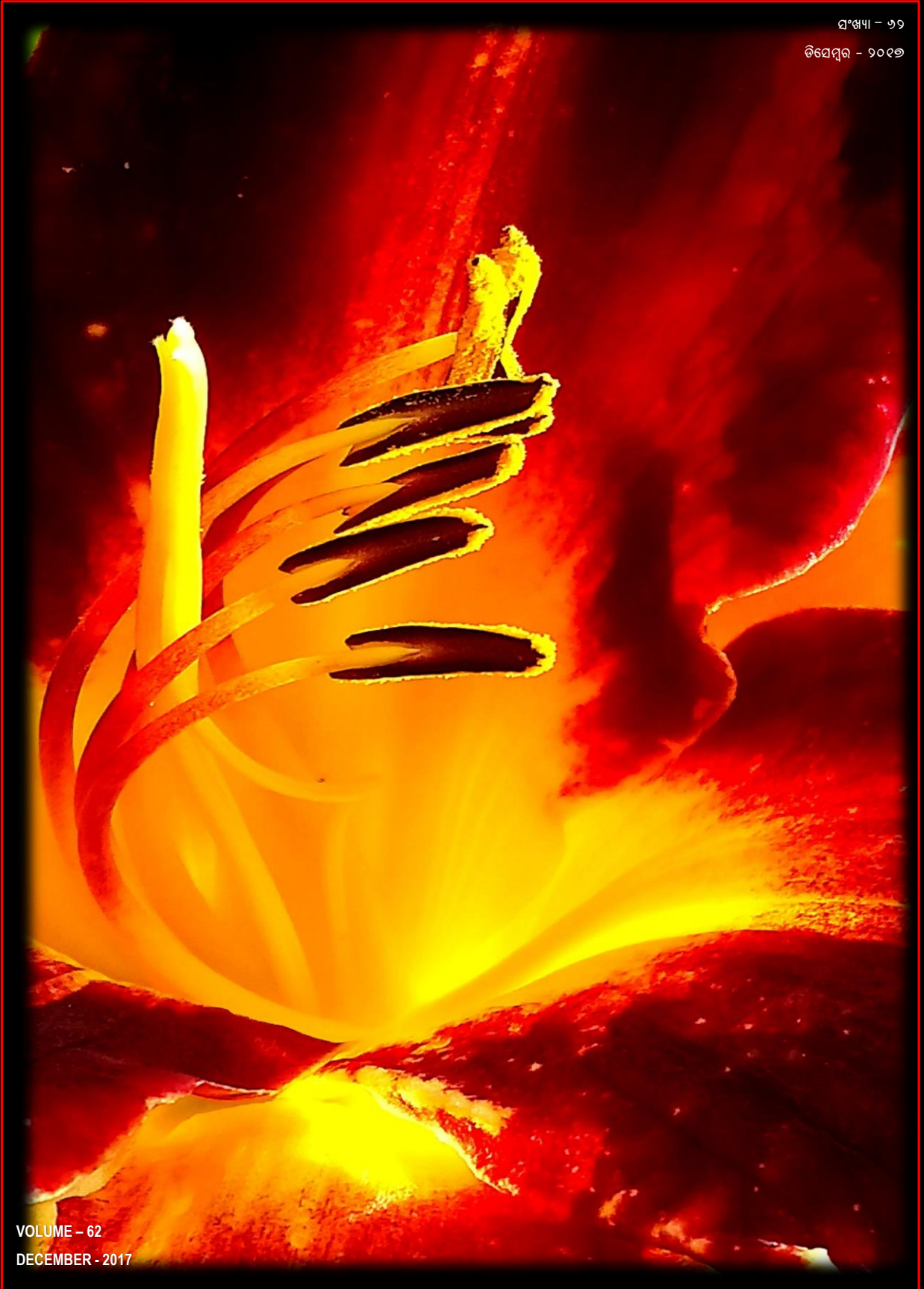




ଉତ୍କର୍ଷ

ପଂଖ୍ୟା - ୨୨  
ଡିସେମ୍ବର - ୨୦୧୭



VOLUME - 62  
DECEMBER - 2017

**UTKARSA**  
A NEWSLETTER OF ODISHA SOCIETY OF AMERICAS

UTKARSA | VOLUME - 62, DECEMBER, 2017

# ଓସା

ଆମେରିକା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜ



ଆମେରିକା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜର ମୁଖପତ୍ର

ସଂଖ୍ୟା - ୬୨ - ଡିସେମ୍ବର - ୨୦୧୭

## ଉତ୍କର୍ଷ



# UTKARSA

A NEWSLETTER OF ODISHA SOCIETY OF AMERICAS

VOLUME - 62 DEEMBER - 2017

*This edition of Utkarsa has incorporated hyperlinks and QR codes for a multi-dimensional experience*



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# UTKARSA

A NEWSLETTER OF  
ODISHA SOCIETY OF AMERICAS

VOLUME – 62      DECEMBER - 2017

# ଉତ୍କର୍ଷ

ଆମେରିକା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜର ନୂଖପତ୍ର

ସଂଖ୍ୟା – ୬୨      ମାର୍ଚ୍ଚ – ୨୦୧୭

## Lalatendu Mohanty

President

## ଲଳତେନ୍ଦୁ ମହାନ୍ତି

ସଭାପତି

## Susil Panda

Vice-President

## ସୁଶୀଳ ପଣ୍ଡା

ଉପ-ସଭାପତି

## Amar Senapati

Secretary

## ଅମର ସେନାପତି

ସମ୍ପାଦକ

## Sachi Pati

Treasurer

## ସଚ୍ଚି ପତି

କୋଷାଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷ

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Anu Pranay Mishra  
Julie Acharya Ray  
Nageswar Rajanala  
&  
Prasanta Kumar Bhunya

## ସମ୍ପାଦନା ମଣ୍ଡଳୀ

ଅନୁ ପ୍ରଣୟ ମିଶ୍ର  
ଜୁଲି ଆଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ରାୟ  
ନାଗେଶ୍ୱର ରାଜନାଲ  
ଏବଂ  
ପ୍ରଶାନ୍ତ କୁମାର ଭୂୟାଁ



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## *Editor's Message...*

**Dear OSA members,**

As the editorial team for OSA, we are privileged to document, publish and promote the creative spirit of OSA. We look forward to finding avenues to promote talents and skills in the community on the national platform and also create networking opportunities for you to engage with other OSA member families in new and meaningful ways.

For 2018 - 2019, we are planning several initiatives which you will find exciting - Please engage with us and share your thoughts and ideas so we may further fine tune the platform.

### **1. Focus on Youth engagement:**

We are working on several initiatives to increase youth participation in OSA activities. We will share a few ideas here:

#### **a. New annual national competition on Visual Arts for youth:**

We are working with OSA 2018 Convention team to launch a new national visual arts competition for students in the following categories:

**Painting / Sketches**

**Pure Photography**

**Creative Digital Art/Photography**

**Videography**

**Anything related to Art, Culture and Literature of Odisha**

Please look forward to the announcement and guidelines in the near future.



## **b. Promoting & Celebrating youth accomplishments on the national platform:**

Did you know [Pariket Mohapatra of PA represented India in the Under 20 world Ice Hockey championships in 2017?](#)

Or

that [Shrutika Padhy of NJ, was in the finals of the Scripps Spelling Bee?](#)

We are eager to publish and promote national level accomplishments of our youth. Please reach out to us with their stories.

## **02. Focus Social Media:**

We are working on revamping our Social Media presence in Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter and will focus on engaging members in new ways.

## **03. OSA Press:**

We are planning to self publish one new book each year which is a compilation of works by OSA members. We will publish guidelines for this initiative in the near future.

## **04. OSA TV on YouTube:**

Several young adults and youth have reached out to us with an interest in video production - filming, editing, sound etc. We are planning an initiative to form small video teams at the chapter level to produce mini-videos and lay the foundations for a OSA TV channel in YouTube.

## **05. Promoting OSA Entrepreneurs:**

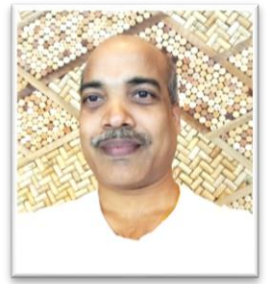
Do you run a business, franchisee or a non-profit? Tell us how we can help.

We would love to hear your ideas and feedback on these initiatives and anything else you would like us to consider. Please also let us know if you would like to volunteer on any of the initiatives. We welcome your involvement to promote the initiatives in your chapters.

## **Editorial Team**



# ଆମେ ଓ ଡିଆ...ଆମ ଓ ଡିଶା...!!!



॥ ଅପୁନରାବର୍ତ୍ତନ ॥

ଭାଇ - ବନ୍ଧୁ - କୁଟୁମ୍ବ

ଆମ୍ଭ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ହୃଦୟ ଦିବ୍ୟ ବ୍ରହ୍ମତ୍ଵରେ ଜୁଡୁରୁଡୁ । ସଂଶୟ, ଜଞ୍ଜାଳ ଆଉ ଦୁନିଆ ଦାଉରେ ବେଳେବେଳେ ସେଇ ହୃଦୟ ବୁଡ଼ିଯାଏ; ନିଆଁ ପାଉଁଶରେ ଘୋଡ଼ି ହେଲା ପ୍ରାୟେକ । ଆଉ ବାଟ ହୁଡ଼ି ଯାଏ ଏଇ ମନ-ହୃଦୟ-ପ୍ରାଣ । ପୁଣି ଏଇ ମନ-ପ୍ରାଣ-ହୃଦୟ ବୁଝେ ବୁଝାଏ ନିଜକୁ; ଘରବାହୁଡ଼ା ହୁଏ ମଣିଷର । ଏଇ ବିଶ୍ଵବ୍ରହ୍ମାଣ୍ଡରେ ତେଣୁତ ଏକାକାର ଓ ଏକଧାରରେ ବହି ଚାଲିଛି । ଏଇ ଜଞ୍ଜାଳରୁ ଅନ୍ୟକୁ ମୁକୁଳେଇବାର ପ୍ରୟାସ ତା'ପରର କଥା; ପ୍ରଥମେ ନିଜକୁ ମୁକ୍ତ କରିବାକୁ ହୁଏ ।

ଅହଂ ବ୍ରହ୍ମାସ୍ମି;

ଏଇ ପଦକ ହୃଦବୋଧ କରି ଆପଣାକୁ ଆଲିଙ୍ଗନ କରି ନିଅ ଥରେ ଭାଇ ମୋର । ସେଇତ ସତ୍ୟ ଆଉ ନିତ୍ୟ । ପ୍ରକୃତି ସହ ପାଦେ ପାଦେ ଚାଲି ମୁଁରୁ ଆମ୍ଭେ ଆଡ଼କୁ; ସ୍ଥିରରୁ ନିତ୍ୟମନ୍ୟ ହେବାରେ ହିଁ ମୁକ୍ତି ।

“ସ୍ମୃତୀତିସ୍ମୃତ୍ତ ବୀଜଟିଏ ବିନା ଶବ୍ଦରେ ବିନା ଆଡ଼ମ୍ବରରେ ମହୀରୁହ ହୋଇଯାଏ ।”

ଜୀବନ ଅତି ନୀରବରେ ଅନ୍ତୁଡ଼ିଶାଳରୁ, ଜନ୍ମ, ଶୈଶବ, କୈଶୋର ,ଯୌବନ ଓ ଜରା ପଥ ଦେଇ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣାୟୁଃରେ ଲୀନ ହୁଏ । ଏଥିରେ କଣ କିଛି ରହସ୍ୟ ଥାଏ! ଥାଏ କେବଳ ସତ୍ୟ-ଦିବ୍ୟ-ନିତ୍ୟର ମୁକ୍ତ ଛାପ । ସେଇ ଅବବୋଧର ଅଧିଗମ ହିଁ ମୁକ୍ତି ।

ଓସା ପରିବାର ଆଉ ତା'ସହ ଉତ୍କର୍ଷର ଏଇ ଯାତ୍ରାର ଅଭିପ୍ରେତାର୍ଥ ମହତ ହେଉ ।

-ପ୍ରଭୁ

**ଜୟ ଓଡ଼ିଆ...ଜୟ ଓଡ଼ିଶା...ଜୟ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ...!!**

ସମ୍ପାଦନାମଣ୍ଡଳୀ ସହ

ପ୍ରଶାନ୍ତ କୁମାର ଭୂୟାଁ

ସମ୍ପାଦକ

ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବିଭାଗ

prasantabhunya@gmail.com

# ଓସା

ଆମେରିକା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜ



ଆମେରିକା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜର ମୁଖପତ୍ର

ସଂଖ୍ୟା - ୬୨ - ଡିସେମ୍ବର - ୨୦୧୭

## ଉତ୍କର୍ଷ



Executive  
Messages

## UTKARSA

A NEWSLETTER OF ODISHA SOCIETY OF AMERICAS

VOLUME - 62 DEEMBER - 2017



[www.odishasociety.org](http://www.odishasociety.org)





## *President's Message*



Dear Friends

As we come to the end of 2017 and ready to welcome 2018, I wish all members and their families a happy, healthy and blessed New Year.

I am excited to write my very first message as the new President of Odisha Society. Being a late entrant to the Society, I consider myself a new comer and possibly, a new generation OSA Member (conceding the fact that I hold limited knowledge on history of OSA). I have a story to tell. It's a true story, story of guilt, but it's my story and may be the story of many of us.

It was year 2003, almost ten years since I immigrated to this country. I had heard about the Odisha society but never thought of a need to be part of it and maybe I was content with my life with few non-Odia friends immigrated together. In fact, I was in New Jersey during 2003 convention at Princeton, but didn't feel like attending it. Primarily because I didn't know any other local Odias or possibly due to the lackluster OSA image portrayed to me. It was unfortunate that I judged the society even before I experienced myself. Growing up at Rourkela, I hardly had patience to listen to classical music nor had any interest to watch Odia movies or enjoy Odissi dance. Hindi influence made me hide my Odia identity. Feelings for other Odia were more like

**“ଗାଁ କନିଆଁ ସିଂଘାଣୀ ନାକି ।”**

After few years, our daughter started going to school and we had to cut down our visits to Odisha. Surprisingly, the feel of being far away from near & dear ones creped in. Suddenly, Odisha became more attractive and listening to Odia voice felt way pleasant than before. At the same time, we were struggling to decide whether to make this place our new home or go back. But one thing we realized, no matter where we stay, where we



go, who are our friends, we will always be known as Odia and our daughter will always be considered of Odia origin. Days will not be far when she would like to know more about her heritage than we can relate to. So, we started going to few Odia events, tried to infuse some Odia culture into her while trying to fit-in with the society. Soon, I was requested to coordinate the Kumar Purnima festival for NY/NJ chapter. I worked wholeheartedly and met some of the true volunteers who worked without any prejudice. I understood the challenges of managing a non-profit totally run by volunteers. My respect for volunteers rocketed. Hearing people calling me “Bhaina” made me felt nostalgic. I felt being part of the group where I really belong. My uneasiness of calling USA my new home gradually disappeared. Meeting others, sharing good old days from childhood invigorated my lovely memories.

I know many of us are/were in same boat as I was fifteen years back. I also agree that we just need 6 or 8 close friends to hang out. But we need a village, with brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, grandparents, temples, ଉତ୍ସାହ, dance, music, celebration, a support system to really grow. That’s how we grew up, isn’t it? That’s what exactly the Odisha Society provides. Earlier you had few friends and now the whole organization is around you and your family. This is the place where you connect with others, express yourself, build a network, share the ideas, improvise your philanthropy, find a mentor or increase your own tolerance. This safety net is something you cannot quantify nor can measure.

**AND THAT WAS THE REASON I FELT PROUD TO JOIN THE ODISHA SOCIETY.**

Odisha society is not perfect but you are open to make the society the way you want to. There will be a personality clash but not “one” person owns the organization. Now we have a strong group of passionate individuals in leadership positions at national level and local level, with lot of new ideas and positive energy. Please come forward to support them. Let’s turn the mirrors to windows.



Now, I take this opportunity to highlight some of the milestones we reached during 2017 due to strong conviction of past & present leadership, and most importantly, due to the dedicated OSA volunteers.

## **Highlights of Year 2017**

### **2017 Convention in a Cruise**

OSA's Annual Convention on board the cruise ship and at Bahamas Islands from June 30th through July 3rd, 2017 to celebrate Odia Culture and Heritage. The Convention was attended by three generations of Odias living in Americas as well as from Odisha joined in this journey as a show of solidarity and cultural integration.

### **Introducing OSA Social Media**

OSA realized that Social Media plays a major role for all its members and it is the best way to communicate easily and quickly. Besides OSANet & OSA Magazine, this is another mode of communication exclusively to members and branding OSA better among non-members.

### **Members Survey**

We wanted to hear from you on things that matters you the most as a member of the society. It was a brief survey on four categories covering OSA Vision and members voiced their opinion which the Executive Team is targeting to initiate in coming days.

### **OSA funded Odisha Public eLibrary inaugurated by CM**

OSA raised Phailin disaster contribution finally taken a concrete shape. After 4+ years of ups and downs, finally the OSA funded, proposed, and driven Urban Model Public Library (Odisha Public e-library, Berhampur) was inaugurated by Odisha CM Sri Naveen Patnaik on 31st August in Berhampur during the 150th celebration of Berhampur BMC



## **OSA New Initiative - Promoting Odia Culture in North America**

OSA Board of Governors feels strongly in promoting Odia culture beyond Odia community. It encourages the chapters to find avenues to promote Odia culture - art, music, food and dance and be the brand ambassador for Odias in North America. As approved by Board of Governors, OSA will fund up to \$250 per event.

## **OSA 2018 Convention**

The OSA convention 2018 takes place at Detroit, the motor city of the world. The Convention Team lead by Sisir Senapati is Detroit Chapter are working hard to showcase the theme - Bridging Generations: Celebrating ODIA unity. Welcome to the great annual extravaganza of culture, music, fun and intellect of we Odias!

## **OSA Impact**

We know it's hard to stay updated on everything happening in Odisha. That's why we're dedicated to keeping you informed – we speak to on-the-ground NGO's, gather insights from the most important stakeholders, and summarize the latest academic research reports – all sent straight to your inbox on Sunday morning. An OSA initiative to drive social impact in our home state of Odisha. Please click here to subscribe to OSA Impact Newsletter.

## **Enhance member engagement and experience**

OSA publishes a quarterly newsletter to communicate society news, announcements and articles written by members. The editors are working in the following initiatives in 2018

- Enhance member engagement and experience with Utkarsa by integrating social media
- Increase engagement of youth members in publication of Utkarsa by integrating alternate forms of expression including blogs, audio and video.

The editors invite ideas and suggestions from all members related to the initiatives to OSA editors.



OSA Supported few unfortunate Incidents involving Odias.

Lately OSA has positioned itself as a spokesperson for all Odias living in or visiting North America. Few Odias reached out us thru OSA Helpline while he stood by Odia businessman impacted due to hate crime.

## **Plans of Year 2018**

### **OSA Golden Jubilee Celebration Planning**

OSA will turn 50 Years in 2019, one of the few Indian societies in North America. Besides a marquee convention, celebrations need to happen in all parts of the countries. Revisiting OSA Membership. With changing immigration landscape, OSA needs to evolve to attract new Odias and Odias working on short term projects. A team is currently working on this in order to recommend BOG with their findings.

### **Branding Odisha Society**

OSA needs to work on branding itself to promote the work it has been doing for years and the impact it is making to the community hear and back home.

### **New Strategic Initiative based on Member Survey**

Recent Members Survey result showed the following top three items that the Executive Team is committed to initiate this year:

1. Promote Odia Music, Dance, Food & Art beyond Odia Community (87%)
2. Build Members Support Groups (Health, Legal, family, Technology, Indian consulate etc.) (81%)  
and
3. Promote Youth mentorship/OSA Big Brother Big Sister (74%)



## **An Appeal**

Due to condensed 2017-18 budget, OSA needs sponsorship for various awards initiatives to promote Odia culture. Please use this link to help the society by donating OSA as well as redirecting your matching company contributions.

With Regards,

**Lalatendu Mohanty**

President

**OSA**

[president@odishasociety.org](mailto:president@odishasociety.org)



## *Vice President's Message*



Dear Friends,

Very happy to see this edition of Utkarsa being published. Many thanks to the dynamic editorial board for all the effort they have put together to bring forward such a beautiful publication.

The new OSA executive team has started many new initiatives and has a lot to do coming 18 months, including the Golden Jubilee convention. We are looking at streamlining our membership to encourage more members to make us stronger. Based on the survey results, we are encouraging promotion of Odia culture in mainstream events across north america. We are also encouraging young adults to be more active in the bigger Odia community.

Personally it has been exciting six months since I took the responsibility that of the Vice President of this esteemed organization. I have been meeting and talking with many members I would not have had the opportunity otherwise. It is amazing to see how lean and structured the national organization is, how much of passion everyone brings and how much OSA does for its members as an organization.

Thank you for all your support and everything you do every day for Odisha and Odia community. With your passion and enthusiasm, we can this make this community outside Odisha stronger and vibrant.

**Susil Panda**

Vice President

**OSA**

[vicepresident@odishasociety.org](mailto:vicepresident@odishasociety.org)



## *Secretary's Message*



My dear OSA Members,

This is my very first ever message to all my OSA members of North America. I am sure many of you would like to know a bit about me. In short I am an KHANTI Odia by heart settled in NJ for last 20 years along with my wife Shibani and 2 daughters Alisha & Anisha. My root belongs to the beautiful temple city Bhubaneswar (Old Town). I am proud to be involved with OSANYNJ since last 17 years and represented the OSA founding chapter as Secretary and President in past. I feel lucky and privileged to be part of the OSA executive team under the leadership of our current president Mr. Lalatendu Mohanty.

I would like to encourage each member to spread our message to our non-member Odia friends and relatives to consider becoming members of OSA to show our strength as an integral Indian community.

We will be celebrating 50th Golden Jubilee year of OSA next year, I would request all our pioneer seniors to encourage their adult children (Above 18 years) to consider becoming OSA members. They are the future of our community and we need them to take control of the society and drive it in future to preserve the dreams of our founders.

Please visit our website "<http://www.odishasociety.org/>" for all community related news and updates. This year we have creates a facebook group for our members to communicate easily and instantly. Please consider to join the [Facebook Group](#).

At the end my humble request to all members to support OSA to preserve the historic value and heritage of the Indian state "ODISHA".





## OSA Membership Status

Category	July 31st 2015	May 31st 2016	May 31st 2017	As of Dec 31, 2017
Life Members	963	995	1015	1033
Benefactors	42	42	42	42
Patron	51	51	51	52
5 Year Member	61	61	67	53
Annual Member	84	87	103	13
	1201	1236	1278	1193

## OSA BOG Meeting Minutes

August – 2017

[http://www.odishasociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2017\\_Aug\\_BOG\\_minutes.pdf](http://www.odishasociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/2017_Aug_BOG_minutes.pdf)

September – 2017

[http://www.odishasociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2017\\_Sep\\_BOG\\_minutes.pdf](http://www.odishasociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2017_Sep_BOG_minutes.pdf)

October – 2017

[http://www.odishasociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2017\\_Oct\\_BOG\\_minutes.pdf](http://www.odishasociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/2017_Oct_BOG_minutes.pdf)

November – 2017

[http://www.odishasociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2017\\_Nov\\_BOG\\_minutes.pdf](http://www.odishasociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/2017_Nov_BOG_minutes.pdf)

December - 2017

[http://www.odishasociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2017\\_Dec\\_BOG\\_minutes.pdf](http://www.odishasociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2017_Dec_BOG_minutes.pdf)

Jai Jagannath

**Amar Senapati**

Secretary

**OSA**

secretary@odishasociety.org



## *Treasurer's Message*



Dear Friends,

I am pleased to share with you OSA Financials to date. As you all may be aware, our 2017 cruise convention did not yield much OSA fees for OSA, a main source of revenue for OSA activities in subsequent year.

Total OSA revenues in 2016-17 was down by 33% compared to the prior year. We were constrained to adjust our OSA 2017-18 budget. Please consider sponsorship for various OSA activities and awards for the year 2017-18, as budgeted in income section of the budget.

We are hopeful and expect to be operating as a normal year for 2018-19 financial year.

**Sachi Pati**

Treasurer

**OSA**

treasurer@odishasociety.org



### **Anuradha Pranay Mishra, NJ**

Anuradha is an ardent reader with a flair for writing and strongly believes that “the pen is mightier than the sword.” A true bibliophile, with a passion for collecting books of different genres and languages, she is also associated with charitable organizations both in India and in the US and loves blogging, travelling and music. Originally from Bhubaneswar, Odisha, Anuradha is a HR professional and lives in South Brunswick, NJ with her husband Pranay and two daughters, Anwasha and Anansa



Anuradha P Mishra



Julie Acharya Ray

### **Julie Acharya Ray, UT**

Julie Acharya Ray, Ph.D continues to be passionate about writing, reading, painting and singing apart from working as an R&D scientist at ARUP laboratories in the scenic Salt Lake City, Utah.

### **Nagesh Rajanala, NJ**

Nagesh lives in New Jersey with his partner Sushmita and 3 children Aradhya, Aaryana and Archiit. Passionate about Social Justice and Gender Equality issues, Nagesh actively volunteers for social causes and in the local high School Robotics and Forensics clubs. Nagesh believes that educating children in critical thinking and social justice will lead to a successful future society. Nagesh is also a Doctoral student pursuing a PhD in Leadership & Information Technology.



