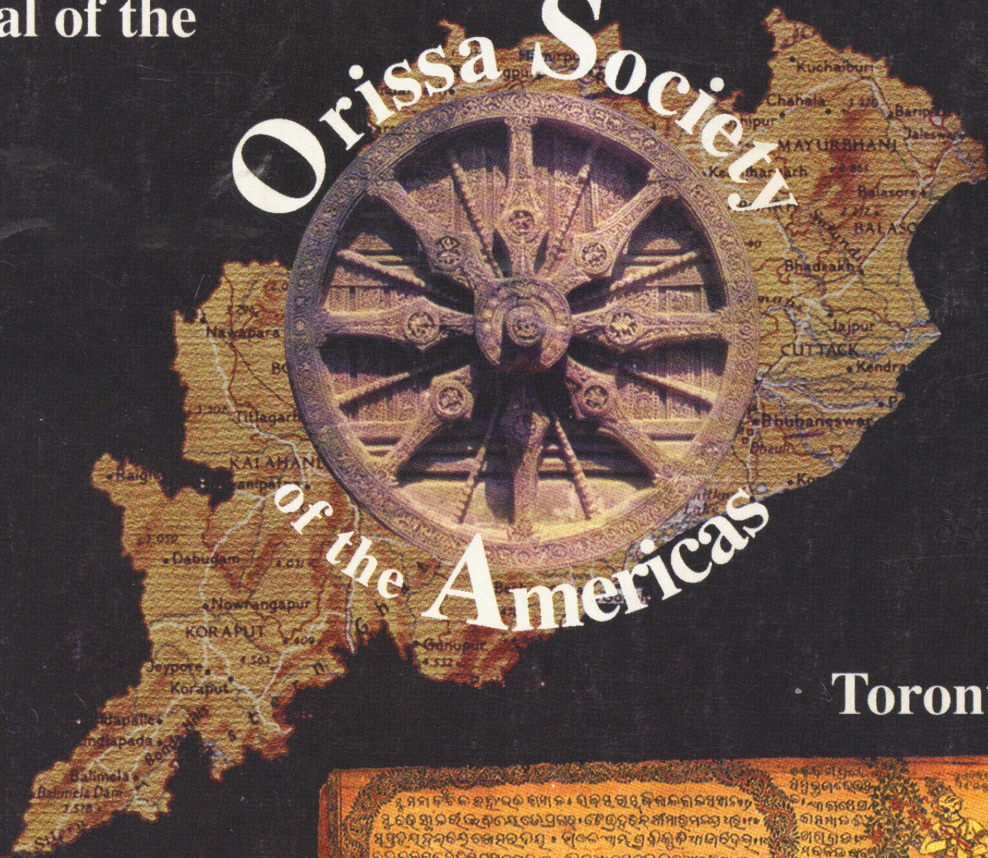


Journal of the

Orissa Society of the Americas



Toronto 1999





Welcome to the
30th Annual Convention
July 2- 4, 1999 Toronto, Canada

souvenir '99



ଯାହା ମୁଁ କରଇ, ଯାହା ମୁଁ କହଇ, ଯାହା ମୁଁ ଚିନ୍ତଇ ମନେ
ଜଗତର କର୍ତ୍ତା ପରମ ଇଶ୍ଵର, କାଣ୍ଡୁଛନ୍ତି ପ୍ରତିକ୍ଷଣେ ।
ମୋ ପାଶେ ଅଛନ୍ତି ଦିବସ ରଜନୀ, ମହାପ୍ରଭୁ ପରାପୂର,
ଏ କଥା ସୁମରି ହୃଦୟେ ଦାହାଙ୍କୁ ପୂଜିବି ମୁଁ ନିରନ୍ତର ।

- ଭକ୍ତକବି ମଧୁସୂଦନ ରାଓ

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Message from OSA President

On behalf of the Executive Council and the Board of Governors, I welcome you all to the 30th convention of the Orissa Society of the Americas. We would like to convey our heartfelt thanks to the Canada chapter, for their hospitality and hard work in putting this convention together. We joyfully anticipate plunging into our Oriya identity as we immerse ourselves in Oriya art, culture and traditions for the next few days.

I have tried to keep regular communication regarding OSA activities through our journal and newsletters. At this point I would like to highlight OSA's activities in the last two years. For the first time the Mission Statement for OSA has been established in keeping with the OSA constitution and by laws. This has been approved by the board and published in our newsletter. OSA is on the web now at <http://www.orissasociety.org>. It is a text- dominated site with its constitution, history, and list of officers, information on outreach activities, selected articles from OSA journals, and cross-links to other related sites, etc.

On the financial side we have done well. When I took the office there was about \$ 40,000 in fixed account and \$2500 in the checking account. Through fund raising and prudent spending, I will be leaving approximately \$50,000 in the fixed account, which is a 25% increase in two years. This was accomplished by reinvesting the interest earned and putting aside part of the membership money in the fixed account. As resolved by the board in the past, the fixed money will be under the supervision of a three-member committee (Dr. Panchanana Satpathy, and past present OSA Presidents) and cannot be withdrawn for OSA expenses.

The OSA committee on Women's interests has remained active and involved with charitable organizations in Orissa. Members of OSA have adopted 5 children from Vasundhara and donations were collected from Northern California for Vasundhara. In addition many donations from individual members exceeding \$34,000 has been sent through OSA to various educational and charitable organizations.

The OSA Center at Bhubaneshwar is now fully operational. Last year for the first time we furnished various admission guides, current publications, guides to standardized tests, and many current catalogs from major universities. With the Rs 50,000 donation from the Government of Orissa, a student assistant is manning the center. OSA's student representative recently visited the Center and presented an informative seminar to prospective students. OSA center at Berhampur was formally opened last year and various resources were provided to jump-start the activities in the center.

On the cultural front, several local OSA chapters took the lead and arranged Odissi dance concerts of Aruna Mohanty and her troop visiting from Orissa. The tour with 18 concerts all over USA and Canada was a major success and exposed the finesse of Orissan culture to a wide array of Indians and non-Indians.

It is imperative for members of OSA to actively participate in its affairs. Lack of participation has resulted in two terms of uncontested elections. Only with concerned involvement from its members will an organization thrive and blossom. For those of you who are not members, I urge you all to take up membership and give OSA your strength and input.

Congratulations to the incoming officers and the board! I wish them every success.

Gopa Patnaik

Editor's Column

May I first congratulate OSA for having accomplished 30 years of vigorous activity, service to the Oriya community both in North America and Orissa, and of preserving Oriya culture among the diaspora. These are no mean achievements and we must thank the vision of the founding members who felt the necessity to organize themselves and pass on a rich legacy to succeeding generations. Like any organization, OSA has had its successes and failures but one of the most important organizational challenges that it faces today, whether we admit it or not, is to accommodate and involve two new groups: the first generation new arrivals and the second generation Oriyas born and raised here. Apparently both these groups may have dissimilar characteristics, but they have lots in common. Both need a certain cultural connectedness but both are also willing to push the cultural borders further and experiment with new ideas, identities, and interests. In both these groups we don't see any longer one-dimensional definitions of Oriya identity. They are engaged in re-creating their selves, their identities, seeking new, bold, expansive, and creative self-definitions. And these are significant *transitions*, ones that we can ill afford to ignore. OSA will be richer if it is able to tap these new 'energies.' And the sooner this is done, the better it is for the health and vitality of the organization. How precisely this idea needs unpacking in terms of re-defining the organization's mission and goals can be left to the broader community to deliberate upon and reach an acceptable consensus thereon.

Editing this journal has been a very demanding but on the whole, a rewarding experience. I thank all enthusiastic contributors, especially children who literally flooded me with submissions. I have tried to include as many Oriya articles, especially short stories, as possible. A special section on *transitions* is devoted to articles that reflect on the theme of this convention. Aside from this, reconceptualizing the structure and adding more fictional works may be considered the mainstay of this issue.

Let me record my debts and acknowledgments to all those who helped me in making this journal print-ready. I immensely thank Ross Mitchell who designed the cover with great care, passion, and ingenuity. For art illustrations, I am indebted to Pallavi Raut Sodhi. I sincerely and enthusiastically thank Purnima (Bani) Patnaik, Srigopal Mohanty, Niranjana Tripathy, Nirmala Panda, Neena Das, Pradeep Behera, Pravat Mishra and Satya Dash for their ungrudging support in typing Oriya articles. Madhusmita Acharya helped me in editing all Oriya articles; and Sheela Hota-Mitchell, Susy Hota, and Sonia Hota did the same for some English articles: my thanks to each one of you, and the whole committee for its collective support. I also thank all those who shared their enthusiasm and suggestions with me.

Since the proof of the pudding lies in its eating, I invite you, the readers, to partake of this literary feast and derive joys appropriate to each.

Ashok Acharya

Editor, Journal of the OSA, Souvenir Issue 1999

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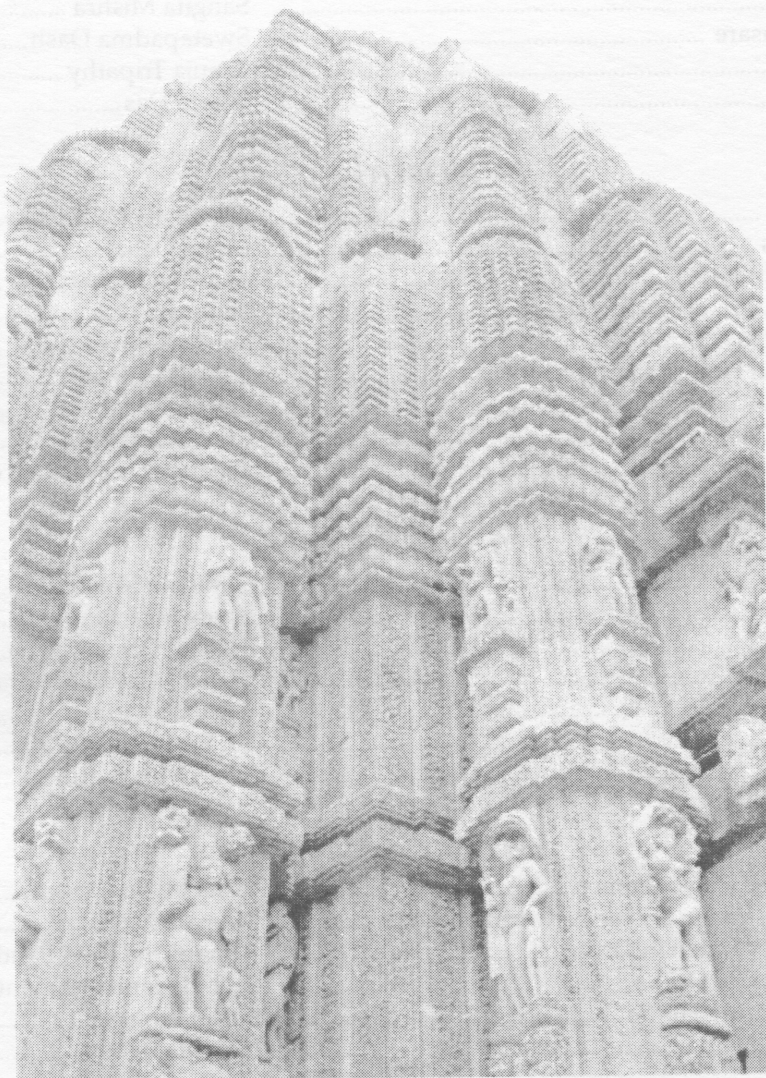
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For Orissa

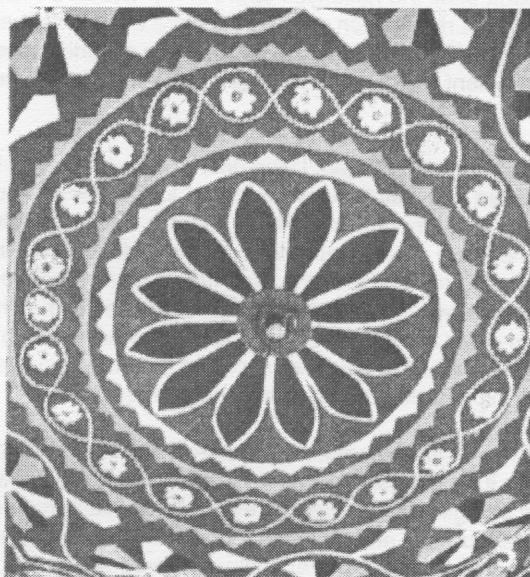
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On The Wings of Poetry



For Orissa

Transitions



ମୁଗାକୁର

How I came to lose my river

SATYA DAS

In the tinted recollection of a happy childhood, it stands out as the perfect river.

Neither the grandest, nor the most significant, just a river that was as it should be: expansive shallows, broad sandbars, and the lure of treacherous water in midstream—what more did anyone need?

In the mornings, just before the heat climbed into your skin, a brisk walk along the hard packed dirt paths of the village—bamboo groves and thorn fences around earthen-walled thatch houses, pumpkin and cucumber vines spreading across the roofs—led to the nearest ghat. Sometimes, bare feet would squish berries or fruit shed by the overhanging trees and a weary adult face might light up at the sight of children running by. A quick plunge into the water would wash away the last tendrils of sleep, and there you would play until someone was sent to fetch you home.

The river was called The Golden Ribbon—Subarnarekha, in the Sanskrit of that long-forgotten age when human civilization was new and people knew the magic and mystery of naming all that was unnamed in the world. It was the also the ribbon of a joyous abandon in all the holidays I spent in my mother's village, and the ribbon that binds me to my earliest memories. I grew up by that river: when my parents were off in Britain earning graduate degrees and on every precious holiday after they returned. The river and the village were a world of their own, with a sense of timelessness, untouched by the swirl of a turbulent history. The river ghat was the place where we arrived and departed, on every holiday.

If the water was low, we would cross by ox-cart. Lying on the straw in the cart-bed, shaded by a cover of woven bamboo, I would look down from the cart and watch the water go by, just below my face. In high water, we would cross by hand-hewn boat. The ferry was sturdy enough to carry at least a dozen people and their belongings, and the boatmen would point out exactly where the treacherous currents swirled. After a particularly hot crossing, someone might split open an enormous watermelon right off the vine. And the rickshaw-pedallers waiting to take us the final few kilometres to the railway station at Dantan would catch the few extra minutes in the shade. It was a river, a road, and a life for all that lived along it. We would cross around the place where the river began to spread into a delta, an incredibly fertile place that provided all the necessities. The boatmen spoke of the muddy surge of the monsoon-fed stream into the Bay of Bengal, about twenty-five kilometres downstream from their ferry ghats.

The village died for me with my grandparents, and I haven't been back in twenty years—there's no one to go back to, only the memory of a place as it once was, of a time as it once was, when the world was simpler. No return could bring back the simple joy of that first plunge into the water of every childhood summer. But even if I wanted to, it would now be impossible for me to make the journey I always longed to—joining the boatmen on a leisurely float to where the river meets the sea. I can't, because ordinary people aren't allowed there any more. That rich delta, those villages on the mouth of the Subarnarekha are off limits now. The Indian government appropriated them in the early 1980s, the people moved off, haphazardly compensated for the loss of their home and their lands.

The place where the rich alluvial soil fed and enriched tens of thousands of people is now part of India's main missile testing range. It is the place where Indian scientists test rockets capable of carrying nuclear warheads deep into the heart of China. This is how innocence passes, how a timeless place is thrust into the ugliest aspects of modernity. One generation you're growing fruit and vegetables, the next you're watching missiles roar over what had once been your land. And if the calamity of nuclear war ever comes to pass, will anyone pushing the buttons know or care what that water used to feel like on an eight-year-old's face? After all is said and done, after all the convictions are aired, after the evil of nuclear weapons is laid bare for all to see, a decision can come down to the simplest things. I can give you all of my logical constructs against nuclear weapons, argue with intellect and passion for disarmament, tell you why you should support Abolition 2000. But in those moments when I am true to myself, it really comes down to this one compact essence: I want my river back.

Satya Das is a senior writer and columnist for Edmonton Journal. He is also the author of 'Dispatches from a Borderless World.'

