

The Memory Decoder

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REHMAN double-checked the apparatus; he went through his notes and tested the wiring. Everything seemed fine. Taking a deep breath, he switched the power button on. Less than a minute later he knew he had made it.

After fourteen hard years, he had succeeded in inventing a machine that could extract memories from people and

project them into someone else's mind as dreams. He used five electrodes that had to be connected to the head of the subject. One of the electrodes sent minute electric signals to the brain's memory centre till it attained a different frequency. The electrodes sent the waves through the receptors of the neurons located on the skin surface. When a particular threshold frequency was reached, the brain sent out signals.

The other four wires received these signals from the brain and relayed them back to the machine which recorded and converted them into more comprehensible forms: dreams. These dreams could then be vividly projected into the mind of anyone connected to the machine's other end. The memories shared thus, could, however, not be chosen at will. Generally, the signals for the most striking memories were picked and projected by the machine.

Rehman decided to name this incredible device, "The Mind Reader". He was certain that this device would bring him indescribable fame and money. Excited, Rehman decided to organise a public demonstration by way of which he would create a ripple in the society. He had accomplished something great and now wanted all the fame he could get. He booked an auditorium, called the media, printed fliers, and even publicised on TV. People from all walks of life came in hordes to his grand event; students and teachers, amateurs, and scientists, young and old, men and women all thronged the hall.

Rehman was full of enthusiasm and curiosity. This was his day to create history. As everybody settled down, he gave the commencement speech and explained what his machine did. He then asked for volunteers he could use his machine on. He would extract their memories using his machine and would then narrate precisely what he had seen in their past. He and the volunteer would embark on the journey together – when connected to the machine, they would both see the same memory as a dream.

Curious and excited, many volunteered for the demonstration. Feeling like a magician about to pull a rabbit out of the hat, Rehman picked a boy in his early teens as his first subject. This boy, Sameer, was markedly nervous. As Sameer took his seat on the stage, Rehman connected all the wires and dramatically turned towards the audience who were on the edges of their seats. The crowd went silent when the machine got turned on and both men fell into a stupor.

In his dream, Rehman found himself in a library. The lights were on, clearly, it was nighttime. He was probably eight years old, crouched in the corner of the room, positively terrorised. A huge boy, at least 8 years older than him was standing over him and leering. "So, here's where I leave you, have fun with the ghosts" jeered the big bully. He turned the lights off and disappeared. Rehman screamed and stumbled towards the exit, but the boy was gone, and the door was locked.

Rehman jerked his eyes open. He was back with the audience on stage. He looked at Sameer who looked downcast and agonised. Hot sweat trickled down his face. Rehman had actually experienced the whole event through Sameer's perspective when he was eight. He was still numb. He had gone back to an age where bullies and darkness were the greatest fears of life. It had been more real than he had ever imagined.

"That boy made me stay there all night. When I was found in the morning, I was faint with shock and on the verge

of death. I have never really recovered from the distress," mumbled the boy wiping sweat from his forehead. Reliving the moment had been painful. Everyone in the hall was mesmerised as Rehman recounted what he had seen, and Sameer verified the details.

Many volunteers followed. Over the next few hours, Rehman lived a hundred different lives. He was the teen being raped on the street, a young soldier in a battleground with a bullet on his chest, a disabled child being laughed at in school, a poor mother unable to feed her child, a child seeing his father hitting his mother and a parent facing his child's dead body.

No matter who he was, there was one thing in common: sorrow, an emotion that united mankind, unlike any other bond. He suffered that day in a multitude of ways and in every sense truly empathised with his fellow human beings. It was not that the people who attended the demonstration were all victims; it was just that every person walking the face of the earth is a victim of life. Though we learn to move on and make other happy memories, there are some things that never leave us. Our mind pushes them away but does not erase them. Things that we clearly want to forget are the things that are etched on our minds forever. *Mind Reader* just brought forth those dreaded memories and thus connected everybody through the invisible bond of human suffering. Not a single living person can claim to have never experienced sorrow. Life makes sure that everyone gets his or her fair share of trouble. The magnitude with which grief manifests may be different for different people but it touches all lives, nonetheless.

This discovery was more colossal than even his great invention. Rehman faced an upheaval; a tornado of emotion rose within him. He realised how fake and hollow all his dreams had been. Fame, money, and all worldly comforts that his machine had promised, now seemed futile. What really mattered to him now was humanity.

If only his machine could ease the pain of someone, it would be the greatest gift he ever could get. He realised now that his machine could be of great service. It would help convict criminals and acquit innocents; it would help the abused and victims overcome the horrors of their past.

Rehman left the hall a changed man that day. He decided not to patent his invention, to dedicate his invention to the service of mankind. He made many such machines at his own cost and sent them free of cost to psychiatric hospitals. Though he never became a millionaire, his life was full of the true treasure of life, fulfilment. Next year, he was surprised to discover that he had been nominated not just for the Nobel Prize for Science but also for the Nobel Peace Prize. He had truly made history!

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