Nagesh Rajanala



Prasanta Bhunya

### **Prasanta Bhunya, Toronto**

Prasanta, born in Jagannath Prasad, Ganjam, has a great name in education. He was awarded as best Educator in 2008. He is associated with many social organizations in Toronto and passionate about promoting Odisha Art, Culture and Literature. He was awarded with Odisha Living Legend Award’s, Youth Inspiration in 2014. He has immense interest in writing poems, short stories, art and photography)



*🌸 Welcome...*

Please also welcome your chapter PR representatives who will be part of the editorial team and will help in coordinating all initiatives with you and collect feedback and ideas. Please reach out to them and say hello and thank them for their voluntary effort:

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>PR Representative</b>
Canada	TBD
California	Kishore Mishra
Chicago	TBD
Michigan	Swapnalata Rath
Minnesota/North-west	Sangya Padhi
MT. Hood	TBD
New England	TBD
NY NJ PA	Anshuman Saswati
Ohio	TBD
Ozark (central)	TBD
Rocky Mountain	Birendra Das
Seattle	TBD
South East	Saroj Patnaik
Southern	TBD
Washington, DC	Bigyani Das

# ଓସା

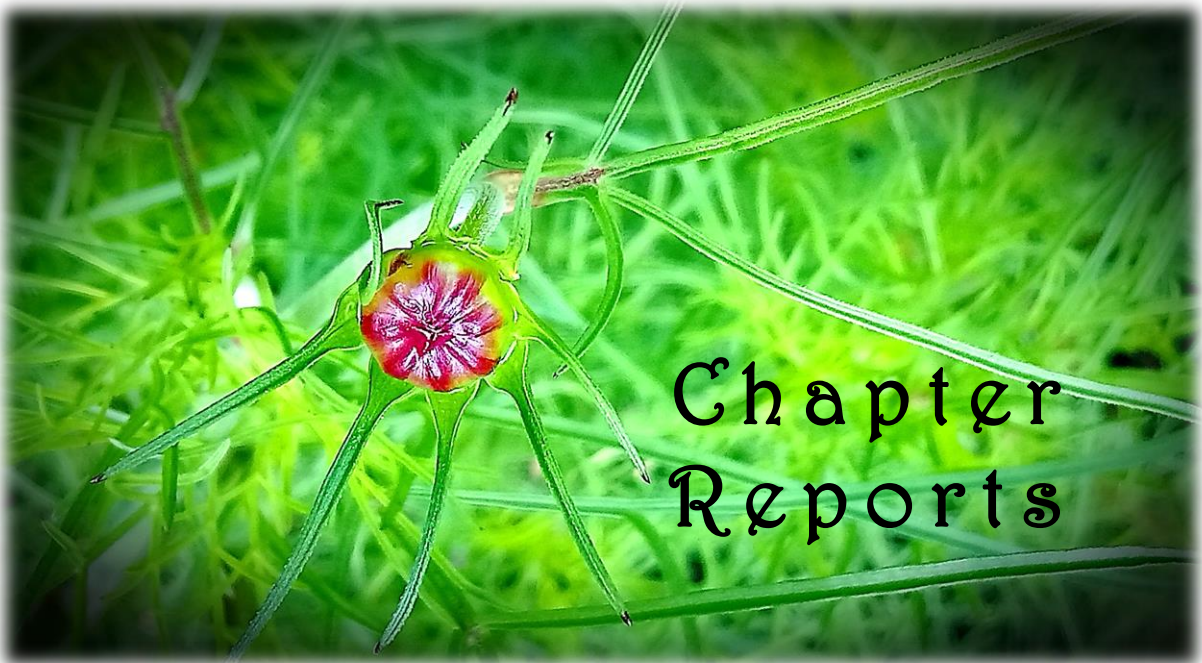
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ଆମେରିକା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜର ମୁଖପତ୍ର

ସଂଖ୍ୟା - ୬୨ - ଡିସେମ୍ବର - ୨୦୧୭

## ଉତ୍କର୍ଷ



Chapter  
Reports

# UTKARSA

A NEWSLETTER OF ODISHA SOCIETY OF AMERICAS

VOLUME - 62 DEEMBER - 2017



[www.odishasociety.org](http://www.odishasociety.org)



## South East Chapter

2017-18 OSA South East OSA-SE group primarily encompasses the Odiyas from North Carolina and South Carolina state. Historically it is a small but closely connected group of Odiya families living in Charlotte, Raleigh, Cary, Greensboro, South Carolina and surrounding areas. With expansion of Education, Life Science, Technology and Finance sectors, this area has witnessed a consistent and significant growth in Odiya population in last few years. However, the community remains closely connected, vibrant and more like an extended family with around 200 active members. OSA-SE fiscal year that started from July 2017 observed (or planning to observe) the following events.

### **Saraswati Puja**

Saraswati Puja is the first event of the year, usually celebrated around February. Members gather to celebrate the event with Puja, ethnic food, cultural programs. This year we celebrated Saraswati Puja at Hindu temple, Morrisville along with Jagannath Monthly Puja. More than 120 members participated in this event on Feb 27th, 2018

### **Beach festival**

This is an annual get together at a different beach every year during Memorial Day weekend. OSA-SE Office Bearers coordinate with members on planning and booking beach houses. It's a three nights fun loaded events with Dinner, Cultural programs, Beach games and iconic Pakahala and Fish Fry Party on Sunday. For 2018, we are planning to go to Sunset Beach, NC.

### **Festival of India (FOI)**

We had our first ever biggest ODIA representation in 2017 Festival of India (Sep 09 & 10) at Charlotte representing Cultural, Craft and Food. We had about 50 active volunteers who helped selflessly for days to mark this as a great event. We raised a sum of \$4175.



# FOI Glimpses

Crafts, Food and More

ODISHA SOCIETY OF THE AMERICAS  
 YouTube  
**Crafts of Odisha**  
 All Proceeds will be donated to the Hindu Center of Charlotte



## Event Photos

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/0B58dOG49OViBTkJWUXFmWkVTVzg>





## Ratha Yatra @ RTP & Charlotte

Both Charlotte and RTP celebrated Ratha Yatra in year 2017. Hundreds of devotees from Odia and non-Odia communities attended the events. Separate cultural programs and Odissi festival were also arranged. More than a thousand attendees enjoyed Maha prasad dinner prepared by community volunteers.

## One year of Monthly Jagannath Puja

@

## Charlotte Hindu Center

Members at Charlotte will complete first year of monthly Jagannath puja at [Hindu center](#) in Feb 2018. The first monthly Jagannath puja was held on 17<sup>th</sup> Feb 2017.







## Monthly Jagannath Puja update

Since the Pranapatishtha of Lords in December 2015, Odia community gathers at Hindu temple on the third week of every month for Puja and offerings to the Lords. On this day, a special Puja, Bhajan and Kirtans are performed. Community members sign up for various seva, prepare and offer many different Odia foods to the Lords. In the end, devotees share and enjoys the Maha prasad feast together.



### Sad News

Dr. Subhas C. Mohapatra (of Apex, NC) passed away on 22nd December 2017 evening at the age of 77. He is survived by wife Nirupama, Son Gautam, Daughter Tanuja, Son in Law Chris and Granddaughter Malini. Dr. Mohapatra was one of early batch of expatriate Odiya from Dhenkanal who came in 1965 for higher studies and settled in Raleigh area. He worked tirelessly on rural development through conservation agriculture, pediatric health care and education in Odisha. His contributions are recognized and highly appreciated by the community, non-government organizations and people of Odisha, he worked for.

### About us

OSA SE has a face book page

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/osase/>

Charlotte Odia face book

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/CharlotteOdia/>



## OSA Washington DC Chapter

OSA Washington DC chapter organized Ganesh Puja on Saturday August 26, 2017 from 11 AM - 3 PM at Hindu Temple. Pratap Dash performed the puja. Many DC chapter children did khadi-chhuan and took the blessings of Lord Ganesh for their learning. Each of the children had a plate arranged with flower, rice, haldi, kumkum and the picture of Lord Ganesh.

Many families attended the puja and had great time with nice weather, spiritual experience and blessings of the Lord. The puja was followed by prasad and community time.

Pictures of Ganesh Puja are available at

<http://www.babru.com/gpuja17>



OSA Washington DC chapter celebrated Kumar Purnami on November 4, 2017. November 4th was the day of Kartika Purnami. The venue of Hindu Temple auditorium was the perfect place to celebrate the Kumara Purnami event and also have darshan of the deities Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra on this auspicious day.

The event was attended by more than 300 people including senior citizens as well as children. The program included 34 varieties of items including Odissi dances, Ollywood dances, Bollywood dances, songs and drama.





Pictures of the program are captured by Dr Babru Samal at

<http://www.babru.com/kpurnima17>



OSA Washington DC chapter president Anjana Chowdhury formally started the program at 3:30 PM. Six hours of continuous program was very well managed by the cultural coordinators Pranati Dash and Snigdha Hota. The audio system for 6 continuous hours was very well managed by Sushant Mohanty and Radhakrishna Pattnaik. Chanda Puja was managed by Mrs Sukanti Ray. Both solo and group Odissi performances were held by the children. Odissi performances by Guru Amulya Balabantaray mesmerized the audience. He performed to the Odia song "Mohana Murati Chhai Lo" followed by "Mokshya". Guru Jayantee Paine Ganguly's performance to the Gita Govinda song "Chandana Charchita Nilakalebara" with her students Kinkini Sarkar and Nirlipta Das Chowdhury was excellent.



The music program by the children and the adults were enjoyed by all. Among the children, the brothers Ritwik and Raunak Hota sang medley of many famous Hindi songs very professionally. Among the adults Kirtan Sahoo and the group presented many Odia and Hindi songs. A short drama "Ama Pahantasingh Paribara" was performed by Nrusingha Mishra, Surya Mishra, Joy Gopal Mohanty, Sulochana Pattnaik, Atasi Das and Bigyani Das. The topic captured the audience attention as it was close to the hearts of the current society where social media controls the activities of everybody. The last surprise item of the night was presented by Tapasi Panigrahi (Rath) with Madhuri Edam.

Trophies were presented to all the children participants. Sulagna Dash, Subham Dash, Sauman Das and Spandan Das managed the children's program in MC roles with professionalism. Suman Ojha managed the adult program in MC role with great care.

The food was very well managed by the food team volunteers Anasuya Dash, Leena Mishra, Sulochana Pattnaik, Urmila Sahu, Tapas Panda and others. Pre-program snacks, mid-time snacks and after program dinner were very well managed. Everybody enjoyed the company of friends, good food and great program. We acknowledge the support of Hindu temple staff and mainly, Sharmaji and his family for help in food preparation.

For their help and support in registration, food distribution, make-up, stage decoration, stage management, photography, light and sound management. There were many others who had provided There were many volunteers that provided support in many other associated activities such as registration, food distribution, make-up, stage decoration, stage management, photography, light and sound management. We appreciate the help and support of Gatikrishna Tripathy, Babru Samal, Hemant Biswal, Bijay Dash, Manaswee Mishra, Sagarika Pattnaik, Pratap Dash, Naresh Das, Ila Ojha.

A community event of this size needs a lot of collaboration and teamwork. We thank everybody in the



Washington DC, Maryland and Virginia for being a part of this community celebration and the sportsmanship.





## OSA New England Chapter

Continuing the tradition of celebrating our heritage, members of OSA New England chapter (OSNE) celebrated Kumar Purnima on 10/14/2017.

OSNE has always believed in celebrating ODIA heritage, We have shown pride and glory in celebrating our Heritage, we literally mean Heritage is the history, unique knowledge, value and traditions that have developed by a combinations of genes and environment over time.

We created the environment for Kumar Purnima by Chanda (moon) puja where we explained the significance of Kumar Purnnima to our children and audience. It was a great celebration with a huge cultural segment which included Odishi, Bollywood, Olywood, Drama, Fashion Shows and the main attraction was, kids were part of each and every segment. Around 130 people gathered to celebrate OSNE Kumar Purnima, it was very well executed which ended on time as well and needless to mention food was yummy (As ODIAS we take pride in eating the yummiest food as well).





## OSA Seattle Chapter Northwest Odia Community

The Odia Community of the Northwest came together on April 1st, 2017 to celebrate Utkala Dibas. The evening was opened by our president, Sri Amulya Das. It was followed by various cultural programs with performances by adults and youngsters alike. With kids dancing to the tunes of Rangabati added much delight to the evening; and an interesting quiz game about Odisha and its history kept everyone engaged with much enthusiasm. Amongst other performances, Mrs. Sachala Das put up a presentation about Adruta Children Home in Bhubaneswar, fostering an opportunity to come together and help the children in need. People made generous financial donations and the amount was presented to Adruta by Sri. Amulya Das during one of his later trips to Odisha this year.



Come June and the community again became busy planning for the much awaited Ratha Jatra. Hundreds of Odia people and many more from diverse communities gathered on June 25th, 2017 to seek the blessings of Lord Jagannatha and to participate in this auspicious festival. Ratha Jatra marked a two-day event; the first day was filled with various food and retail stalls spanning the many cultures of India along with fun youth activities as the Ratha decked up in preparation for Jatra. The second day marked the actual Ratha Jatra followed by cultural performances of dance and music. Prasad in form of Dalma, Anna, Khatta, Saaga and such were served to all who attended.



The month of July brought in summer and sunshine...and what better time than this, to meet up outdoors for the Annual picnic. Mossyrock Park proved to be the most picturesque venue and the fun- filled day included various summer games and activities, shared stories and conversations, and an Odia skit that filled us with laughter. Last but not least, sumptuous Odia food ending with ‘Mudhi mixture’ and Garam Cha completed this delightful day.



With the onset of Fall, one starts to feel the vibes of Maa Durga Puja in almost every corner of Odisha. The Odias of the Northwest too became fully engaged in tons of planning and rehearsals ...in attempt to make this year’s Puja even better and more successful than the last! Many people came together on September 30th, decked in all grandeur to offer their prayers to Maa Durga and celebrate. Various dances and songs, even a series of fashion shows, kept the audience mesmerized and clapping in appreciation.







In December 2017, Mrs. Sachala Das and family visited Adruta Children Home. Mrs. Das had the opportunity to inaugurate the Dining Hall, the furnishings of which have been made possible with the donations made by Seattle Chapter of OSA.



The year of 2017 was truly filled with memorable events and joyous moments of community, celebration, and culture. As we continue to grow our NW Odia community and broaden our engagement, we look forward to 2018 and all the adventures and masti in store!



## OSA Michigan Chapter

Michigan Odisha Society celebrated Kumara Purnima with lot of enthusiasm on Nov 19, 2017. There was record participation from all age groups. The Program started with the welcome address by the President and the executive team.



This was followed by Odissi Mangalacharan and seeking the blessings of Lord Jagannath and the children coming on stage and dancing to the song 'Kumara Punei Janago'. There were many songs and dances from Ollywood and Bollywood which was performed enthusiastically by all the participants. There were Classical and semi classical dances as well as live music performance in Odia and Hindi. The ladies presented a scintillating sambalpuri dance Raserkali Bo. We also had another Sambalpuri folk performance. A nice drama based on dialogues between Kunti and Draupadi was presented.







Music and Dance was encouraged, and a lot of people sang lovely Odia and Hindi songs. Each child was appreciated for participating by giving trophies as part of Meghna Memorial award. All the children who participated in Odia Speech contested in Ganesh Puja were recognized and given a certificate.



There were a lot of volunteers who contributed their time to make the event successful. Our thanks to all.



## OSA NY/NJ/PA Chapter

OSA NYNJPA celebrated the Kumar Purnima on November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017. There are 40 videos which captured the glorious event.



Since 2014, OSA has been volunteering at the Hillside Community Food Bank once a month. At this food bank kids ages 13 and above, do acts of service for the disenfranchised. We at OSA NY/NJ pride ourselves in being a change in the community and providing supplies to help those in lesser situations. Hillside Community Food Bank is located in Hillside, New Jersey along Route 22 and is a great site for volunteering.



# ଓସା

ଆମେରିକା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜ



ଆମେରିକା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜର ମୁଖପତ୍ର

ସଂଖ୍ୟା - ୬୨ - ଡିସେମ୍ବର - ୨୦୧୭

## ଉତ୍କର୍ଷ



English  
Section

## UTKARSA

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VOLUME - 62 DEEMBER - 2017



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## International Conference on Lord Sri Jagannatha 2018

Sri Jagannatha at Puri, a tinsel town in the eastern part of Bharat is not like Badrinath in north, Ramanath in South and Dwarikanath in West of the country. He is never called Purinatha, rather He is regarded as Jagatnatha i.e. Master of Universe. According to the Skand Puran (Baistamba Khand) written by Maharsi Vyasadev He manifested Himself in Satya era in the form of Nilamadhab at Puri and then as Lord Jagannatha, Balabhadra, Subhadra & Sudarsan. He incarnated as Ramachandra in Tretaya era and Krushna in Dwapar era. He is Brahma, but behaves as human beings. He wakes up early in the morning, brushes teeth, takes up bath, have His breakfast. He too eats His lunch & dinner, decorates Himself in various types of dresses befitting to occasions. He performs worldly customs like spending some time together with His spouse Laksmi as husband on each thursday night except some festive occasions, goes on sojourn with elder brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra to give darsan to devotees as well as to spend some days in His birth place and meets His aunt Ardhasini, enjoys boating with His two wives Sridevi & Bhudevi during hard summer and sleeps with His spouse on cot during night. As Kausalya and Debaki She takes special dish on previous night for reducing labor pain and gives birth to Rama on Rama navami day and Krushna on Janmastami day respectively. Both occasions are celebrated with pomp and ceremony in the form of Sahi Yatra around the temple. He each year pays tribute to ancestors i.e. He gives Shradha to parents of Bhagawan Rama i.e. Dasaratha and Kausalya, parents of Krushna i.e. Debaki and Basudev and Nanda and Yasoda. He too pays tribute to parents namely Kasyap and Aditi in era of His incarnation as Baman.

His leela is mysterious. If one enters into 'Niladrivihar' i.e. the museum set up inside the temple premises of Srimandir, Puri he comes across a big bell exhibited there glorifying leela of the Lord. That bell was originally gifted by French Government to Church of



Pondichery in the year 1746. The ship carrying the bell was passing through bay of Bengal near Puri Sea-coast. Suddenly the captain Albeque Beatow could see violent storm is gradually moving towards their ship. It might sink their ship. On the other side a monstrous sea creature far bigger than whale is moving towards their ship with mouth wide open and it might engulf the whole ship. There was chaos and everybody in the ship was terribly frightened. The captain saw everybody was moving hither and thither with dampen spirit. He felt helpless. He thought everybody could meet his ends there.

In the midst of such chaos he found a rustic sitting calmly and praying before a photograph. He was calm and serene. His eyes were fixed on two circular eyes only. The captain got curious. He wanted to know the secret of his confidence. The rustic man calmly answered ‘Sir, this photo is of Lord Jagannatha, Balabhadra and Subhadra. If you pray Him, He will save us.’ The captain found three images there in the photo. They were of black, yellow and white in color. The captain saw the black image looking ferocious. His two circular eyes were burning like that of monstrous sea creature coming towards them to eat the ship. He was terribly frightened. The captain was bewildered and asked ‘Who is Jagannatha? Where is he? Is he coming with weapon to kill the sea creature? The rustic man replied with confidence that “He is our God. I believe He will protect us. I have experienced it many a time”. The captain told “if your God saves us and the ship, then I will offer everything stored in the adjacent room. I too will surrender before Him.” Without finding an alternative all men on ship deck shouted ‘Jay Jagannatha’. That saved all of them. The storm changed its course and sea animal too went in other direction. The captain did not go to Pondichery then and came closer to Puri coast. He donated the bell to the Temple Authority along with wealth stored there.

Later French Government insisted before Government of India to return the bell. The temple authority denied their request on the plea that it was a gift by a devotee to the Lord. They had no right to return it. One can find the French writing on the bell in English





alphabet as below:

BOETPSALIAMINGEN  
CANTA TIBUS  
INLIBERALITE DEFEDRO  
MOUDELI COURT DELA  
COMP DE FRANCE MF NOMME PIERRE ANDRE  
J E PESE900  
**A. PONDICHERY 1746**  
**Capt. Albuquerque Beatow**

Another incident took place about six months back that proved faith of a poor lady on Lord Jagannatha that yielded result after 7 years. A teacher in Nellore of Andhra Pradesh asked his children to list out pilgrim places of India by searching google. A girl of class six namely Puja studiously searched the google and found Sri Mandir, Puri. She danced with joy and shouted “It is Jagannatha temple, I was going there every day with my mother.” She started crying to see the Lord again.

Her mother, a migrant from Gujarat belonging to Khandi community and earning her livelihood by collecting old clothes from houses in exchange of stainless steel utensils and selling collected saris got married of her choice against the will of their community in Srimandir, Puri. They were living in Nimapara area about 40 kms away from Puri. When community did not accept their marriage against their will the couple were staying separately. The girl called Nanu was their third child. Since their earning was not sufficient grandmother of child took pity and took her when she was 4+ years old to railway platform. The lady cleaned the compartment and allowed the child to sit in one corner of that compartment. When she went to the next one she also took the child with her. Came a day when she forgot to take the child to the next compartment by mistake. When she completed clearing of the third compartment she suddenly remembered her grandchild.



She started rushing to the first compartment where the child was sitting. In the meanwhile the train started running and reached Nellor station, i.e. its last destination and the child slept there. Ultimately the child was handed over to the child care unit of District Administration of Nellor. The poor mother of the child could not do anything. She bore grudge against her god Lord Jagannatha. She vowed not to see Him again unless she got back her child.

Time passed away. Everybody forgot the incident, but bleeding of losing her child did not stop. She was everyday pleading with her god to bring back her child. After seven years her prayer was answered.

When Puja spoke about the Sri Mandir, Puri, the District Administration Nellor contacted Sri Mandir administration. They referred it to District Administration Puri. After enquiry they found the family of child had already shifted to Jagatsinghpur. The family was contacted through Collector, Jagatsinghpur. The mother of child insisted that she be brought to Puri first. At last then was happy union of girl with her mother. She is presently reading in residential school with help from Collector, Jagatsinghpur.

A Brahma is now a human god having semblance of every limbs. He is now manifested across the globe. It is our bounden duty to ensure His worship according to scripture. To inculcate that spirit it has been decided to organise International conference on Lord Sri Jagannatha on 28.01.2018 at Rabindra Mandap, Bhubaneswar, Odisha, India.

It is good that two organisations namely Dr. Dash Foundation of America and Sri Jagannatha Society of America came forward to join hands with Shree Jagannatha Sanskruti Parishad, Bhubaneswar formed in 2008 and working sincerely since then to popularise the Lord across the globe. It will be a one day affair starting from 9 AM to 9 PM having various programmes like seminar, programme for youth, sharing experiences etc. Gajapati Puri



has given his kind consent to be part of the programme.

It is requested that other such organisations intend to join hands are also welcome.

I appeal all devotees of the Lord to take part in the conference and enjoy blessings of the Lord.

**Gopinath Mohanty**

President

Sri Jagannatha Sanskruti Parishad

[gopinath.mohanty@gmail.com](mailto:gopinath.mohanty@gmail.com)

Mob.: +91 9437006670



## Akshaya –The Cult



A dramatic story teller without frills, only Akshaya Mohanty, the maverick can open his story with these lines,

“ଯିଏ ଭୁଲିଯାଏ ସେ ପ୍ରେମିକା , ଯିଏ ଭୁଲେନା ସେ ପ୍ରେମିକାର ସାନ ଭଉଣୀ” .

His openness excited conservative Odia society since the 60’s. He brought out the hidden **ଚଗଲାମୀ** in Odisha. With his friends he started a magazine called **ଝଞ୍ଜ** in the 60’s (’64). This unconventional name was coined because these letters are used rarely in Odia writing and are considered “unusable” or “uncommon” or **ଅପ୍ରଚଳିତ** (as he referred). And since his early writings were not published by the then mainstream magazines, he thought his wares were “unacceptable” and this was his sweet rebuff. A rebel, he was restless to break out of any mould.

Always ahead of his times, Akshaya babu was a dreamer indulging himself with rather super confident concepts, be it in music or stories to end the stupor of the reader or the listeners. He was in a hurry to break the convention. Not only snap the siesta but to also make them addict to his usage of words making day-to-day Odia even easier and less orthodox. He made **ମଣି, ପଡିଯିବିକି, ଫୁଲେଇ ରାଣୀ, ଚମକୁଛ**. He made Odia life easy, naughty and lighter. The father of modern Odia music or **ଲଘୁ ସଙ୍ଗୀତ**, Akshaya Mohanty changed the diction of Odisha and Odisha youth in the seventies like nobody else. His influence on the youth was magnetic. He was the homegrown style icon, who swayed the youth much more magically than any Hindi or Bengali cultural influences. This was a syndrome on which not much has been written about. This trend fired the imagination of at least two generations of ‘traditional’ Odias. There was fresh breeze of romance and light hearted, innocent pranks. The colleg campuses became alive.



Creating out -of- the-box music or literature was complimented by his rock star persona which gave ‘Odia’ a new identity. They no longer shied away from Odia folk music which was presented to them in a new package and praxis. While experimenting with folk music and lyrics, Akshaya, the “father of Odia modern music” created romance in the air. I have stopped everything many times just to listen to *‘Thik To’ri Pari Jhia Tia’* or *“Chandra Malli Hase”* which were urbane, peppy and yet very Odia. This combination made his music always fresh, trendy and outward looking. He dared to challenge the boundaries, even at the cost of being accused of “crossing the line”.

In a way he was a great impressionist. I remember his saying proudly that he can never sing while playing the harmonium in a staid, standing position looking only in one direction (as the traditionalists did). He was an interactive artist. He could feel the audience, the listener. Real imitates reel. The first maligned hero କଳଙ୍କିତ ନାୟକ who never lived under a mask or pretensions. Loves and lovers were loudly acknowledged, lifestyle openly pursued and if there were eyebrows raised they were given brusque replies. Often the thoughts of Beatles, Jim Morrison, Bob Marley and Elvis come to my mind when I think of his spontaneity and energy. One of them, at a very small and incestuous surrounding. No one gets out of here alive. Akshaya has been spurned, loathed, ridiculed and there lay his candid life severely exposed.