In search of an ethos

CHITTA RANJAN DAS

Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana once used to speak about an African personality. Africa had then just turned over a new leaf and tracts of land that had been colonies for centuries had attained political freedom. The boundaries between the states had been most arbitrarily drawn by the colonisers and the new governments of the states decided to abide by them. The enthusiasm was all around among the leaders who had just come to wield administrative power over people and they thought, because of the euphoria, that they were governing full-fledged nations. Subsequent history has proved that these were only agglomerates of tribes politically pinned together to be governed under one administration; states have yet to be nations in Africa and the concept of an African personality, or African ethos if you may, is still far from the offing.

Anthropologists did once claim that collectivities meant wholes where the people that constituted them had been brought together by what they, the anthropologists, called a 'participation mystique'. They, of course, were talking about primitive societies where the horizons were compact and almost one-dimensional. People lived in ways chiefly because their ancestors had been living in the same way. Nationalism, a later innovation, perhaps took very much of its psychological tips from that idea of a mystique, but yet we can never explain a modern nation by that idea only. Modern society is anything but a simple society wherein conventions are gods and single individuals can defy them only at their own peril. A nation ought to be much more than that in order to connote all the attributes that make up to define it.

Salvatore de Madariaga of Spain sometime in the first half of this century made an attempt to give characteristics to nations, traits by which one could remember them as distinct from one another. He went by concepts like a nation of sheep, a nation of goats and so on. He concerned himself, understandably, with the nation-groups of Europe and had little acquaintance with their non-European equivalents.

What would we Oriyas as a group of people choose to call ourselves, a nation of sheep, or a nation of goats? An Indian viceroy in the beginning of this century has been alleged to observe in the British Parliament that the Oriyas as a corporate group were a sort of soft people and did not know the art of appropriately exacting their demands. It is interesting to observe that even today enlightened Oriyas will agree with the viceroy to corroborate their opinions about Oriyas. Some people

have always taken delight in what may be termed as self-demeaning exercises, perhaps suggesting that they are the only strong and hard ones though they have been born among soft people. But, thank God, there are many in Orissa who think differently.

Nationalism seems to have evolved in Orissa in a way that may explain to some extent why a vociferous section of the knowledgeable elite in Orissa has come to react in a way it often does. The other single incident in Orissa's history that could be cited as a parallel from the annals of this region will probably be its conversion by Ashoka to Buddhism after he had won a military victory over this tract. During the middle of the last century, coastal Orissa was virtually ruled by English-educated Bengalis from Calcutta. Whatever elements of what was then called the renaissance could trickle into British Orissa of that time was mainly through them and was thus very much second-hand and borrowed. And after all one can never take the narrow coastal strip for the whole of Orissa. The rest of the landmass was deeply immersed in inertia and gloom, ruled by local satraps in their respective feudatory states by virtue of a strange agreement with the colonial powers. Ganjam, Koraput, and Sambalpur were appended to two other British provinces solely for the convenience of administration. Where was the ethos we could so much like to decipher among the people that inhabited these tracts, where was the culture that held them together? Poets of Oriya nationalism during those years of half-assimilated inspiration mostly borrowed the sentiments and even the metaphors from Calcutta and wished to din into the very few who could read and write and lived in about a couple of towns, the more often than not quaint epithets that sounded big but did not denote any meaningful base. That gleeful style has sarcastically continued till date and even today we have stalwarts demonstrating a romantic vigour, blaring superlatives at school children about Orissa and bloated notions of our motherland.

The very first attempt worth the name that sought at giving form to the aspirations of the time was the Oriya Conference or the Utkala Sammelani as it has come to be known for posterity. The Sammelani took to itself the task of uniting all the Oriya-speaking areas into a single administrative unit. Later the move developed into a demand for one separate province where the protagonists thought, the Oriya people as a contiguous whole, could be free to develop their distinctive potentials and play their appropriate roles. As we look back and critically scan the bonafides of that endeavour in terms of its acclaimed goals, we begin to wonder if the leaders that mattered in it were

very clean about the goals they had put before themselves and whether they were fully conscious of the various implications of such a move. The Sammelani had several rajahs of the feudatory states and zamindars who appeared so benevolent in the sessions, were great champions in philanthropy and yet were dire oppressors in places where they ruled. They never harboured the illusion, as it were, that when the call was given from the Sammelani forum to all Oriyas to come together, it could logically include the teeming thousands that smothered under their rule. Even to talk about that was stigma and considered a taboo. And what is more, the leaders in the Sammelani knew little about the political simmers soon overtaking the whole country. There was already a struggle for freedom from the British yoke but in Orissa nationalism was still understood according to the same old horoscopes. And when one of the persons at the forefront of the Sammelani brought in a proposal that the campaign for a separate Orissa should cast in its lot with the mainstream fight for an independent India, not many seemed to understand what he was saying, and as Orissa came more and more to join the fray of the national struggle, the Sammelani, withered. For the fact that Orissa was declared a separate province by the imperial rule in 1936, the Utkala Sammelani deserves full credit. But the feudatory states remained as they had remained and nobody thought it worthwhile to raise the question of bringing them to the newly created province. That happened only in 1947, after India was free and suzerainty decided its own restructuring. It has to be noted that during the Indian freedom movement, the people of the states gave a very admirable proof of their valour and their capacity to brave the odds in their fights against the tyranny of their kings who, they took almost no time to be convinced, were just stooges under the foreign rule. Orissa gave a very good account of itself during the freedom movement and had its commendable share in the saga of sacrifices that always goes together with such a fight.

Could we then say that Orissa as we know it and to which we now profess to belong came to be only after Indian independence and after the merger of the native states with what had been till then known as British Orissa? Right from early history, the landmass that contains Orissa has always remained split into several principalities, the latter changing their masters as frequently as the various dynastic conquests. Only when the Mughals occupied a slice of the land and established a semblance of government here, they actually came to call it Orissa and since then we have inherited the denomination which has survived till our time. A search for ethos justifiably starts only when the people of the tract or section of a country consciously feel that it has come of age. To take the help of anthropologists again, there is a great tradition and a little tradition characterising the life of every people we intend to study and otherwise portray. For Orissa, the great tradition is Indian, which is again the perpetual in

the blending of the Austric Dravidian and Aryan heritages. Especially in the case of Orissa, because of its geographical position in the subcontinent, it has very much actively served as a passage for all those three flanks to communicate with, and stretch into, one another. Even today, a sizeably large proportion of Orissa's population continues to be Austric, with its contributions in the field of cultural assimilation and appropriation. Most of the Oriya words continue to be of Austric and Dravidian origins though the Sanskritised elite will not be very happy to admit it. Kalinga, for that matter Orissa, did resist Aryan infiltration for quite a long time and was called a part of the Bratyaland by the latter. And, whoever wishes to study the underlying features of the little traditions of Orissa, can never afford to hoodwink this very significant factor.

It is said that most of the religious movements that affected the ideational gamut of India also had their respective days in Orissa. This is a fact, although it has to be taken with a grain of salt. To give only one instance, when Buddhism really touched the life of Orissa, it was already Mahayana Buddhism which soon flattened out as Vajrayana. And all the missionaries who sojourned via Orissa in their proselytising missions in favour of the sects they happened to belong, beginning from Adi Shankara right up to Shri Chaitanya, left only scraps of their sectarian ritual worship in the temple of Lord Jagannath at Puri. Though often lauded as a synthesis, these were in all intents and purposes anything but that and had little spiritual challenge in their actual content. The kings were their chief and most dependable patrons, not the people; the people in the modern sense of the term hardly existed. A caste system sat heavy on the society and the age-old karmic injunctions were as tight as they were intended to be. Of course, as was in the case of the entire country also, the parallel appeal of the saint-poets relentlessly harped on the equality of man with man and goaded the conscience of all concerned towards a social order that there was no discrimination and no cant.

As we begin to survey the state of things as they obtain at the present moment, man is yet not on the saddle. About half the people of Orissa are below poverty line in spite of the ceremonious promises made by the powers that be. About half again are illiterate and hence have no say in public affairs. Whatever is intended at the top by way of amelioration hardly percolates to the levels for which it is meant. Political will is dismally at a very low key and political thinking appears to be even lesser. Sectional and parochial interests divide the bulk of the people and keep them apart. There are, of course, some who keep on glorifying and romanticising a past which perhaps never was. It is in tune with that familiar attempt of a certain section of the Indian populace to take shelter in an inflated image of the past because one is not able to encounter the present. Some more romanticise even the present telling us that our land is as it has always been under the

direct protection of the gods and hence one ought not to be wary about the future. The cohesive community seems to be conspicuous in its absence here in Orissa. The imaginary village community is again many universes within a universe. There will not be a single village where all the children there happen to play together without feelings of distantiation. The ancient scriptures have sung high about the oneness of all under the sky, of the indwelling godhead that can not be compromised, and yet in actual situations of living, privileges and special ascriptions always intervene and one feels frustrated searching for a common matrix which really takes all people into consideration.

There are reasons to agree with the sociologist Ralf Dahrendorf that the abolition of social differences is the soil on which human differences thrive, and that men can differ as individuals precisely because they are equal as citizens. And all Indians including those in Orissa have yet to be in reality acknowledged as equal citizens. The processes are definitely on, yet they are slow if measured from the lot of the people suffering the deprivations. And, without free individuals having equal access to a land's rights as well as duties, we can hardly think of a free society. There will always be more equal pigs in the sacralized herd of pigs. And as long as a collective is not free, how can a democratic dialogue be possible, where everybody can express himself and make a dent without let or hindrance? As a surest step toward approaching that goal, all children should be given the chance of a minimum education and what is more, that education thus imparted ought to be the same for all children. Orissa's children of school going age go to a variety of primary schools, and is prone to apprehend this sort of apartheid clinging to us for the next many decades and eating into our vitals as a human conglomerate.

A saving residue that remains is the Oriya language. Whatever we are and wherever we may be stationed in life, we have a common language. This language, Oriya, has a history of its own evolution, a history of its gradual coming of age, its struggle to secure a mooring of its own in spite of the hurdles that Sanskrit, said to be the language of the Gods, did place before it. Just think of Sarala Das deviating from the Sanskrit version of the Mahabharata and transcribing one of his own, or Jagannatha Dasa elbowing his way to write the Bhagabata in Oriya. They had to wean themselves from the prevalent inhibitions and try at using their own living language as a

medium. Oriya has thus a rich heritage and compares brilliantly with the other sister languages of the country. That alone is the foundational ethos upon which the next edifices have to be built. Only with that as the ethos, can we reach all that inhabit this land and have their destinies entwined with the destiny of this landmass called Orissa. There have been periods in the socio-cultural history of Orissa when an elite here has chosen to remain aloof from the larger segment of the people by sticking to an idiom and usage that is more Sanskrit than Oriya. But all the while there have been dissent in favour of the spoken language too. The trend and the dissent have both continued down to our times. We may of course hope that it is the people's aspiration that will always win.

Given the right type of leadership and with greater enlightenment reaching more and more people, Orissa will of course discover its latent potential and march ahead. In India after the attainment of political freedom, we have been victims of wrong priorities and in the process have foolishly debarred a vast majority of our country's people from participating in the task of creating a real ethos: culture, literature, and the so called finer pursuits of life have, as it were, remained the pastime of the few. Let the task of creating an appropriate ethos move more and more of us who care. In terms of human resource development, India lies somewhere in the lowest rungs and Orissa has also more or less a record of lying especially low among the other states in the country. That is disastrous, and therefore things have to change. With the right sort of determination infusing us as a people, we shall also better qualify ourselves to inherit all the wealth that our past stands for, read new meanings into it and use it as a capital for the next strides. And Oriya language is the best medium now available that will bring us together in that common endeavour. There have been very unfortunately, people around us who simply admire a heritage and go to relax. There has been enough of that and it should now change. Even at times it appears as if some people carry with them a vestige right from the colonial times and even regard their own language, Oriya, as something they can dispense with for reasons of expediency. It is really miserable that as they learn a second language, they have to remain alien to the language they have grown up with as children. Disowning your own language may suggest that you intend to disown a whole people, remain privileged and exploit them. And to talk of an ethos to live with in other areas must then amount to indulging in superfluities because one wishes to evade the very essential.

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TRANSITIONS IN ORISSA: FRAGILE BUT FIRM

MANORANJAN MOHANTY

People of Orissa enter the twenty-first century with an agony of persisting poverty and rising communalism but also with a new consciousness and determination to change this situation. We celebrated the 150th birth anniversary of Madhusudan Das in 1998, which saw rededication of the Oriyas to the building of a prosperous Orissa with people living in peace and happiness. It is true that the drought and distress in Kalahandi during the past decade and the burning to death of the Christian missionary Graham Stuart Staines and his two sons in Manoharpur Keonjhar in January 1999 have brought ignominy to Orissa internationally. But at the same time a process of slow transformation has ignited the common people's imagination to seek new dignity. This remarkable trend has been evident in the social movements from Baliapal and Chilika to Kshipur and in the literary and cultural upsurge taking place throughout Orissa.

In the political sphere Orissa's transition has been fragile and painful. The domination of the upper caste mostly Brahman-Karan – elite from the coastal region has undergone some change but only to a degree. The appointment of Giridhar Gamang to replace Janaki Ballabh Patnaik as the Congress Chief Minister in 1999 signalled an attempt to bring about a change. For the second time a tribal leader was assigned this role; earlier Hemananda Biswal had briefly occupied this position on the eve of the elections in 1990. Biswal from Sambalpur and Gamang from Koraput symbolised a shift away from the coastal Orissa. But that was an unsuccessful attempt. Both Janata Dal under Biju Patnaik and Congress under J.B. Patnaik had their strong political base in the coastal districts and operated through their agents to mobilise and control inland Orissa. The other force in Orissa, Congress leader Basanta Kumar Biswal – neither Brahman nor Karan, but Khandayat – is also based in coastal Orissa's Cuttack District.

Inland Orissa's princely states and tribal areas have been dominated by former kings and their families. They have been active in the electoral politics of both Congress and Janata and recently in BJP. The Ganatantra Parishad was a significant political organisation dominated by the princes in the 1950's, which merged with the Swatantra Party. Rajendra Narayan Singh Deo its leader, former ruler of Bolangir was Orissa's Chief Minister heading a coalition during 1967-69. Since then the trend of royal participation in electoral domain persists and the BJP has been the latest avenue of their politics. The absence of tribal

people's political movements in the region has facilitated the continuing domination of princely families in inland Orissa. Even though opposition to them has locally emerged in the rival political party it has only been a reaction to the royal more.

Though Orissa has about 40.5% of its population as dalits (SC 16%) and adivasis (ST 24%) and backward classes constitute about 40% still the upper caste and princely families dominate politics in Orissa and they are based in the coastal region. They have not allowed any autonomous leadership to grow among the dalits and adivasis. The few leaders who came up from time to time are very much dependent upon the coastal upper caste leaders. In fact these upper castes, together, with the landowning Khandayats also dominate the bureaucracy, professions and business in Orissa for historical reasons because they had land and access to education.

The social basis of Orissa's elite is the under developed agriculture and the bureaucratic jobs with the government from clerks to IAS – and in recent years the professional sphere of engineering, medicine. Entrepreneurship did not grow in Orissa during the last two centuries because of lack of surplus Marwaris. Gujratis and in recent decades Punjabis who came to Orissa engaged in commerce and very little in manufacture. The colonial regime had set the pattern of Orissa's political economy by laying two rail lines one linking the areas of minerals and forests of inland Orissa to the parts another linking Calcutta and Madras which had passed through Orissa but required cheap labour in the process. Utilising Orissa's natural resources and cheap labour for national and international profit has been the trend that has persisted even fifty years after Independence. All the big projects of today's Orissa bear that character. Rourkela Steel Plant converts iron ore to steel but Orissa has no engineering industries which could use the steel and generate massive employment. NALCO transforms bauxite into alumina for export. Paradeep exports the natural resources themselves. Orissa's rich minerals, forests and water resources, have not been used to raise people's incomes, develop the regions, aid agricultural development and rural and forest-based industries.

