with solar-powered fans sucks in the cash and expels a steady stream of re-usable foils, bulging biodegradable plastic bags and sparkling chilled recyclable bottles. A live band strikes up, fueled with natural substances, and people pour from their offices, flats, rooms, cupboards and small holes in the ground.

'Whoa! Magu party-time! And totally carbon neutral!' The Dhon is impressed, his brain aflame with unrehabilitated desires. Fortuitously, the radhuns from Resort Rajje nod

kindly in his direction, their narrow eyes flashing amidst twitching ears.

Keyothi, for whom the whiff of a good exchange rate outranks any chemical substitute, is stimulated to perform at his charming best: 'Greetings, foul felons, may your dollars choke your chickens, and the seas swallow your resorts leaving you penniless and pursued for eternity by countless lawsuits.'

'Ah, our old friend the Dhon,' the radhuns smile together flawlessly - an elegant tribute to their PR advisors. 'Do we perceive a little jealousy amongst the jocularity?'

'No more than one should expect when hoarding dollars from the desperate,' suggests our empathetic hero, but there are pressing matters at hand that go straight to Keyothi's mouth: 'I need a few dollars to feed thousands of Bangladeshi wives, children and needy relatives. Their slave husbands and sons can't buy dollars with their cowries at Blood's bank. You've got all the foreign currency - unaudited and unblessed - I'll give you 12.85 shells for each.'

The harmony and pitch of the radhuns' reply - 'GET STUFFED!' - is observed by many to be the most perfect ever heard in the streets of the capital, with the accompanying lyrics also faultlessly on message:

'We want at least 15 or 20 cowries per dollar,
Or maybe we don't want any at all!
We spend enough money in the Blood empire already,
Don't wanna spend anymore at all!
Filling election envelopes, paying slave wage rates,
We pay enough already, enough, enough!
Hiring law-abiding gangs for important negotiations,
Keepin' it all when things get tough!'

Keyothi concedes gracefully. 'That you make a significant contribution to the country's problems cannot be denied. The people won't forget that fact as easily as you forget the families of the men who maintain your kingdoms.'

The rage of the radhuns is lost in the clamour of the crowd as it sweeps them towards the island's main sand pit beneath the towering edifices of Blood's historic heroes who not only enjoy the unbounded love and gratitude of their people but also a lot of their government revenue.

The grateful masses applaud the armoured divisions parading proudly through the pigeons, but Keyothi is most entranced by the final ceremony - a historic re-enactment - where a prone and protesting man in an ironed white shirt is dragged backwards across the pit while his hands and arms are massaged by muscled minions in blue camouflage.

The Dhon rotates towards his radhun retinue and enquires, 'Who's that lucky guy?' Keyothi's companions pat their gold chains and mobile thaveedhu. 'He's the new chief - a grass roots man of the people type - we hold him responsible for the mess BO left behind. He only got elected because the voting was free and fair! Has no appreciation of the importance of doing as little as possible. Corruption is good because it works! We

just have to be patient, starve the slaves and keep the government coffers bare. He'll learn to bargain for his bribes, like all the others.'

'A damning assessment from the pinnacle of business enterprise and experience,' comments Keyothi appreciatively, prompting the radhuns to blush as they prepare to leave. Fond farewells are expected and the Dhon knows how to deliver:

'So, do I get the dollars, flush fiends? Or is the matter too taxing?'