Akshaya Mohanty has written over 4,000 songs, sung over 8,000 songs and composed music in 106 feature films. His literary works also include 100 short stories, out of which 70 were published, 12 novels out of which four were published and an autobiography. His writings were crisp, direct, bold and most of them read almost autobiographical, though he has often said that he created an aura around his characters to make them more endearing. Master story teller, his use of Odia language in a modern form was brilliant. ବ୍ରହ୍ମଜ୍ଞାନ ବନାମ ଗୋଟେ ପାନ , ବେସୁରା, ବାମପଞ୍ଚୁ, କଟକ, ଗାର are some of his masterpieces. Since the 60’s he has observed people, spent time with and written about them (based on lives of



rickshaw pullers, vendors near liquor shops in Cuttack) and had the audacity to create his own style and panache. In music I often found an uncanny similarity between the combinations of Pancham-Gulzar-Asha and Akshaya-Devdas –Trupti or Akshaya-Parthasarathy-Geeta. The style, the courage, the freshness very contagious.

On being asked to write a few lines on the 1000 years of Cuttack city, he had penned impromptu, “କଟକ, ପୁଣ୍ୟବାନ ଓ ପୁଣ୍ୟବତୀଙ୍କ ନକ୍ସ”. Original and unrepentant and guileless.

That’s the ‘ଦଣ୍ଡା ବାଲୁଙ୍ଗା’ for you. The genius, the magnanimous, the erudite, romantic Akshaya Mohanty, it’s not the same without you.

A famous litterateur of Odisha had once said that the Odia story readers can be divided into two parts – one who have read Akshaya Mohanty and the other who haven’t. You are a magician, a cult.



by  
Charudatta Panigrahi



## Visiting Ashrams in India



There are some places around the world that give you a feeling of peace. These places make you feel very relaxed and afterwards just hearing those names makes you feel peaceful. Since I have had such an experience, I would like to share it with you. In the summer of 2015, I travelled to India and I had the rare opportunity to visit three ashrams in south India with my Dad and grandparents. These ashrams are located in Amritapuri in Kerala, and Pondicherry and Tiruvannamalai (Arunachala) in Tamil Nadu. Let me describe how I felt about these places.

**Amritapuri:** Amritapuri is named after a living saint known as Amma, Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, a world renowned humanitarian and spiritual leader. She is also recognized as hugging saint because when someone comes to see her, she embraces as a mother hugs a child. To reach her ashram, we took a plane to Trivandrum. It was 10 o'clock in the night when we got off the plane. The night was cold. When we got out from the airport I saw a car waiting for us. My Dad previously requested the ashram to send a car to pick us. After a 3 hour drive, we were at the destination. I noticed that the ashram is on an island that has Arabian Sea on one side and a canal like waterbody called backwaters the other side. When I got there, I got amazed because even though it was 1:00 AM in the night, all around the ashram there were people doing things like sweeping the ground and arranging things for the next day Ashram activities. I got to know from my Dad that over years, Amma has inspired many people to help people and serve the needy and poor with a compassionate heart. Many of those people have decided to permanently stay in Amritapuri. Amritapuri has 5,000 permanent residents and receives about 10,000 visitors on any day when Amma is in the ashram. The next morning, my dad woke me up early to take me around the ashram. It was really very early morning and when I came outside I



saw people doing work even when it was still dark. My dad took me to the beach next to the ashram.



I got to know Amma often goes and meditates on the beach. People in the ashram also accompany her and meditate with her. I recalled then that once when I was visiting the ashram a few years ago, I had a chance to go with her to the beach and it felt really good. And I realized that Amma can make the atmosphere very peaceful. After the nice walk on the beach, we went for some breakfast and then went to see Amma in a big hall called darshan hall. Amma came and guided all for some meditation then gave a small talk in her native language called Malayalam. One devotee was translating her talk to others. I heard that Amma was talking about ego. Ego means the person in us who desires to do or get something. After the speech, Amma personally distributed lunch (Prasad) to many people (maybe more than 2000 people) who were there that time. Prasad is a food that is first offered to God before one eats it. I saw something astonishing about Amma. After handing out the Prasad, Amma started eating hers among the huge crowd. I was surprised to see that although a lot of people were talking and there was a lot of distraction around, Amma was quietly eating without talking to anyone. It wasn't like she was in a quiet place, I thought she was just respecting the food by giving full attention to it. I got to know that





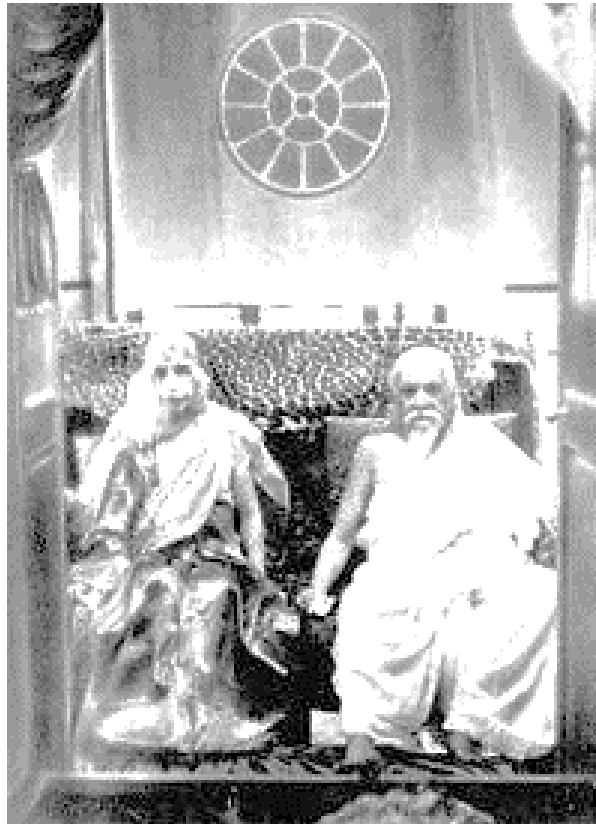
according to Hindu religion while eating one should not talk and feel grateful to God for the food. After the lunch, I went to our room and took some rest. In the evening, we got ready to go to darshan hall again where Amma comes and sings bhajans. Bhajans are songs for God. While Amma was doing bhajans we had a chance to sit very close to Amma. In the middle of the bhajans I started to feel cold. A person who knew my Dad was helping us (who I call Rupa aunty) took me out of the hall and brought a chocolate for me and then took me to Amma's room. Amma's room was a simple one with a few photos of various Hindu Gods, a small sofa for rest and a mat on the floor. I felt really lucky to be there because never imagined that I will be in the room of such a famous person. The next day, I went to have a darshan of Amma. During darshan, Amma gives hugs and also some Prasad which is usually a fruit, a candy or a piece of sweetmeat. There was always a big crowd around Amma. Lot of noise, cries, laughter etc.; Amma was so lovingly talking to everyone. She was not tired at all. After giving the darshan, Amma asked us to sit next to her for some time. The time we spent with her after the darshan was so nice that in just a little time I felt so calm and happy. After sitting there for a while we came back to our room to get ready for our next trip, the following morning. Amritapuri was a nice place indeed.

**Pondicherry:** Our next trip was to Pondicherry, to visit the Ashram of Shri Aurobindo (1872-1950) and The Mother (1878-1971), who is also known as Shree Maa in Odiya language. Shree Maa was the spiritual companion of Shri Aurobindo. After a 2 hour trip on the plane from Trivandrum, Kerala we got to Chennai, Tamil Nadu. From the airport, we went to meet one of my Dad's friend and his family who were living in Chennai. There we had lunch and then we headed to Pondicherry which is about three hours drive. We reached there at night. After we got there, we got a room in a hotel and then went out to get something to eat. The next day we went to see Shri Aurobindo's ashram. I heard that Shri Aurobindo was a fighter of India's freedom from British rule during his early years but then became a saint. He founded the ashram, lived there for about 39 years and when he



died he was buried in the ashram. His burial place is called Samadhi. I got to know even The Mother (Shree Maa) was buried at the same place. After reaching the Ashram, we first went to see the memorial (i.e., Samadhi), the place where their bodies were laid.

After getting there and sitting next to the memorial of Shri Aurobindo for some time, something very rare happened. My Dad and I had an urge to enter the building where Shri Aurobindo lived. After entering the building we looked around for a while, went upstairs and in fact got into his room, where he lived for 24 years continuously. There was a watchman at the door but he did not stop us. Later we got to know, it is a rare privilege to go to Aurobindo's room and meditate. To maintain the sanctity of the place, Shree Maa had advised that one can go to Shri Aurobindo's room only on his/her birthday. The policy is strictly followed even today. In the room, I was given some flowers to offer near the bed of Shri Aurobindo. I had also a chance to sit quietly for some time. It really felt very peaceful, something similar to what I felt while being with Amma. I felt very lucky to be there because it was neither my birthday nor my Dad's and I never know if there would be a day when I can be there on my birthday.





The next day we headed to Auroville, a small town which is about 10 miles from Pondicherry. We went there to see the Matrumandir which I will get to in a moment. Auroville was founded by Shree Maa as a town for those who desire to live and grow spiritually. Auroville is a memorial to Shri Aurobindo and is meant to help people who believe in Aurobindo's teachings. Okay, now to Mathrumandir. Mathrumandir is a sphere shaped, golden building that was built by Shri Maa for a place to meditate on God. Unfortunately we couldn't go inside because we did not have tickets that we should have brought from another building earlier in the day. The next day we left for our new destination, Shri Ramana Maharshi's Ashram.

**Tiruvannamalai:** After the nice trip and peaceful stay at Pondicherry, we left for Tiruvannamalai, a temple town in Tamil Nadu in south India. In Tiruvannamalai, there is Arunachal Shiva temple and an ashram which is known as Bhagavan Ramana Maharshi's Ashram. Bhagavan Ramana (1879-1950) was a saint who is also viewed by many as an incarnation of Lord Shiva. Shiva is one of the most auspicious Gods in Hindu religion.

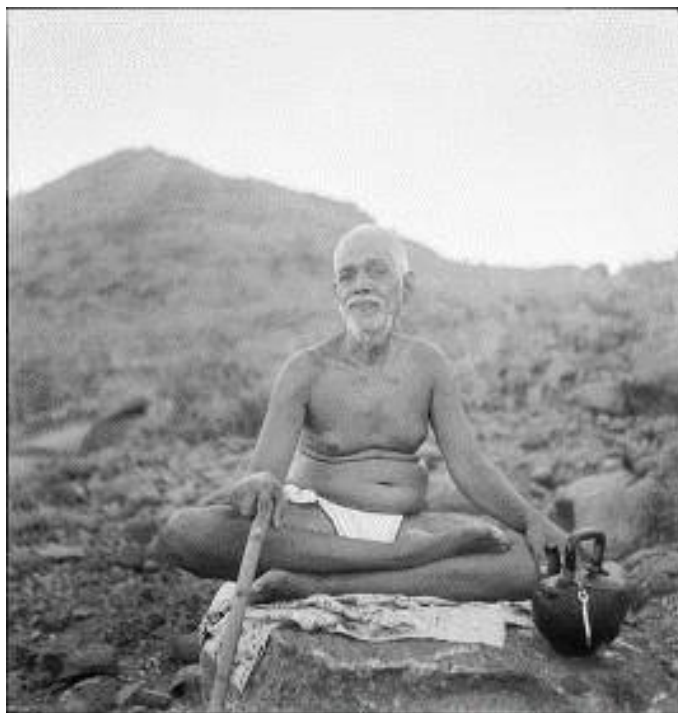
After reaching Ramana's ashram, we went to the ashram office to get a room to stay. Afterwards, when we were on our way to the ashram, something really funny happened. I was holding a water bottle and was looking around; there were lot of monkeys in the ashram premises. I think, one monkey was very thirsty. So what it did was, it came over to me, snatched the water bottle out of my hand, opened the water bottle, drank like a human would, then closed the cap and jumped away with my bottle. I was a bit scared but was amazed to see that. Afterwards, we went inside Ramana's temple to participate in arati (a traditional way to offer prayer by waving a lamp in front of the deity). The place was really very cool and peaceful – maybe the most peaceful one for me among the three ashrams, I visited.

The next day, I and my dad went to hike on the Arunacharla hill that is also known as the hill of auspicious fire. Raman said and many believe that the hill is Lord Shiva Himself



There we went to Skandaashram a cave on the hill, where Ramana stayed for seven years when he was young. We meditated there for some time and it felt as if Ramana was in front of us and had just left the place. On my way back, I heard the life and teachings of Raman were being read in a room. I went in, sat for some time and enjoyed the reading.

Subsequently, I and my dad went to look around the room where Ramana spent his last days. His dishes were arranged in a shelf. My dad told me there was something to learn from them. Well you might be thinking, “what would I be learning from plates, dishes etc.?” Trust me, I thought the same thing. When I keenly observed the plates and cups, I realized one can really learn something about Ramana from those dishes. Even if those dishes were very old they were shining like gold! It shows how sincere Ramana was in maintain those! It was truly fascinating. The next day we went to the Arunachala Shiva temple, which was a massive temple. Then we also took time to drive around the Arunachala hill in the late afternoon. The taxi driver pointed to us many people who were walking around the hill which is about 8 miles – he explained that people consider walking around the hill is same as circling around the Shiva. It is very auspicious. The next day morning we left for Bhaubaneswar, where my grandparents live.





What I learnt: Throughout the whole trip, I learnt something from each place. In Amma's ashram I learnt how to do work with love and fun. In Shri Aurobindo's ashram, I learnt how to stay focused in one's own work and thoughts. And in Ramana's ashram, I learnt how to remain simple, sincere and yet peaceful. My entire trips to the three ashrams lasted only seven days; this may not be long but the memory of it will stay with me forever. I really think, these are the places that one can visit when one is very lucky. I am glad that I am one of those lucky ones.



By  
Haripriya Mahapatra



## The Mirithmus Asylum

I hadn't ever dreamed of being a robber. Or, being a 35 year old man living on the streets. But sometimes life doesn't always give you lemons to make lemonade. Today would be nothing special. I robbed the grocery store all the time. It was the only store that I could easily sneak into and steal food. I had thought that today wouldn't be anything different. I snuck in some meat today just to add some taste to my dull life. I walked in, looked, and picked what I would get. I exited happily, envisioning what I could add to today's meal. That's when everything went wrong.

Right when I stepped out, a siren went off, so deafening that I thought I was going to lose my ability to hear. I stumbled outside, my face white with shock, holding onto my ears but it wouldn't do a thing. I thought of only one thing. 'Cops!' I thought. I recovered from my shock, and sprinted down the alleyway, and just as I rounded the curb, my eyes almost fell out of their sockets. There they were. The cops, waiting with a smug smile. Then a man with black hair and piercing gray eyes looked up. He announced. "Hands up!" Since many guns were pointed at me, I couldn't do anything but to follow his orders. The police immediately surrounded me, tense, as if believing I possessed a weapon. Which, as a homeless person, I didn't have. After what seemed like hours, they finally proceeded to handcuffing me, and while the metal slowly dug into my skin, a man shoved me into a police car, locking the door. As we began to drive, I noticed the man who was in shotgun was the same man who had told me to put my hands up. He was speaking into his walkie talkie, reporting news to probably his chief. "Chief Bob, we finally caught him." The man spoke. More crackling. Probably a response. "Really?" the policeman questioned. "There?" More static. "Okay all right." He responded, tucking his phone into his pocket. The car was silent. I was thinking about how lucky I was, because some people I knew had the scariest stories of how they got captured. As I thought about it, I shivered. I had heard a kind of new security system they had developed, that was created a year ago, in 2028. It was being



tested currently in the Mirithmus Asylum, and one of my best friends had gone in there, just to explore, and when he came back, he was somebody completely different. He had been driven insane, and kept ranting about how all the security guards were created from your deepest fears, and that you stayed in a hall all by yourself. If you did one thing wrong, they would stir and wake, frightening you to an extent that you couldn't think anymore. He barely explained with his mind, but he was never the same. He just hid in his sleeping bag, and barely ate, getting horror-stricken whenever there was a loud sound. I believed I was very lucky. I just probably had to stay in a local jail for 5 days, and then come back. But, a few minutes later, news came to me that would probably change me forever`

It felt like hours on the trip there. The shades were completely closed, so I couldn't see anything. Finally, the door opened, and I got shoved out of the car. The dim light of the sun blinded me. After a few seconds, I finally looked up. The sun was setting. It was the evening, and the sun flashed and the sky had turned red, as a beautiful splash of colors lit the sky. "Where am I?" I thought to myself. "How is it already sunset? I turned around slowly. My eyes rested on a huge sign. As I read it, my heart rate instantly went up, my eyes practically jumping out of their sockets, and fear seeping into my body. The sign had read, "The Mirithmus Asylum".

I turned around sprinting and breathing hard, thinking about how I had gotten myself into this mess. I started running breathlessly, knowing that this was a bad dream. Suddenly I felt a tug on my leg. I looked down right before I fell, seeing a rope tied around my leg, as the ground rushed to meet my face. Pain seared through my face, though I was really just hurt on the inside 'Why am I even here? What did I do?' I thought as I looked up, groaning, right at the sky. The police laughed, and two of them lifted me up, hauling me into the asylum against my own will. After an hour of processing, a man led me into the jail rooms, and while we were walking I tried to understand my surroundings. I first recognized the people. They were all sitting in a corner, their eyes filled with fear. They were probably



scarred for life, facing their deepest fears over and over again. I practically felt sorry for them, but then I remembered that the only reason they were there was because they must have done something terrible. But that contradicted the fact about why I was there. All I did was stealing from a grocery store. What did I do to deserve... this?

A man shoved me inside my cell, telling me that I would be released in 5 days. The room was absolutely disgusting. There was a slab of stone which was a lame excuse for a bed, a toilet, and dirty walls surrounding the cell. But I personally didn't want to stay for more than a few seconds. That's what I planned in doing. After a few minutes making sure that the coast was clear, I got set to working. The security guard, a clown-of course it had to be a clown-hadn't noticed when I had swiftly taken the keys from him. I put the key through the lock and tried to locate anything that I could use to escape. As I carefully observed the room I finally noticed something. Right next to an empty leather sack was a sewer hole. I ran to it, looking slowly, to see if there were any cameras watching me. I sprinted to the sewer hole safe at last. But right before I reached it, the leather sack moved. I froze, what was it? Then paying attention a little bit more, I realized that it was alive. It was one of the guards, forged from my fears. The Nerosaur had been awakened.

The creature turned around, and then I realized it was the same monster that I have had nightmares about. It had a bullish figure, but with a body of a muscular human one. Its scarlet eyes focused on me. It had two double-blade axes, shaped like the Greek letter of delta. It was shaped like a triangle, making it look a little lopsided. Two rings hung from its nose, and its body was covered with shiny gold armor. Its face was changing constantly, first a clown, then a ghoul, and then the faces of my dead children, and then my dead wife. The more time I looked at its face, the more times it changed into something that chilled me to the bone. I shivered with fright. Sweat beaded down my neck. I was frozen with fear. Fear and panic took over my mind. The Nerosaur lifted up its axe and swung. I finally shook out of my daze, ducking at the very last instant and sprinting away. The monster





roared, pulling its axe out of the rubble and then roared. I ran into my cell and locked the door. The monster desperately threw an axe, landing it right where I was about a moment ago. I faltered, not being able to think properly anymore. I ran to a corner, thinking I was safe, because the Nerosaur had successfully completed its job. But Nerosaur had other ideas. It smashed into the door repeatedly, trying to break into the cell. Cracks were appearing at the door. If the Nerosaur had broken in, I was doomed. I looked around, seeing if I could do anything to stop it. The axe... The toilet... the sewage pipes... I had an idea!

I ran over to the axe trying to take it out of the wall. With a final strain of effort, I ripped it out of the wall, and positioned myself right where I was supposed to be. But right before I could get ready, the cell exploded with debris. I tumbled to the ground, and stayed there. My legs turned to lead, and I felt like I was inhaling coal. The monster rose up and brought up his axe. At that moment, I screamed and smashed the sewage pipe with the monster's other axe. But nothing happened. I had failed. I would perish as a desperate homeless person that stole food to feed his own mouth. The monster raised his axe coming in for the kill. I closed my eyes waiting to die. But then suddenly, water engulfed the monster. The water instantly gushed out of the pipes, practically drowning the Nerosaur with water. I instantly sprinted out of the cell and jumped down to the sewer hole. I ran as fast as I could, because I knew that if I stopped, the Nerosaur could get me. Hastily and anxiously, I hunted for an exit. Once I found it, I ran out of the sewer, finally bursting into the fresh air. Finally, there was sunlight to look at, and not worrying about dying. I suddenly turned. The sign said, 15th Avenue. I was on the same street as where the Mirithmus Asylum is. I looked around. No police chasing me. In fact as I looked around, I couldn't find the Mirithmus Asylum. In its place was barren land. That struck me weird. I couldn't believe it! Where did the asylum go?

A few months after the incident, life became very strange. I started to get money by



working at the gas station, because I was never going to go to jail again. I started asking people if they knew anything about the Mirithmus Asylum, and they didn't know if it existed or not. Even my friend that had been scarred from there didn't remember anything about it, being his usual jovial self. When I visited the police department, they never even had a record of me ever going to jail. Weird. I was starting to think it had just been a scary nightmare, but deep down in my gut, I knew that wasn't the truth. If I were you, I would never try to think doing something against the law anymore. You will never know what will happen to you. If the Mirithmus Asylum is still out there, then you should definitely heed my advice. If you don't, then be prepared to be facing your worst fears. And facing the truth like that will scar you for your life-if you still have yours after it.

By

Yogesh Mohapatra



## A Temporary home of permanent memories

We all return to homes every day, rented ones or built from the sweat of our ticking time clocks. Then there are homes that we own but do not live in and further more there are beloved dwellings that we have a to and fro relationship with ...uncertain , deep , fleeting , essential. These are perhaps ancestral homes that we visit once in a while. The latter wait for us , watch over us and then sadly let us go . And for some unreasonable reason we sense a feeling of belonging there and if we were to dig up their courtyards we would find our hearts buried in there.

In the blistering month of May 2005, I was introduced to one such home . It was my husband's home in Bhubaneswar , the capital of Orissa. We were residing in Mumbai and this was to be my first trip to Bhubaneswar after marriage . When I alighted from the aircraft, the airport with its mirrored hangings and tie and die weaves gave me the first glimpse of the rich heritage of the state . In Bhubaneswar everything is located on the chak (intersection). The pharmacy is on the chak, the *paan wala* is on the chak, the *samosa* vendor is on the chak , it's as if the entire town is planned around chaks. So our home too is located between two chaks , in a genteel and prosperous neighborhood.

A spreading, auspicious *bael* tree screens the home from curious eyes of passersby. I had never seen a *bael* tree before and paused to admire its green shroud of trifoliate leaves that are offered to the deity Siva. As I push open the red and white iron gates to enter the charming, white walled home with a sloping brick red roof set amidst sentinel coconut and burdened mango trees, shoulder high shrubs of white and pink roses nod their heads in approval. This is bau 's home(my husband's mother) , soon to become my lifetime home. A life time home I have discovered is a home that you keep coming back to. It houses the lives of its permanent inmates ,whilst giving permanent, treasured memories to temporary inmates like us. I have long believed that everything in this place



has a life, a very organic , sustaining life ....a watching life mind you not just a breathing one , from the trees to the bees , the shopkin color flowers bobbing like boats upon green waves , to the walk in maids to the hop in hop out relatives, the fish vendor with his pungent, silvery grey wares and the bangle seller with his psychedelic jangling ones , even the tepid yellow moon at night, everything is breathing, watching, overseeing , witnessing, almost like living extensions and accomplices to our home in Bhubaneswar.

The soil of Orissa is fertile owing to the largely temperate climate and one has to randomly throw any seeds to be soon rewarded with a patch of green and sprouting delight. Red Clumps of *mandara* (hibiscus)and yellow blazes of *sevati* (hardy moms) lit up the front, gently wild garden. A slightly peppery , heavy fragrance suffused the air. Its source a blossoming *tulsi* housed within a wide earthen *kunda*. As Tulsi is worshipped as the divine mother it is widely believed that she protects the inmates of the home from all kinds of negativity . A straggly line of the holy herb lined the length of the front wall of the house whereas bunches of green splattered crotons and dainty ferns arrayed in pots of varying sizes affirmed their presence.

From the dark cool environs emerged a short , stout, attractive figure swathed in a blue, light as a cloud sari, a river of red in the parting of her long white hair , a gracious tanned face , smidgens of yellow gold on the ears, wrists and neck , red no apologies red bangles adorning strong wrists, pale brown eyes that miss nothing and see far into your heart. This was bau carrying a traditional heavy plate of copper with a single lamp and some rice and vermilion to welcome me into the home. We entered a room that is in the garden and leads into the main house, but fenced in so is airy, lighted and breezy. The pale yellow walls are etched with auspicious drawings of trumpets and banana plantains in vibrant colors of eggplant, blue and emerald green. A two foot high figure of Lord Jagannath , the presiding deity of Orissa is installed high up on the wall his fierce and benign gaze overseeing the activities of tenants.



As I enter the living room, I was taken aback to see a gaggle of neighborhood women . Evidently they had assembled to see me, the new bride . Having lived in Lucknow and Delhi for an eternity and coming from a corporate background I was uncomfortable with the open but not unkind scrutiny of the women ranging in age from fifteen to late sixties. Most of them were draped in traditional *ikat* and *passapalli* sarees with the red *sindoor* in the hair , red bangles, silver toe rings , exotic silver anklets and a faded yellow cotton thread with knots tied on the upper right arm.

Under the gentle probing I revealed that I hailed from Garhwal a hilly terrain in Northern India boasting of the formidable Himalayas . Uttarakhand was yet to be formed. My response drew blank looks. In those years , most oriyas had simplified the complex topography of India into everything north as Delhi, everything south as Chennai , east into Calcutta and west into Mumbai. The word Garhwal froze the women and perhaps forced them to jog their memory into neuron pathways of dead end Geography lessons. But the names Haridwar and Kedarnath drew relieved sighs that I was not a Martian and soon I was engulfed in a friendly banter.

