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## **Inanimate?**

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A beaming middle aged couple enters a mobile store. The man is dark and bulky with a sharp look (like out of a classic Bengali film), the woman much younger, the innocent, happy committed kind. They ask for a mobile which has both the features of type and touch to suit the needs of the man. The couple happily select a black and white Nokia with a 2.5 inch touchscreen and a keypad. The salesman congratulate them on having bought a good set. They leave beaming (a feature not common in middle aged couples).

In the cab, the woman proudly takes control of the situation. She gushes saying “They took us for a husband and wife”. The man smiles “I like it”. She promises to help load all his contacts into the new phone and his favourite songs as well. In his flat she immediately puts the mobile on charge and reads the instructions. They lie together happy in their embrace.

The next day the woman comes and immediately sets about the arduous task of saving his contacts from one phone to another and also a song in Bengali.. “Aamar bhitor o bahire ontore ontore. Achho tumi...hriday jure.. .’(You permeate my whole being ...within and without’) symbolizing their love. The man comes and understands how the camera functions and sets about taking her pics. She is all over him, wears his specs and poses. They make love and take some very intimate pics. They are happy in their own world, they make a world of their own.

The mobile becomes a part of their lives, a small device but because they had purchased it together, had extended their intimacy into it, it contained bits of them it had become a sort of baby. They checked each other’s mobile freely, but every time the man got a call from his female friends when they were together, either in bed or travelling, the woman would be perturbed. He was managing the other women in his life to give her that special place. She knew there was no



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alternative so she took it though with a grain of salt. She just couldn't do without him, he filled all the pores of her body and mind ...”Aamar bhitor o bahire....’.

Science says the whole cosmos is in a state of flux. All animate, inanimate things change over time. Humans have evolved and so have their inventions. One day the mobile had some fault, it wasn't functioning properly. The man was too busy to go to the service centre, so he asked another woman, a subordinate to get it checked. She got it repaired. He didn't like paying for repairs again and again, he made her give up her spare set as she had got herself a new mobile. She obliged him and he made her feel special. Meanwhile his beloved who was being possessive about the mobile because she had attached all her emotions to it, suffered. She had reservations about the other woman having to do anything with 'their' mobile. She was pained to see their 'baby' easily replaced by someone's used set in the most abrupt manner. All her complaints, expressions of anger and pain fell on deaf ears; she was rebuked for misbehaving. She was told it was his mobile and none of her business whosoever repaired it or whose set he used. He oozed from all the pores of her being, she was animated about the mobile and her feelings for it. The sight of it in another's hand and her mobile in his burnt her heart. Every time the phone rang ...and sometimes the two phones rang simultaneously she felt stupefied. She had left a part of her being in the mobile. He had the memory card removed and all their stored intimacy vanished with it. The world of their own crumbled. One day he said “I am mine” to contradict and nullify his earlier lovey lovey committed “I am yours”. The girl was shattered. An inanimate object, a device had once given her such joy, it had animated her life. The device broke down; its owner found a new set. A new set would not have hurt but a used set brought along many associations, it had a discourse of its own. It had established its actual owner in the centre and pushed the woman fancying his mobile to be 'theirs', to the edges. It changed all equations in their relationship and eventually as the used mobile got replaced by a new smartphone probably gifted by this other woman their relationship too changed forever.

Our girl learnt her lessons- initially crying, howling, foaming and fuming to calm and stoic acceptance of facts and the knowledge that one mustn't take people's words literally. She gradually learnt the ways of the world- a thing belongs only to the person who pays for it, all other claims of



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ownership and association are superficial and temporary. She has counselled herself well and doesn't pry to see which set he is using, against which pic he has saved her number, what songs are there etc. She knows whatever or whoever might be there might be deleted any moment. Things and devices are inanimate but do they remain so when human touch and care imbue, personify and identify them with their love, resistance or indifference they at some point of time shared with these things? People preserve the belongings of their near and dear ones as they are tokens of their memories. Memories of joy, laughter, sorrow, belonging and pain ...memories which cannot be erased... "Aamar bhitor o bahire ontore ontore...achho tumi...hridoy jure..."(You permeate my whole being...within and without...you fill my heart..).