The Orissa elite has managed this process for the last five decades as an agency of the national political economy. Orissa politicians—whichever party they may belong to – are loyal subordinates of their national leaders.

Orissa bureaucrats are disciplined instruments of the system to maintain law and order. Orissa professionals and businessmen have failed to intervene to alter this pattern. No doubt, Biju Patnaik was an exception to this pattern. But during his second term he too showed exhaustion and retreat.

But there are signs of change. It took fifty years after Independence and eighteen years of construction to provide a rail link between coastal and inland Orissa with the opening of the Talcher—Sambalpur line. For the first time the Orissa youth revolted against the neglect of Orissa by the Centre with the rail roko agitation in 1998. Kalahandi people showed signs of restlessness because famine conditions recur despite money and publicity coming in. There were gharaos of blocks demanding long-term measures of irrigation, land reforms and rural industries. The widespread protest in Orissa against the sexual harassment of Anjana Mishra in 1998-99 showed a new level of democratic consciousness on women's rights in Orissa.

The Baliapal movement of 1986-88 had successfully resisted the location of the missile range. The Gandhamardan agitation in paikmal did not allow BALCO to set up the bauxite mines there. The Tata's Prawn Project in Chilika and Steel Plant in Gopalpur were effectively

stopped by the people of the area. The latest is the success story of the movement against Alumina plants in Kashipur. Had people of the region been consulted and appropriate project designs made would have contributed to the overall development of the area and its people resulting in better ways of utilising the natural resources of Orissa. The ruling elite arbitrarily designs such projects and then thrusts them over the people in the name of national interest and Orissa's development. Through these movements common people of Orissa have demanded an alternative model of development that would develop agriculture and rural industries and use natural resources to a great extent for manufacture in the region itself and insist on a major emphasis on education, health and infrastructure. Currently Orissa does not attract much investment due to its poor infrastructure. The paradox is that the highly publicised privatised power system has been used to sell power to other states of India since Orissa does not have adequate requirement for power for its industry and has very little need (only about 4%) for agriculture.

Baliapal and other social movements have not been able to shape the character of Orissa politics. But the streams of consciousness that they have released are creating possibilities to advance towards the making of Orissa of the dreams of Bhima Bhoi, Surendra Sai, Madhusudan, Gopabandhu, Laxman Naik, and Nabakrusna.

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କଳିଙ୍ଗରୁ - ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଏକ ଐତିହାସିକ ବିବରଣୀ

ଡକ୍ଟର ଗୁରୁପ୍ରସାଦ ମହାନ୍ତି

ମାହାମେଘବାହନ କଳିଙ୍ଗଧୂପତି ସମ୍ରାଟ ଶାରବେଳଙ୍କ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ସାମ୍ରାଜ୍ୟ ଭାରତବର୍ଷର ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧାଧିକ ଅଞ୍ଚଳକୁ ନେଇ ଗଠିତ ହୋଇଥିଲା, ଦୁର୍ଭିକ୍ଷ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସେନା ଛୋଟନାଗପୁର ମାଳଭୂମି, ଗାଙ୍ଗେୟ ସମତଳଭୂମି ଓ ସମଗ୍ର ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ଭାରତ ଜୟକରି କଳିଙ୍ଗ ସାମ୍ରାଜ୍ୟ ଗଠନ କରିଥିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କପରେ କେଶରୀ ବଂଶ ଓ ଗଙ୍ଗ ବଂଶର ରାଜା ମାନେ ଶତଶତ ବର୍ଷ ଧରି କଳିଙ୍ଗ ସାମ୍ରାଜ୍ୟକୁ ଗଙ୍ଗଠାରୁ ଗୋଦାବରୀ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବିସ୍ତୃତ ରଖିବାରେ ସମର୍ଥ ଥିଲେ । ମାତ୍ର ୧୫୬୮ ମସିହାରେ ବଙ୍ଗଳାର ନବାବଙ୍କ ସେନାପତି କଳାପାହାଡ଼ ଦ୍ଵାରା ଉତ୍କଳର ଶେଷ ଗଜପତି ରାଜା ମୁକୁନ୍ଦଦେବ ନିହତ ହେବା ପରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତି ଭାଗ୍ୟକାଶରୁ ସ୍ଵାଧୀନତାର ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଅସ୍ତମିତ ହେଲା । ଶତରଶହ ବର୍ଷରୁ ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ବ ସମୟ ଧରି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତି ଜେଭଳି ଏକ ଦୁର୍ଭିକ୍ଷ ପରାକ୍ରମୀ ବୀର ଜାତି ଭାବରେ ଖ୍ୟାତି ଲାଭ କରିଥିଲା, ତାର ଆକ୍ରୋଶମଳକ ପ୍ରତିକାର ଭାବରେ ମରହଟ୍ଟା, ମୋଗଲ, ଓ ଆଫଗାନମାନେ ବାରମ୍ବାର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଆକ୍ରମଣ କରି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ମାନଙ୍କର ଘରଦ୍ଵାର ଶସ୍ୟକ୍ଷେତ୍ର ଆଦି ନଷ୍ଟ କରି ଉତ୍କଳଭୂଖଣ୍ଡକୁ ଧନ ମାନ ବୀର ଶନ୍ୟ କରିଦେଲେ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ କୃଷକ ଶସ୍ୟକ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ସୁନାର ଫସଲ ଉତ୍ପାଦନବାକୁ ଭୟ କଲା । ସାଗର ସେପାରିରୁ ଧନରତ୍ନ ଆଣି ଘରକୁ ଫେରିବାର ସାହସ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାଧବପୁଅ ମାନେ ହରାଇ ବସିଲେ । ବୁଢ଼ୁଷୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତି ହୀନବୀର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହୋଇ ଦୁଃଖକଷ୍ଟରେ କାଳାତିପାତ କଲା । ଦୀର୍ଘ ତିନିଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ଧରି ପରାଧୀନତାର ଅମାଅନ୍ଧାର ଭିତରେ କେବଳ ମୋଗଲ ଆଫଗାନ ଓ ମରହଟ୍ଟା ସୈନ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କ ଘୋଡ଼ା ଟାପୁର ଧ୍ବନୀ ଓଡ଼ିଆଜାତିକୁ ଭୀତପ୍ରସ୍ତ ବୁକୁରେ କାପୁରୁଷତାର ଆର୍ତ୍ତନାଦ ଗୁଞ୍ଜରିତ କଲା । ଫଳରେ ଏ ଜାତି ମୃତପ୍ରାୟ ହୋଇପଡ଼ିଲା ।

୧୭୭୨ ମସିହାରେ ଇଂରେଜମାନେ ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଦଖଲ କଲେ । ତାପରେ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଭାବେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ଇଂରେଜ ଶାସନାଧୀନ କରିବା ଲାଗି ତିରିଶବର୍ଷ ବିତିଗଲା । ୧୮୦୩ ମସିହା ସୁଦ୍ଧା ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ରାଜାରାଜୁଡ଼ାମାନେ ଇଂରେଜମାନଙ୍କ ବଶ୍ୟତା ସ୍ଵୀକାର କଲେ । ୧୮୧୭ ମସିହାରେ ବକ୍ସିଜଗବନ୍ଧୁଙ୍କ ନେତୃତ୍ଵରେ ଖୋର୍ଦ୍ଧାର ପାଇକମାନେ ଇଂରେଜଶାସନ ବିରୁଦ୍ଧରେ ବିଦ୍ରୋହ କଲେ । ସେ ବିଦ୍ରୋହ ଦମନ କରିବା ଲାଗି ଇଂରେଜମାନଙ୍କୁ ଅଧିକ ସମୟ ଲାଗିଲା ନାହିଁ । ବକ୍ସି ଜଗବନ୍ଧୁ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ହାତରେ ବନ୍ଦୀ ହୋଇ ଫାଶୀ ପାଇଲେ । ଏହାର ଦଶବର୍ଷ ପରେ ସମ୍ବଲପୁରରେ ବିଦ୍ରୋହର ବହିଁ ଜଳି ଉଠିଲା । ବୀର ସୁରେନ୍ଦ୍ର ସାଏ ଇଂରେଜ ବିରୁଦ୍ଧରେ ସଂଘର୍ଷ ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲେ । ୧୮୩୫ ମସିହାରେ ଘୁମୁସରର ପାଇକମାନେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଇଂରେଜ ସରକାରଙ୍କ ବିରୁଦ୍ଧରେ ବିଦ୍ରୋହ କରିଉଠିଲେ । ୧୮୫୭ ମସିହାରେ ବୀର ସୁରେନ୍ଦ୍ର ସାଏଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଇଂରେଜ ସେନାବାହିନୀର ଯୁଦ୍ଧ ହେଲା । ଏହି ଯୁଦ୍ଧରେ ଇଂରେଜମାନେ ଜୟଯୁକ୍ତ ହେଲେ । ଏହାର ବର୍ଷକ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସମ୍ବଲପୁର ମଧ୍ୟପ୍ରଦେଶର ଶାସନାଧୀନ ହେଲା ।

୧୮୬୬ ମସିହାରେ ନଅଙ୍କ ଦୁର୍ଭିକ୍ଷ ପଡ଼ିଲା । ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଲକ୍ଷ ଲକ୍ଷ ଲୋକ ଖାଇବାକୁ ନ ପାଇ ଅନାହାରରେ ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ବରଣ କଲେ । ଏହାହିଁ ଥିଲା ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଇତିହାସର ସବୁଠାରୁ କଳଙ୍କମୟ ଅଧ୍ୟାୟ । ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ଖଣ୍ଡ ବିଖଣ୍ଡିତ କରି ମଧ୍ୟପ୍ରଦେଶ, ବଙ୍ଗ, ବିହାର ଓ ମାହାଜ ପ୍ରେସିଡେନ୍ସି ଅଧୀନ ରେ ଶାସନ କରାଯାଉଥିଲା । ତେଣୁ ନଅଙ୍କ ଦୁର୍ଭିକ୍ଷର କରାଳ ଚିତ୍ର ବ୍ରିଟିଶ ଦରବାରରେ ଯଥା ସମୟରେ ଠିକ ଭାବେ ଉପସ୍ଥାପିତ ହୋଇପାରିଲା ନାହିଁ । ଇଂରେଜମାନଙ୍କର ଦଲାଲ ଭାବେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରୁଥିବା ବିହାରୀ, ବଙ୍ଗଳି, ତାମିଲ ବା ମଧ୍ୟପ୍ରଦେଶର ହିନ୍ଦିଭାଷୀଲୋକେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଅନ୍ଧାଧିକ ଲୋକଙ୍କର ଅନାହାର ଜନିତ ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ସମ୍ବାଦକୁ ଲୁଚାଇ ରଖିଲେ ।

ଏତିକି ବେଳେ କଟକରୁ ଏଣ୍ଟାନ୍ସ ପାଶ୍ କରି ବାଲେଶ୍ଵରରେ ଶିକ୍ଷକତା କରୁଥିବା ଜଣେ ଉଚ୍ଚାଭିଳାଷୀ ଯୁବକ କଲେଜ ପାଠ ପଢ଼ିବା ପାଇଁ ଚାନ୍ଦବାଲିରୁ ଝିମର୍ ଯୋଗେ କଳିକତା ଯାତ୍ରା କଲେ । ସେତେବେଳେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ କୌଣସି କଲେଜ ନଥିଲା । ତେଣୁ ଏ ଯାବତ୍ କୌଣସି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଲୋକ କଲେଜରେ ପଢ଼ିବାର ଗୌରବ ଅର୍ଜନ କରିନଥିଲେ । ନଅଙ୍କ ଦୁର୍ଭିକ୍ଷରେ ସେତେବେଳେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଗ୍ରାମେ ଗ୍ରାମେ ଗଦା ଗଦା ଶବ ପଡ଼ିବା ବାତାବରଣକୁ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିତ କରୁଥିଲା, ଗ୍ରାମ୍ୟ ଶୁଣାନ ମାନଙ୍କରେ କୁଡ଼ କୁଡ଼ ଅସ୍ଥି ଓ ମାଳ ମାଳ ଖପୁରୀ ଗଦା ହୋଇ ରହିଥିଲା, ସେ ସବୁ ଦେଖି ସେଦିନ ଯୁବକ ଜଣକ ମାତୃଭୂମିର ଦୁର୍ଦ୍ଦଶାରେ ଭାଙ୍ଗି ପଡ଼ିଥିଲେ । ସେ ଥିଲେ କଟକ ଜିଲ୍ଲା ସତ୍ୟଭାମାପୁର ଗ୍ରାମର ଗୋବିନ୍ଦ ବଲ୍ଲଭ ଦାସ । ନଅଙ୍କ ଦୁର୍ଭିକ୍ଷ ବେଳେ ଲକ୍ଷ ଲକ୍ଷ ଲୋକ ଯେତେ ବିକଳରେ

ଅନୁରୂପ ଖାଇ ଅଜାତି ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଲେ ବୋଲି ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ହିନ୍ଦୁ ସମାଜ ବାସନ୍ଦ କଲା । ମାତ୍ର ଶ୍ରୀକ୍ଷ୍ମ ଧର୍ମାବଲମ୍ବୀମାନେ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଆପଣାର କରିନେଲେ । ଏ ସବୁ ଦେଖି ଗୋବିନ୍ଦ ବଲ୍ଲଭଙ୍କର ବିପ୍ଳବୀପ୍ରାଣ କାନ୍ଦି ଉଠିଲା । ସେ ମଧ୍ୟ ପରେ ଶ୍ରୀକ୍ଷ୍ମ ଧର୍ମଗ୍ରହଣ କରିଥିଲେ । ଧର୍ମାନୁକରଣ ପରେ ତାଙ୍କର ନାମ ମଧୁସୂଦନ ହେଲା । କଲିକତାରେ ପାଠ ପଢ଼ି ସେ ଏଫ୍. ଏ, ବି. ଏ ଓ ଏମ୍. ଏ ପାଶ୍ କରି ବିବାହ କଲେ । ବି. ଏଲ୍ ପାଶ୍ କରି କଲିକତାରେ ଓକିଲାତି ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲେ । ମାତ୍ର ତାଙ୍କ ପତ୍ନୀ ବିୟୋଗ ପଡ଼ିବାରୁ ପରେ କଟକ ଫେରି ଆସି ଓକିଲାତି ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲେ । ଶିକ୍ଷା ତଥା ଓକିଲାତି କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ସେ ଥିଲେ ପ୍ରଥମ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ।