Right from the first day I felt the house possessed a sense of compelling completeness despite the inside gentle disarray and wild outdoors. Every room possesses an expansive window offering a sight of a moving, outdoor green curtain. It is as if the trees and the shrubs lend their ears to the conversations inside the home. There is nothing luxurious about the decor, for the home belongs to an era where houses were built not as abodes of display but were dwellings where people lived, assembled to chat, eat , share ,and above all fulfill their destinies. The ground floor ambles out into a covered verandah, two bedrooms, dining area and the kitchen. A flight of steps lead to an open terrace, and the owner of the universe is housed in a bright and fragrant spot beneath the stairs known as *thakura ghar* (altar). I was intrigued by the *alna*, a wooden rack type commodity used to drape clothes worn for everyday life. Its aesthetic functionality appealed to my eye and I



clicked pictures to the bemusement of bapa , my father in law.

"Bhauja chaa ", a statement interrupted my reverie. It was Pooja the household help in Bhubaneswar putting down a cup of tea or rather half a cup of tea in a miniscule cup. I was used to downing tea from mugs the size of a bucket and such a amount made me wonder if it was a gargling potion . However as the hot brew filled my mouth I was pleasantly surprised to affirm its delicious taste . Tea is sparingly drunk in Orissa and is often made with equal parts of water and milk with copious amounts of sugar and flavored with cardamom or *gujurati* as it is known in local parlance. Well the gargling potion was more delicious than my bathing size brew I concurred.

The last decade has seen me changing at least eight homes and often I dwell upon the words of Ruskin Bond, the famous writer from the hills, "The world keeps on changing, but there is always something, somewhere, that remains the same."

Its January 2018 and a snow storm is battering outside my New Jersey home. The air hangs at 23 Fahrenheit and trees stand like shorn warriors. Everything is grey , dismal and eerily quiet as I crank up the evening meal. And then the spluttering of *panch phutan* and *sukhila lanka* and its robust, spiky fragrance fills my kitchen with its four gas burners, huge grill and an impersonal dishwasher. My thoughts wing me to the kitchen in Bhubaneswar, a small, dark , cool and organized space with an open window covered by a thin mesh that looks out to a backhouse , a dancing bay leaf tree and a chunk of open skies. The occupants of the backhouse were meant to help bapa bau but are preoccupied making sense of their own earthly struggles. One wall is occupied by big steel bins filled to the brim with rice, flour and sugar. Spoons and *kharikas* (spatulas) of every conceivable size occupy another wall , glistening aluminum vessels known as silver are stored below a two burner gas , and a small rickety wood and glass cabinet boasts of cutlery collected by Bau over the years. Like the house the crockery carry a story , a tea set bought by my husband from



his first salary , a set of dinner plates bought by my brother in law when the guests exceeded the supply, a flower patterned mug Bau picked up from Macys .Cutlery in orissa is hardly used and when chipped is also used. What is used is displayed and within easy reach and what is not used is never bought (exception is the Macy mug which I suspect will only be a look at, not use item.)

I slide the shutters up a wee bit to clear the cooking fumes and remember another typical feature of the home , the ventilators high up on the walls . They are square, carved into a beauteous stone design of a wheel very similar to the Konarak circle and possess no covering of mesh . On my concerned musing that they were open doorways for hordes of mosquitoes I was informed that mosquitoes in Orissa do not fly that high, they do not bite and even if they bite there is nothing fatal about it. None of it I believed. And that shrubs of *tulsi* deter mosquitoes . This I believed. Till this day I ponder the logic of shutting the windows at dusk to keep the hordes out . But this house gracefully accommodates everyone within its folds, from creepy, staring lizards, to stray dogs that like the mosquitoes bypass the shut gate, and sleep on the outer boundaries. But everything is accommodated in Bau's singular phrase "*sie tha gharaku jhauichi tu tho kama kar.* (That creature is going his way you do your own thing.)

That first night I slept a deep sleep . My house in America is too quiet and our home in Bhubaneswar is filled with solitude. Having lived in both places I can distinguish between the two. I slept to the sound of running tap water courtesy outhouse inhabitants and I woke up to the sound of running tap water. I smelt my poison.....ginger tea and got up. Bau and my husband were talking at 5 am over cups of sweet tea. The day begins with this ritual of exchanging all that fills their days separated as they are by providence and eight thousand miles. Talks meander over people, places and occasions and what is not possible settles down like dregs at the bottom of an understanding heart .



The *thakura* room is a spacious nook beneath stairs and is painted in brick red and canary yellow. A thick sweet fragrance of bananas, flowers, lamp oil, camphor and Rs 10 Samaj agarbatti permeates the space. I feel bedecking the numerous Gods and Goddesses with flowers is the actual pray for Bau. So the white star shaped *tagars* are heaped plentiful on the male Gods , whereas the crimson and pink *mandara* vie as crowns for the goddesses. The yellow bell shaped *kaniari* and the daring orange marigolds add gay splashes of color whereas clumps of soft red *ashokas* enliven faded portraits that radiate an eternity of grace .

Adjoining the *thakura* room is the living room which is easily one of my favorite rooms with a wide, wide window. This is the place where we receive guests who then decide to venture into the dining area, bedroom , kitchen or wherever they fancy. Here in this house everything is open , the doors are always open to let in daughters, son in laws, children , vendors, acupuncturist and mosquitoes. The living room has been witness to all important rites of life .....from the feeding ceremony of my daughter and nephews to the death of my father in law. And in all these moments of joy and sadness, divinity pervades this house in its acceptance of destinies, embracing of people and overflowing gratitude to the bounties of life in the form of brown gunny bags overflowing with gifts of *chuda*, yam, green bananas and maturing green coconuts. Beloved people of the house have passed through the forbidden veil and are now mere pictures on the wall. And I guess that's what we all are in the end .....stories and pictures, with our home as a witness to the eternal dance between life and death.

Last year I had a wonderful month long stay in our house. The day before we were to leave I slowly climbed the stairs that lead onto the terrace , my one hand drifting along the walls . Tomorrow there would be the tearful good byes, the plane taking off , and I would be craning my neck to see the last patch of paddy fields disappear , but for today I was here. I passed nooks and corners that would have been a child's delightful hiding space but are instead used for storing things that have long outdated their use. I emerge on the



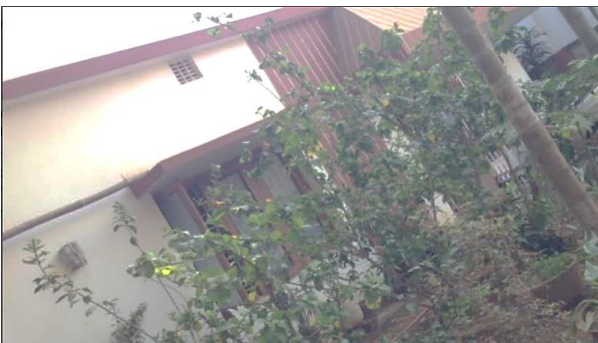


terrace, a whitewashed square fringed by trees planted by Bau . Rows of earthen pots with happy clusters of purple and maroon *sevati* claim one corner. One Entire wall is taken up by a spreading mango its branches heavy with flowers. They rustle and move as if to acknowledge my presence . Plastic wires with dangling clips meant to dry clothes zigzag across the length of the terrace. The sun has bid a reluctant adieu and numerous flowers of the sky are visible on a soil of pink and fading grey.

An overhead plane roars over and I lean on the parapet, inhaling the dusty air, seeing the front garden, dirt road, neighboring houses and distant trees . New York with its grid of avenues and streets and blur of yellow taxis seems far away and unreal. A comforting buzz of street voices and birds chattering surrounds me. I feel my core and the soul of the house merge into one , we are both lost, so full of potential and trying to make the best of what life has given us. I don't know why such homes come to us , maybe as a preamble to a culture , a manner of life or to pen a homage for its virtues of just remaining there , waiting .

Thud! A beloved coconut tree relieves one of its numerous, juicy burdens. I can almost taste its sweet water and soft white flesh.

And in that place where I stand between what could have been and what is, I feel a peace descend on me . The stumbling onto I daresay our little , poignant selves through a beloved place is perhaps best expressed by Pascal Mercier ( Night Train to Lisbon ) : "We leave something of ourselves behind when we leave a place, we stay there, even though we go away. And there are things in us that we can find again only by going back there."



Mrs Deepti Paikray

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## The Light in the Window

The girl held her breath, squinting through the window in an attempt to make out some of the details of the night outside. The numbers on the alarm clock beside her bed glared at her angrily.

**2:54 A.M.**

She could feel the tension everywhere, in her fingers clenched tightly around the edge of her pillow, in her feet curled up underneath the blanket, in the air as it hung there, thick and dry and heavy. And as she watched, painted against the curtain over the window on the house across the street, she could make out the silhouette of a woman, with long hair and a loose, flowing nightgown, walking into her view. The woman seemed weighed down by something as she sat in front of a table, chin in her hands.

**2:56 A.M.**

After a few seconds, a man walked in and the woman stood, walking lightly towards the door where he had entered, lifting her arms and wrapping them around his neck. They stood there, holding each other, until the woman put her arms down, taking the man's hand and walking to the back of the house, out of the girl's line of sight. The shadows in the window disappeared as the light went out.

And then, just like always, the warmth and satisfaction flooding through her being, the girl relaxed, exhaling slowly, and sleep took her within minutes.





Night after night, this scene continued, the woman sitting and turning on the light, then going to sleep with the man once he came home, always leaving the window in darkness before leaving.

As usual, the girl pulled the covers up over her nose, enjoying a moment of perfect stillness before drawing in a deep breath.

**2:53 A.M.**

She would just have to wait another few minutes. Anticipation kept her from breathing, numbing the ends of her fingers, making her stomach crawl. There was something about that light across the street, something about the mystery of those who lived inside that kept her riveted, unable to sleep until some sort of resolution presented itself as the end of a perpetual question that lingered in the air. The darkness that followed the light wasn't an answer, but it seemed to be the closest she would get.

**2:54 A.M.**

She breathed in further, feeling like her lungs were about to burst, praying that the light would turn on and woman would enter before they actually did. Where was it? Where was the light, illuminating the woman's sorrow? Where was the woman, sitting at the table, hands clasped in loneliness?

**2:55 A.M.**

The girl let go of the breath at last, a hopeless kind of relief spreading through her as she blinked repeatedly, trying to see if she'd missed something, if she was somehow looking at the wrong house.

**2:56 A.M.**

Just as she had given up hope of ever receiving her resolution, the light flashed through the



window. The man entered from one side, the woman from the other, gesturing violently at each other. The man threw his hands outward in accusation, the woman letting hers fly up in defense, landing in her hair and pressing downwards, looking for some kind of purchase on the steep cliff she'd slipped off of, something, anything she could grab onto in such a crisis. *Anything*. But no such consolation seemed to present itself as the woman lowered her hands in a single sharp movement, shouting, putting her hands to her eyes and wiping away tears. The man hesitated, about to step towards her and comfort her, give her the handhold she sought so desperately for, for her to cling onto like her life depended on it.

But she pushed him away, turning around, sinking to her knees, clutching at her chest, like it would provide some kind of relief from the abyss she'd fallen into, but she couldn't catch herself. The man, clearly reluctant to do so, with one last exclamation, turned and walked out the door.

The girl stared in disbelief, her heart stopping at the sight of the woman's anguish, the man's anger, as the echo of the door slamming shut behind him reverberated through the streets.

Her eyes were wide with horror, and she found that the breath she had released refused to obey her commands and enter her body again, instead hanging there in the empty space between her and the window, so tantalizingly close that she should have been able to capture it with the slightest of efforts, but it just sat there, creating a kind of oblivion that she knew would never go away. Her heart ached in rhythm with the woman's, the tears in her eyes blurring her view of the shadow in the window.

### 3:12 A.M.

Through the sorrow pulsing in her chest, digging into her being, a sympathy so deep that it made her dizzy with emotion, sleep somehow crept past her blanket, smothering her in



a solace so temporary that suddenly, she dreaded the idea of ever waking up.



The night after that, the girl scrambled quickly into bed, throwing the blanket hurriedly over herself, a strange sense of urgency overcoming her ability to think clearly.

**2:45 A.M.**

There would be at least another ten minutes before the woman came out. If she came out at all. A leaden trepidation settled firmly in the back of her mind, clawing at the pit of her stomach, tearing out her heart, making her head spin as she struggled to draw a conclusion.

Would she come? Would she sit at the table, awaiting the man as she did every night? Or had last night changed all of that? She felt tears prick her eyes, rolling down her cheeks as she failed to blink them back, the steady pounding of blood in her ears drowning out all other sounds. It was completely dark outside. The woman still wasn't there.

**2:47 A.M.**

Be patient, the girl chided herself, just wait, just wait. She would come, she had to come, *she had to come*.

And yet, the night grew ever longer.





The girl turned off her light as she entered her room, trudging listlessly to the edge of her bed, pulling up the blanket and draping it over herself, as if it was a shield against the desolation in the air.

### 2:48 A.M

No light, no sign of the woman. The girl heaved a breath, the effort of this one single action making her ache with exhaustion. There really was no light, nothing at all to shine through the darkness that encompassed her world. After all, if that one piece of eternal purity and love couldn't exist for long...what could? What would be worth going through all that pain and suffering for if it wouldn't last, if the light at the end of the tunnel was really just a crack in the ceiling leading towards a dead end, if the shadow in the window was just a mirage, a trick of the light? The girl was too tired to even flinch as the burning tears fell down her cheeks, the blanket soaking them up instantly.

### 2:49 A.M.

The girl gasped suddenly, sitting up in bed as a light turned on across the street, the shadow of the woman appearing in the window. The woman dragged herself to the table, sitting down heavily, burying her face in her hands. The tears continued to fall from the girl's eyes as she felt herself melt with every bit of misery and despair the woman must have been feeling, every ounce of remorse piled on top of her, suffocating her.

But the woman was just a trick of the light, wasn't she? Of course. No faith could ever exist with such conviction, such trust that things would work out if she just kept waiting. And yet, the girl found herself unable to tear her gaze away from the shadow in the window.

### 2:54 A.M.

The girl breathed in sharply as the woman stood up and hurried towards the door. Why



was she getting up? Was she leaving the house? Had she finally given up?

Her eyes opened wide in wonder. The woman walked slowly backwards, stopping when she reached the table, hands covering her mouth in awe. The man followed her after a moment, moving closer, reaching out for her. This time, she accepted him, throwing herself into his arms, letting him hold her. The girl could only stare in absolute reverence, disbelief in her eyes. He came back. He really came back for her. A cold, dense kind of guilt formed in her throat for ever having dared to question their love, but it didn't last long. She smiled warmly towards them, the consolation of the light in the window instantly dispelling her doubts.

2:56 A.M.



By

Aaryana Rajanala

Read more of Aaryana's writing at [Aaryana Rajanala](https://www.aaryanarajanala.com)





## Missing the Chip



Conversation with Amber Hart:

You: Yeah, I'm so glad it's the weekend.

Amber: Same. The whole week I was just waiting for it.

You: Like I said I can't wait. Oh, you're still going to get your chip checked with me, tomorrow right?

Amber: Yeah, there's been some connection problems on my chip so I definitely need a maintenance check.

You: K

Incoming Message from Parker Young:

Parker: Kaylee, lunch's ready!

You: I'm coming.

Would You Like to Return to Your Conversation with Amber Hart?

Yes

No

Conversation with Amber Hart:

You: Sorry Amber, I got to go. Parker's calling me for dinner and I'm starving. I'll call you when I'm about to leave for your house, k?

Amber: Sure Kaylee. I have some homework to finish anyway that my mom's chatting to me about right now. Since I've been getting some headaches from my chip she's been telling me to stop using it so much, but it's so boring without my chip.

You: You've been getting headaches? Amber, why didn't you tell me? I don't want





you to feel sick.

Amber: Don't worry about it, they're minor headaches. Plus, we're going for the chip check so Dr. Miller will fix it.

You: Okay, you sure?

Amber: Positive.

#### Incoming Message from Parker Young:

Parker: Kaylee you better hurry. Mom says that the food's getting cold.

You: Okay, I'm coming. I just need to finish up this convo with Amber.

Parker: Okay.

Would You Like to Return to Your Conversation with Amber Hart?

Yes

No

#### Conversation with Amber Hart:

You: I have to leave Amber, so I'll see you later.

Amber: Yep.

You: K, ttyl!

Amber: Bye!

I bolted out of my room and rushed down the stairs, quickly sliding into my seat next to Parker. I grabbed my fork and took a small piece of pasta and swallowed it. I looked through the photos of my friends with my TC social media account. I chuckled at my friends as we looked hilarious in the photo we took together at the park with silly faces. I looked down to take another bite of pasta when I noticed Parker, my younger brother, on his chip too. He looked really concentrated on his chip so I suspected him playing video



games again. Mom and dad were also on their chips, both probably finishing their work. Dad especially was very concentrated on something. I scrolled through my TC account, looking for new posts from my friends.

#### Incoming Message from Dad:

Dad: Kaylee, don't go on your chip after I tell you this.

You: What, why?

Dad: I just received an email from TechFeed and they said there was a malfunction with the TechFeed software in our chips. Everyone must get off their chip until the software has been fixed to prevent harm to anyone. Shut down your chip now.

You: Okay, I will.

I clicked the shutdown icon on my chip as I looked around the table. Mom, dad, and Parker were all staring at me.

“Kaylee, you are off... your chip, right?” Dad asked in broken fragments. I opened my mouth to start respond “yeah,” but my mouth felt so weird using it this way. I decided to just nod. I looked around at Parker, who was still eating his lunch, but in the messiest way ever. He had sauce all over his face. Mom opened her mouth to tell him to use a napkin, but for some reason decided to leave it. I watched her open her mouth and roll her tongue, maybe to make a letter sound. I don't even remember the last time anyone in this family used their mouth to speak.

Silence filled the air as everyone stared awkwardly at each other. I wished that there had been no malfunction in the first place. I wanted to chat with my friends! I was so bored! I sighed in frustration internally. Finally, mom broke the silence by saying, “Let us go...”



outside on... a walk.” She spoke in broken fragments just like dad. Parker and I stood up, showing that we wanted to go outside too. Everyone had finished their pasta.

“I need...to go... change.” I spoke slowly, having trouble saying the word change I think. I walked upstairs to my room and opened my closet. I picked my favorite cashmere sweater to wear and combed my brown, curly hair until it felt soft and smooth. I rushed downstairs where the rest of my family was already ready. I wore and zipped up my black boots and followed my mom and Parker outside, my dad behind me. The air felt cold, but it was okay because of my sweater. We all walked on the sidewalk with Parker in front of me and mom and dad behind me; no one said a word. I looked around and noticed it was just outside; everyone else was probably inside on their chips.

After a long while of silence, Parker finally spoke.

“Kaylee... do you... want... to hear a... story?” Parker asked, in the same way of speaking as the rest of us.

“Okay,”

“This was... a story that... I... wrote for...class,”

“Go on.”

Parker explained a story where the whole family were superheroes. One day there was an attack on their neighborhood and it was up to our family to save everyone. Parker had the ability to fly and shoot grenades, I had the ability to shoot heat blasts and create forcefields, mom had invisibility and super vision, and dad had could shoot lightning out of his fingers and super speed. I laughed so hard that I almost fell on the ground while we were walking. Eventually, mom and dad listened in to our conversation and started laughing along with Parker and I as well. The story Parker wrote had some funny and cool moments.



“Wow Parker, that... is a cool.... story, but... why... did you not... tell this... to everyone... before?” I asked curiously as I controlled my laughter.

“Everyone... was busy on... their chips. I... was too. No one... had time to... listen,” Parker responded. Mom and dad became quiet all of a sudden and so did I. The realization that I had spent my entire life so far circling around the chip dawned on me. I think it dawned on mom and dad too. Suddenly, I didn’t care about the malfunction our chips.

“Parker... tell me... another story.”

By

Ananya Pradhan





## My Dog Cookie

Yes! I yelled. “We are getting a dog!” “Wahoo” my sister yelled as we were walking to the pet store. I was overwhelmed with lots and lots of joy. When we walked in I looked around. There were so many dogs.

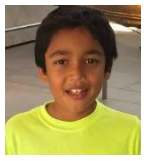
“We are getting a big dog.” My dad said. “How long have you been planning this?” I asked. “A few months” answered my Mom. Weird. ”A FEW MONTHS” I said loudly and also I told you “we will get a dog Misha” I bragged. We are going to get a golden doodle.

The small dogs were barking soo loudly. A lady led us to a small place with lots of golden doodles. There it was. The perfect one.....or at least that’s what we thought. “Are we going to take it home or what” my sister said. “We have to play with it, to see if we like the dog” my mom said with her smart voice. She took us inside a gate where we could play with a dog. I could tell this would be fun. We took her inside. “Can I hold her” I asked “sure” the lady said. I held her. So was so fluffy. I was beamed with joy. We played and played with her. Right when we were about to leave with her....My sister said “WAIT... I... I like this one” she yelled. We looked over.

I felt like beautiful music was playing. She was the real one. We asked to play with her. She was much better than the other dog. She looked like a cookie. She was super playful. We loved her. We took her. When we walked out of the pet shop I got to hold her half of the way and then my sister held her. “I want to name her” I said. “Okay” my family said. “I’ll name her....COOKIE” I yelled. “Because she looks like a cookie” I said. “Yay! That’s good name for her” my sister said. And we drove away.

By

Mallika Panda



## The Crystal Ball

Once upon a time, there were two brothers Dan and Ryan and they both considered each other best friends. They lived in house 236 on Crambary Street, Oakville city. One day, they were playing catch with a tennis ball when a ball that looked like a crystal came flying into their yard.

“What kind of ball is that?” Dan asked.

“It seems to be a crystal ball!” Ryan exclaimed. Then, the two brothers investigated the ball when they saw a hidden gem inside. They investigated a little more until they decided to track down where it came from.

“Let’s knock on our neighbors’ doors to see if they know anything about the ball.” Ryan suggested.

“That’s a good idea!” Dan exclaimed. Then, they asked everyone in their street and nobody knew where it came from. Finally, they asked their friend Matthew who lived across the street and he replied saying, “I think my grandfather has a map of where the ball came from.”

Next, the three boys went to Dan and Ryan’s yard to investigate. “The map ends at a field near a lake?” Dan asked.

“Yeah, this map was passed down from my grandfather to my dad to me.” Matthew replied.

“Hey, that lake looks familiar.” Ryan said looking closely at the drawing of the lake on the map.



“We should go to the lake and explore more!” Dan said.

After they packed water and other tools, they met in Matthew’s yard.

“I found out that the lake is where we went during the summer?” Ryan said.

“Isn’t that Lake Hudson?” Dan asked.

“My grandfather told me it’s buried on the moist shore of the lake.” Matthew explained.

“Let’s explore more then.” Matthew exclaimed.

So, they all adventured to the lake until they saw their other friend Zack. When they saw him, Ryan asked, “What are you doing here?”

“Did you steal the crystal ball Zack?” Matthew asked.

“Yeah” Zack admitted.

“Well, you shouldn’t steal something that’s special to someone”, told Dan.

“Yeah, I guess you are right”, Zack agreed.

“We should put it back”, told Ryan

“We should put it in the moist shore”, Matthew suggested.

So, the four of them dug a hole and put the crystal ball inside.

“Well, let’s go home Dan. This adventure was fun!”, Ryan exclaimed.

“Okay bye Zack and Matthew!”, Dan yelled.

“Okay bye Dan, bye Ryan!”, Zack and Matthew both called over their shoulder and they all went home. Suddenly, I heard a voice.

“Wake Up!”

*A w w m a n , i t w a s o n l y a d r e a m !*

By

Amrit Pradhan

Grade: 3



## The Jockey Jackal

Once upon a time there lived a jackal. He toiled as a farmer just to put food on his family's plates. His son Jack loved to play soccer. So, to fulfil his son's dream, the Jackal started doing a crop sale every day to get money to register him on their local soccer team. He also managed to buy shin-guards and cleats for Jack. So, on his first practice, he walked up to his teammates, who were all prey. His coach wrote something down on his clipboard and said, "Welcome to the team! What's your name?" Jack happily said, "Jack." The other players snickered at him, but Jack didn't seem to notice.

Afterwards, the coach gave a series of genuine compliments to Jack for his soccer skills. He thanked the coach and walked off to his house in total darkness. He told his parents about the first day, but his father knew that all his teammates were being fishy for one reason. Because his son was a jackal.

The next day, at school, Jack got a soccer ball at recess and started to practice some footwork. His teammates started planning to pass with him, but then "accidentally" kick the ball away and tell him to get it. But when they started to approach him, Joey the giraffe spoke up. He said, "Why should we do this? I mean, Jack is a nice guy, even if he's a jackal. Plus, he is our teammate, why should we treat him differently?" Harry the hare, the leader of the group said, "Because back in prehistoric times, jackals used to eat us! Now, we need to pay them back by disrespecting them." Joey shook his head and told his teammate he couldn't support Harry's plan. Harry ignored him and began to activate his plan, but the recess whistle blew and they had to go inside.

In class, show and tell was going on and Jack showed a gourd that he had picked with his father from his farm. Harry and some of his friends began stifling laughs until Joey and





Timmy the turtle silenced them by saying, “I can’t hear him with your laughs”, but actually they tried to tell them that it was not nice to laugh at someone. When it was Joey’s turn he brought a soccer ball and explained that his dad, the coach of his soccer team, told him that at show and tell he would tell Jack he was the best player on the team, right in front of Harry and his friends.

