They look upon me as a rebel. There is a long list of criminal charges against my name. I am regarded as a misfit in their civilized world. The government has probably announced a reward for my arrest. I am different, they say—maybe anti-social, or barbaric, or a dangerous combination of other such disparaging adjectives. These adjectives, I feel, when linked to my name, seem to magnify my personality. The mere mention of my name sends a shiver down the spines of so-called civilized individuals.

Am I so frightening?
I don’t think so.
I know that I am not a superman. I am just another ordinary human being born into a modern, self-centred era. Maybe I am not as kind-hearted as some who live in this age. Maybe my looks arouse revulsion and my thoughts are diabolical. But, for me, life is just a bizarre blend of discordant moments.

I don’t remember when I began to take note of the world around me. I do not know the exact date of my birth. The man who stamped his name on me to give me my identity was in no way important. It was enough for me that I was a human child. My natal hearth was somewhere in a dirty, squalid shack in some nameless land unnoticed, unidentifiable on
the world map. I don’t know whether I should pity or thank the woman who carried an ill-shaped, rickety creature like me in her womb for months and lived on the satisfaction that her motherhood gave her. More often than not, my heart hankered after the soothing touch of her bony, turmeric-tinted hands. Later, when I realized that one has to strive hard to survive in this cruel world, I tried to bury those feelings deep within me.

I recognized that the planet I live on is an evolving mass. Civilizations change, and I wondered whether human civilization was heading toward progress or decadence. Probably the latter, I thought. Enormous frustration boiled up within me and enveloped my very being as the truth dawned upon me.

It must have been an ominous hour at which I slid out of my mother’s womb to land on a little patch of damp earth and began to whimper, beating my tiny hands and feet as the light of the morning sun hit my eyes. A mysterious, indistinct voice whispered in my ears, “You are the Lord of Destruction. Look at the vast desert of black loss stretched ahead of you. This is where you are fated to live—where poverty, pain, hunger, and deceit reign. Your arrival has heralded Doomsday.”

The tableaux of terrible memories trudged past me, each one a witness to the truth of the prophecy pronounced at the time when I made my fateful entrance onto this planet.

One of the bitterest of these memories was the silent suffering of my innocent father. He had within him an element of honesty worthy of King Yudhisthir, which destroyed him. He proved to be a misfit in a society that thrived on crime and corruption when he refused to honour a forged bill. False charges were made against him, and he was dismissed from his job. His efficiency, honesty, and sincerity could not save him. He inflicted the punishment of self-exile on himself and moved to another place with his family.

His daughter, the eldest of his children, decided to shoulder the responsibility of the family and, with what little education she had, managed to get a low-paying job. But things only grew worse. Like most girls in a similar plight, she was constantly hounded by a bunch of lewd, amoral young men. Finally, one day, as she was on her way home from work, they forced her into a car and took her to some unknown place. My father lodged a First Information Report at the police station, and a case was
opened. But the sons of big shots are always beyond the reach of law. Sometime after they abducted her, they sent her back, unhurt. I don’t know whether they were moved by pity or fear. But the ordeal was too much for my sister to bear. She strangled herself. Her body hung from the hook in the bedroom.

My father sat on the veranda dry-eyed, his mouth hanging open. As he sat there, with his hand on his head and his vacant gaze fixed at nothing in particular up in the sky, a nicely decorated jeep fitted with a loudspeaker drove by the back of our house, broadcasting feminist slogans.

Hazy images of social progress began to move along the track of my memory, one after another, and a muffled cry of despair escaped my throat, despite my best efforts to suppress it. I could see a college teacher assaulted by goons disguised as social workers for the offence of catching red-handed a student who was cheating on an examination. There was another—an old man. Some hooligans snatched his only means of survival, his pension payment, from him as he was walking down a crowded road. The man screamed, but no one came to his rescue; the motorbike sped away and blended into the stream of vehicles flowing down the road.

The inability of my father to work within a corrupt system; the agony of my helpless mother, who could do nothing except curse her fate; the picture of the lifeless, pathetic body of my sister were tests too tough for me to endure. Determined to seek the help of those who held the sceptre of justice, I approached the men at the helm. But no one had any compassion for me. I saw them lurching out of a bar in broad daylight. Their glazed eyes did not notice a pitiable creature like me. Nor did my appeal and my grievances reach their callous ears. Instead, I was jeered at, kicked to the roadside like a stray dog. When I saw the men in power conduct themselves in this manner, shame spilled over me, like some dark fluid. “My life might be worse than that of a street dog,” I concluded gloomily, “but the morals of these human beings are no better than those of the dog.”

“Why should you live such a bleak life?” a voice inside me asked. “Stop being a living corpse,” it advised. So I decided to join the mainstream and become one among the many who believe that social progress and the death of morality go hand in hand. I would release the brute lying dormant in me and live life to the hilt. I would not be a defeatist like my father, an honest teacher. He had failed to face challenges and had cowered in
the face of every little thing. I would not shed helpless tears like him or waste time cursing society. Nor would I blame or beg God. I have learned that one does not need a God in order to survive in the jungle of human beasts; one needs the craft to counter the stack of odds. There is nothing called God. If ever there was one, he is dead now. That God would never have foreseen how treacherous life could turn out to be!

Hence, I took a vow to eliminate my humanity. First, I killed my conscience; next, I severed the ties of relationships. I knew that no man can kill another unless he kills himself first. I wiped out all sense of righteousness, ruthlessly rubbed all morals and ideals from the canvas of my soul. I was filled with abhorrence when I watched the old values, humanitarian principles, metamorphosing under the pressure of selfish motives. Heavenly bodies have never violated the law of nature and have never been guided by selfish interests, nor have air and water ever been miserly in showering their benefits upon humanity. The human being is perhaps the most uncouth, unscrupulous creature in God’s world, I decided.

Slowly, I began to lose faith in beauty. I could not stand the fragrance of flowers. I would have liked to uproot all flowering plants and grow a forest of cactuses, the lightest touch of which would draw blood. Words like pity, compassion, penitence, and love had no meaning as far as I was concerned. Crimes filled me with elation. I rejoiced at the sight of a mother trading her child for a handful of rice, the dishevelled hair and torn clothes of a molested woman, the gory, disfigured body of a murdered human being, or an educated boy reduced to polishing shoes by the roadside. Humans fought bloody battles with other humans at the smallest provocation. I was terribly excited at the sound of the battle cry.

I am eager to have all human virtues replaced by a brute instinct. I shall send a destructive stir through whatever calm still somehow manages to exist. The virus of annihilation bred in the heaps of violence and terrorism around me has entered my blood and proliferated. I will contaminate civilization and extinguish it. I will shoot an arrow of conspiracy and distrust to pierce humanity at its very heart. I will scatter seeds of fiendish crime everywhere. I shall laugh aloud when Mother Earth begs from the Creator the boon of blessed barrenness. “Let the world that has been shunned by humanity be eliminated,” she will cry in despair. She has reached a stage where she cannot foster new life—she cannot.
lend it her salubrious lap to grow up in. I represent the final batch of humankind she has produced. And I am her loved one. The memory of my noble precursors might at times bring a flood of nostalgic tears to her eyes, but she knows the truth—that it is this last batch of humanity that can guide her to the path of salvation. The robotic human beings of the twenty-first century will spin around in a diabolical whirlpool until catastrophe strikes. Mother Earth might be muttering curses, camouflaged as benediction, on me.

But I will never die. I am the man of the century. I shall preserve and nurture my being and continue to exist in the demonic, spiralling tides of dissolution.