୧୮୭୦ ମସିହା ବେଳକୁ ବଙ୍ଗଳା ଶିକ୍ଷାବିତ୍ ମାନେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ବଙ୍ଗଳାର ଏକ ଉପଭାଷା ବୋଲି ଦାବି କଲେ । ବଙ୍ଗଳାଶିକ୍ଷାବିତ୍ କାନୁଲାଇ ଭଟ୍ଟାଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କହିଲେ ” ଉତ୍ତମ୍ ଏକତ୍ର ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଭାଷନୟ ” ଘୁମୁସରବାସୀ (ଭଞ୍ଜନଗର) ଓଡ଼ିଆ ମାନେ ପ୍ରଥମ କରି ପ୍ରତିବାଦ ସଭା କଲେ । ୧୮୭୨ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟାବ୍ଦରେ ଗଞ୍ଜାମରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ହିତବାଦିନୀ ସଭା ଗଠନ କରାଯାଇ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଭାଷୀ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ଗୁଡ଼ିକର ଏକତ୍ରକରଣ ଲାଗି ଦାବୀ ହେଲା । ହାର ତେର ବର୍ଷ ପରେ ଇଂରେଜମାନଙ୍କ କବଳରୁ ଦେଶକୁ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ୧୮୮୫ ମସିହାରେ ଜାତୀୟ କଂଗ୍ରେସ୍ ପ୍ରଦଳ ଗଠନ କରାଗଲା । ତତ୍ପର ବର୍ଷ ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ କଂଗ୍ରେସ୍ ଅଧିବେଶନ କଲିକତା ଠାରେ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠିତ ହେଲା । ଏହି ଅଧିବେଶନରେ ପ୍ରଥମକରି ଜଣେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଶ୍ରୀ ମଧୁସୂଦନ ଦାସ କେନ୍ଦ୍ର କମିଟିର ସଭ୍ୟ ଭାବରେ ମନୋନୀତ ହେଲେ । ସେ ଭାବିଥିଲେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଭାଷୀ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ଗୁଡ଼ିକର ଇକତ୍ରୀକରଣ ଦିଗରେ କଂଗ୍ରେସ୍ ଜରିଆରେ ଦାବି କରାଯାଇ ପାରିବ । ମାତ୍ର ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ଦଶକରେ କଲିକତା ଓ ମାୟାଜ ଠାରେ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠିତ କଂଗ୍ରେସ୍ ଅଧିବେଶନରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପ୍ରଦେଶ ଗଠନ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବଆଗତ କରିବାରେ ମଧୁବାବୁ ବାରମ୍ବାର ଅକୃତକାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହେଲେ । ଏ ଦିଗରେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ବଙ୍ଗଳା, ତାମିଲ ଓ ହିନ୍ଦିଭାଷୀ ନେତୃବୃନ୍ଦ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଅସହଯୋଗ କଲେ । ଫଳରେ କଂଗ୍ରେସ୍ ଛାଡ଼ି ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ନେତୃସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିମାନଙ୍କୁ ଏକତ୍ର କରି ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଉତ୍କଳ ଗଠନ ଲାଗି ଏକ ସାମ୍ବନ୍ଧ ଗଠନ କରିବା ଦିଗରେ ସେ ଚିନ୍ତା କଲେ । ସମ୍ବଲପୁର ଜିଲ୍ଲାକୁ ମଧ୍ୟପ୍ରଦେଶ ଅଧୀନରେ ରଖିବାପରେ ସେହି ଜିଲ୍ଲାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ବଦଳରେ ହିନ୍ଦିକୁ ସରକାରୀ ଭାଷା କରିବାର ଆଦେଶ ଜାରୀ ହେଲା । ଫଳରେ ୧୮୮୫ ମସିହାରେ ସେ ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ ଏହା ବିରୁଦ୍ଧରେ ଆନ୍ଦୋଳନ ହେଲା । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଭାଷୀ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ଗୁଡ଼ିକର ଏକତ୍ରକରଣ ଦିଗରେ ମଧୁବାବୁ ଭିନ୍ନ ଉପାୟ ଚିନ୍ତା କଲେ । କଂଗ୍ରେସ୍ ସହିତ ମିଶି ଇଂରେଜମାନଙ୍କ ବିରୁଦ୍ଧରେ ସ୍ୱର ଉତ୍ତୋଳନ କରିବା ଅପେକ୍ଷା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତିର ପୁନର୍ଗଠନ ଲାଗି ଇଂରେଜମାନଙ୍କ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ଦିଗରେ ସେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟପଛା ଛାଡ଼ି କଲେ । ୧୮୯୭ ମସିହାରେ ସେ ଇଲ୍ଲାହ୍ ଯାଇ ସେଠାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଶିଳ୍ପ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନୀ କଲେ । ଏହି ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନୀ କୁ ବ୍ରିଟିଶ ସରକାରଙ୍କ ଭାରତସଚିବ ହାମିଲଟନ୍ ସାହେବଙ୍କୁ ସେ ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ କରି ତାଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଭାଷୀ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ଗୁଡ଼ିକର ଏକତ୍ରକରଣ ଦାବୀ ଉପସ୍ଥାପିତ କଲେ । ଏଥିସହିତ ସମ୍ବଲପୁରରେ ହିନ୍ଦି ବଦଳରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ କୁରାଜଭାଷା ଭାବରେ ପ୍ରଚଳନ କରିବାକୁ ଦାବୀ ଜଣାଇଲେ । ୧୯୦୧ ମସିହାରେ ରମ୍ଭା ଠାରେ ଏକ ସମ୍ମିଳନୀ ହୋଇ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଭାଷୀ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ଗୁଡ଼ିକର ମିଶ୍ରଣ ଦାବି ହେଲା । ଏବଂ ଅଣଓଡ଼ିଆ ମାନଙ୍କର ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଉପରେ ଆକ୍ରମଣକୁ ନିନ୍ଦା କରାଗଲା । ମଧୁବାବୁ ଭାରତର ବଡ଼ଲାଟଙ୍କୁ ସମ୍ବଲପୁରରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ପ୍ରଚଳନ ପାଇଁ ଟେଲିଗ୍ରାମ କଲେ । ଠିକ୍ ଏହା ପର ବର୍ଷ ବ୍ରହ୍ମପୁର ଠାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତୀୟସମିତି ଗଠନ କରାଗଲା ।

୧୯୦୩ ମସିହାରେ ସମ୍ବଲପୁରରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ପ୍ରଚଳନ କରିବାକୁ ସରକାରୀ ଇସ୍ତାହାର ଜାରୀ ହେଲା । ସେହି ବର୍ଷ ଡିସେମ୍ବର ୩ ତାରିଖରେ ସମଗ୍ର ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାଭାଷୀ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ଗୁଡ଼ିକର ମିଶ୍ରଣ ପାଇଁ ରିସଲ୍‌ଯୋର୍ଣ୍ଣାଲ୍ ଜାରୀ ହେଲା । କଟକର ଇଦ୍‌ଗା ପଡ଼ିଆରେ ମୟୂରଭଞ୍ଜ ମହାରାଜା ଶ୍ରୀରାମଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଭଞ୍ଜଦେଓଙ୍କ ସଭାପତିତ୍ୱରେ ଉତ୍କଳ ସମ୍ମିଳନୀର ପ୍ରଥମ ଅଧିବେଶନ ବସିଲା । ଏହି ସମ୍ମିଳନୀକୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସମସ୍ତ ମାନ୍ୟଗନ୍ୟ ଲୋକମାନେ ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରିତ ହୋଇଥିଲେ । ବିଶେଷ କରି ଗଡ଼ଜାତ ଗୁଡ଼ିକର ରାଜାରାଜୁତାମାନେ ଏହି ସମ୍ମିଳନୀର ମଧ୍ୟ ଆକର୍ଷଣ ଥିଲେ । ଏମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ତାଳଚେର, ଧରାକୋଟ, କନିକା, ସୁରଙ୍ଗୀ, ଆଠଗଡ଼, ଜୟପୁର, ମଞ୍ଜୁଷା, ଆଦି ରାଜ୍ୟର ରାଜାମାନେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଭାଷୀ ଅଞ୍ଚଳଗୁଡ଼ିକର ଆଶୁ ଏକତ୍ରକରଣ ଦାବୀ କଲେ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟର ଉନ୍ନତି ପାଇଁ ”ଉତ୍କଳ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ସମାଜ” ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା କରାଯିବାର ସିଦ୍ଧାନ୍ତ ହେଲା । ଏଥି ପୂର୍ବରୁ ମଧୁବାବୁ ଲଣ୍ଡନରୁ ଫେରି ୧୯୦୦ ମସିହାରେ ଭାରତର ବଡ଼ଲାଟ ଲର୍ଡ୍ କର୍ଜନ୍‌ଙ୍କୁ ଭେଟିଥିଲେ । ଦୀର୍ଘ କାଳଧରି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷୀ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଯେପରିଖଣ୍ଡବିଖଣ୍ଡିତ ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିରହିବା ଫଳରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆମାନେ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବହେଳିତ ଭାବରେ କାଳାତିଯାତ କରୁଛନ୍ତି, ସେ ସବୁ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନା କଲାବେଳେ ତାଙ୍କ ଆଖିରୁ ଧାର ଧାର ଲୁହ ବହୁଥିଲା । ନଅଙ୍କ ଦୁର୍ଭିକ୍ଷର କରୁଣ କାହାଣୀ ଶୁଣି ଲର୍ଡ୍ କର୍ଜନ୍‌ଙ୍କର ଶାସକ ହୃଦୟ ବିଗଳିତ ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଲା । ସେ ଅଭିଭୂତ ହୋଇ ମଧୁବାବୁଙ୍କୁ ନିର୍ଭର ପ୍ରତିଶ୍ରୁତି ଦେଲେ ଯେ ନିଶ୍ଚିତ ଭାବରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ରାଜ୍ୟ ଗଠିତ ହେବ ।

ସେହିବର୍ଷ ଲର୍ଡ୍ କର୍ଜନ୍ କଲିକତାରୁ ଟ୍ରେନ୍ ଯୋଗେ ପୁରୀ ଆସି ସେଠାରୁ କୋଣାର୍କ ଓ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର ଯାତ୍ରା କଲେ । କୋଣାର୍କ ଓ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱରର ରାଜରାଣୀ ମନ୍ଦିର ଦେଖି ସେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସ୍ଥାପତ୍ୟ କଳାର ଭବ୍ୟତା ପ୍ରଶଂସା କଲେ । ମଧୁବାବୁଙ୍କ ଅନୁରୋଧରେ ଏସବୁ ମନ୍ଦିରର ସୁରକ୍ଷା ଲାଗି ପ୍ରତ୍ନତତ୍ତ୍ୱ ବିଭାଗର ପୁନର୍ଗଠନ ହେଲା । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଲୋକେ ଲର୍ଡ୍ କର୍ଜନଙ୍କର ଜେପରି ସ୍ୱାଗତ ସମ୍ବର୍ଦ୍ଧନା କଲେ ତହିଁରେ ସେ ଜଥେଟ୍ଟି ଅଭିଭୂତ ହୋଇଗଲେ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାଭାଷି ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ଗୁଡ଼ିକର ମିଶ୍ରଣ ନୀତି ଘୋଷଣା କରି ରିସଲେ ସରକ୍ଲାର ଜାରୀ ହେଲା । ଏହାର ପ୍ରଥମ ପଦକ୍ଷେପ ସ୍ୱରୂପ ୧୯୦୫ ମସିହାରେ ସମ୍ବଲପୁର ଓ ପଶ୍ଚିମ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସମସ୍ତ ଗଡ଼ଜାତ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଡିଭିଜନ ସହିତ ସାମିଲ ହେଲା ।

୧୯୦୭ ମସିହାରେ ଉତ୍କଳ ଗୌରବ ମଧୁସୂଦନ ପୁନର୍ବାର ବିଲାତ ଗଲେ ଓ ଭାରତ ଶାସନ ସତୀକ୍ଷା ପାଖରେ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପ୍ରଦେଶ ଦାବୀ କଲେ । ଲଣ୍ଡନରେ ଏକ ସାମ୍ବାଦିକ ସମ୍ମିଳନୀରେ ସେ ଅବହେଳିତ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାଭାଷି ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ଗୁଡ଼ିକର ଦୁଃଖ ଦୁର୍ଦ୍ଦଶା ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନା କଲେ । ଫଳରେ ୧୯୧୨ ମସିହାରେ ବିହାର-ଓଡ଼ିଶା-ବଙ୍ଗ ପ୍ରଦେଶ ବିଭାଗିତ ହୋଇ ବିହାର-ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପ୍ରଦେଶ ଗଠିତ ହେଲା ।

୧୯୧୩ ମସିହାରେ କେନ୍ଦ୍ର ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥାପକ ସଭାରେ ସଚିବାନନ୍ଦ ସିହ୍ନାଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଉତ୍କଳ ଗଠନ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଆଗତ ହେଲା । ଠିକ୍ ଏହା ପରବର୍ଷ ଧରାକୋଟ ରାଜା ମଦନମୋହନ ସିଂହଦେଓ ମାନ୍ୟତା ବିଧାନସଭାରେ ଦେଶ ମିଶ୍ରଣ ପ୍ରସଙ୍ଗ ଉପସ୍ଥାପିତ କଲେ । ମହାରାଜା କୃଷ୍ଣଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଗଜପତିଙ୍କ ଆହ୍ୱାନ କ୍ରମେ ୧୯୧୪ ମସିହାରେ ପାରଳାଖେମୁଣ୍ଡି ଠାରେ ଜୟପୁର ମହାରାଜା ବିକ୍ରମଦେବ ବର୍ମାଙ୍କ ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷତାରେ ଉତ୍କଳ ସମ୍ମିଳନୀ ଅଧିବେଶନ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠିତ ହେଲା । ପାରଳା ମହାରାଜା ଉତ୍କଳ ସମ୍ମିଳନୀରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେଲେ । ୧୯୧୭ ମସିହାରେ ମଞ୍ଜେଶୁ ଚେମସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟେର୍ କମିଟି ଭାରତୀୟ ପ୍ରଦେଶ ଗୁଡ଼ିକର ପୁନର୍ଗଠନ ପାଇଁ ସାକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ପ୍ରମାଣ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରୁଥିଲେ । ଏହି କମିଟିର କଲିକତା ଅବସ୍ଥାନ କାଳରେ ମଧୁବାବୁ ଉତ୍କଳସମ୍ମିଳନୀ ପ୍ରତିନିଧିମାନଙ୍କୁ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ନେଇ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ପୁନର୍ଗଠନ ସପକ୍ଷରେ ସାକ୍ଷୀ ଦେବାପାଇଁ କଲିକତା ଗଲେ । ତାଙ୍କରି ପ୍ରରୋଚନାରେ କଲିକତାର ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଶ୍ରମିକମାନେ ଏକ ବିରାଟ ଜନସଭାର ଆୟୋଜନ କରିଥିଲେ । ଫଳରେ ଭାଷାସୂତ୍ରରେ ପ୍ରଦେଶ ଗଠନ ନୀତି ମଞ୍ଜେଶୁ ଚେମସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟେର୍ କମିଟି ଦ୍ୱାରା ଅନୁମୋଦିତ ହେଲା ।