Their teacher, Mrs. Antler and all Joey’s other friends and teammates went over to Joey and Jack to give them hugs. Harry was the only one who didn’t. All of Jack and Joey’s teammates apologized for bullying him. Right when they finished, the final bell rang and Joey told Harry his dad would tell him to control his behavior or he would be benched on the first and last game. Harry finally learned his lesson and went over to Jack and said, “I’m sorry.” Then afterwards, the coach saw that Harry was well-behaved and put him with Jack on the forward position. And they played together happily ever after.

By

Pratyay Mohapatra



## There's No One

Walking down the broken path  
Trees shadowing the road  
I am alone and scared  
Nobody can find me  
I am stuck in a maze  
With all the exits blocked  
The voices whisper my name  
My memories are hazy and they fade away  
It's been days since I was lost  
Nobody has called for me  
Nobody noticed that I was gone  
I can't get my voice to speak out  
I am surrounded by never ending darkness  
I have fallen into a ceaseless abyss  
The sun has vanished  
The moon has arisen  
The stars are my only company  
Everything is quiet  
No sound to be heard  
I dream that I will be raised  
From this bottomless pit  
The rain falls in  
And taps 'hello' to my hollow head  
My smile is stolen from my face  
I am afraid to stand in this place  
Every night I have no one to talk to



The constant fear wraps its arms  
I know that there are worse things  
Than being alone  
But loneliness is the only thing I have  
Right now  
I understand..  
..that my thoughts will destroy me  
The pain has stopped  
The sun has come out  
The stars are gone  
And there is a warmer feeling  
I survived another day of being alone

By  
Sumedha Jena

Sumedha is Grade – 8 student of Woodrow Wilson Middle School in Edison. She lives in New Jersey with her family.



## The Witness

Tucked in my sub consciousness, I frequently dream a huge banyan tree  
Floating in space unhindered  
I, sitting silently under this tree with eyes closed imagine Lord Buddha  
Under the peepal gazing at the sick, old and deceased  
Childhood memories of this banyan inspire me often to move to fourth dimension  
But only see the unusually calm all-pervasive darkness in sound sleeping position  
Flashes of illuminating light rarely appear and swiftly gone  
Leave behind a deep sense of amazement about the creation  
Night breaks with dawn and the dream vanishes and sound sleep does not persist  
New day arrives and I see that the banyan tree does not exist  
What is the truth, recurring dream or the calm darkness or this new substitution?  
None of this is true and something ever existent is true behind this perception  
A massive cyclone came and hit my dear banyan with an unbelievable powerful impact  
Demolished its widely spreader branches and dislodged its strong adherence  
to the Mother Earth  
Legacy of its magnanimity in giving shelter and solace will enliven all beings in their heart  
I remain as sole witness in all my changing three states beholding the truth  
behind the banyan tree fact

By

**Nrasingha Mishra**

Germantown, Maryland



## A w a k e n i n g

She stands on the oceanfront, looking at the horizon

Where the earth and sky blissfully meet

The pounding waves rush forth,

The rippling waters kiss her feet.

She gazes and gazes and quietly contemplates

Upon life and its mysteries, standing alone she reflects.

Like an ascetic plunged in meditation

She isolates herself from the mercenary world,

Solitary she stands on the sandy beach

Haunted by her bottomless thoughts.

The setting sun's red glow grows dimmer

The image of an approaching boat looms larger

Intimidated by the approaching dusk

Abruptly she turns to look behind her.

In the half-light, she beholds the sand

None else but the sand, empty and vast.

They had all taken the long road home

Leaving her lonesome, castaway on the shore.

Unknowingly her cheeks become wet

If only a vision of her lost ones she could get

Her forlornness would vanish, her world would change

Her life would repossess meaning once again.

Conflicting thoughts, memories of yesteryears

And volumes of unspoken words,

Gathering these priceless treasures of hers

Silently she retreats across the sands.

By

**Anuradha P Mishra**, -New Jersey, USA.



## The Whisperer

She knew it wasn't right  
Yet, she just wanted to take flight  
To somewhere, far, far away.  
Somewhere where she wouldn't have to see this  
Every single day of her life.  
She tried being oblivious to her surroundings,  
Confused as to what to do.  
That did not stop them, and she got determined.  
Suddenly, she stopped amidst her fears  
She knew she could change this  
This horrible world of grey!  
If she could just put herself together  
Piece by piece, part by part,  
Little by little, heart by heart.  
So she stood in the middle of it all  
And started to whisper  
Words of courage, words of hope.  
Sometimes she almost gave up  
What good would a whisper do?  
She thought about fighting  
Maybe throwing her shoe?!  
Though in her mind she knew  
That would only make it worse.  
And then she would die of remorse.  
So she stood tall and started whispering again, this time louder,  
"STOP...STOP and fight back.



DO NOT take anything lying down!’

Slightly confused

They froze where they were.

And then they fought back,

Slowly, relentlessly.

Soon the tormentors walked away

Leaving them alone,

And the fallen had eyes shining with pride.

They looked up at her

Ah, this girl, this special girl!

Who saved them from all evil.

They thanked her with relieved looks

She was their savior;

She was their guardian

The girl who whispered hope.

The Whisperer.

By

Anwasha Mishra



## P o e m

Sky was brilliantly blue  
Sunlight glittering white on the ground  
Blinding.  
A Whole world  
Transformed by snow.  
Looking in vain for familiar landmarks  
Treetops that had been gold all autumn were twisted  
As if they would never have any life in them  
Ever again.  
Few cedars, so dull before,  
Now stood out a strong, dusky green.  
The wind had the burning taste of fresh snow  
The cold stung, and delighted one.  
Earth got back little color under the dazzling light  
The palest gold in the sun and snow stood.  
Snow was crusted in shallow terraces,  
Tracings like ripple-marks at the edges  
Curly waves were the impression of the stinging lash in the wind.  
Girls shivering beneath sweaters  
Hugging each other for warmth.  
The great open, after the stupefying warmth indoors,  
Made them behave like wild things.  
They laughed and shouted.  
Never wanting to go home again

By

Aastha Das



# ଓସା

ଆମେରିକା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜ



ଆମେରିକା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜର ମୁଖପତ୍ର

ସଂଖ୍ୟା - ୬୨ - ଡିସେମ୍ବର - ୨୦୧୭

## ଉତ୍କର୍ଷ



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## UTKARSA

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## ପର୍ବତ ଉପରେ ପ୍ରେମ ପତ୍ର

ଆଠ ହଜାର ଫୁଟ ଉଚ୍ଚ ଆମେରିକାର ରକି ପର୍ବତ ମାଳାର ଅନ୍ତା ସହର. । ସହରର ଗ୍ରୀଷ୍ମକାଳିନ ଦୃଶ୍ୟର ଝଲକରେ ଚକିତ ହୁଏ ଦର୍ଶକ । ପାଖରେ କଟନ୍ ଉଡ଼ି ପାହାଡ଼ ଉପତ୍ୟକାରେ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ସ୍ଥାନରେ ଗ୍ରୀଷ୍ମକାଳୀନ କ୍ୟାମ୍ପ ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତି ଦେଖିବା କଥା । ଶହଶହ ଦର୍ଶକ ପାହାଡ଼ରେ ହାଇକିଂ ପାଇଁ ଆସନ୍ତି ପ୍ରତି ବର୍ଷ । ସେ ସହରର ଦୃଶ୍ୟରେ ବିମୋହିତ ହୁଅନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ବାରମ୍ବାର ସେଠାକୁ ଆସିବାର ଲୋଭ ସଂବରଣ କରି ପାରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ ।

ଦୁଇପଟେ ସୁଉଚ୍ଚ ପର୍ବତମାଳା । ମଝିରେ ପାହାଡ଼ିଆ ରାସ୍ତା । ବାଟଯାକ ଦର୍ଶକଙ୍କ ସୁରକ୍ଷାପାଇଁ ଏବଂ ମୋଟର ଚାଳକଙ୍କୁ ସଚେତନ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ସାଇନବୋର୍ଡ଼ ମରାଯାଇଛି: ପହରମାଇଲରୁ ଅଧିକ ବେଗରେ ଯେମିତି କେହି ମଟର ଚଳାଇବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା ନକରନ୍ତି ।

ଉଠାଣି ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଗାଡ଼ି ପାର୍କିଂପାଇଁ ଯାଗା । ତା ପରଠୁ ପାହାଡ଼ିଆ ପାଦଚଲା ଉଠାଣି ରାସ୍ତା । ବାଟଯାକ ଲେଖା ହୋଇଛି “ଭ୍ରମଣକାରୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ଅନୁରୋଧ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ କୁକୁର ନେଇ ଏଠାରେ ପ୍ରବେଶ କରନ୍ତୁ ନାହିଁ ।” ପ୍ରଥମେ ସେ ନିଷେଧାଦେଶର ଅର୍ଥ ବୁଝି ହେଲା ନାହିଁ । ମନରେ ସନ୍ଦେହ ହେଲା- କାହିଁକି? କଣ ଏ ସ୍ଥାନ ଏକ ପବିତ୍ର ସ୍ଥାନ? ପରେ ବୁଝିଲି ଏଠି କୁକୁରମାନର ଯଦି ମଇଳା କରନ୍ତି ତେବେ ସଫା କରିବ କିଏ । କାଳେ ଝରଣାର ପାଣି ମଇଳା ହେଇଯିବ ସେଥିପାଇଁ ହୁଏତ ଏ ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା । ଅଲଟା ସହରର ଏ ବହୁମୂଲ୍ୟ ପାର୍ବତ୍ୟ ଦୃଶ୍ୟକୁ ଏ ସ୍ଥାନ ନିଜ ଭିତରେ ଲୁଚାଇ ରଖିଛି; ସତେକି ଯାଦୁକରର ହାତ ବାଜିଯାଇଛି ଏଠି ।

ମାଇଲ ମାଇଲ ବ୍ୟାପି ଉପତ୍ୟକାମାନଙ୍କରେ ଏଠି ଅଲଟା ପର୍ବତ ଆପେଆପେ ରଚିଥାଏ ଫୁଲର ଏକ ବିସ୍ତୀର୍ଣ୍ଣ ବଗିଚା । କିଏ ଯେମିତି ଫୁଲର ଗାଲିଚା ବିଛେଇ ଦେଇଛି । ହଳଦିଆ ନାଲିଧଳା ନାରଙ୍ଗି ଫୁଲର ଶୋଭା ମନ ମୋହିନିଏ । ଆଉ ତାକୁ ଘେରି ରହିଛି ଶ୍ୟାମଳ ଘାସର ପଡ଼ିଆ । ପକ୍ୱତି ରାଣୀ ପୁଣି ଏତେ ସୁନ୍ଦର ଦିଶନ୍ତି? ନିଜକୁ ପଚାରିଲି ମୁଁ ।

ପର୍ବତ ଉପରୁ ନିମ୍ନମୁଖି ଓହ୍ଲାଇ ଆସିବନ୍ତି ମାଳମାଳ ଝରଣା ରାସ୍ତାର ଦୁଇକଡ଼ରେ । ବୋହି ଆଶୁଚନ୍ଦ୍ରି ବରଫ ତରଳା ସ୍ୱଚ୍ଛଦଳ ପ୍ରବାହ । ପ୍ରବଳ ସେ ସୁଅର ଧାରା. । ପଥର କାଟିକାଟି ବୋହିଆସୁଚନ୍ଦ୍ରି ସେମାନେ । ସେ ଉଚ୍ଛୁଳା ଧାର ଚାହୁଁଟି ଆଗରେ ସତେକି ସମୁଦ୍ର - ତାଙ୍କ ବିସର୍ଜନର ସ୍ଥଳୀ । କିନ୍ତୁ ପାଖରେ ଏଠି ସମୁଦ୍ର ନାହିଁ । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ନଇଟିଏ ଅଛି କୋଉଠି ବହୁ ଦୂରରେ ।



ଦିନେ ଏଠି ଥିଲା ସମୁଦ୍ର । କେଉଁ ଯୁଗରୁ କେନାଣି ସମୁଦ୍ର ପତନରୁ ଉଠିଆସି ଗଢିଥିଲା ଏ ରାଜ୍ୟ । ତଥାପି ରହି ଯାଇଛି ସମୁଦ୍ରରୁ ଅରାଏ । ନାମ ହୋଇଛି ସଲୁଲେକ୍ । ଶୁଖିଲା ହୋଇ ଯାଇଥିବା ଜାଗାତକର ନାମ ସଲୁଲେକ ସିଟି, ଯେଉଁଠି ଗଢିଉଠିଛି ସେ ବିରାଟ ସହର । ଚାରିପଟେ ପ୍ରାଚୀର ପରି ଠିଆହୋଇଛି ରକି ପର୍ବତମାଳା । ମଣିଷହାତର ସ୍ପର୍ଶ ପାଇ ହୋଇଉଠିଛି ଜୀବନ୍ତ ।

ବିଶାଳ ବିଶ୍ୱର ଚତୁର୍ଦ୍ଦିଗରେ ଜଂଗଲ । ଝରଣାମାନେ ବୋହି ଆସୁଛନ୍ତି ପାର୍ବତର ପାଦ ଦେଶକୁ । ଝରଣାର ଦୁଇ କଡରେ ଆସପେନ ବୃକ୍ଷର ଅରଣ୍ୟ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଘୁରି ଆହୁରି ବିଚିତ୍ର । ଠିଆ ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି ଧାତଧାତି ହୋଇ ଝରଣାର ଦୁଇ କୁଳରେ । ସତେକି ତନୁ ପାତେଲି ଯୁବତୀ ଗୁଡିଏ । ଲମ୍ବା ଗୋଡ ସରୁ ଅଂଟା ଆଉ ଶରୀର ଗଠନ ଚମକାର । ଡାଳମେଲିଚନ୍ଦ୍ରି ମାପି ରୁପି କରି । ପତ୍ରମାନେ ଚକଚକ କରୁଛନ୍ତି ଖରାପତି । ଝୁଲୁଛନ୍ତି ପବନର ହିଲୋଳରେ । ଗଛ ଗୁଡିକର ତଳ ଗଣ୍ଡିମାନଙ୍କରେ ଡାଳନାହିଁ । ତଳୁ ଡାଳ ମାନେ ଗହଳି କରିଥିଲେ ବରଫ ପଡିଲେ ସହିବ କିଏ । ଶୀତଦିନେ ପତ୍ରଗହଳିରେ ବରଫର ଓଜନ ସହି ନପାରି ଭାଙ୍ଗି ପଡିବେନି କି? ପ୍ରକୃତିରାଣୀ ପରି ବୁଦ୍ଧିମତୀ ଆଉ କିଏ! ଝରଣାର କଳକଳ ନାଦ. ପବନର ହିଲୋଳରେ ପତ୍ରର ମର୍ମର ସ୍ୱର ସତେକି କିଏ ମଧୁର ତାନରେ ସଂଗୀତ ଗାଉଛି ।

ଉପରକୁ ଚାହିଁଲି । ସ୍ୱର୍ଗ ସତେକି ଓହ୍ଲେଇ ଆସିଛି ଏଇ ପର୍ବତ ମାଳା ଉପରକୁ । ଭାବିଲି-ଏ କଣ ସ୍ୱର୍ଗକୁ ଯିବା ବାଟଟି ସତରେ ଏଇଠି କି! ପାହାଡର ବିଭିନ୍ନ କନ୍ଦରରୁ ବୋହି ଆସୁଥିବା ଝରଣାମାନେ ଆଉ ଦୁଧରଙ୍ଗର ଜଳପ୍ରପାତମାନେ ଠାଏଠାଏ ମିଶିଯାଇଛନ୍ତି ପରସ୍ପର ସହିତ । ସତେକି ହିମାଳୟର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ନଦୀମାନଙ୍କର ମିଳନ ସ୍ଥଳୀ ରୁଦ୍ରପ୍ରୟାଗ! କିଏ ସବୁ ସେଠି ବସି ପିତୃତର୍ପଣ କରୁଛନ୍ତି ପରା । ନିସ୍ତ୍ୟା ବନ ଭୂମି । ଏକାନ୍ତ ଏକୃଷିଆ ସେଇ ଗଛ ଗହଳି ଭିତରୁ ଏମିତି ଦିଶିଯାଉଛି ସେ ଦୃଶ୍ୟ । ଜନମାନବ କୋଉଠି ଦିଶୁଥାନ୍ତି ଜଣେ ଅଧେ, ଠାଏଠାଏ । ନହେଲେ ସବୁ ଆଡେ ନିର୍ଜନ ନୀରବ ରୁପବାପ । ନିସ୍ତ୍ୟାତାର ଓଁକାର ଧ୍ୱନୀ । ହଠାତ ଆଖିରେ ପଡିଲା ଦୃଶ୍ୟଟିଏ । ଗୋଟିଏ ରେଷ୍ଟୁରୁମର ନାମଫଳକ ଲେଖାଥିବା ଆୟୋନ ଗଛ ଦେହରେ ଝୁଲୁଛି କାଗଜ ଖଂଡେ । ପାଖକୁ ଗଲି । ଲେଖାଥିଲା ଇଂରାଜିରେ- “ଏ ରାସ୍ତାରେ କୋଉଠି ମୋ ମନିପର୍ସଟି ହଜେଇ ଦେଇଛି । ସେଥିରେ ବେଶିକିଛି ‘ପିଏସା’ ( ଟଂକା) ନଥିଲା । ହେଲେ ସେ ପର୍ସଟି ଆମର ପ୍ରେମର ପ୍ରତୀକ । ବିବାହ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଏଇଟିକୁ ମତେ ପ୍ରଥମେ ଉପହାର ଦେଇଥିଲେ ମୋ ପ୍ରେମିକା ଯେ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ମୋର ପତ୍ନୀ । କେହି ବଦାନ୍ୟ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଯଦି ସେଇଟି ପାଆନ୍ତି, ମୋର ଏଇ ଠିକଣାରେ ଜଣାଇଲେ ଉପକୃତ ହେବି । ଆଉ ତାଙ୍କୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ଶହେ ଡଲାର ଉପହାର ଦେବି ”, ତା ତଳକୁ ଲେଖାଥିଲା ଫୋନ ନମ୍ବର ଓ ଠିକଣା । ତାଙ୍କ “ପିଏସା”ଲେଖାରୁ ଜାଣିଲି ଯେ ସେ ନିଷ୍ଠୁୟ ସ୍ୱେନ୍ ଦେଶର ଲୋକ । ବିଦେଶରେ ହଜାଇ ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି ତାଙ୍କ ପ୍ରେମର ପ୍ରତୀକଟିକୁ । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଦୁଃଖ ଏଇ ବ୍ୟାକୁଳ ନିବେଦନ!



ଏତେବେଳେ ଯାଏ ପ୍ରକୃତିର ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟରେ ବିମୋହିତ ହେଉଥିବା ମୋ ମନ ହଠାତ ଯେମିତି ଶତଗୁଣ ବିଦଗ୍ଧ ହୋଇଗଲା ଏ ଅନୁରୋଧର ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟରେ । ପ୍ରକୃତିର ଦିଗନ୍ତ ବିସ୍ତାରି ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ରାଜ୍ୟରେ ହଠାତ ଜଣେ ସଜା ପ୍ରେମୀ ମଣିଷର ପରିଚୟ ମତେ ସତେବା ମିଳିଗଲା ! ମନେହେଲା ତନୁ ପାତଳୀ ଝିଅଟିଏ ରୁପାନ୍ତରିତ ହୋଇ ଯାଇଛି ଏଇ ଅସ୍ତେନ ଗଛକୁ । ଦୃଶ୍ୟଟିଏ ଦିଶିଗଲା-ସେ କେତେ ଆଗ୍ରହରେ ମନିପର୍ଯ୍ୟଟିକୁ ସୁନ୍ଦର କରି ଗୁଡାଇ ଧରିଛି ନାଲିନେଲି ରଙ୍ଗର ଉପହାର ପାଇଁ ଉଦ୍‌ଭିଷ୍ଟ କାଗଜ ଖଂଡିକରେ । ଆଉ, ଚିଠିଖଂଡେ ମଧ୍ୟ ନିଶ୍ଚେ ଥିବ ସେ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟରେ- ଏଇଟି ଆମ ପ୍ରେମର ସନ୍ତକ । ଯାକୁ ସଜାଡି କରି ରଖିଥିବ, ମତେ ମନ ଭିତରେ ସଜାଡିକରି ରଖିଲା ପରି ।

ଏତକ ମନ ଭିତରକୁ ଆସିଲା ମାତ୍ରେ ଆଉ କିଛିଭାବିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ମୋ ହାତ ଯୋଡି ହେଇଗଲା ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ଉଦ୍‌ଧ୍ୟେଷରେ । ମୋ ଆତ୍ମା ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା କଲା -ପ୍ରଭୁ! ତାଙ୍କ ପ୍ରେମର ସନ୍ତକଟି ତାଙ୍କୁ ମିଳିଯାଉ । ତାଙ୍କ ପ୍ରେମର ଅଭିବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଉପରେ ସେଇ ପ୍ରେମିକ ପ୍ରେମିକାଙ୍କର ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ରହୁ । ଏ ନିମ୍ନର ଜଗତରେ ଯେ ସତରେ ପ୍ରେମ ନାମକ ସେଇ ସୁକୋମଳ ପଦାର୍ଥଟି ଥାଏ ଯାହା ଥରେ ହାତରୁ ଖସି ଗଲେ ସେଯେ ପୁଣି ହାତକୁ ଫେରିଆସିପାରେ - ଏହି ଅସଂଭବଟି ଅନ୍ତତଃ ଥରଟିଏ ହେଲେ ସଂଭବ ହେଉ!

ମୋ ଆଖି ମୋ ପାଦତଳା ରାସ୍ତା ଉପରେ ପହଁରି ଆସିଲା । ହଠାତ ମୁଁ ସଚେତନ ହେଲି । ଆଗରେ କାରପାର୍କ ଜାଗା ଦିଶିଲାଣି । ଘରକୁ ଫେରିଲୁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ସେ ଚିଠିଟିର ମର୍ମକଥା ମତେ ଅପୂର୍ବ ଲାଗିଲା । ଏ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଅଳ୍ପ ଦିନର କଥା ହୋଇଥିବ । ନହେଲେ ଏ ଚିଠି ରହିପାରିନଥାନ୍ତା ଏ କାକରଭିଜା ଆର୍ଦ୍ର ଆରଣ୍ୟକ ସ୍ଥାନଟିରେ? କାଗଜଖଣ୍ଡକ ତ କେବଠାରୁ ନଷ୍ଟ ହୋଇସାରନ୍ତାଣି ଝରଣାରୁ ଅନବରତ ଛିଟକା ମାରୁଥିବା ପାଣିରେ । କିନ୍ତୁ କାଗଜ ଖଣ୍ଡିକ ତଥାପି ସୁରକ୍ଷିତ! ହୁଏତ ଖୋଜାଖୋଜିକଲେ ହଜିଲା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟଟି ମିଳି ଯାଇପାରେ । ମୁଁ ମୋ ପାଦତଳ ଚାଲବାଟରେ ଅନେକ ଦୂର ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଚାଲିଗାଲି ଚାରିଆଡକୁ ଆଖି ବୁଲେଇବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲି । ପରେପରେ ସେଇଟା ହେଇଗଲା ମୋ ପାଇଁ ଏକ ଚାଲେଂଜ ।

ପରଦିନ ଠାରୁ ସେଇ ଚଲା ପଥରେ ମୋ ଗତି ଶିଥିଳ ହେଲା । ଆଖି ଖୋଜିଲାଗିଲା ସେ ମନିପର୍ଯ୍ୟକୁ ରାସ୍ତାସାରା । କାଳେ ପବନମାତରେ ରାସ୍ତାଠାରୁ ଦୂରକୁ ଠେଲିହୋଇ ଯାଇଥିବ । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ମଧ୍ୟ ମୁଁ ସଚେତନ ହେଲି । ଏବେ ପ୍ରାୟ ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ମୁଁ ଘରେ ଗାଳି ଖାଇଲିଣି । ସାନ୍ଧ୍ୟ ଭ୍ରମଣରେ ଆସୁଥିବା ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକଙ୍କ ଅଭିଯୋଗ; କଅଣ ଏମିତି ଅନ୍ୟମନସ୍କ ହୋଇ ବାଟ ଚାଲୁତ? ବୁଲିବାକୁ ମନ ହଉନି ଯଦି ଘରେ ରହୁନ! ହେଲେ ଘରେ ରହିବି କେମିତି? ମୁଁ ଯେ ଗୋଟାଏ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ନେଇ ଚାଲୁଟି ଏ ରାସ୍ତାରେ । ସମସ୍ତେ ସେ ଚିଠି ଖଣ୍ଡକ ତ ପଢିବନ୍ତି ।



ଆଖିରେ ପଡିଲେ କିଏ ବା ସଚେତନ ନହେବ ନୁହେଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ମୋ ପରି ମନ ପ୍ରାଣ ଲଗାଇ କିଏ ଖୋଜୁଛି ତାକୁ ? ସେଦିନ ଝିଅଠାରୁ ଡଲାରଟିଏ ଆଣି ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ନାଁରେ ପାଣି ଛତେଇ ରଖିଦେଲି ଠାକୁରଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ । ପୁଣି ତିନିଚାରିଦିନ ଗଲାଣି । ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ବୋଧହୁଏ ବିଦେଶରେ ରହିଲେ କଥା ଶୁଣନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ ।