୧୯୨୮ ମସିହାରେ ସାର୍ ଜନ୍ ଆଲ୍‌ସୀ ବୁକ୍ ସାଇମନ୍‌ଙ୍କ ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷତାରେ ଇଂରେଜ୍ ସରକାର ଭାରତରେ ଶାସନ ସଂସ୍କାର ଆଣିବାକୁ ସାଇମନ୍ କମିଶନ୍ ଗଠନ କଲେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏହି କମିଶନ୍‌ରେ କୌଣସି ଭାରତୀୟ ସଭ୍ୟ ସ୍ଥାନ ପାଇନଥିବାରୁ ମାନ୍ୟତା ଠାରେ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠିତ ଜାତୀୟ କଂଗ୍ରେସ୍ ଅଧିବେଶନରେ ଏହାର ବିରୋଧ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ନିଷ୍ପତ୍ତି ହେଲା । ମାତ୍ର ଏହି କମିଶନ୍ ଠାରୁ ମଞ୍ଜେଶୁ ଚେମସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟେର୍ କମିଟି ପରି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷୀ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ଗୁଡ଼ିକର ଏକତ୍ରିକରଣ ଦିଗରେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ମିଳିବାର ଦୃଢ଼ ଆଶା ଉତ୍କଳ ଗୌରବ ମଧୁସୂଦନଙ୍କର ଥିଲା । ଓଡ଼ିଶାର କଂଗ୍ରେସ୍ ନେତାମାନେ ୧୯୨୮ ମସିହା ଫେବୃଆରୀ ୩ ତାରିଖରେ ପ୍ରତିବାଦ ଦିବସ ପାଳନ କଲେ । ମାତ୍ର ମଧୁବାବୁଙ୍କ ଇଚ୍ଛାରେ ବିହାରର ପାର୍ଟନା ଠାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପକ୍ଷରୁ ସାଇମନ୍ କମିଶନ୍‌ଙ୍କୁ ସମ୍ବର୍ଦ୍ଧନା ଦେବାକୁ ସ୍ଥିର ହେଲା । ୧୯୨୮ ମସିହା ଡିସେମ୍ବର ୧୯ ତାରିଖ ଦିନ ସାଇମନ୍‌କମିଶନ୍ ବିରୁଦ୍ଧରେ ପାର୍ଟନା ବନ୍ଦ ହେଲା । ମାତ୍ର ବ୍ରଜସୁନ୍ଦର ଦାସଙ୍କ ନେତୃତ୍ୱରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଲିବରାଲ୍ ଲିଗ୍ ପକ୍ଷରୁ ପାର୍ଟନା ରେଳଷ୍ଟେସନରେ **“Orissa Welcomes Simon Commission”** ପୋଷ୍ଟର୍ ଦେଖାଇ କମିଶନ୍‌ଙ୍କୁ ସମ୍ବର୍ଦ୍ଧନା ଦିଆଗଲା । ବମ୍ବେ ଠାରୁ ପାର୍ଟନା ଯାଏ ସବୁଠାରେ ସାଇମନ୍ କମିଶନ୍ କେବଳ କଳାପତାକା ଦେଖି ଆସିଥିଲେ । ପାର୍ଟନା ଠାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଲିବରାଲ୍ ଲିଗ୍ ପ୍ରତିନିଧିମାନଙ୍କ ସ୍ୱାଗତ ସମ୍ବର୍ଦ୍ଧନା ଦ୍ୱାରା ସେମାନେ କିଛି ପରିମାଣରେ ଆନନ୍ଦିତ ହେଲେ । ସମଗ୍ର ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷୀ ଅଞ୍ଚଳର ଏକତ୍ରିକରଣ କରି ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଗଠନ ସପକ୍ଷରେ ସାକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ଦେଇ ସାଇମନ୍ କମିଶନ୍ ହାତରେ ବ୍ରଜବାବୁ ସ୍ୱାଗତପତ୍ର ଦେଲେ । ଫଳରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସମସ୍ୟା ସମ୍ପର୍କରେ ବିଷଦ ଅନୁସନ୍ଧାନ କରିବାକୁ ମିଷ୍ଟର୍ ଅଟ୍‌ଲିଙ୍କ ନେତୃତ୍ୱରେ ଏକ ସର୍ବ କମିଟି ଗଠିତ ହେଲା । ୧୯୩୦ ମସିହା ସେପ୍ଟେମ୍ବର ୨୦ ତାରିଖ ଦିନ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପ୍ରଦେଶ ଗଠନ ସପକ୍ଷରେ ଅଟ୍‌ଲି ସର୍ବକମିଟି ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଦେଲେ । ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବିତ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସୀମା ନିର୍ଦ୍ଧାରଣ ପାଇଁ ୧୯୩୧ ମସିହା ସେପ୍ଟେମ୍ବର ୧୮ ତାରିଖରେ ସାର୍ ଏସ୍ ଓଡୋନେଲ୍‌ଙ୍କ ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷତାରେ ଭାରତସରକାର ଏକ କମିଟି ନିଯୁକ୍ତ କଲେ । ଏହି କମିଟି ଆଗରେ ସାକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ଦେବା ପାଇଁ ମଧୁବାବୁଙ୍କ ପ୍ରେରଣାରେ ଉତ୍କଳ ଯୁନିୟନ୍ କମିଟି ଗଠିତ ହେଲା । ସିଂହଭୂମ୍ ଜିଲ୍ଲାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ମାନଙ୍କ ପକ୍ଷରୁ ଦୃଢ଼ ସଂଗଠନ ଗଢିବା ପାଇଁ ବୃନ୍ଦାବନରେ ମଧୁବାବୁ ଜାମ୍‌ସେଦପୁର ଯାଇ ସେଠାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଆସୋସିଏସନ୍ ଗଠନ କଲେ । ତଥାପି ବିହାରି କଂଗ୍ରେସ ନେତାମାନଙ୍କର ପ୍ରଭାବ ତୁଳନାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା କଂଗ୍ରେସ ନେତା ମାନଙ୍କର

ଦୟନୀୟ ଅସମତା ଓ ହୀନମନ୍ୟତା କେବଳ ସତେଇକଳା ଖରୁସୁଆଁକୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ସମଗ୍ର ସିଂହଭୂମି ଜିଲ୍ଲାକୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ମିଶାଇବା ସପକ୍ଷରେ ଜନମତ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିପାରିଲା ନାହିଁ ।

ପାରଳା ମହାରାଜା ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଗଜପତି ବିଲାତ ଯାଇ ଗୋଲ୍ଡେନ୍‌ବୁଲ୍ ବୈଠକରେ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପ୍ରଦେଶ ଦାବୀ ଉପସ୍ଥାପନ କଲେ । ୧୯୩୩ ମସିହାରେ ବ୍ରହ୍ମପୁରଠାରେ ଉତ୍କଳ ସମିଳନୀ ଅଧିବେଶନ ହେଲା । ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଗଜପତି ଏହି ଅଧିବେଶନରେ ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷତା କଲେ । ଉତ୍କଳ ଗୌରବ ମଧୁସୂଦନ ଦାସ ୧୯୩୩ ମସିହା ମାର୍ଚ୍ଚ ୧୭ ତାରିଖ ଦିନ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତି ପ୍ରତି ଅନ୍ତିମ ଭୀଷଣ ଦେଇ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଗଠନ ହେଲା ବୋଲି ଘୋଷଣା କଲେ , ତାଙ୍କରି ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶରେ ପାରଳା ମହାରାଜା ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଗଜପତି ପୁଣି ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟବାର ବିଲାତ ଯାଇ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଆତମନିଷ୍ଠେ ଚିତ୍ତ କମିଟିରେ ସାକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ଦେଇ ଜୟପୁର ଓ ପାରଳାଖେମୁଣ୍ଡି ରାଜ୍ୟକୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସହିତ ମିଶାଇ ଦେବାକୁ ଅନୁରୋଧ କଲେ । ପରିଶେଷରେ ୧୯୩୬ ମସିହା ମାର୍ଚ୍ଚ ମାସରେ ବ୍ରିଟିଶ୍ ପାର୍ଲିମେଣ୍ଟରେ ଭାରତ ସରକାରଙ୍କ ଆଦେଶ ରୂପାନ୍ତ ହୋଇ କନ୍ଠିତ୍ୟୁସନ୍ ଅଫ୍ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଗୃହୀତ ହେଲା , ତଦନୁଯାୟୀ ସେହିବର୍ଷ ଏପ୍ରିଲ୍ ପହିଲା ଦିନ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଗଠିତ ହେଲା , ମାତ୍ର ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ପରିସୀମା ବାହାରେ ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧାଧିକ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ରହିଗଲେ ।

ସିଂହଭୂମି, ମାନଭୂମି, ମେଦିନପୁର, ବସ୍ତର, କଖାଇ, ଇଛାପୁରମ୍, ମଞ୍ଜୁଷା, ଚିକିଳି, ଜାଳନ୍ତର, ବିଜୟନଗରମ୍, ଆଦି ବହୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାଭାଷୀ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବାହାରେ ରହିଗଲା । ସେବୁ ଅଞ୍ଚଳର ଲକ୍ଷ ଲକ୍ଷ ଓଡ଼ିଆ କ୍ରମଶଃ ସିଂପୁକ୍ତ ଅଞ୍ଚଳମାନଙ୍କର ମୁଖ୍ୟ ଭାଷାକୁ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିନେଇ ମାତୃଭାଷା ଓଡ଼ିଆକୁ ଜଳାଞ୍ଜଳି ଦେଲେଣି । କାରଣ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବୋଲି ନିଜକୁ ପରିଚୟ ଦେଲେ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଅନେକ ଦୂରବସ୍ଥା ଭୋଗ କରିବାକୁ ହେଉଛି । ଭୋକ ଉପାସରେ ଦିନ ବିତୁଛି । ତହିଁରେ ପୁଣି ପଡ଼ୋଶୀମାନଙ୍କର ସମାଲୋଚନା ବା ଗଞ୍ଜାରି ଭୟ ।

ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ହୋଇ ରହିଲେ, ସେମାନେ ମଧ୍ୟ ମାତୃଭାଷାକୁ ନ୍ୟୁନ ମନେ କରିବା ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲେଣି । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ରାଗିଲେ ହିଁ କୁହନ୍ତି । ଆଉ ମର୍ଯ୍ୟାଦା ସମ୍ମାନ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଭାବରେ ଇଂରାଜି କହନ୍ତି । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବିଧାୟକ ଓ ସାଂସଦମାନେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଛାଡ଼ି ଇଂରାଜି କହିବାକୁ ଆଭିଜାତ୍ୟର ସୂଚନା ବୋଲି ଭାବୁଛନ୍ତି । ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ପ୍ରତି ସହରରେ ଇଂରାଜି ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ମାନ ଛତୁ ଫୁଟିଲା ପରି ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଟେକିଲେଣି । ପିଲାଏ ଆଉ ଓଡ଼ିଆ କହିପାରୁ ନାହାନ୍ତି । ବିବାହ, ବ୍ରତ ବା ଆନୁଷ୍ଠାନିକ ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣପତ୍ର ମାନ ଇଂରାଜିରେ ଲେଖା ହେଉଛି । ଦୂରଦର୍ଶନରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପିଲାଏ କେବଳ ହିଁ ବା ଇଂରାଜି କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ ଦେଖୁଛନ୍ତି । ଯାହା ମନେ ହେଉଛି, ଆସନ୍ତା ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ଭିତରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତି ଲୋପ ପାଇଯିବ । ମୃତ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ହୁଏତ କିଛି କାଳ ପାଇଁ କାଠ ପଥର ଖୋଦେଇ ଭିତରେ ଇତିହାସର ମୂକସାକ୍ଷୀ ଭାବରେ ଚିପି ରହିପାରେ ।

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LANGUAGES OF CORRUPTION

BISHNU MOHAPATRA

The Burden of Amnesia:

The reporting of corruption in our time has lost its shock value. Its impact, if any, on popular consciousness is at best transitory. The memories and experiences of corruption in India are numerous but they remain fragmented. Every event of corruption, followed by enquiry, interrogation, witnesses, findings, reports, court-cases and so on remains alive in the mind of people for a while and then dissolves into an abyss of amnesia. Besides, the time taken between the detection of a corrupt practice and the final establishment of the rule of law is usually so long that it is difficult to encompass it within a narrative structure. For instance, how many of us can say what came of the commissions of enquiry instituted to look into the excesses of the Emergency years? How many Indian citizens know what was the fate of CBI enquiries carried out during the last two decades? The 'time' factor combined with the fragmentation of experience tends to make the incidents of corruption fade from collective memory or forces them to appear as mere disjointed events. A history of corruption in postcolonial India is yet to be written from this perspective. For the narrative of corruption in India to acquire clarity and coherence it is necessary that we jettison the intellectual and political strategies that make the citizens overlook the violation of the rule of law. In this context, the questions of meanings and languages of corruption assume crucial significance. What are the languages of corruption? Underlying the question is the idea that our discourses on corruption are constitutive of the languages we use. The distinctness of languages here does not refer to the style of representation but primarily to the organisation/placement of several key elements, which construct the frame or the discourse for comprehending the phenomenon of corruption. The notions of language and articulation are being used here in an encompassing sense. This essay seeks to explore different ways of understanding of corruption. However, this is not an abstract philosophical exercise nor does it offer a sociological/ political explanation of corruption in India. Drawing upon literary sources the essay focuses on the different discourses and narrative structures centred on the theme of corruption. An attempt will also be made here to examine their internal coherence, and the strengths and weaknesses of articulation'. The objective of the essay is to throw light on the intertwined themes of corruption and moral values.

Corruption, Disorder, and Eschatology:

Etymologically 'corruption' (in English as well as in its French and Latin variants) possesses three sets of meanings: the first is related to the sense of disintegration, putrefaction; the second is used in the sense of moral

depravity, degeneration, perversion of integrity, and finally it denotes a fall or a deviation from a state of purity². In Oriya, the term '*Durniti*' is often used to describe corruption and particularly in the contemporary period it refers to practices related to bribery³ and unlawful grant of favour. Other terms such as *Aniti* and *Kuniti* are also used to refer to illegal practices and immoral conduct. The root word *Niti*⁴, from which all the three words above are derived, has a strong moral resonance. Corruption is an essential part of the moral vocabulary of all communities. However, the sense in which it is connected to our moral universe is deeply problematic and controversial. According to one point of view, corruption is primarily an act of violation, a deviation from an order, but the languages used to describe the violation and deviation vary a great deal from one discourse to another. For example, in cases such as Bofors, Hawala, Fodder Scam, St. Kitts and so on, the accent of our understanding is heavily legal in character and the judiciary expresses outrage because there are alleged violations of laws committed by the people involved. However, even in such legalistic understanding of corruption, the broader moral dimension is not entirely absent. Let us consider the statement made by the Judge V .B. Gupta while acquitting Madan Lal Khurana in the Jain Hawala case: "Corruption and nepotism are rampant in our society of today, more particularly at the higher level - at the seat of power - and it is a grave concern [that] persons highly placed in political life and holding office of great responsibility should indulge in any illegal activity... Corruption has eaten into the nation's moral fibre and rectifying this should be top priority and a beginning has to be made (emphasis mine)⁵."

The above judgement-speech displays two distinct but related aspects: one deals with the substance of corruption, and the other focuses on its impact on the moral order of the society. Here the preoccupation of an investigator and that of a moralist are placed side by side. In the judicial discourse, corruption's defining feature is its illegality. But corruption can also be seen as a grave disorder, a moral breakdown and finally an apocalypse and the harbinger of a new era. A language that is significantly different from that of the legal discourses with which we are familiar largely constitutes such a broader understanding of corruption. Often the popular notion of corruption, quite surprisingly, has much in common with this broader discourse whose language and authority can be traced to the language of *Dharma* and Apocalypse. For an exposition of this broader discourse, let me turn to the rich tradition of *Malika / Kali-Yug* literature in the Oriya language whose main focus is on corruption, disorder, and regeneration.

Although there seems to be a long history of writings on the *Kali-Yug* theme in the Indian epic literature (the *Mahabharata* for instance), in Orissa this theme achieved immense popularity in the 15th/16th centuries⁶. Poets during the period recreated this old theme for conveying their messages to the people. Some interpreters detect in these writings (mostly written by the authors from the lower castes) the voices of protest against the hierarchical caste-order. Others discovered in them simply a vivid image of the future thereby recognising the clairvoyance of the saint-poets of the time. To some others, the prophetic visions of the saints were meant to spread spirituality at a time of momentous social changes. Evaluation of these interpretations is beyond the scope of this essay. My objective is simply to explore the problematic link between the narrative of corruption and the eschatological visions in the *Malika / Kali-Yug* literature.

Every *Yug*/era has certain distinguishing characteristics, and as time passes its end is played out as a battle between the evil and the good. In every era there are identifiable characters that embody evil, and their unjust acts bring the God in his incarnated form to restore the moral equilibrium. For instance, the battle of *Mahabharata* and the incarnation of *Krishna* took place in *Dwapar Yug* and the fight between Ram and Ravan occurred in the *Treta Yug*. In all these eras, violation of norms and principles did of course take place but it is only in *Kali-Yug* that the violation is seen to be all pervasive. This is the era where all the established institutions of society tend to crumble, and the metaphor used to describe this is that of the world turned upside-down. The social dislocation, the perversion of social roles and the decay of personal morality (most importantly the sexual mores) constitute both the symbol and the substance of corruption. Very rarely do words such as *Aniti* or *Durniti* appear directly in apocalyptic literature; nevertheless, the portrayal of corruption possesses great depth, power and vividness. Disciples will defy their teachers, the wives their husbands, the *Shudras* will disrespect the *Brahmins*, and they in turn will disregard their duties, the Kings will ignore the welfare of their subjects and so on: these are the sites as well as the evidences of corruption in the *Kali-Yug* literature. The collapse of the social order and the invasion of immorality set the stage for the final apocalypse, which is the harbinger of the new era, the *Satya Yug*.