ଏ ଭିତରେ ଆହୁରି କେତେଦିନ ଚାଲିଗଲାଣି । ସେଦିନ ସାନ୍ଧ୍ୟ ଭ୍ରମଣ ସମୟରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଜଳପ୍ରପାତ ପରି ବହୁ ଉଚ୍ଚରୁ ତଳକୁ ଖସୁଥିବା ଝରଣାର ଚମତ୍କାର ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ସେଠି ଗୋଟାଏ ପାଲିସ ପଥର ଉପରେ ବସିବାକୁ ଯାଉଥିଲି । କିନ୍ତୁ ହଠାତ୍ ଚମକି ପଡିଲି । ଆଖିକୁ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ କରି ପାରିଲି ନାହିଁ ଯାହା ଦିଶିଗଲା ମତେ ସେତେବେଳେ । ସତେକି କିଏ ସଜାଡି କରି ଥୋଇ ଦେଇଯାଇଛି ସେଇ ହଜିଲା ମନିପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସେଠି ଗୋଟିଏ କତକୁ । ମୁଁ ପାଟିକରି ଉଠିଲି । ଟିକିଏ ଦୂରରେ ପ୍ରପାତାର ଫଟୋ ଉଠୋଉଥିବା ଭଦ୍ରଲୋକ ( ମୋ ସ୍ୱାମୀ ) ପଛକୁ ଚାହିଁଲେ ।

“କଣ ହେଲା ? ” ସେ ଡରିଗଲେ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ।

ପର୍ଯ୍ୟଟିକୁ ଉଠେଇ ଧରି ପୁଣିଥରେ ପାଟିକରି ଉଠିଲି-ଦେଖ କଣ ପାଇଛି! ସେ ପାଖକୁ ଦଉଡି ଆସିଲେ । ପର୍ଯ୍ୟଟିକୁ ପରୀକ୍ଷା କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଖୋଲି କରି ଦେଖିଲୁ ଆମେ ସ୍ୱାମୀସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଦୁହେଁ । ସେଥିରେ ଥିଲା କିଛି ବିଦେଶୀ ମୁଦ୍ରା । ହୁଏତ ସ୍ୱାନିସ ‘ପଏସା’! ଛାଡି ଦମଦମ ହେଇଗଲା । ଏ କଣ ? ଏ ତ ସତ୍ୟଯୁଗର ଆଭାସ! ମଣିଷର ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା ଶୁଣିବାକୁ ସତରେ କିଏ କୋଉଠି କାନ ଡେରିଟି ଏ ବିଶାଳ ବିଶ୍ୱରେ! ଆଉ ଚାଲିବାକୁ ମନ ହେଲା ନାହିଁ । ଏହାପରେ ଅନ୍ୟଆଡେ ନଯାଇ ଫେରିଲି ସେଇଠୁ ।

ରାତିରେ ମତେ ନିଦ ହେଲାନି । କେତେବେଳେ ସକାଳ ହେଲେ ସେଇଟା ପୋଷ୍ଟ ହେବ । ମୁଁ ସେ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ମାଲିକଙ୍କ ଠିକଣା ଜାଣିବାକୁ ଆସ୍ତେନ ଗଛରେ ଲଟକାଯାଇଥିବା ସେଇ ହାତଲେଖା କାଗଜ ଖଣ୍ଡକ ନେଇ ଆସିଥିଲି ସାଙ୍ଗରେ । ଫେରିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ପ୍ରଥମେ ରକି ପର୍ବତ ଶିଖରରୁ ଭୂତଳୁ ଲମ୍ଫ ଦେଉଥିବା ସେଇ ସୁଦୃଶ୍ୟ ଜଳପ୍ରପାତକୁ କେତେକେତେ ବଧେଇ ଜଣେଇଲି । ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ସେଇ ନୈସର୍ଗିକ ଦୃଶ୍ୟଟିକୁ ଉପଭୋଗ କରିବାକୁ ସ୍ୱାମୀ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ପାଲଟିଥିବା ପ୍ରେମିକ-ପ୍ରେମିକା ଯୁଗଳ ବସି ପଡିଥିବେ ସେଇ ପଥର ପାଲିସ ପଥରର ଚଟାଣ ଉପରେ । ଅଜାଣତରେ ପ୍ରେମିକଙ୍କ ପକେଟରୁ ସେଇଠି ଖସିପଡିଥିଲା ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ତାଙ୍କର ପ୍ରେମର ସନ୍ତକ ସେଇ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟଟି । ପୁଣି ରହିଥିଲା ସେଇଠି ସଜାଡି ହୋଇ ମୋ ଆଖିରେ ପଡିବା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ । କିନ୍ତୁ, ସବୁଦିନେ ମୁଁ ତ ସେଇ ବାଟେ ଯାଇଛି କେତେଦିନ ହେବ ଏମିତି ସାନ୍ଧ୍ୟ ଭ୍ରମଣରେ! ସେଦିନ କାହିଁକି ମୋ ମନ ହେଲା ସେଇ



ପଥର ଉପରେ ବସିବାକୁ? ସେଇଠି ବସି ଜଳପ୍ରପାତର ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ଦେଖିବାକୁ କାହିଁକି ମନହେଲା ମୋର? କିଏ ମତେ ସେଇଠି ବସିବାକୁ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶ ଦେଲା? ଯାହାର ଫଳ -ଏ ପ୍ରାପ୍ତି ।

ପରଦିନ ସକାଳୁ ସେଇ ଅଜଣା ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଙ୍କର ଫୋନ ନମ୍ବର ନେଇ ଫୋନ୍‌କଲ୍ କରିବା ମାତ୍ରେ ଉତ୍ତର ମିଳିଲା । କେହି ଜଣେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋକର ସ୍ଵର ଶୁଣାଗଲା ସେ ପାଖରୁ । ମନେ ହେଲା ଭଲ ଇଂରେଜୀ କହିପାରୁନାହାନ୍ତି ସେ । ପରେପରେ ଶୁଭିଲା ପୁରୁଷ କଣ୍ଠସ୍ଵର । ନିଜର ପରିଚୟ ଦେଲି ଓ ଘଟଣାର ସୂଚନା ଦେବା କ୍ଷଣି ବିଦେଶୀ ଭାଷାରେ ଏକ ବିରଳ ଆନନ୍ଦର ପରିପ୍ରକାଶ ସହିତ ଗଦଗଦ ସ୍ଵରଲହରି ଭାସି ଆସିଲା - । ମୁଁ ତାଙ୍କ ଖୁସିର କାରଣ ଜାଣିଥିଲି । ତେଣୁ କହିଲି- ମୋର ଶହେ ଡଲାରର ଉପହାର ଦରକାର ନାହିଁ ! ଆପଣ ଦୟାକରି କହନ୍ତୁ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟଟିକୁ ସେଇ ତାକ ଠିକଣାରେ ପଠାଇ ଦେବି ନା ନୁଆ କୋଉ ଠିକଣା? ମୋର ପୁରସ୍କାର ଲୋଡା ନାହିଁ ଶୁଣି ସେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ହୋଇ ପଡିଲେ । କହିଲେ -ମୁଁ ତ ଦେବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଚି! ମନା କରୁଚନ୍ତି କାହିଁକି?

କହିଲି, “ ମୁଁ ତ ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ ପୁରସ୍କାର ପାଇ ସାରିଚି । ମୋ ପ୍ରଭୁ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ତ ମତେ ସେ ପୁରସ୍କାର ଠାରୁ ବଳି ଆହୁରି ବଡ ଜନିଷ ଦେଇ ସାରିଛନ୍ତି । ଆଜିର ଏଇ ତଥାକଥିତ ବିଜ୍ଞାନ ଯୁଗରେ ଭଗବତ ବିଶ୍ଵାସ ଓ ମାନବିକ ପ୍ରେମ ଯେ ନମରି ବଂଚି ରହିପାରିଚନ୍ତି ଏହାର ପ୍ରମାଣ ହାତେହାତେ ପାଇବାର ଆହ୍ଲାଦର ସୁଖରୁ ବଂଚିତ କରନ୍ତୁ ନାହିଁ ମତେ, ମହାଶୟ! ”

ସେ ଆମ ଠିକଣା ପଚାରିଲେ । କହିଲେ -ଆମେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆପଣଙ୍କ ପରି ଏଠିକି ବୁଲିବାକୁ ଆସିଚୁ । ଦୂରକୁ ପାର୍ଯ୍ୟଳ କରିବା ଦରକାର ନାହିଁ । ମୁଁ ଏଇ ଭିତରେ ଯାଇ ନେଇ ଆସିବି । ସେଦିନ ରବିବାର । ତୋରବେଲ୍ ବାଜିଲା । ମୁଁ କବାଟ ଖୋଲିଲି । ଠିଆ ହେଇଚନ୍ତି ସେଇ ପ୍ରେମୀ ଓ ପ୍ରେମିକ ଦଂପତି । କୁନି ପିଲା ଦିଓଟି ସାଙ୍ଗରେ । ପରିଚୟ ଦେଲେ । ମୁଁ ଯାହା ଆଶା କରୁଥିଲି ଏ ବିଦେଶୀ ଦମ୍ପତି ତାଠାରୁ ଆହୁରି ବେଶି ଆପଣାର ଲାଗିଲେ । ଶେଷକଥା ହେଲା -“ମୋର ମା ନାହିଁ! ତୁମେ ମୋର ଭାରତୀୟ ମା!”

ଝିଅଘରେ ଆମେ ସେଠି ଯେତେଦିନ ରହିଲୁ ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ ସେମାନେ ଆସି ଦେଖା କରନ୍ତି । ଫୋନ କରନ୍ତି । ଆମେ ସେଠା ଛାଡିଲା ଦିନ ଏୟାରପୋର୍ଟକୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ଛାଡିବାକୁ ଆସିଥିଲେ ସେମାନେ ଓ ଲୁହ ଭର୍ତ୍ତି ଆଖିରେ ବିଦାୟ ଦେଲେ ଦୁହେଁ । ଏହା ଭିତରେ କେତେ ଦିନ ନୁହେଁ, କେତେ ବର୍ଷ କଟିଗଲାଣି । ହେଲେ ସଂପର୍କ ତୁଟିନି ।

ଏବେ ମୁଁ ଘର ସଜାଡୁଚି- ମୋ ସ୍ଵାନିସ ପୁଅବୋହୁ ନାତିନାତୁଣିମାନେ ଓଡିଶା ଆସୁଚନ୍ତି । ନାତି ଫୋନ କରି କହିଚି-ଜେଜେମା! ତୁମ ପାଇଁ ଉପହାର ନଉଚି ଗୋଟିଏ ସୁନ୍ଦର ସ୍ଵାନିସ ମନିପର୍ଯ୍ୟ । ଅହୋ ଭାଗ୍ୟ! ମୁଁ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ବାଟକୁ ଚାହିଁ ବସିଚି ।

- ନିରୁପମା ଆଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ



## ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ପୋଖରୀ

ଆମ ଗାଁରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ପୋଖରୀ ଅଛି । ସେଇଟା ଗାଁ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ । ଟିକେ ଦୂରରେ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ସଡକ । ସେବାଟେ ପୂର୍ବ କାଳେ ଲୋକେ ପୁରୀକୁ ଯାଉଥିଲେ । କୁହାଯାଏ ସେ ରାସ୍ତାରେ ମହାତ୍ମା ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ମଧ୍ୟ ଥରେ ପଦଯାତ୍ରାରେ ପୁରୀ ଯାଇଥିଲେ । ସେ ବହୁ ବର୍ଷ ତଳ କଥା । ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ମହାତ୍ମା ସେକାଳେ ପାଦରେ ଚାଲିଚାଲି ଭାରତ ଭ୍ରମଣ କରୁଥିଲେ । ମହାତ୍ମା ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ସେ ବର୍ଷ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ଆସିଥିଲେ ।

ପୁରୀ ଯିବା ବାଟରେ ସେ ଆମ ଗାଁ ମୁଣ୍ଡ଼େଇ ପୋଖରୀ କୂଳେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଘରେ ରାତିଟିଏ ରହଣି କରିଥିଲେ । ସକାଳେ ପୋଖରୀରେ ଗାଧୁଆ ପାଧୁଆ ସାରି ସେ ପୁଣି ତାଙ୍କ ପଦଯାତ୍ରା ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଥିଲେ । ମହାତ୍ମା ଗାନ୍ଧୀଙ୍କୁ ବିଦାୟ ଦେଲା ପରେ ଆମ ଗାଁର ମୁଖିଆମାନେ ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ ଡକେଇ ସଭା କଲେ । ସେ ସଭାରେ ଘୋଷଣା ହେଲା ଯେ ସେଇ ଦିନଠୁ ଆମ ଗାଁ ମୁଣ୍ଡର ସେ ପୋଖରୀର ନାଁ ଦିଆଗଲା- ମହାତ୍ମା ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ପୁଷ୍କରିଣୀ । ପୁଣି ମଧ୍ୟ ଘୋଷଣା କରାଗଲା- ଆଜିଠୁ ସେ ପୋଖରୀରୁ ମାଛମରା ନିଷେଧ!

ସେଇଦିନୁ ଆଜି ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଆମ ଗାଁ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ସେ ପୋଖରୀରୁ କେବେ ବି କେହି ମାଛ ଧରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଯା ଭିତରେ ଅନେକ ବର୍ଷ ବିତି ଗଲାଣି । ମହାତ୍ମା ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ତ କୋଉ କାଲୁ ମରି ସ୍ମରଣକୁ ଗଲେଣି । କିନ୍ତୁ ତାଙ୍କ ନାଁ ବଂଚିଛି ଆଜିଯାକେ ଆମ ଗାଁ ର ସେଇ ମାଛ ପୋଖରୀଟାର ନାଁରେ ।

ସେଦିନ ପହିଲି ରଜ । ଆମେ ପିଲାମାନେ ବସି ତାଣ ଖେଳୁଥିଲୁ । ସକାଳୁ ପେଟେ ପୋତପିଠା ଖିଆ ସରିଥାଏ । ଶ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟ ଛୁଟି ମଙ୍ଗଳାବେଳେ । ସ୍କୁଲ ବନ୍ଦ । ସକାଳ ପହୁରୁ ଆକାଶରେ ମେଘ ଘୋଡେଇ ଥାଏ । ଚାରିଆଡ ଦିଶୁଥାଏ- ଗାଢ ନୀଳ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣ । ଠିକ ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଙ୍କ ଦେହର ବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ପରି । ଅତି ସୁନ୍ଦର । ତାହା ଖେଳ ଜମୁଥାଏ । ସାଙ୍ଗମାନେ ଖୁବ ହସ ଖୁସିରେ କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା ଚଳେଇଥାନ୍ତି । ମୋ ସାଙ୍ଗ ଦୁଖିଆ ହଠାତ ବଡ ପାଟିରେ ଗୋଟାଏ ମଜା କଥା କହିଲା,"" ଜାଣ? କାଲି ମୁଁ ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ପୋଖରୀକି ଯାଇଥିଲି- ସେଠି ଦେଖିଲି ଗୋଟାଏ ମସ୍ତବତ ରୁଢା ମାଛ । ତା ମୁହଁରେ ହେଁ ବଡ ବଡ ନିଶ ଦାଢି! ଇସ୍! ମତେ ଦିଶିଲା ସେଇଟା ମାଛ ନୁହଁ! ମଣିଷ!"

ତା କଥା ଶୁଣି ବାବାଜି ଠୋଠୋ ହସି ଉଠି କହିଲା,""ତୁ ଜାଣିନୁ? ସେ ପରା ଜଣେ ଜଲୌକା ବାବା ! ସେ ବାବା ରହନ୍ତି ପାଣି ତଳେ! ତୁ ବଡ ଭାଗ୍ୟବାନ ଦୁଃଖିଣ୍ୟାମ! ଜଲୌକା ବାବାଙ୍କ ଦର୍ଶନ ପାଇଗଲୁ । ଏ ବର୍ଷ ତୁ ନିଶ୍ଚେ



ପରୀକ୍ଷାରେ ଭଲ କରିବୁ ।’

ବାବାଜୀ କଥା ଶୁଣି ଅନ୍ତରା ଆହୁରି ବଡ଼ ପାଟି କରି ହସିଲା । କହିଲା, “ ଦୁଖିଆ ଯୋଉ ଦାଢ଼ିବାଲା ମାଛର ଦର୍ଶନ ପାଇଛି ସେ ଜମାରୁ ବାବାଜୀ ନୁହନ୍ତି କି ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାସୀ ନୁହଁନ୍ତି; ତାଙ୍କ ନାଁ ବିହାରୀ ତାକୁ! ବିହାରୀ ତାକୁ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଠିକ୍ ଜଣେ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାସୀ ପରି । ସେ ଆମ ଏଇ ଆଡ଼ିକା ଲୋକ । ବୋଧହୁଏ ସେଇ ଫେରୁଥିବ କାହା ଘରେ ଡକାୟତି କରିସାରି । ରାତିରେ ସେ ତା ବ୍ୟବସାୟ ସାରି ସକାଳକୁ ଗାଧୁଆ ପାଧୁଆ କରେ ଆମ ଏଇ ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ପୋଖରୀରେ ବୋଲି ଶୁଣିଚି ମୁଁ । ବୋଧ ହୁଏ ଦୁଖିଆ ତାକୁ ଭେଟଣା ହେଇଚି ସକାଳୁ ସକାଳୁ । ”

“ ନା ନା କଦାପି ନୁହଁ କଦାପି ନୁହଁ, ” ପ୍ରତିବାଦ କଲା ଦୁଖିଆ, “ ସେଇଟା ମଣିଷ ନୁହଁ, ମାଛ! ହେଁ ବଡ଼ ଜୀବ! ତା ଦିହଯାକ ଗୋଲ ଗୋଲ ଚକ୍ର ଚିହ୍ନ । ସେ ବୁଡ଼ିବୁଡ଼ି ଅନନ୍ତଥାଏ ପାଣିତଳୁ ଉପରକୁ । ତା ଆଖି ଦେଖିଲେ ତର ମାଡ଼ିଯିବ ମଣିଷକୁ । ସତେକି ସେ ମତେ ଛକୁଥାଏ । ପାଣିକୁ ଗୋତ ବଢେଇବା ମାତ୍ରେ ଧରିଥାନ୍ତା କି କଅଣ । ମୁଁ କଣ ଆଉ ଯାଇଚି କି ପାଣି ପାଖକୁ ?

ତରରେ ଆସିଲି ପଲେଇ ସିଧା ଗାଁ ଭିତରକୁ ।”

ସେତିକି ବେଳେ ମୋ ପାଟିରୁ ବାହାରିଗଲା, “କଅଣ କହିଲୁ? ଚକ୍ର ଚିହ୍ନ? ତାମାନେ ସେ ଗୋଟାଏ ଶାଳମାଛ! ଶାଳ ମାଛମାନେ ହିନ୍ଦୁ ମାନଙ୍କର ପବିତ୍ର ମାଛ । ତାଙ୍କ ଦିହରେ ଚକ୍ର ଚିହ୍ନ ଯୋଗୁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଆମେ କହୁ ଭଗବାନ ବିଷ୍ଣୁ ଅବତାର! ଜାଣିନ ?

ଦଶ ଅବତାରରେ ବିଷ୍ଣୁଙ୍କ ପହିଲି ଅବତାର ହେଲା- ମୀନ ଶରୀର! ତେଣୁ ଦୁଖିଆ ଭାରି ଭାଗ୍ୟବାନ । ସେ ମୀନ ଅବତାରଙ୍କ ଦର୍ଶନ ପାଇସାରିଚି...”

ଏତେବେଳ ଯାକେ ରୁପଚାପ ବସି ଆମର ଫାଜିଲାମିଆ କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତାକୁ କାନେଇଥାଏ - ଠୁକୁରାନ୍ନା । ହଠାତ ସେ ତା ହାତରେ ଧରିଥିବା ତାଣ ପତା ଗୁଡ଼ାକୁ ଠୋ କିନା ଫିଙ୍ଗି ଦେଲା ତଳକୁ । ଆମେ ଚମକି ପଡ଼ିଲୁ । ଆମେ ଜାଣୁ ଠୁକୁରାନ୍ନା ଭାରି ବଦରାଗୀ । ତାର ରାଗ ହେଲେ ସେ ପୃଥିବୀ ପ୍ରଳୟ କରିଦେଇ ପାରେ । ଆମଠୁଁ ତିନି କ୍ଲୟ ଉପରେ ପଡ଼େ ସେ । ତାର ଏକାଦଶକୁ ଆମର ଅଷ୍ଟମ ଶ୍ରେଣୀ । ତେଣୁ ସେ ଆମର ବଡ଼ ଭାଇ ଭଳି । କିନ୍ତୁ ସେ ଆମ ସାଙ୍ଗେ ସାଙ୍ଗ ହେଇଥାଏ । ତା ଯୋଗୁ ଆମେ ଅନେକ ନୁଆନୁଆ କଥା ଶିଖି ଥାଉ । ସେ ଆମକୁ ଶିଖାଏ ବଣି ଚଢେଇମାନେ କୋଉ ଋତୁରେ ଅଣ୍ଟା ଦିଅନ୍ତି, ଛୁଆ ଫୁଟାନ୍ତି, ସେ ଛୁଆ ମାନଙ୍କୁ କେମିତି ନଣ୍ଟା ତାଳଗଛ ଉପର କୋରତରୁ ଧରିବାକୁ ହୁଏ, ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ କଥା କହି ଶିଖେଇଲେ କେମିତି ସେମାନେ ଶୁଆଖାରୀଙ୍କ ଭଳି ମଣିଷଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗେ କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା କରି ପାରନ୍ତି ଇତ୍ୟାଦି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏ ସବୁ ସତ୍ତ୍ୱେ ତାର ଗୋଟାଏ ଖରାପ ଗୁଣ ହେଲା ସେ ଜମାରୁ ଦେବଦେବୀ କି ଅସୁର ଅସୁରୁଣୀ କି ରକ୍ଷିମୁନି, ଭୂତପ୍ରେତ ଗପକୁ ଆମର ସହି





ପାରେନା । ଯଦି କଥା ଲହସରେ ସେମିତି କଥା କାହା ପାଟିରୁ ବାହାରି ଗଲା ତ କଥା ସଜଲା । ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତକ ଭିତରେ ସେ ନିଆଁବାଣ ହେଇଯିବ । ଗର୍ଜନ କରିବ । ପଚାରିବ, "" କାହିଁ କୋଉଠି ଅଛି ତୋ ଠାକୁର କି ଅସୁର କି ରକ୍ଷିତ୍ରସି ଭୂତପ୍ରେତ ଚାଲିଲୁ ଦେଖିବା! ମତେ ଦେଖେଇ ଦେଇ ପାରିବୁ ତୁ ସେସବୁ ତୋ ବୁଢ଼ିମା କାହାଣୀକୁହା ଚରିତ୍ର ଗୁଡ଼ାକୁ? "

ଆଜି ବି ଠିକ ସେଇ କଥା ଘଟିଲା । ମୋ ମୁହଁରୁ ଯେମିତି ବିଷ୍ଣୁଙ୍କ ମୀନ ଅବତାର କଥା ପଦକ ବାହାରି ପଡ଼ିବି, ଠୁକୁରାନ୍ନା ତାଣ ଖେଳ ଭାଙ୍ଗି ଦେଇ ଧତ କିନା ଉଠି ଠିଆ ହେଇ ପଡ଼ିଲା । ଅଂଟା ଦୁଇ ପାଖେ ଦିହାତକୁ ଭରା ଦେଇ ସେ ମୋ ଆଗରେ ଠିଆ ହେଲା ଆଉ ମତେ ଯୁଦ୍ଧ ଡାକରା ଦେଲା, "" କାହିଁ କୋଉଠି ଅଛି ତୋ ମୀନ ଅବତାର ଦେଖେଇବୁ ଚାଲିଲୁ! ବାହାର କର ବନଶୀ ଖତା । ଚାଲ ଆଜି ସେ ପୋଖରୀରୁ ମାଛ ଧରିବା । ବହୁ ବର୍ଷ ଧରି ସେ ପୋଖରୀରୁ ମାଛ ଧରା ନହେବାରୁ ମାଛ ଗୁଡ଼ାକର ସାଇଜ ନିଫେ ୨ ବଢ଼ି ଯିବଣି । କିନ୍ତୁ , ତମେମାନେ ଯୋଉ କହୁତ ମାଛ ଦିହରେ ରୁମ, ତାଙ୍କର ନିଶ ଦାଢ଼ି ଉଠିଗଲାଣି - ଏ ସବୁ ଗାଲୁଆମି ବନ୍ଦ କର । ଆଜି ଚାଲ- ସେ ପୋଖରୀରେ ବନଶୀ ପକେଇବା । ଯଦି ସତରେ ତମ ଦାଢ଼ିଆ ବାବାଜିମାଛ କି ବିହାରୀ ତାକୁ ମାଛ କି ତମର କୋଉ ଅବତାର ମାଛ ସେ ପୋଖରୀରେ ଥବ ତେବେ ଅଲବତ ତା ଦେଖା ମିଳିଯିବ । ଚାଲ ଉଠ । ଆଉ ଡେରି କରନାହିଁ । ଆଜି ଆମେ ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ପୋଖରୀରୁ ମାଛ ଧରିବା ..."