How is corruption narrativised in *Malika*? What are the sources of corruption as well as morality? Corruption, as the *Kali-Yug* literature suggests, stems from people's wrong conduct- wrong to the extent that the established social customs and rules do not approve them. These rules are not necessarily about the spiritual domain but they concern the sphere of diet, dress and travel. Here are two examples - one from a sixteenth-century text and the other from late nineteenth century - on this theme:

" (In the *Kali-Yug*) the Brahmins will sell off their *Vedas*. Cows will devour human excreta. Men will copulate with

cows, and housemaids will take the place of the ladies of the house. Caste distinctions will disappear, and kings will tyrannise over their subjects by levying on them oppressive taxes. Young women will choose husbands for themselves. Brothers will make love to their sisters, and the children will beat their parents."⁷

"People use their pockets for carrying pan (betel leaves) and think nothing of touching infidels. They do not take off their shoes while drinking water, but these deviations are only to be expected in *Kali-Yug*. They even eat *palau* (rice cooked with meat) and do not bother to take off their shirts. They take a fancy to alien vegetables such as cauliflower, carrot, beetroot, and eat off glass plates. They do not feel ashamed of putting on English clothes. While they are ready to give alms to the blind and the crippled, they despise and attack the Brahmins. They even take their meals while travelling in ferries and trains. They like smoking tobacco. All these deviations are to be expected in *Kali-Yug*."⁸

The above passages, written during two periods, display anxieties that emerge from a series of violations. What are these violations? How do they become the objects of moral disapproval? The underlying idea is that there is a natural cosmic / social order and a natural hierarchy, and corruption enters the scene once the order is tampered with or the hierarchy challenged through 'deviant' behaviour. This is central to all *Malika* or *Kali-Yug* literature. Outside the notion of such a cosmic/ social order corruption loses its conceptual correlates, and the moral framework disintegrates. It is true that the ideal social order the *Malika* alludes to is not a perfect world; it becomes clear as one looks at the chief sources of corruption: the women and the untouchables. Still by naturalising corruption and weaving it with the characteristics of the *Yug* a single moral standpoint is fashioned and defended. Corruption threatens such a point of view and disrupts the social order. This is a theme which crops up in varied forms later in different discourses on corruption. The emphasis falls on the functional roles whose disruption signifies or creates corruption in society. Despite the nightmarish vision, which it projects, the *Kali-Yug* literature finally offers hope and the possibility of regeneration. Sometime these texts read like a divine thought-experiment, imagining a society bereft of values and without any anchorage. Corruption here is internal, menacingly threatening yet is subdued in the end; its sway is checked, and a new era begins with the establishment of *Dharma*. The idea of a clean break coupled with the idea of the conquest of evil makes corruption such a recurrent motif in this discourse. From whose vantagepoint the world is seen to be turning? Whose perspective is this by which a corrupt world is transformed into its opposite? Is it possible to imagine *Kali-Yug* without the idea of a divine creator? Is it possible to reach a secularised conception of apocalypse? If the answer is yes, then how would the idea of corruption feature in this?

Corruption and Everyday life:

I have sketched above what I consider a significant discourse regarding corruption and the moral order. However, there are perceptible shifts in the portrayal and conception of corruption over the last two centuries. With changes in the realm of society (in the spheres of politics, economy and culture) the moral vocabulary also underwent transformation. As a result, the God's-eye view or divine vantage point, which was so central to the idea of corruption in the *Kali -Yug* literature, became deeply problematic. In the place of one and only framework and language, there emerged several competing perspectives which conditioned our evaluative stance vis-à-vis the world. Now the yardsticks by which the human actions are judged to be corrupt became a matter of debate too. This was no mean transformation. However this did not imply that in the absence God everything was permitted. It made humans realise that the foundation, which was invoked or thought to exist in order to justify their ethical evaluation, is indeed fragile. The idea that we make our own yardsticks, construct our own measures began to take hold. This inevitably made our moral world a domain of dialogue and disputes resulting in the emergence of alternate discourses on corruption. With no hope for the coming of *Satya Yug* (there were of course secularised versions of it in our times), it seemed as if the world is stuck with corruption. The conception of society as predominantly a *modus vivendi*, the idea of compromise or accommodation came to characterise the relationship between everyday life and corruption. The objective then became not the complete rejection of corruption but tolerating it within reasonable limits. Negotiating a corrupt world then becomes an important challenge for the human beings. Thus the moral framework and actions got further complicated. The *Malika's* focus on corruption, as pointed out earlier, is extremely general. But, with the rise of the novel towards the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Indian languages, the narrative of corruption acquired concreteness and as a consequence effected several changes in the ways of perceiving this phenomenon. The novelists' penchant for specificity and their subtle handling of characters provide us with compelling narratives in which the description of corruption and its evaluation become inseparable. Before I take up Fakir Mohan Senapati's *Mamu* (The Maternal Uncle) Gopinath Mohanty's *Danapani* (The Survivor) for analysis, a few statements regarding the contexts are in order. No discourse on corruption in this century can be adequately understood without the mediation of colonialism. Colonial subjugation forced intellectuals in India to look for the reasons for their bondage. Such a search led them to reflect on their differences with and deviations from their colonial masters. British conquest of India was accounted for in terms of the corruption that devitalised precolonial society. Corruption is used here in the sense of deviations from traditional ways. These

deviations coupled with the material superiority of the British were adduced as the reasons for the advent of colonial rule. The rise of nationalist thought drew attention to the negative impact of colonialism on India's economy. Gopinath Mohanty's description of this impact in *Danapani* is quite vivid and full of irony: "Once it was the white man's burden, which he carried into dark wilderness, bringing light; jungles were cut down to accommodate the dazzling white edifice of civilisation; the drowsy, sluggish earth woke up, startled, yawned, stretched its limbs, and commenced its crazy dance, Shiva's dance of destruction."⁹

However, the impact of colonialism was not confined to the economic sphere alone. The growth of institutions, particularly the bureaucracy, brought about many transformations in the public domain of Indian society. The bureaucracy offered to the few Indians who were part of it cash, a modicum of power and a semblance of status. This also was the world of a new kind of corruption and estrangement, which several fictions of the colonial period vividly depicted. The nationalist discourse emphasised the need to protect people's inner life from the corruption of the outer world. The tension between the two is central to the new understanding of corruption. Now let us turn to the texts. Fakir Mohan's *Mamu* was published in 1913. The story of the novel is set in the nineteenth-century Orissa undergoing rapid transformation during colonial rule. Senapati who was a schoolteacher and later a *Dewan* of the princely states, had a close association with the bureaucracy created by the British for the extraction of resources and smooth functioning of the regime. *Mamu* vividly captures this changing milieu and within it locates the *problematic* of his novel. More than a network of organisations, bureaucracy here represents as well as embodies the new values that were engendered and privileged by the colonial ideology. An unbridled individualism and an atomised self constitute the core of this ideology. This should not be confused with the rise of the autonomous individual, a free legislator of values, around whom the idea of the modernity in the west is centred. In Senapati's novel, it is 'colonial modernity', not modernity per se which is the object of evaluation and satire

Mamu opens with the following couplet: "That home is a heaven where people are bound by eternal love and affection".¹⁰ This holds out the vision of a harmonious whole. What unfolds in the chapters that follow is the drama of the systematic negation of this vision. Natabara, the maternal uncle and the protagonist of the novel, is the destroyer of the values central to this moral order. As the Najir in the Cuttack collectorate, he is driven by an intense desire to quickly become wealthy and powerful. In order to achieve his goal, he cheats his nephew, his sister and an entire village community. In pursuit of his selfish ends, he also abuses his official position. This, of course, is an instance of corruption. But a graver corruption consists in his wicked thoughts and his moral bankruptcy. *Senapati* describes the degeneration of values in moral terms. Some of the chapters towards the end of the novel have the following morally resonant titles:

'The Consequences of the Sin', 'The Beginning of Repentance' and 'The Judgement'. The words such as betrayal of trust (*pratarana*), the evil deeds (*papa*), repentance (*prayaschita*) lend depth and poignancy to the moral landscape of the novel. There is no need for a divine agency, or a given order to authenticate Senapati's moral universe; its legitimacy derives from its approval from the heart of the community as well as from the individuals' conscience. The imbrication of these two makes this discourse on corruption different from the one articulated by *Malika*.

Why did Natabara become corrupt? What led him to oppress the tenants of his sister's estate? Why did he cheat his own nephew, Naru? Fakir Mohan provides us with a social context of corruption. But he should not be understood as advocating social determinism of behaviour and thought. *Mamu* ends with Natabara bitterly repenting his misdeeds. More than the judgement of the court which indicts him, it is the verdict of his own conscience which forms the true denouement of the novel. Underlying this possibility of self-correction lies a profound faith in the essential goodness of human beings. All the negative characters in Fakir Mohan's novels finally exhume the buried conscience and employ it to come to terms with their past misdeeds/corruption.

This view of human nature illuminates the link between corruption and character. It is the weakness of character which makes people corrupt. A new way of seeing corruption and corrupt characters is evident here. The emphasis on the combination of 'weakness of will' with a historically specific social context in Fakir Mohan's understanding of corruption makes his discourse truly modern.

Gopinath Mohanty's *Danapani* (1955) is primarily about compromise in everyday life. Balidatta, the central character of the novel works as a clerk in private trading company owned by the British in a small town in Orissa. The story charts his rise from a humble position to the rank of an officer. Like Natabara, Balidatta is also driven by the idea of success. But whereas Natabara's ambition to own the estate of his sister by fraud is a tangible one, Balidatta's is an obsession, a way of life and a daily longing, a never-ending process. This intense drive, the strong desire to move up the social ladder without any regard for means make *Danapani* a story of subterranean corruption that has come to be an intimate part of the modern life. More importantly for my purpose it is a story which quite poignantly demonstrates the invasion of corruption into the intimate spheres of life.

Danapani begins with Balidatta trudging through the swineherd's village searching for pig-manure for the rose garden of the *sahib* of his company. Through sycophancy and calculated servility he achieves rapid promotion, promotion that is for him the sole measure of success. Success for him is so important that he does not hesitate to use even his wife as an instrument for achieving his end. In self-justification he argues:

"Our scriptures say the wife is the *shahadharmini* - the partner in *dharma*. Now what is *dharma*? One's profession! But your *dharma* and mine never seem to meet! Just look at all the other company wives: how smart they are! They know exactly what to say in the club: the right word can mean instant promotion for the husband!"¹¹

With the passage of time his wife Sarojini metamorphoses into the person her husband Balidatta always wanted her to be. But this 'desirable' change is brought about at a terrible price: even the most intimate aspects of family life are now clouded by the outer world of obsessive ambition and avarice. As the narrative draws to a close, Balidatta returns to head the office in the old town where he had once his career as a humble clerk. His loss of dignity and lack of control over his own family life parallel his achievement of a reasonable mastery in his professional life.

Compromise in everyday life remains central to Mohanty's novel. Although one hears in it occasional rumblings of inner voices, the central character of the novel fails to escape the encircling web of corruption. The author's disapproval of this world makes itself felt in his powerful use of irony. The title of the novel *Danapani* - a combination of two words: *dana*, which means a morsel of food, and *pani*, which means water - refers to the bare subsistence, required to maintaining life. Its repeated use in the narrative is as much a pointer to the basic needs that govern life as to the immoral acts that people do in order to obtain it. *Danapani* is thus wrenched away from its life-affirming association to signify the immoralities of actions performed in its name. From Balidatta's perspective, fulfilment of insatiable ambition is equated with bare survival, and corruption is a natural feature of the world. Take for instance the ways he justifies his own corrupt practices: "Look at the ant, carrying grain to its nest. Does it ask whom the grain belongs to? Then why should we? And the company what is it but a machine for plunder?"¹² If *Malika* regards corruption as a transient phenomenon, *Danapani* presents a radically different picture: corrupt people might disappear but corruption does not. Whereas *Malika* considers corruption as the disrupter of a naturally ordered world, Mohanty's novel sees it as its natural constituent. Numerous Balidattas confer on corruption the qualities of natural instinct and like "blind termites burrow this way or that under the earth."¹³ In other words the natural world is sustained by everyday corruption.

Although the endings of *Danapani* and *Mamu* are radically dissimilar - justice in the end does not overtake Balidatta, unlike Natabara, nor is he afflicted by feelings of remorse - the two novels complement each other in several ways. Both invoke a moral order, which throws the problem of corruption into sharp relief, an order, which is qualitatively different from the one conveyed by the *Kali-Yug* literature. For Fakir Mohan and Gopinath there is no given normative order which could claim the unquestioning allegiance of individuals; for they are under an obligation to create their scales of evaluation. Together, the two novels draw our attention to two kinds of corruption: one that is episodic in nature and the other, which slowly and imperceptibly corrodes

the fabric of society and social relationships. They both clearly highlight the weakness of will as well as character of the individuals and at the same time view them in the social contexts of their time. It is the close scrutiny of individual lives, which lends their narratives density of texture and a special poignancy, which one misses in a generalised image of decay and disorder in the *Kali-Yug* literature.

'Eating with two hands':

To conclude, let me narrate an anecdote. During a bus journey I once chanced to overhear a sharp remark made by a passenger to his friend, vividly sketching a corrupt man: "X eats with both his hands". Here the act of taking bribes is visualised in terms of the metaphor of over-eating, and eating with two hands signifies the enormity and the ugliness of the act of corruption. Central to this gastronomic metaphor are the ideas of greed, appropriating something which is not one's own, and unnatural appetite. From a cultural vantagepoint, eating is usually associated with life-giving qualities such as nourishment, growth, warmth, hospitality, and togetherness. Corruption represents a sharp negation of all these, and the metaphor of eating associated with it implies 'eating away' and 'eating into' the vitals of a community. Not surprisingly, therefore, in Oriya, the bribe-taker is often referred to as a 'devourer' (*Khau*). Thus, in the moral vocabulary of contemporary popular culture, the drama of corruption involves the predatory self-seeking to undermine the moral foundations of the collective.

¹ I am sure that there are many ways of understanding 'corruption' in our society. At a conceptual level many an interpretations are possible. However, I believe a better conceptual understanding is possible when we tend to look at the ways in which the concept of or discourses regarding corruption are used over a period of time. 'Corruption' is not a neat concept like 'justice' and 'liberty' hence my use of the expression concept is rather loose.

² *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, vol.1, Guild Publishing, 1983, p. 431-432. The first meaning is by and large out of use.

³ *Utkocha* is the word for bribe in Oriya. But the act of taking bribes is included within the rubric of corrupt practices (*Durniti*)

⁴ Gopal Chandra Praharaj, *Purnachandra Oriya Bhasakosa*, vol. 1 (1931) and vol.4 (1934). Till today this is the most comprehensive dictionary in Oriya language.

The root word *Niti* has seventeen usages covering a wide range of meanings. Rules and right conduct seem to be the dominant meaning (thirteen out of seventeen usages relate to this). However, the old association of corruption (as derived from French and Latin) with disintegration, breakdown does not feature in Oriya language.

⁵ *The Times of India*, Delhi, May 16, 1997, p.1.

⁶ The writings of *Achyutananda*, *Yosabanta*, *Jagannath*, *Balaram* and *Sisu Ananta* (popularly known as *Panchasakha* or five friends) are significant for our purpose. Even later, the saint-poet *Bhima Bhoi* used this theme creatively for the purpose of critiquing the Orissan society. Quotations from these texts are taken from the fragments found in Ratnakar Sahu, *Malika*, (revised edition), Cuttack: 1995. The author has given excerpts from the *Malikas* of seventeen poets covering a span of four centuries, beginning from the age of *Panchasakha* [16th century]. For a broader understanding of the *Panchasakha's* period see Basanta Kumar Mallik's Ph. D. dissertation, "Social Protest and Popular Movement in Medieval Orissa (1450-1600), Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, 1992.

⁷ Jagannath Das's *Bhakti Chandrika* in Ratnakar Sahu, *Malika*, Cuttack: 1995, p. 9.

⁸ This is a short extract from a long poem titled *Kali Bhagabata*, published in the newspaper *Sambalpur Hitaishini* (Oriya), 14 August, 1889. For the sake of convenience, I have rendered the translation in prose form. It is important to detect the 'real presence' of the *Malika* literature in this poetry.

⁹ Gopinath Mohanty, *Danapani* (The Survivor), Translated by Bikram K. Das, Madras, 1996, p.168.

¹⁰ *Mamu*, *Fakirmohan Granthabali* (The Collected Works of Fakir Mohan), vol.2, Cuttack, 1963 (second edn.), p.121.

¹¹ *Danapani*, pp.60-61.

¹² P. 122.

¹³ P. 154.

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ଶୈଳବାଳା ମହାପାତ୍ର

ଶିଶୁର ମନସ୍ତତ୍ତ୍ୱକୁ ଅନୁଧ୍ୟାନ କରି ନିଜର ପରିବେଶ ସହିତ ତାକୁ ସଂଗତ କରିବାସହ ତାର ଶୃଙ୍ଖଳିତ ଜୀବନଯାପନ ପାଇଁ ପଥପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନକରି ବଞ୍ଚ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିମାନେ ସରଳଭାଷାରେ ତା' ପାଇଁ ଯେଉଁ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ରଚନା କରନ୍ତି, ତାହାହିଁ ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟ । ଅନୁଭୂତି ସମ୍ପନ୍ନ ସାହିତ୍ୟିକ ମାନଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ସୃଷ୍ଟି ଏହି ପ୍ରକାର ସାହିତ୍ୟ ତାର କୋମଳ ମନରୁ ବୃଥା ନୈରାଶ୍ୟଭାବ ଦୂର କରିଥାଏ ଏବଂ ତା ଜୀବନକୁ ସରସ, ସୁନ୍ଦର କରିଥାଏ । ଏହାର ପରିସର ଖୁବ୍ ବ୍ୟାପକ । ଶିଶୁକୁ କର୍ମଚଞ୍ଚଳ, ପୃଥିବୀର ବୈଚିତ୍ର୍ୟପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ସଂସାର, ସାହାସୀ, ଆତ୍ମବିଶ୍ୱାସୀ, କୁସଂସାର ବିରୋଧୀ, ଅନ୍ଧବିଶ୍ୱାସମୁକ୍ତ, ପ୍ରାକୃତିକ ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟପ୍ରେମୀ, ଜୀବଜନ୍ତୁଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧାଳୁ, ଦେଶପ୍ରେମୀ, ପରୋପକାରୀ, ମାନବିକ ସଦ୍‌ଗୁଣସମ୍ପନ୍ନ, ଇଶ୍ୱରତଥା ଗୁରୁଜନଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ଅନୁଗତ ହେବାପାଇଁ ଶିକ୍ଷାଦେବା ହେଉଛି ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟର ମୂଳ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ।

ଆଜିକୁ ଶହେବର୍ଷରୁ ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ୱହେବ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ନିରୋଳା ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟର ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହୋଇ ନଥିଲା । ୧୮୭୬ ମସିହା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ମୌଖିକ ସାହିତ୍ୟର ଯୁଗ ଥିଲା । ତାଳ ପତ୍ର ପୋଥିରେ ଚଉତିଶା, ବାରମାସୀ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଲେଖା ଯାଉଥିଲା । ଏହାକୁ ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟ କୁହା ଯାଇପାରେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ରାମାୟଣ, ମହାଭାରତ, ଭାଗବତ, ଛାନ୍ଦ, ମନବୋଧ ଚଉତିଶା, କୋଇଲି ଓ ଗୋପୀ ଭାଷା ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ପିଲାମାନେ ପଢୁଥିଲେ । ତା ଛଡ଼ା ଆଇ ଜେଜେମାଆଙ୍କଠାରୁ ବାଘମାମୁଁ, ବୁଢ଼ୀ ଅସୁରଣୀ, ବାରହାତ ଖଣ୍ଡ ଓ କଲୁରିବେଣ୍ଟ କଥା ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଶୁଣି ଆନନ୍ଦିତ ହେଉଥିଲେ । ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟକୁ ଯିବାପୂର୍ବରୁ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣମାଳା ଓ ସହଜ ଗଣନା ଶିଖିବା ପାଇଁ ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟ ରଚନା ହୋଇଥିଲା । ସେତେବେଳେ ଖେଳଗୀତ, ନାନାବାୟା ଗୀତ, ଡଗଡ଼ମାଳି ଓ ବିଭିନ୍ନ କାହାଣୀ ଥିଲା ପ୍ରଧାନ । ମୌଖିକ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଯୁଗରେ ଅସଂଖ୍ୟ ଶିଶୁ ସଂଗୀତ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ଥିଲା । ଯାହାକୁ ଆମେ ଆଜି 'ଲୋକସାହିତ୍ୟ' ବୋଲି କହୁଛୁ । ଶିଶୁକୁ ନିରାପତ୍ତା ଦେବାପାଇଁ ପ୍ରତିଶ୍ରୁତିପୂର୍ବକ ସଂଗୀତ ପରିବାରର ସଦସ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କ ମୁଖରେ ଶୁଣାଯାଉଥିଲା । ସେହିପରି 'ଶିଶୁ ସଂଗୀତ' ଯେଉଁ କେତେଜଣ ସାଇତି ରଖିବାକୁ ଭାବିଥିଲେ, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ପଲ୍ଲୀକବି ନନ୍ଦକିଶୋର ବଳ, ଚକ୍ରଧର ମହାପାତ୍ର, ଲୋକରତ୍ନ ଡକ୍ଟର କୁଞ୍ଜବିହାରୀଙ୍କ ନାମ ସ୍ମୃତିପଟରୁ ପୋଛି ହେବ ନାହିଁ । ଶିଶୁ ସଂଗୀତ ଭିତରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଉପାନ୍ତ ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ ଗୀତରେ, ଅର୍ଥହୀନ ଗୀତ ରେ (nonsense rhymes) ମଧ୍ୟ ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟର ଭାଷା ଅଛି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏଥିରେ ମାଧୁର୍ଯ୍ୟ ନଥିଲେ, ଭାବ ଓ ଭାଷା ସଂଯାରିକ ଭାବନାରେ ଭାରାକ୍ରାନ୍ତ ହୋଇଥିଲେ ତାହା ଶିଶୁ ସାହିତ୍ୟର ମୂଲ୍ୟହୀନ କରେ । ଶିଶୁର ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱର ବିକାଶପଥ ତାର ଶିକ୍ଷାକୁ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣାଙ୍ଗକରିବାକୁ ହେଲେ ତାମନରେ ବୃଥା ଭୟ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିବା, ତାକୁଅଧମ, ଅକ୍ଷମ, ଅବୋଧ ବୋଲି ମନେ କରିବା ଭଳିତ ନୁହେଁ ।

ମାନବ ସଭ୍ୟତାର ବିକାଶ ହେବା ସଙ୍ଗେ ସଙ୍ଗେ ସହର ସଂଖ୍ୟା ବୃଦ୍ଧି ପାଇଛି । କିନ୍ତୁ ମାନବ ସମାଜର ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଓ ପରମ୍ପରା ପୁରାପୁରି ନିଷ୍କିନ୍ନ ହୋଇ ନାହିଁ । ଇଂରେଜ ଶାସନ, ପାଶ୍ଚାତ୍ୟ ଶିକ୍ଷା, ବିଜ୍ଞାନର ଦ୍ରୁତ ଅଗ୍ରଗତି ଦ୍ୱାରା ଆମର ଚିନ୍ତା ଓ ରୁଚି ବଦଳିଛି । ପଂଳତଃ ମନୁଷ୍ୟର ଜ୍ଞାନ, ବିଦ୍ୟା ସମସ୍ତ କମ୍ପ୍ୟୁଟର, ଟେଲିଭିଜନ, କାଳି ଓ କାଗଜରେ ରହିଯାଇଛି । ଯଦିଓ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ କାଳରେ ପ୍ରାକ୍ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଶିକ୍ଷାପ୍ରତି ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ଦିଆଯାଇ ପାରିନି, ଭବିଷ୍ୟତରେ ଏହାର ଗୁରୁତ୍ୱ ଯେ ନିଷ୍ଠର ଉପଲବ୍ଧି କରିହେବ, ଏହା ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ।

୧୮୭୬ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟାବ୍ଦରୁ ୧୯୦୦ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ନୂତନ ଧରଣର ମୁଦ୍ରାଯନ୍ତ୍ର ସ୍ଥାପିତ ହେବାରୁ ଅନେକ ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟିକଙ୍କ ପୁସ୍ତକ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ ହେଲା । ୧୮୬୬ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟାବ୍ଦର ନଅଙ୍କ ଦୁର୍ଭିକ୍ଷ ଏବଂ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାବିଲୋପ ଆନ୍ଦୋଳନ ଜନସମାଜ ଉପରେ ଗଭୀର ପ୍ରଭାବ ପକାଇଲା । କବିବର ରାଧାନାଥରାୟ, ଭକ୍ତକବି ମଧୁସୂଦନ ରାଓ, ବ୍ୟାସକବି ପଂକଜ ମୋହନ ସେନାପତି ଓ ଗୋବିନ୍ଦ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ରଥ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ନୂତନ ଧାରଣା ନେଇ ଶିଶୁ ସାହିତ୍ୟକୁନୂତନ ରୂପ ଦେଲେ । ଆନ୍ଧେ ଆନ୍ଧେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟ ସୁଦୃଢ଼ ହେବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲା । ଏହା ପାଠ୍ୟ ପୁସ୍ତକରେ ସୀମିତ ନରହି ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଭାବରେ ଆଦୃତ ହେଲା । ଗୋପାଳ

ହୋଇଥିଲା । ୧୯୦୩ ମସିହାରେ ‘ଉତ୍କଳ ସମିଳନୀ’ ଓ ‘ଉତ୍କଳ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ସମାଜ’ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା ହେଲା । ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରମୋହନ ମହାରଣା, ପଣ୍ଡିତମୃତ୍ୟୁଞ୍ଜୟ ରଥ, ଚିନ୍ତାମଣି ମହାନ୍ତି, ତାଙ୍କ ରଚିତ କବିତାବଳୀ ଦ୍ଵାରା ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟକୁ ସମୃଦ୍ଧ କରିଥିଲେ । ସ୍ଵତନ୍ତ୍ର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପ୍ରଦେଶ ଗଠନ ପାଇଁ ଆନ୍ଦୋଳନ ଓ ଭାରତର ମୁକ୍ତି ସଂଗ୍ରାମ ଦ୍ଵାରା ଜନସମାଜ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଜାତୀୟଭାବ ଜାଗ୍ରତ ହେଲା । ଫଳରେଶିକ୍ଷା ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ, ମୁଦ୍ରଣାଳୟ ଓ ପତ୍ରପତ୍ରିକାର ଆଦର ବଢ଼ିଲା ।

ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟ ଆକାଶର ଉଜ୍ଜ୍ଵଳ ଜ୍ୟୋତିଷ୍ଠ ସ୍ଵରୂପ ଜ୍ଞାନକୋଷ ‘ଶିଶୁସଂଖ୍ୟାଳି’ର କେତୋଟି ଭାଗର ପ୍ରଣୟିତା ବାଳକୃଷ୍ଣ କର, ଜାତୀୟ କବି ବୀର କିଶୋର, ଗୋପବିଂସୁ ଦାସ, ବାଞ୍ଛାନିଧି ମହାନ୍ତି, ଗୋଦାବରୀଶ ମହାପାତ୍ର, ଗୋଦାବରୀଶ ମିଶ୍ର, କାଳିନ୍ଦୀ ଚରଣ ପାଣିଗ୍ରାହୀ, ରାମକୃଷ୍ଣ ନନ୍ଦ, ରାଧାମୋହନ ଗଡ଼ନାୟକ, ପଣ୍ଡିତ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ଵର ମିଶ୍ର, ରାମଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଆଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ, ଓ ଉଦୟନାଥ ଷଡ଼ଙ୍ଗୀ ସ୍ମରଣୀୟ । ଜାତୀୟ ଜାଗରଣ ପରେ ପ୍ରକାଶକ ମାନେ ପ୍ରେରଣାପାଇଁ ଉପର ଲିଖିତ ସାହିତ୍ୟିକମାନଙ୍କ ଲେଖା ପ୍ରକାଶ କରି ଚାଲିଲେ ପୁସ୍ତକ ଗୁଡ଼ିକର ଜାତୀୟକରଣ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ । ସତ୍ୟବାଦୀ ଯୁଗର ପଣ୍ଡିତ ନୀଳକଣ୍ଠ ଦାସ, ପଣ୍ଡିତ ବାସୁଦେବ ମହାପାତ୍ର, ପଣ୍ଡିତ ଉପେନ୍ଦ୍ର ତ୍ରିପାଠୀ, କାନ୍ତକବି ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀକାନ୍ତ, କବିଚନ୍ଦ୍ର କାଳୀଚରଣ, କୁଞ୍ଜବିହାରୀ ଦାଶ ଥିଲେ ଦକ୍ଷ ଲେଖକଗଣ । ମୁଦ୍ରଣାଳୟ, ପ୍ରକାଶନ ସଂସ୍ଥା, ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଭୃତି ସଂଘ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ଜୀବନୀ, ଆବିଷ୍କାର ଭଦ୍ରାବନ କାହାଣୀ, ଦେଶ ବିଦେଶର ଲୋକକଥା, ପୁରାଣ, ଜାତକ ଗନ୍ଧ, ବୈଜ୍ଞାନିକ ଗନ୍ଧ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଶିଶୁ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଭଣ୍ଡାରକୁ ଅମୂଲ୍ୟ ଦାନ ଦେଲା । ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଧ୍ୟରୁ ବ୍ରହ୍ମପୁର ଷ୍ଟେଟେକ୍ସ ଷ୍ଟୋର ଓ କଟକ ଟ୍ରେଡିଂ କମ୍ପାନିଙ୍କ ନାମ ସ୍ମରଣୀୟ ।

ପାଠ୍ୟପୁସ୍ତକ ଲେଖକ ବ୍ୟତୀତ ଉପଯୁକ୍ତ ଶିଶୁ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ରଚନାରେ ଉତ୍ସାହ ପ୍ରଦାନ କଲେ ଏ ଯୁଗର କେତୋଟି ସାହିତ୍ୟ ପତ୍ରିକା । ୧୯୦୯ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟାବ୍ଦରେ ଶାମତୀ ରେବାଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟଙ୍କ ଦ୍ଵାରା ସଂପାଦିତ ‘ପ୍ରଭାତ’ ଥିଲା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାର ପ୍ରଥମ ଶିଶୁ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ପତ୍ରିକା । ୧୯୨୦ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟାବ୍ଦରେ ଚିନ୍ତାମଣି ଆଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ, ଅଗଣି ଦାଶ ଓ ପଣ୍ଡିତ ଆକୂଳି ମିଶ୍ରଙ୍କ ମିଳିତ ପ୍ରଚେଷ୍ଟରେ ‘ପଞ୍ଚାମୃତ’ ପରେ ‘ଜହ୍ନମାମୁଁ’ ଓ କିଶୋର ପତ୍ରିକା ‘ମଧୁକୋଷ’ ବାଳକୃଷ୍ଣ କରଙ୍କ ସୁଦକ୍ଷ ସଂପାଦନାରେ ପ୍ରକାଶ ପାଇଲା । ୧୯୪୮ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟାବ୍ଦରେ ତତ୍କାଳୀନ ହରେକୃଷ୍ଣ ମହତାବଙ୍କର ‘ମୀନାବଜାର’ ରାମପ୍ରସାଦ ମହାନ୍ତି, (ଜହ୍ନରୀ ଭାଇ) ଙ୍କ ପରି ବହୁ ଶକ୍ତିଶାଳୀ ଶିଶୁ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଞ୍ଜ ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହୋଇଥିଲେ । ପୁରାଣର କଥାବସ୍ତୁ, ପଲ୍ଲୀକାହାଣୀ, ଐତିହାସିକ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ଵର ପରେ ଆଧାରିତ ଅନେକ ଲେଖା ପ୍ରକାଶିତ ହେଲା । ମୌଳିକ ଶର ଯୋଜନା ସହ କବିଗୁହ୍ମର ଅଭାବ ଦୂର ହେଲା । ‘ସମାଜ’ର ‘ଶିଶୁ ରାଇଜ’ ଜ୍ଞାନ ବିଜ୍ଞାନ ମୂଳକ ଶିଶୁ କିଶୋର ପତ୍ରିକା ‘ସଂସାର’, ‘ଶିଶୁ ସଂପଦ’, ‘ରୁଆ ଗୁଲ୍’, ‘ତଗର’, ‘ମୋ ଦେଶ’, ‘ମନ ପବନ’, ସରକାରୀ ପତ୍ରିକା ‘ଶିଶୁ ଲେଖା’, ‘ପିଲାଙ୍କ ଧରିତ୍ରୀ’, ‘ନନ୍ଦନ କାନନ’, ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଅନେକ ଶିଶୁପତ୍ରିକା ପ୍ରକାଶ ପାଇଲା । ବଳିଷ୍ଠ ସଂପାଦନାର ଅଭାବଯୋଗୁଁ ଏହା ମଧ୍ୟରୁ କେତୋଟି ଓ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଅନେକ ପତ୍ରିକା ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ଅଧିକାଂଶ ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ ବନ୍ଦ ହୋଇଯାଇଛି ।