ଠୁକୁରାନ୍ନାର ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଶୁଣି ଦୁଖିଆ କହିଲା, "" ସେଇଟା ପରା ମାହାମ୍ନା ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ପୁଷ୍କରିଣୀ! ସେଠି ମାଛ ଧରିବା ନିଷେଧ । ସେଠି କେମିତି ଆମେ ମାଛ ଧରିବା? "

ଠୁକୁରାନ୍ନା ପଚାରିଲା, "" ତତେ କିଏ କହିଲା ସେ ପୋଖରୀ ନାଁ ମହାମ୍ନା ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ପୁଷ୍କରିଣୀ? ସେଠିତ ଏଇଲେ ଧୋବା ଲୁଗା କାରୁଟି, ରାସ୍ତାରେ ଯାଉଥିବା ଟ୍ରକବାଲା ସେ ପୋଖରୀ ବନ୍ଧ ଉପରେ ଟ୍ରକ ଠିଆ କରି ସଫା କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ସେଇଟା ତ ସର୍ବସାଧାରଣଙ୍କ ପୋଖରୀ । ତା ନାଁ ମହାମ୍ନା ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ପୁଷ୍କରିଣୀ ବୋଲି କିଏ କହିଲା? " ବାବାଜି ଦେଲା ତା ଜବାବ । କହିଲା, "" ମୁଁ ଶୁଣିଛି ଆମ ଜେଜେବାପାଙ୍କ ଅମଳରେ ମହାମ୍ନା ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ଆସିଥିଲେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା । ସେ ପାଦରେ ଚାଲି ଚାଲି ଯାଉଥିଲେ ପୁରୀ ଏଇ ଆମ ଗାଁ ବାଟେ । ତାଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗେ ଆହୁରି ଦଳେ ବଡ଼ବଡ଼ କଂଗ୍ରେସିଆ ଲୋକ- ଉତ୍କଳମଣି ଗୋପବନ୍ଧୁ ଦାଶ, ନୀଳକଂଠ ଗୋଦାବରୀଶ ବି ଥିଲେ । ସେତେବେଳେ ଆମର ଏ ଗାଁର ଜମିଦାର ଥିଲେ ଆମ ଜେଜେ ବାପା । ମହାମ୍ନା ଗାନ୍ଧୀଙ୍କୁ ଅଭ୍ୟର୍ଥନା ଜଣେଇ ସେ ଗୋଟାଏ ସଭା କରିଥିଲେ ଆମର ଏ ଅଂଚଳରେ । ମହାମ୍ନା ସେଦିନ ରାତିକ ଆମର ସେଇ କଟେରି ଘରେ ରହିଲେ । ସକାଳେ ପୋଖରୀରେ ଗାଧୁଆ ପାଧୁଆ କରି ପୁରୀ ଗଲେ । ତାରି ପରଠୁଁ ଏ ପୋଖରୀର ନାଁ ହେଲା- ମହାମ୍ନା ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ପୁଷ୍କରିଣୀ । ସେଇ ଦିନଠୁଁ ଏ ପୋଖରୀରୁ ମାଛ ଧରା ନିଷେଧ କରିଦେଲେ



ଜେଜେବାପା । କାରଣ ମହାତ୍ମା ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ଥିଲେ ଅହିଂସାର ପୂଜାରୀ! ଏତେ ବର୍ଷ ଗଲାଣି । ଜମିଦାରମାନେ ଜମିଦାରୀ ଛାଡ଼ି ଗାଁରୁ ଉଠି ଗଲେଣି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସେ ପୋଖରୀରୁ କେହି ମାଛ ଧରିବା ତ ଦେଖା ଯାଇନି! ଆଜି ଆମେ କେମିତି ସେ କାମ କରିବା? ଅଧର୍ମ ହବ ନାହିଁ ଆମର?’

ବାବାଜି କଥା ଶୁଣି ଠୁକୁରାନ୍ନା ହସିଲା - ସେତେବେଳେ ଆମର ସିନେମାର ବଡ଼ ଭିଲେନ ପ୍ରାନଚୋପ୍ରା ପରିକା ଗୋଟାଏ ବେପରୁଆ ହସ । କହିଲା,“ ତମେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଗୁଡାଏ ଗଧ! ଆରେ ଏ ଧର୍ମ ଫର୍ମ କଥା ସିନା ସେ ପୁରାଣ ଯୁଗରେ ଚଳୁଥିଲା । ଆଜି ଏ ବିଜ୍ଞାନ ଯୁଗରେ ସେ ସବୁ କଥାର କିଛି ଅର୍ଥ ଅଛି? ମଣିଷ ଯାଇ ପହଞ୍ଚିଲାଣି ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରରେ! ଟେଲିସ୍କୋପରୁ ମଣିଷ ଛୁଆ ଜନ୍ମ ହେଲେଣି -ନାଶ?ଆମ ବିଜ୍ଞାନ ବହିରେ ପଢ଼ା ହଉଛି ସେ ସବୁ । ତମେ ଗୁଡାକ ଅଛ ମାନ୍ୟତା ଅମଳରେ । ଛାଡ଼ ସେ ସବୁ ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ଫାନ୍ଦି ଅହିଂସା ଫହିଂସା କଥା । ମୋ କଥା ମାନ । ଯାଅ ନିଜନିଜର ବନସୀଖତା ଆଣ । ଆଉ ହଁ- ବନଶୀରେ ଥୋପ ଦବାକୁ ମେଂଚାଏ ଜିଆନାତ ଖୋଳି ବାହାର କରିବାକୁ ହବ ତମକୁ ଓଦା ମାଟିରୁ । ଏଥିପାଇଁ ପନ୍ଦର ମିନିଟ ଟାଇମ ଦିଆଗଲା ତମମାନଙ୍କୁ । ଶୀଘ୍ର ଯାଅ ଆଉ ଶୀଘ୍ର ଆସ । ମୁଁ ଏଇଠି ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରିବି ତମ ପାଇଁ । ଆଜି ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଗୋଟାଏ ବଡ଼ ମାଛ ଧରାହବ ସେ ପୋଖରୀରୁ । ରାତିକୁ ଫିଷ୍ଟ । ବୁଝିଲ ତି?’

ଆମେ ସମସ୍ତେ ପରସ୍ପରର ମୁହଁ ଚାହିଁ ରୁହିଁ ହେଲୁ । ଠୁକୁରାନ୍ନାକୁ ଆମର ପ୍ରାଣରେ ଡର । ପୁଣି ଏତେ ବର୍ଷ ଧରି ଗାଁ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ସେ ପୋଖରୀଟା ପ୍ରତି ଆମର ଯୋଉ ସଂସନ , ଯୋଉ ଧର୍ମଭୟ- ଏ ସବୁକୁ ଏତେ ଶୀଘ୍ର ଛାଡ଼ିବା କଣ ସହଜ? ଆମେ ତଥାପି ବାହାରିଲୁ ନିଜନିଜ ଘରୁ ମାଛଧରା ବନଶୀଖତା ଆଉ ସାଜସଜ୍ଜାମ ସବୁ ଯୋଗାଡ଼ କରିବାକୁ । ବାଟରେ ମୁଁ ମୋ ସାଙ୍ଗ ଦୁଖିଆକୁ ପଚାରିଲି ରୁପରୁପ,” ତୁ ସତରେ ସେ ପୋଖରୀରେ ସେମିତି ମାଛ ଦେଖିବୁ ଦୁଖିଖ୍ୟାମ ଯାହାର ନିଶ ଦାଢ଼ି ଅଛି?’

ଦୁଖିଆ ଅନେକ ବେଳେ ସାମାନ୍ୟ କଥାକୁ ଖୁବ ବଡ଼ କରି କହେ ବୋଲି ଆମେ ତାକୁ ଥଙ୍ଗା କରୁ- ତହରତାନ୍ ଗିରିଧାରୀ!

ମତେ ଲାଗୁଥିଲା ସେ ଆଜି ବି ସେମିତି ତହରାମି କରୁଥିଲା ,ପୋଖରୀରେ ମଣିଷ ମୁହଁ ମାଛ ଦେଖିବି ବୋଲି କହି, ଆମକୁ ଚମକେଇ ଦବାକୁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଦୁଖିଆ ହଠାତ କହିଲା,“ ମାଆଙ୍କ ରାଣ! ସେ ପୋଖରୀରେ ଖାଲି ସେମିତି ଦାଢ଼ିଆ ମାଛ ନାହାନ୍ତିରେ ଭାଇ! ଆଉ ଧରେ ମୁଁ ଦେଖିଥିଲି ଗୋଟାଏ ମାଛ ଯାହା ମୁଣ୍ଡଟା ଅବିକଳ ମହାତ୍ମା ଗାନ୍ଧୀଙ୍କ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଭଳିଆ ! ‘



ମତେ ଜୋର ହସଲାଗିଲା । ତଥାପି ହସ ଚାପି ପଚାରିଲି," ତୁ କହୁଛୁ ସେ ମାଛର ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଚନ୍ଦା, ସେ ତା ଆଖିରେ ଗୋଲଗୋଲ କାଚର ସୂତାବନ୍ଧା ଚଷମା ପିନ୍ଧିଥିଲା? ଆଉ ଆଣ୍ଟିନଲୁଚା ଖଦୀ ଲୁଗା , ପୁଣି ପୁରୁଷେ ଉଚ୍ଚ ବାଉଁଶ ଠେଙ୍ଗା? ", ମୋ ପେଟ ଫାଟି ଯାଉଥାଏ ହସଟାକୁ ଜୋରକରି ଚାପି ରଖିବା ଯୋଗୁ । ମୁଁ ଭାବିଥିଲି ମୋ ଦେହରେ ଏଥର ଧରା ପଡ଼ିଯିବ ଦୁଖିଆର ଚାଲବାଜି । ସେ ମାନିଯବ ଯେ ଏତେବେଳ ଯାକେ ସେ ମିଛ କହି ଆମକୁ ଧପୋଉଟି ବୋଲି ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟର କଥା - ମୋର ସବୁ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନର ଉତ୍ତରରେ ସେ ମାତ୍ର ପଦଟିଏ ନବାବ ଦେଲା । କହିଲା , " ଅହିଂସା!"

"କଣ ଅହିଂସା?" ତାର ସେ ଅନବ ଉତ୍ତର ବୁଝିବା ସମ୍ଭବ ହେଲା ନାହିଁ ମୋ ପକ୍ଷରେ । "ମୁଁ କହିପାରିବି ନାହିଁ ତା ଅର୍ଥ-", ଦୁଖିଆ ଆସ୍ତେକିନା କହିଲା ମୋ କାନ ପାଖରେ , " କିନ୍ତୁ ସେ ପୋଖରୀକି ମୁଁ ଯେତେବେଳେ ଯାଏ ମତେ ପାଣି ତଳେ ସେଇ ମୁହଁଦିନା ଦିଶେ! ଜଣକର ମୁହଁରେ ଦାଢ଼ି ଆଉ ଜଣକର ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଚନ୍ଦା! ମୋର ମନେ ହୁଏ ସେ ଦାଢ଼ିଆ ମୁହଁବାଲା ମାଛଟା ହୁଏ- ଉକ୍ତଳମଣି ଗୋପବନ୍ଧୁ ଦାଶଙ୍କର ଆଉ ସେ ଚନ୍ଦା ମୁଣ୍ଡିଆ ମାଛଟା ହୁଏ ଖୋଦ ମହାତ୍ମା ଗାନ୍ଧୀଙ୍କର! ସେମାନେ ସତରେ ଅଛନ୍ତି ସେ ପୋଖରୀରେ ଭାଇ! ଆମେ ସେ ଠୁକୁରାନ୍ନା କଥାରେ ପଡ଼ି ସେଠି ବନଶୀ ପକେଇବା ନାହିଁ । ନହେଲେ ଅହିଂସା ଚାଲିଯିବ ସେ ପାଣିରୁ । ଆମେ ଆଉ ପାଇବା ନାହିଁ ସେ ଅତୁଟ ରୂପର ମାଛମାନଙ୍କୁ ଆମ ଗାଁର ସେ ପୋଖରୀରେରେ ଭାଇ!"

ଆମେ ଜାଣିନାହିଁ ତେରି କଲୁ । ତେଣେ ଠୁକୁରାନ୍ନାର ତାକ ଶୁଭିଲା," ହେ ଦୁଖିଆ! ହେ ଫକୀର! କିରେ କୁଆଡ଼େ ଗଲ? କିରେ? ବାହାରୁଟ ନା ଦେଖିବ ପୁଣି!"

ଠୁକୁରାନ୍ନାର ରାଗ କଥା ଆମକୁ ଭଲ କରି ଜଣା ଥାଏ । ସେ ରାଗିଲେ ପ୍ରଳୟ କାଣ୍ଡ ଘଟେଇ ଦେଇ ପାରେ । ତା ହାତରୁ କେତେଥର ସେ ଦଶା ଭୋଗିରୁ ଆମେ । ତେଣୁ ସେ ଝମେଲାରେ ନପଣି ଦୁଖିଆ ଆଉ ମୁଁ ବାହାରି ଆସିଲୁ । ଆମ କାନ୍ଧରେ ବନଶୀଖତା ଆଉ ହାତରେ ଜିଆନାଳ ଡବା । ଆମେ ନିଶ୍ଚେ ଦିଶୁଥିବୁ- ଦଣ୍ଡକମଣ୍ଡଳୁ ଧରି ସନ୍ନ୍ୟାସରେ ବାହାରିଥିବା ଯୋଡ଼ାଏ ବାଳ ବ୍ରହ୍ମଚାରୀଙ୍କ ପରି!

ସେତେବେଳକୁ ବାବାଜି ଆଉ ଅନ୍ତରା ରେଡ଼ି ହେଇ ଠିଆ ହେଇଥାନ୍ତି ଠୁକୁରାନ୍ନା ପାଖରେ । ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ହାତରେ ବନଶୀଖତା । ଆମେ ଚାଲିଲୁ ଗାଁ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ସେଇ ମହାତ୍ମା ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ପୁଷ୍କରିଣୀ ଦିଗରେ । ବାଟରେ ଜଣେ କକେଇ ଲେଖା ଗାଁ ଲୋକ ଦେଖା ହେଲେ । ସେ ଆମର ସେଭଳି ଦୃପ୍ତ ଅଭିଯାନକୁ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ କରି ସନ୍ଦେହ କଲେ । ପଚାରିଲେ, "କୁଆଡ଼େ ଚାଲିବ କିରେ ଏମିତି କାନ୍ଧରେ ବନଶୀଖତା ପକେଇ? କଣ ମାଛ ଧରିବ ନା କଅଣ ?



କିରେ ଆଜି ପହିଲି ରଜ ବୋଲି ଜାଣିନକି? ଆରେ ରଜରେ ପରା ପୃଥିବୀମାତା ରଜୋବତୀ ବୋଲି ଚାଷବାସ, ଗଛ କଟା, ଛେଳି ହଣା ନିଷେଧ? ବଢେଇ ଖାଳ, କମାର ଖଳ ବନ୍ଦ! ଆଉ ତମେମାନେ ବାହାରିବ ମାଛ ମାରିବାକୁ? ଆରେ ରଜରେ ପ୍ରାଣୀ ବଧ କରିବ! ତମକୁ ଧର୍ମ ଛାଡ଼ିଗଲା କିରେ?’

ଠୁକୁରାନ୍ନା ଆମକୁ ଆଖିମିଟିକା ମାରି କହିଲା,“ ଚାଲମ! କିଏ ଶୁଣୁଚି ଏ ବେକାର ଲୋକଟା କଥା! ପ୍ରାଣୀ ବଧ ବାଧ୍ୟତା ଯାହା । ତାଙ୍କୁ ପଚାରୁନା- ଆଜି ରଜରେ ଗାଁରେ କେତେଟା ଖାସି କଟା ହେଉଚି? ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ଘରେ ତ ପୋତପିଠା ସାଙ୍ଗକୁ ମାଉଁସ ଝୋଳ! ଆଉ ପୃଥିବୀ ମାତାଙ୍କ କଥା ଉଠୁଚି କାହିଁକି ଏ ଗାଁରେ?’

ଆମେ ଚାଲିଲୁ ବେପରୁଆ ଏଥର । ଠୁକୁରାନ୍ନା ସତ କହୁଥିଲା- ଗାଁରେ ସେଦିନ ଆଠ ଦଶଟା ଛେଳି କଟା ହେଉଥିଲା ଆମ ଜାଣତରେ । ଖାଲି ଛେଳି ନୁହଁ- କୁକୁଡ଼ା ବି । ଘରେ ଘରେ ମାଂସ ତରକାରୀ - କଥା ଲହସରେ ଆମେ ପ୍ରାୟ ପାଖେଇ ଆସିଲୁଣି ଗାଁ ମୁଣ୍ଡର ସେଇ ବଡ଼ ପୋଖରୀ ବନ୍ଧ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ । ଦୂରରୁ ଦିଶୁଥାଏ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ସତକ । ଗାତି ମଟର ଯା ଆସ କରୁଥାଏ ସେ ରାସ୍ତାରେ ।

ଦୁଖିଆ ମୋ କାନ ପାଖେ ମୁହଁ ରଖି କହିଲା,“ ଦିନେ ଏଇ ରାସ୍ତାରେ ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ଗୋପବନ୍ଧୁ ପଦଯାତ୍ରା କରୁଥିଲେ- ନାଁ ରେ?’

ମୁଁ ତା ମୁହଁକୁ ଚାହିଁଲି । ଦେଖିଲି - ତା ଆଖିରେ ଲୁହ ।

“କିରେ ତୁ କାହାରୁ କାହିଁକି?”, ମତେ ଲାଗିଲା ଆମ ଭିତରେ ଏକା ଦୁଖିଆ ଜଣେ ସନ୍ଥୁ ଆଉ ଆମେ ସବୁ ଆର୍ତ୍ତକ୍ଲାସ ଅର୍ତ୍ତନାରୀ ଗୁଡାକ । ନହେଲେ ତାକୁ କାହିଁକି ଏତେ ଘାବୁଚି ସେ ନାଁ ଦିଟା ?

ଆମେ ଉଠିଲୁ ଉଚ୍ଚା ପୋଖରୀ ବନ୍ଧ ଉପରକୁ । ବନ୍ଧ ଉପରେ ଠିଆ ହେଇ ତଳେ କାଚକେନ୍ଦୁ ଭଳି ସ୍ୱଚ୍ଛ ପାଣିର ବିସ୍ତୃତି ପ୍ରତି ଆମ ଆଖି ଆପେଆପେ ମେଲିଗଲା । ସତରେ ପୋଖରୀଟା ଖୁବ ବଡ଼ ଆଉ ସେଥିରେ ଖରା ଦିନେ ବି ପାଣି ଟୁମଟୁମ । ଜମାରୁ ଶୁଖେନା ସେ ପୋଖରୀ ବୈଶାଖ ଜ୍ୟେଷ୍ଠ ମାସ ଭଳି ନିଦାଘ ଗ୍ରୀଷ୍ମ କାଳରେ ବି । ଆଖ ପାଖର ସବୁ ପୋଖରୀ ଗତିଆ ନଦୀ ନାଳ ଶୁଖି ଗଲେବି ଏ ମହାମୁଗାନ୍ଧୀ ପୁଷ୍କରିଣୀରେ ପାଣି ଟୁମଟୁମ! ଲୋକେ କହନ୍ତି ତା ତଳେ ଝର ଅଛି । ଆଉ କେହି କହନ୍ତି ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ମହାତ୍ମାଙ୍କ ବର ଅଛି- ଏ ପୋଖରୀ ଗୁପ୍ତ ଗଙ୍ଗା! ମାଟି ତଳେ ତଳେ ସିଧା ଗଙ୍ଗା ନଦୀ ସାଙ୍ଗେ ସଂପର୍କ ଅଛି ଏ ପୋଖରୀର । କିନ୍ତୁ ଆଜି ଆମେ ପଂଝାଏ



ଦିଲ୍ ପ୍ରତିଜ୍ଞା ନେଇ ଆସିବୁ ଏ ପୋଖରୀ ସଂପର୍କରେ ଯେତେ ଯାହା କିଂବଦନ୍ତୀ ଏ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଲୋକ ମୁଖରେ ଶୁଣା ଅଛି ସବୁକୁ ମିଛ ବୋଲି ପ୍ରମାଣିତ କରିବାକୁ । ସେତିକିବେଳେ ହଠାତ ଆମ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ଆଖିରେ ଏକା ବେଳକେ ପଡ଼ିଗଲା ସେ ଦୃଶ୍ୟଟା!

ଆମେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଏକାବେଳେ ଚିତ୍କାର କରି ଉଠିଲୁ, "" ହେଇ ଦେଖ ଦେଖ! ସେ କିଏ ଧୁଆଁଧୋଇ ହଉଛନ୍ତି ସେଠି ପୋଖରୀ ଆଉ ପାଖ ତୁଠରେ?" ଆମ ଆଖି ଖୋସି ହେଇ ଗଲା । ଓଁ? ଏକଣ ସଂଭବ? ଆମେ ଭୂତ ଦେଖୁନୁତ! ଲୋକଟା ଦିଶୁଥାଏ ଅବିକଳ ସେମିତି! ସେମିତି ଚନ୍ଦା ମୁଣ୍ଡ, ସେମିତି ଗୋଲ ଗୋଲ କାତର ଚଷମା , ଆଣ୍ଟୁ ନଲୁଗା ସଫେଦ ଫରଫର ଧଳା ଖଦୀ ଧୋତି ଆଉ ଠେଙ୍ଗା!

ଦୁଖିଆ ସଭା ପ୍ରଥମେ ବିକଳ ଚିତ୍କାରଟିଏ କଲା, "" ବାପୁ ବାପୁ ବାପୁ ..."ତା ଡଣ୍ଟି ପଡ଼ିଗଲା ।

ଦୁଖିଆର କଥାରେ ଆମର ହଲକ ଶୁଖିଗଲା । ଆମ କାନରୁ ବନଶୀଖତାଗୁଡ଼ାକ ଗଳଗଳ ଗଳି ପଡ଼ିଲା । ସେତେବେଳେକୁ ବାବାଜି ଆଉ ଅନ୍ତରା କେତେବେଳେ ଉଭାନ ହେଇଯାଇଥିଲେ । ପଛ ପଟକୁ ବୁଲି ପଡ଼ି ଚାହିଁ ମୁଁ ଦେଖିଲି ସେମାନେ ଗାଁ ରାସ୍ତାରେ ଦଉଡୁଥାନ୍ତି ଯୋତାଏ ହରିଣ ଛୁଆ ବାଘ ଦେଖି ଡିଆଁ ମାରି ପଳେଇଲା ପରି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଠୁକୁରାନ୍ନା ଠିଆ ହେଇଥାଏ ବୀର ପରି ଦୁଇ ହାତକୁ ଅଂଗା ଦିପାଖରେ ଭିରାଦେଇ ।

ହଠାତ ଠୁକୁରାନ୍ନା ଗୋଟାଏ ରତି ପକେଇଲା, "" ହୋ ବୁଢ଼ା! କିଏ ତୁମେ? ତୁମ ଘର କୁଆଡ଼େ?"

ପୋଖରୀ ଆରପାଖୁ ଜବାବ ଆସିଲା, "" ବହତ ଦୂରସେ ଆୟା ହୁଁ! ଏ ରାସ୍ତା ପୁରୀ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥକୋ ଯାତା ହେଁ ନା ମେରେ ପ୍ୟାରେ ବଜେ? କିତନେ ଦୂର ତକ ଓ ର ଚଲନା ପଡେଗା?"

ସ୍ଵରଟାକୁ କାନେଇ ଠୁକୁରାନ୍ନା କଣ ବାରିଲା । ବୁଲି ପଡ଼ି ଆମ ମୁହଁକୁ ଚାହିଁଲା । ତା ମୁହଁରୁ ସିକଲ ଖସି ପଡ଼ିଥାଏ ସେତେବେଳକୁ । ସେ ଦିଶୁଥାଏ ଅନ୍ଧାର କିଟିକିଟି ରାତିରେ ଛାଇଟାଏ ତମ ମୁହଁକୁ ଝରକା ଆରପଟୁ ଚାହିଁକରି ଘର ବାହାରେ ଠିଆ ହେଇଥିଲା ଭଳି ଭୟଙ୍କର!

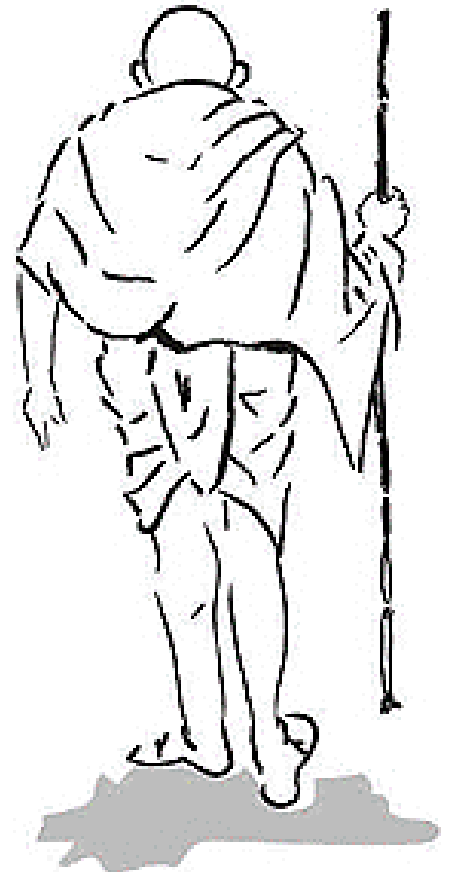
ମୁଁ ଆଉ ଦୁଖିଆ କଅଣ କରିବୁ ବୁଝି ନପାରି ଏକା ବେଳକେ ଦୁଇ ହାତ ଯୋଡ଼ି ପୋଖରୀ ଆରପାଖ ତୁଠରେ ଗାଧୋଇ ଥିବା ମହାମୁଞ୍ଚୁ ନମସ୍କାର କଲୁ । ଆମର ଆଉ ସନ୍ଦେହ ନଥାଏ ସେ କିଏ -ଜାଣିବାକୁ । ""ବାଲ!



ଠୁକୁରାନ୍ନା ନମସ୍କାର କଲା ନାହିଁ । ତା ପାଟି ଖନି ବାଜି ଯାଉ ଥାଏ । ସେମିତି ଖନେଇ ଖନେଇ କହିଲା,  
ଫେରିଯିବା!’

ଆମେ ଫେରିଲୁ ନାହିଁ । ଅପେକ୍ଷା କଲୁ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ସେ ଯାତ୍ରୀ ଜଣକ ଧୁଆଁଧୋଇ ସାରି କୁଆଡ଼େ ଯାଉଛନ୍ତି  
ଜାଣିବାକୁ । ସେ ଯେ ଭୂତପ୍ରେତ ନୁହଁନ୍ତି ଜଣେ ଜୀବନ୍ତ ରକ୍ତମାଂସର ମଣିଷ- ସଂଭବତଃ ଆମକୁ ତା ପ୍ରମାଣ  
ଦେବାକୁ ସେ ତାଙ୍କ ନିତ୍ୟକର୍ମ ସମାପ୍ତ କରି ପୁଣି ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲେ ଯାତ୍ରା ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ସତକରେ- ପୁରୀ ଅଭିମୁଖେ ।  
ତଥାପି ଆମର ସେଦିନର ସେଇ ଅତୁଟ ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତାକୁ ଆମେ ଏ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ପୂରା ବିଶ୍ୱାସ କି ପୂରା ଅବିଶ୍ୱାସ  
କରିପାରି ନାହିଁ ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ସେଇ ଘଟଣା ପରେପରେ ଆମ ଗାଁର ସବୁଠୁଁ ଦୁଃସାହସୀ ଆଉ ଅବିଶ୍ୱାସୀ ଯୁବକ ଠୁକୁରାନ୍ନା, ତାଙ୍କ ଭଲ  
ନାଁ ଗୋପାଳଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କର ଏକ ଅତୁଟ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଘଟିବା ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ କରିଥିଲୁ ଆମେ । ବୁଢ଼ା ହେଲା ବେଳକୁ ସେ  
ସକାଳ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟା ଘରୁ ଏକାଏକା ବାହାରିଯାଇ ବସୁଥିଲେ ରୂପଚାପ ସେଇ ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ପୋଖରୀ କୂଳରେ । ତାଙ୍କ ଲଣ୍ଠା  
ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଆଉ ଗୋଲ ଗୋଲ କାଚର ଚଷମା ପିନ୍ଧା ମୁହଁ ଦେଖି ତାଙ୍କ ନାତି ବୟସର ପିଲା ମାନେ ତାଙ୍କ ନାଁ  
ଦେଇଥିଲେ-“ବେନ କିଙ୍ଗସଲି”! ସେ ନାଁଟା ସେମାନେ ପାଇଥିଲେ ସହରର ସିନେମା ଘରେ ପଡ଼ିଥିବା ଓସ୍କାର  
ପୁରସ୍କାର ପ୍ରାପ୍ତ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶକ ରିଚାର୍ଡ ଆଣ୍ଡେନବରୋଙ୍କ ବିଶ୍ୱ ବିଖ୍ୟାତ ଇଂରେଜୀ ମୁଭି“ଗାନ୍ଧୀ” ସିନେମାର ହିରୋ  
ବେନ କିଙ୍ଗସଲିଙ୍କ ନାଁରୁ!



-ଶାନ୍ତନୁ କୁମାର ଆଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ



## ରଥଯାତ୍ରା

ରଥରେ ବସିଛି କାଳିଆ ଧନ, ଭାଇ ଭଉଣୀକୁ ନେଇ ସାଂଗରେ  
 ରଥ ଗଡୁଅଛି ବଡ଼ ଦାଣ୍ଡରେ, ହରିବୋଲ ହୁଳହୁଳି ଶବ୍ଦରେ  
 ଘଣ୍ଟ ଘାଣ୍ଟି ଆଉ ଶଂଖର ନାଦ, ମନୁ କରେ ଦୁଃଖ ବିଷାଦ ଦୂର  
 ସିଂହ ଦୁଆରରୁ ଗୁଣ୍ଡିଚା ଘର, ସର୍ବ ଲୋକେ ଯୋଡ଼ି ଅଛନ୍ତି କର  
 ଧରମକୁ ଆଖି ଆଗରେ ରଖି, ପ୍ରଥମେ ଛାଡ଼ିଛି ବଡ଼ ଭାଇକି  
 ଭଉଣୀକୁ ରଖି ଅଛି ମଝିରେ, ପଛରେ ରହିଛି ଲୋକଭିତରେ  
 ସଭିଂକୁ କହୁଛି ମୋଠାରୁ ଶିଖ, ଭାଇ ଭଉଣୀକୁ ସାଂଗରେ ରଖ  
 ରତନ ସିଂହାସନରେ ବସିଛି ମୁହିଁ, ସାଂଗେ ଧରି ଭଉଣୀ ଭାଇ  
 ବାଟେ ଜଗିଛି ମୋ ମାଉସୀ ମା, ଯୋଡ଼ ପିଠା କରି ତାକୁଛି ଆଆ  
 କହି ଅଛି ମତେ ବହୁତ କରି, ଯିବା ଆସିବା ବେଳେ ଚୋହରି  
 ମୋ ଦୁଆରେ ଟିକିଏ ହୋଇବୁ ଠିଆ, ନାଶିଛୁ ତୁ ମୁ ରହୁଛି ଏକୁଟିଆ  
 ଭକ୍ତ ମାନଂକର କେତେ ଗୁହାରୀ, ତାକୁଛନ୍ତି କେତେ ପ୍ରକାର କରି  
 ପିତା ମାତା ପୁତ୍ର ଭକ୍ତ ଭାବରେ, ଭଜନ କରନ୍ତି ମୋର ଆଗରେ  
 ଦାସ ଭାବ ଧରି କିଏ ତାକୁଛି, ଉଦ୍ଧାର କରିଦେ ମତେ ତାକୁଛି  
 ବଡ଼ ଦାଣ୍ଡ କହେ ଦୁଃଖନାଶନ ତତେ କୋଳରେ ଧରି ଆଜି ମୁଁ ଧନ୍ୟ  
 ମନେ ମନେ ହସି ରଂଗ ଅଧରେ, ବସି ଅଛୁ ତୁହି ରଥ ଉପରେ  
 ତୋ ନେତ୍ରରେ ଧନ ପଲକ ନାହିଁ, ସମସ୍ତେ ଭାବନ୍ତି ମତେ ଦେଖଇ  
 ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ତୋ ନେତ୍ରରୁ ବାହାର, ଶ୍ରୀଚରଣେ ତୋର କୋଟି ଜୁହାର  
 ସତରେ ଧନ ତୁ ଉଦାର ମନ, ସଭିଂକୁ ଦେଇ ଅଛୁ ଆଶ୍ୱାସନ  
 ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧା ନାମ ତୋର ଦୟା ସାଗର, ତୋ ପାଖେ ନାହିଁ ପାତର ଅନ୍ତର  
 ପୁରାଣ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରରେ ପଢ଼ିଛି ମୁହିଁ, ରଥେ ତୋତେ ଯେ ଦରଶନ କରଇ  
 ପୁନର୍ଜନ୍ମ କେବେ ହୁଏନା ତାର, ପ୍ରାପତ ହୁଏ ତାକୁ ବୈକୁଣ୍ଠ ଘର  
 ଏ କଥାରେ ମୋର ଅଛି ବିଶ୍ୱାସ, କରିବୁନି ମତେ ନିରାଶ  
 ସବୁ ବଡ଼ ତୋର ବଡ଼ ଠାକୁର, ବଡ଼ ଆଶା ତୁହି ବଡ଼ ଦୁଃଖୀର  
 ସର୍ବ ସୁଖେ ଯାଇ ଗଣ୍ଡିଚା ଘର, ବୁଲି ଫେରି ଆସ ଖୁସି ମନରେ



ତୋ ବାହୁଡ଼ା ଯାତ୍ରା ଦେଖିବା ପାଇଁ, ବଡ଼ ଦାଣ୍ଡେ ଥିବେ ଭକ୍ତ ଅନେଇ  
ନାଶୁଛୁ ତୁହି ତୋ ଶୁଭାଶୀଷ ଆଉ ରେଣୁର ମନ, ଶ୍ରୀ ଚରଣେ ତୋର କୋଟି ପ୍ରଣାମ



- ଶୁଭାଶୀଷ ପଣ୍ଡା





# ଓସା

ଆମେରିକା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜ



ଆମେରିକା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜର ମୁଖପତ୍ର

ସଂଖ୍ୟା - ୬୨ - ଡିସେମ୍ବର - ୨୦୧୭

## ଉତ୍କର୍ଷ



# UTKARSA

A NEWSLETTER OF ODISHA SOCIETY OF AMERICAS

VOLUME - 62 DEEMBER - 2017



[www.odishasociety.org](http://www.odishasociety.org)



Mitisha Panda is a high school student and lives with her parents and sister in Montgomery NJ. She goes to the Somerset County Vocational and Technical High School Academy of Health and Medical Sciences. In her free time, she likes to run track and field for Montgomery High School and also swim competitively for a club team.

Misha aspires to be a doctor and serves as a board member of the Doctors Without Borders club at the school. She also love animals, and volunteers at the SAVE Animal Shelter in Montgomery. Photography has been a passion of for a while now, and she is a student in a photography class in school.



## OSA NextGen

### Photography



Anshul Mahakud is a high school student and lives with his parents in Bridgewater, NJ. He considers himself a novice photographer and filmmaker. Over the last three years he has produced multiple videos. He has also used his talents to edit music for OSA

NYNJPA cultural programs. He recently collaborated with other youth to produce a video report of the OSA NYNJPA Saraswati puja event.



## OSA NextGen

### Spelling Bee

Shruthika Padhy was in ESPN !



OSA youth Shruthika Padhy of Cherry Hill came in 7th on the National Scripps Spelling Bee 2017. Shruthika is an avid speller and has a long list of accomplishments including:

2017: 7th place in National Scripps Spelling Bee

2017: North South Foundation Senior Vocabulary Bee Nationals Champion

2017: 2nd place in North America Spelling Champion Challenge;

2016: South Asian Regional Champion and National Runners-up

2016: 22nd place in National Scripps Spelling Bee

2016: Aloha Vocabulary Bee champion

2015: Aloha Vocabulary Bee champion

Shruthika's parents, Uma and Sujata Padhy, and her brother Prachet, are part of her team to help prepare for the Bee. She spends upwards of 15 hours every week practicing spelling bee strategies and techniques.

Shruthika is gearing up for the 2018 spelling bee championship and we wish her great success. Read about Shruthika's accomplishment at: [Shruthika Padhy Spelling Bee Finalist](#)

Shruthika's official Scripps video



Reported by Aaryana Rajanala



## OSA NextGen

### Sports – Ice Hockey

#### The Pride of India Lives in Pennsylvania



USA Youth, Pariket (Neel) Mohapatra from Lancaster, PA had the honor of representing India in the Asian under 20 Ice Hockey championship in Malaysia.

In recent years India, has seen a thriving interest in Ice Hockey as a sport. There is a huge shortage of infrastructure, equipment and institutional support, but the team qualified to play in the championship.

Neel's parents, Subrat and Toya, supported the team by facilitating the purchase of equipment from the USA.

Neel is a sophomore in high school and loves watching and playing sports. He has been playing ice hockey for the past four years for his school and club and likes the competitive nature of the sport.

Neel is a fan of Martin Brodner, an accomplished ice hockey player and a great role model.

We wish Neel success in all his future endeavors

[Read more about India's Ice Hockey dreams and challenges](#)

Congratulate Neel and see photos at:

[Subrat Mohapatra's Facebook Post on Neel](#)

Reported by

Aaryana Rajanala



# ଓସା

ଆମେରିକା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜ



ଆମେରିକା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜର ମୁଖପତ୍ର

ସଂଖ୍ୟା - ୬୨ - ଡିସେମ୍ବର - ୨୦୧୭

## ଉତ୍କର୍ଷ

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## UTKARSA

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## *Premalata Panda*

*Mausi's Journey from Dhenkanal to Denver*



**1943.** Anticipation of India's freedom turned to dejection with the sudden end of Quit India movement. The famine was ravaging Bengal. With all the gloom surrounding it, Odisha was juxtaposed with despair and hope. Female literacy in India was below 6%.



Equality between females and males was not even a dream. Dhenkanal, while still a princely state, not in Odisha or India at that time, had gifted the fable of Baji Rout, 5 years before. In the small town of Gailo, about 20 kms from Dhenkanal, public prosecutor Anant Charan Mishra and his wife Sarojini Mishra were resolute to showcase equality and education of girls in their family. They had 4 boys and 4 girls. Premalata Mishra is the 6th child. She was destined for higher education. Utkal University shares the same birth year for her. 1943.



**This is the journey of Premalata Mishra.**

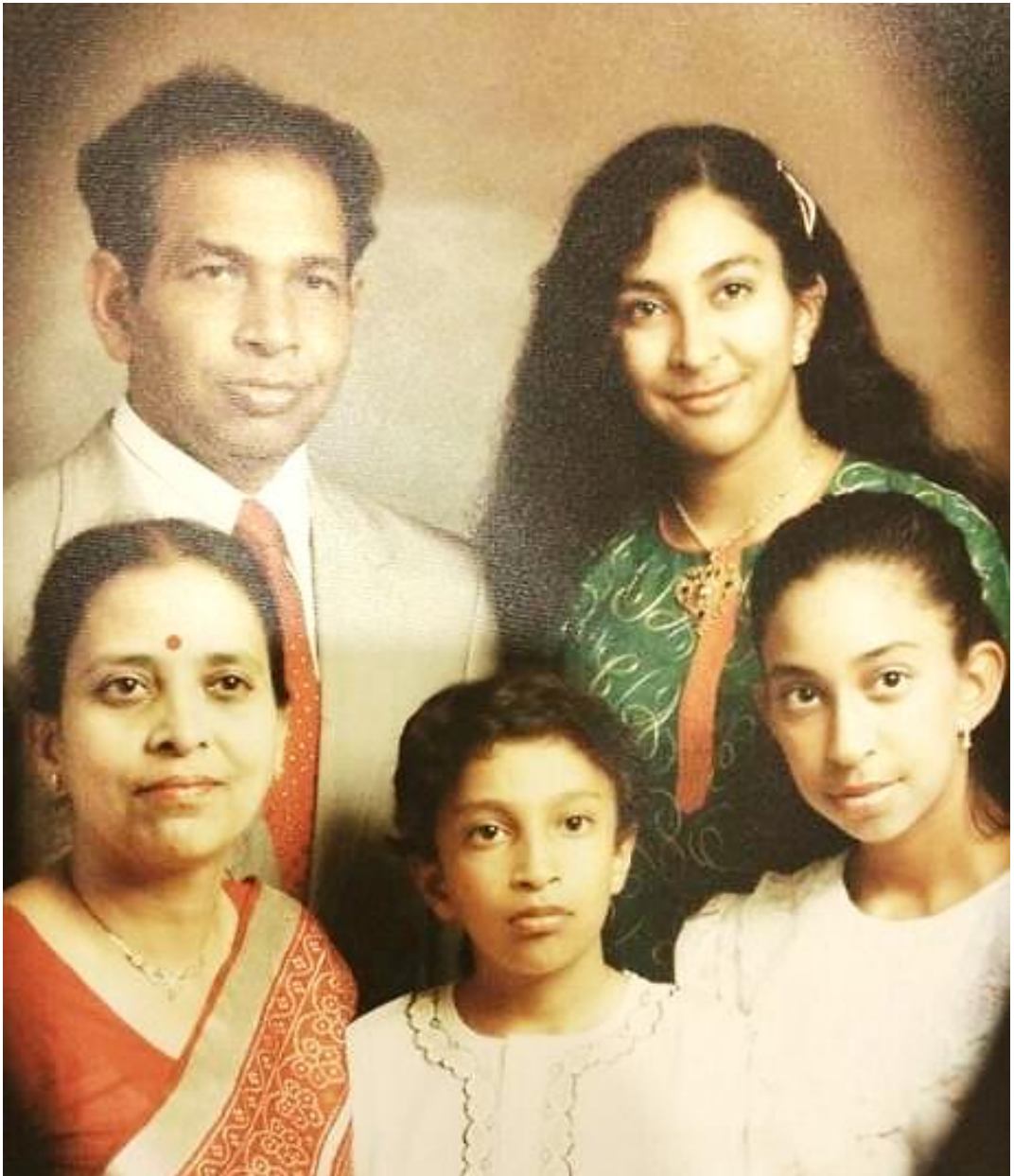
**She is Premalata Panda now.**

**She is “Mausi” for us all.**





Mausi was a child in a joint family of 30. Must have been an exciting childhood. 1960 was cruel. Lost her father. She progressed to Ravenshaw college. Then to Utkal University, Vani Vihar and completed her masters in Psychology in 1964. So Utkal University had a destiny to be born with her. Someone else had a destiny with her, but was born 5 years before. Siba Prasad Panda. Asst. Professor in REC, Rourkela, couldn't resist being drawn to her. They married in 1964. Nice. Romantic. Beautiful story so far. It has to have a twist though. Love doesn't taste sweet without separation. "Birhaaii". Mausai came to USA alone in 1967. To start his PhD in Stony Brook, NY. 1 Year. Just enough for





some violin and a few slow songs. Mausi joined him in Stony Brook in 1968. She still remembers how much she loved the first sight of USA. She still loves it. Only cars on the road, instead of people, was a bit weird to start with. Through a University program, Jerry and Ann Coats were the assigned Host Family. The love, welcome and help they provided is still treasured by Mausi. That was her first exposure to the convivial culture of USA which is still the same.

Mausa's job took the young couple to a few places in USA. New York, Michigan, Nebraska, Ifind a place to call home. Turned out to be Denver, Colorado. Those years gave them 3wonderful childrenndiana. In the process, they befriended a lot of Odia families. Took them 11 years to. 2 daughters, Sipra and Sheila and a son, Sangram. Mausi concentrated on raising the kids. Financially hard, sometimes, but they were happy days. Mausma concentrated on his work. Consulting in Electrical Engineering and moved to Robotics division in StorageTek. Time passed by. Love for USA grew with it.





Appreciation for the opportunities, education for kids, the environment, acceptability. They of course, missed their large family in India, but Mausa and Mausi also knew that this is their home, which they always loved.

Mausa and Mausi were the first Odia couple in Denver, CO. Soon they met two other Odia families. Mrs & Mr Pradhan and Mrs & Dr Mohapatra. They are the oldest Odia friends in Denver and the friendships are still going strong. With few other Odia families at that time, they started a Odia community. Soon the picnics, “29” and meat curry became the most anticipated events for few Odias here. Mausi was always looking for an excuse to have a get-together. Mausa didn’t express that specifically, but it was obvious that he did too.

Children are well educated and are living happily with their families. Mausa retired in 2004 and they were looking forward to a happy retired life in the mile-high clean environment. Looking forward to a few sessions of “29” and a few get-togethers. Not to be, though. Fate is quirky. It snatched away Mausa in 2009. He fought hard. He almost won. Almost. Mausi is alone. Of course, the children, Sipra, Sheila and Sangram are always there for her. Her three pillars. And Sadhu & Sunanda Behera are her fourth pillar. Always there for her. And everyone in the OSA community here loves her very much and is eager to help her whenever she needs. Mausi loves everyone in the community here and enjoys everyone’s company.

Over the years, Mausi has come across many Odia families. And a number of other Indian and American families. She cherishes all the love and affection she has received. There are many, who have readily helped her whenever she has needed. She holds everyone and the memories, close to her heart. She would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone from the bottom of her heart, for all the adoration she has received.



2017. Mausi travels to India for few months a year. Visits her brothers and sisters in India. She loves them a lot. She visits families of her daughters and son and her grandchildren. She loves them so much. She comes back here to Denver though. This is where she has spent most of her life. This is where she built her wonderful family. She loves the environment. The freedom. The medical facilities. The cleanliness. This is her home. She goes to all the get-togethers of Odias here. She loves them. She loves everyone. She stays alone in her home. She wants to be as independent as possible. She loves to. The same home which has hosted so many parties when Mause was there. And it still does. She still likes to have people come over to her home. Anytime. She still makes those amazing food. Especially, the “Samosa” and “The salad”. She loves a glass of wine – if her doctor visit is at least a month away. She has seen all facets of life. Sometimes, for a fleeting moment, we think, we see her missing Mause. She must be. But she gathers herself really fast. She is strong.

We all love you, Mausi.

It's always fun to be around you and it'll continue for years to come.

It's only 2017.

Compiled

by

Subrat Mishra

OSA - ROCKY MOUNTAIN CHAPTER



*Edward Village*  
HOSPITALITY  
600 TOWN CENTER DR.  
DEARBORN, MI 48126



*Ford Community & Performing Arts Center*  
15801 MICHIGAN AVE.  
DEARBORN, MI 48126

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ଠଳଭମ

**ଡେଟ୍ରଏଟ୍- ମିଚିଗାନ୍  
ଆମେରିକୀୟ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜ ବାର୍ଷିକ ମହାମଣ୍ଡଳ**



DETROIT, MICHIGAN  
**49<sup>th</sup> OSA  
Convention**  
THURSDAY  
05 JULY 2018 (EVENING)  
to  
SUNDAY  
08 JULY 2018 (MORNING)



**49<sup>th</sup>  
DETROIT-MICHIGAN  
OSA CONVENTION**

[www.osa2018.org](http://www.osa2018.org)



# OSA 49<sup>TH</sup> CONVENTION 2018

## DETROIT - MICHIGAN

*Message From 49th Annual OSA Convention Convenor*

Dear All,

Michigan chapter is hosting the 49th Annual OSA Convention in July 2018. As it is not possible to keep in touch with all the community members personally, on behalf of the convention committee, this is my pleasure to give some appraisal towards reaching our goal for the convention.

1. Venue and accommodation has been finalized.

( Ford performing Art center, Edward hotel, Dearborn MI)

2. Website for the convention has been already launched (please refer to [www.osa2018.org](http://www.osa2018.org) )

3. Artist selection from India completed.

Various committees have been working very hard and diligently to make the event a grand success. I sincerely request everybody's participation and cooperation for this convention to make it a memorable event for us, as well as for all the attendees coming from various part of the USA, Canada and abroad. Please register early bird special online at your convenience.

*Wish you all Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2018...*

With Regards

Dr. Shishir Senapati

Convenor

49<sup>th</sup> Convention

OSA



# OSA 49<sup>TH</sup> CONVENTION 2018

## DETROIT - MICHIGAN

### Invitation for Souvenir and Meghna Memorial Creative writing Competition

**Dear OSA Members,**

We invite you to submit your **ODIA or ENGLISH articles** to be published for Souvenir and Meghna Memorial Award selection for 49<sup>th</sup> OSA Convention in Dearborn, Michigan, USA.

Souvenir submissions are open to:

OSA members

OSA member extended families (outside Americas)

Non-members who have registered to attend the convention.

(Editors retain discretion for publishing)

Meghna Memorial Creative writing competition is open to:

Children or OSA members

Children of non-members who have registered to attend the convention.

The deadline for submissions is **March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018**. Due to time needed for editing and publishing, the deadline will not be moved.

Please click on the

→ [SouvenirAndMeghnaMemorialAward](#)

for writing and submission guidelines.

We look forward to hearing from you soon for the 49<sup>th</sup> OSA Convention Souvenir and Meghna Memorial articles. Sincerely,

**Swapnalata Mishra (Rath)**

Chair (Souvenir & Directory) | 49<sup>th</sup> OSA Convention

Phone: (586)-463-9168

Email: [osasouvenirurmi2018@gmail.com](mailto:osasouvenirurmi2018@gmail.com)

**Sasadhar Sahoo**

Co-Chair (Souvenir & Directory) | 49<sup>th</sup> OSA Convention

Phone: (248)-910-0907

Email: [osasouvenirurmi2018@gmail.com](mailto:osasouvenirurmi2018@gmail.com)



Youth Committee of 49th OSA Convention, Detroit, MI and OSA National Editorial Team are  
pleased to announce the

## 1st Annual OSA Youth Visual Arts Competition.

### Competition Guidelines:

1. Competition is open to all youth and students in OSA (Parents have to be OSA members)
2. Youth can participate in 3 age groups:
  - a. Junior: 4 to 10 years
  - b. Intermediate: 11 to 17 years
  - c. Senior: 18 years and above
3. Students can submit their original work in one of the following 5 categories
  - a. Painting / Sketches (Submit upto 2 entries)
  - b. Pure Photography (Submit upto 2 Photographs)
  - c. Creative Digital Art/Photography (Submit upto 2 entries)
  - d. Videography (Submit 1 video, 3 minutes or shorter)
  - e. Anything Odia - Can be Painting, Sketch, Photo, Digital Art or Video related to Odisha, OSA, Odia or Convention theme (Bridging Generations: Celebrating Odia Unity / Bada aau Sana: Ejka Ama Odia Prana)
4. Pure Photography requirement: Photos cannot be touched up or altered in any way. Only resizing is allowed.
5. Creative Digital Art / Photography: photos may be enhanced / altered with software or the entire image can be created with digital tools.





6. Please ensure submissions have high resolution (3 Mb and above files) - .JPEG or .MP4 files are preferred.

7. Entries will be judged on:

- a. Originality
- b. Informational Content
- c. Technical Proficiency
- d. Artistic and Visual Impact

8. Entries have to be uploaded by 30th April 2018 at [OSA Visual Arts Competition](#)

9. One winner will be announced in each category and age group. Winners will be announced and recognized at the 2018 OSA convention. Some of the entries may be published in the OSA quarterly UTKARSA magazine at the editors discretion

10. All participants are invited to a seminar at the convention (details TBD) to talk about their work, interests and network with each other.

The organizers also invite adults OSA members who would like to mentors to the students in Visual Arts - we will attempt to pair you with the students at the convention for potential coaching and fieldwork.

*Thank You...!*



Dear All,

Namaste...!

This is UTKARSA for all of us. We apologise for unintentional delay in the publication of this issue. We have already started working on the next issue and request you to send us your contributions as soon as possible.

**For March, June, September & December 2018 issues of  
UTKARSA**

**Please send your contributions by  
15<sup>th</sup> of the same month.**

Please provide your social media contact information so the readers can contact you or provide feedback. As always, we appreciate your feedback about Utkarsa in errors, design or content. Your constructive comments are always welcome and yes; Please let us know few words about the current issue.

We are thankful those photographers whose images are collected and associated with the current edition .

Thank You All...!

Editors

**[editors@odishasociety.org](mailto:editors@odishasociety.org)**



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ସଂଖ୍ୟା - ୨୨  
ଡିସେମ୍ବର - ୨୦୧୭

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A NEWSLETTER OF ODISHA SOCIETY OF AMERICAS