‘ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରମାମା’ର ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାନ୍ତର ‘ଜହ୍ନମାମୁଁ’ ରକ୍ଷୀୟ ଗନ୍ଧର ଓଡ଼ିଆ ରୂପାନ୍ତର, ନେହେରୁ ବାଳପୁସ୍ତକାଳୟର କେତୋଟି ପୁସ୍ତକର ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଅନୁବାଦ, ଶିଶୁପତ୍ରିକା ଓ ପୁସ୍ତକମାନଙ୍କର ବିଦେଶୀୟ ଗନ୍ଧ, ରୂପକଥା, ଲୋକକଥା, ପ୍ରକାଶପାଇଁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଶିଶୁ ସାହିତ୍ୟକୁ ସମୃଦ୍ଧ କରିଛି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏସବୁ ସତ୍ତ୍ୱେ ଶିଶୁନାଟକ, ଏକାଙ୍କିକା, ହାସ୍ୟରସାତ୍ମକ ଗନ୍ଧ, ପ୍ରକୃତି ଗନ୍ଧ ଓ ରଙ୍ଗୀନ୍ ଆକର୍ଷଣୀୟ ଶିଶୁପୁସ୍ତକ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାରେ ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ ସଂଖ୍ୟାରେ ନାହିଁ ।

୧୯୫୪ ମସିହାରେ ମିଳିତ ଜାତିସଂଘର ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଅନୁସାରେ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ୧୪୫ଟି ରାଷ୍ଟ୍ର ଭିନ୍ନ ଭିନ୍ନ ଦିବସରେ ପ୍ରତିବର୍ଷ ଶିଶୁ ଦିବସ ପାଳନ କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ଶିଶୁର ସ୍ୱାକୃତିସହ ଶିଶୁ ସାହିତ୍ୟର ସ୍ୱାକୃତି ମିଳିଛି । ଆନ୍ତର୍ଜାତିକ ସ୍ତରରେ ପ୍ରତି ଦୁଇ ବର୍ଷରେ ଥରେ ଲେଖାଁ ଜଣେ ବିଶିଷ୍ଟ ଲେଖକଙ୍କୁ ଗୋଟିଂ ପଦକ ପ୍ରଦାନ କରିବା ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା ହୋଇଛି । ୧୯୫୪-୫୫ ମସିହା ଠାରୁ କେନ୍ଦ୍ର ସରକାରଙ୍କ ଦ୍ଵାରା ଏବଂ ଆଜିକାଲି **NCERT** ଙ୍କ ଦ୍ଵାରା ବିଭିନ୍ନ ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକ ଭାଷାରେ ଉତ୍କୃଷ୍ଟ ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟ ନିମନ୍ତେ ଜାତୀୟ ପୁରସ୍କାର ପ୍ରଦାନ କରାଯାଉଛି । ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର, ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଏକାଡେମୀ, ଶିଶୁ ସାହିତ୍ୟିକ, ସଂପାଦକ, ଓ ଗବେଷକମାନଙ୍କୁ ପୁରସ୍କୃତ କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ବିଭିନ୍ନ ପ୍ରକାର କର୍ମଶାଳା, ପୁସ୍ତକମେଳା, କବିତାପାଠୋତ୍ସବ, ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟ ସମିତି, ଆଲୋଚନା, ଶିଶୁ ପାଠାଗାର, ଶିଶୁ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଗବେଷଣା କେନ୍ଦ୍ର, ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟ ଏକାଡେମୀ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଅନେକ ସଂସ୍ଥା ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟର ଉନ୍ନତିକଲ୍ପେ ଉଦ୍ଦିଷ୍ଟ ।

ଏହାଛଡ଼ା ଶିଶୁ ପ୍ରତିଭାମାନଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ ସଂସ୍କୃତିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମର ଆୟୋଜନ କରାଯିବା ସହ ଆଞ୍ଚଳିକ ସ୍ତରରେ ଶିଶୁ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ସଂଗଠନ ମଧ୍ୟ ହେଲାଣି । ରାଜଧାନୀ ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟ ସଂସଦ, କେନ୍ଦୁଝର ଜିଲ୍ଲା ସ୍ୱରୀୟ ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟ ସଂସଦ, ମହତାବ ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟ ସଂସଦ, ପୁସ୍ତକ ପ୍ରତିଯୋଗିତା, ନ୍ୟାସନାଲ୍ ବୁକ୍ସ ଫେସ୍ଟିଭାଲ୍ ନେହେରୁ ବାଳ ପୁସ୍ତକାଳୟ, କଳାପଟା ଯୋଜନା, ରାଜା ରାମମୋହନ ଲାଲ୍ ହେରୀ ପକ୍ଷରୁ ଶିଶୁ ପୁସ୍ତକ କ୍ରୟ, ବେତାର, ଦୂରଦର୍ଶନ, ଚଳଚ୍ଚିତ୍ର, ମହାକାଶ ଯାତ୍ରା, ଭାରତୀୟ ଏବଂ ବିଦେଶୀୟ ସାହିତ୍ୟରୁ ଅନୁବାଦ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟକୁ ସମୃଦ୍ଧ କରୁଛି । ତା ଛଡ଼ା ପ୍ରଜାତନ୍ତ୍ର ପ୍ରଚାର ସମିତିଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଆୟୋଜିତ ବିଷୁବ ମିଳନ ଉତ୍ସବରେ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ବେସରକାରୀ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ଯଥା :- ଭ୍ରାମ୍ୟମାଣ ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ 'ଧ୍ରୁବତାରା', 'ନୀଳଶୈଳ' ଇତ୍ୟାଦିଙ୍କ ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟକୁ ଦାନ କମ୍ ନୁହେଁ ।

କଟକରେ ବିଜ୍ଞାନ ପ୍ରଚାର ସମିତିଦ୍ୱାରା ସରଳ ଭାଷାରେ ବିଜ୍ଞାନପୁସ୍ତକ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ ହେବାରୁ ସାହିତ୍ୟରେ ବିଜ୍ଞାନର ପରିଲକ୍ଷିତ ହୁଏ । ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟରେ ବିଜ୍ଞାନଲେଖକ ମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ବିନୋଦ କାନୁନଗୋ, ଜୁଲମଣି ସାମଲ, ଶାନ୍ତନୁ କୁମାର ଆଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ, ଦେବକାନ୍ତ ମିଶ୍ର, ବସନ୍ତ କୁମାର ବେହେରା, ଗୋକୁଳାନନ୍ଦ ମହାପାତ୍ର, ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟନାରାୟଣ ଆଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ, ରମେଶ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ପରିଡ଼ା, ନରେନ୍ଦ୍ର ପ୍ରସାଦ ଦାସ, ନିତ୍ୟାନନ୍ଦ ସ୍ୱାଇଁ ଓ ପ୍ରଦୋଷ ତ୍ରିପାଠୀ ଇତ୍ୟାଦିଙ୍କ ନାମ ଉଲ୍ଲେଖଯୋଗ୍ୟ ।

ସମୟର ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ସହିତ ଶିଶୁର ରୁଚିର ମଧ୍ୟ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ହୋଇଛି । ବୈଜ୍ଞାନିକ ତଥ୍ୟଭିତ୍ତିକ ଶିଶୁଗଳ୍ପପ୍ରତି ଆଜିର ଶିଶୁ ଅଗ୍ରହୀ । ଏହି ସମସ୍ୟାକୁ ସମାଧାନ କରିବାକୁ ଲେଖକମାନେ ବନ୍ଧ ପରିକର । ଆଜିକାଲି କମ୍ପ୍ୟୁଟର ଦ୍ୱାରା ଯେଉଁ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହେବ, ସେଥିରେ ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ମନର ଆବେଗ ନ ଥିବ, ଚିନ୍ତାଧାରା ଜୀବନ୍ତ ବା ପ୍ରାଣସ୍ପର୍ଶୀ ହେବନାହିଁ । ବିଦେଶର ଲାଇବ୍ରେରୀ ଗୁଡ଼ିକପରି ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ମଧ୍ୟ **Audio books** ଭର୍ତ୍ତି ହୋଇଯିବ । ଇଣ୍ଟରନେଟରେ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଚର୍ଚ୍ଚା ହେବ ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ପାଠକ, ଲେଖକ, ପ୍ରକାଶକ, ସଂପାଦକ, ଓ ଚିତ୍ରକାରଙ୍କ ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ କଥା ବିଚାରକୁ ନିଆଯାଉ । ବହିର ଆର୍ଜିକ ମୂଲ୍ୟବୋଧ ସହ ଆର୍ଜିକ ମୂଲ୍ୟବୋଧ ରହିବା ିକାନ୍ତ ବାସ୍ତବ । ମୁଦ୍ରଣ ପରିପାଟୀ, ନର୍ଭୁଲ୍ ଛାପା, ତୁଟି ଶୂନ୍ୟ ବିଷୟବସ୍ତୁ, ସମୀକ୍ଷା, ସମାଲୋଚନା, ଠିକ୍ ନହେଲେ ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟ କଲୁକ୍ଷିତ ହେବା ନିଶ୍ଚିତ । ଯେ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ପ୍ରକାଶ ଶିଶୁ ସାହିତ୍ୟିକଙ୍କର ଅଭାବ ରହିବହିଁ ରହିବ । ଆମ ଦେଶର ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟ, ପଠନ ସ୍ତରର ଅଭାବହେତୁ ବ୍ୟବସାୟିକ ଭିତ୍ତିରେ ଉକୃଷ୍ଟ ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟ ମଧ୍ୟ ପ୍ରକାଶ ପାଇବା ସମ୍ଭବ ହେଉନାହିଁ ।

ପ୍ରାକ୍ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା କାଳରେ କେତେଜଣ ଓ ଉତ୍ତମକାଳରେ କେତେଜଣଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ବାଳକୃଷ୍ଣ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ, ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଶେଖର ନନ୍ଦ, ନିତ୍ୟାନନ୍ଦ ସିଂହ, ଯନାଥନ ମହାନ୍ତି, ଦାମୋଦର ମିଶ୍ର, ଶିବ ପ୍ରସାଦ ଦାସ, ପଣ୍ଡିତ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର ମିଶ୍ର, ପ୍ରାଣକୃଷ୍ଣ ପରିଡ଼ା, କୃଷ୍ଣଚନ୍ଦ୍ର କର, ଭଗବାନ ପତି, ପଦ୍ମଚରଣ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ, ଭିକାରୀ ଚରଣ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ, ଶ୍ରୀଧର ଦାସ, ବିଜୟ ଚରଣ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ, ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ମହାପାତ୍ର, ବନମାଳୀ ବ୍ରହ୍ମଚାରୀ, ନିତ୍ୟାନନ୍ଦ ମହାପାତ୍ର, ରାଜ କିଶୋର ରାୟ, ହରିହର ମହାପାତ୍ର, ଦୟାନିଧି ମିଶ୍ର, ବନମାଳୀ ମିଶ୍ର, ପଣ୍ଡିତ ବାସୁଦେବ ମହାପାତ୍ର, କୃଷ୍ଣଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ସେନଗୁପ୍ତା,ବାମଦେବ ମିଶ୍ର, ରାଧା ଚରଣ ପଣ୍ଡା, ଲେଖିକା ମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ମନୋରମା ମହାପାତ୍ର, ବିଦ୍ୟୁତଲତା ଦାସ, ଓ ଶୈଳରାଣୀ ମିଶ୍ର ପ୍ରମୁଖଙ୍କ ଅବଦାନ ଅବିସ୍ମରଣୀୟ ।

ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ପରେ ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ସଂସ୍କୃତି, ପରମ୍ପରା ଓ ନୂତନ ଭାବଧାରାର ମିଶ୍ରଣରେ ନୂତନ ସ୍ୱାଦର ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟ ରଚନା ହେଲା । ଜାତୀୟ ସଂହିତ, ଗଣତନ୍ତ୍ରର ସୁରକ୍ଷା ଓ ବିଜ୍ଞାନର ଦ୍ରୁତ ବିକାଶ ଘଟିଲା । ସଂପ୍ରତିକ କାଳର ସମସ୍ତ କୃତି ଲେଖକ ମଣ୍ଡଳୀଙ୍କ ନାମ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିବା ସମ୍ଭବ ନୁହେଁ । ତତ୍ତ୍ୱର ମହେଶ୍ୱର ମହାନ୍ତି, ତତ୍ତ୍ୱର କୃତିବାସ ନାୟକ, ବୈଷ୍ଣବ ଚରଣ ସାମଲ, ନବିଆ ବିହାରୀ ମହାନ୍ତି, ତତ୍ତ୍ୱର ମନୀନ୍ଦ୍ର ମହାନ୍ତି, ମହେଶ୍ୱରମୂଳିଆ, ଧ୍ରୁବଚରଣ ପଣ୍ଡା, ବଟକୃଷ୍ଣ ସ୍ୱାଇଁ, ମାନସ ରଞ୍ଜନ ସାମଲ, କ୍ଷୀରୋଦଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ପୋଥାଳ, ସୁହଲତା ମହାନ୍ତି, ରମେଶ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଭଞ୍ଜ, ଡାକ୍ତରସଚ୍ଚିତାନନ୍ଦ ଶତପଥୀ, ବୀରକିଶୋର ପାଢ଼ୀ, ଗୋଲକ ବିହାରୀ ଧଳ, ଶାନ୍ତନୁ କୁମାର ଆଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ, ଅନନ୍ତ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ, ଶୁଭେନ୍ଦ୍ର ମୋହନ ଶ୍ରୀଚନ୍ଦନସିଂ, ନନ୍ଦ କିଶୋର ସିଂହ, ଜାନକୀବଲ୍ଲଭ ମହାନ୍ତି, ବିନୋଦ ରାଉତରାୟ, ଭଗବାନ ପାଢ଼ୀ, ପ୍ରଫୁଲ୍ଲ କୁମାର ଗିରି, ବୀରେନ୍ଦ୍ର କୁମାର ସାମନ୍ତରାୟ, ପ୍ରସନ୍ନ କୁମାର ମିଶ୍ର, ପରମାନନ୍ଦ ଅଧିକାରୀ, ଭାଗିରଥୀ ନେପାକ, ରମେଶ ପତ୍ରୀ, ରମେଶ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଧଳ,

ପ୍ରମିଳା ନାୟକ, ବାସୁଦେବ ତ୍ରିପାଠୀ, ମନୋଜ ଦାସ, ଜୟକୃଷ୍ଣ ରାଜ, ବିଚିତ୍ରାନନ୍ଦ କର, ଦୁର୍ଗାମାଧବ ମିଶ୍ର, ସଦୁନାଥ ଦାସ ମହାପାତ୍ର, ସୁଧାକର ଦାସ, ଜୟକୃଷ୍ଣ ସାହୁ, ନିରଞ୍ଜନ ବେହେରା, କଲ୍ୟାଣୀ ଘୋଷ, ନୀଳମଣି ଚାନ୍ଦ, ରଘୁନନ୍ଦନ ମହାପାତ୍ର, ଏବଂ ଗୋରାଚାନ୍ଦ ମିଶ୍ର ପ୍ରଭୃତି ପ୍ରଧାନ ।

ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ କେତେକ ଆଦର୍ଶ ଓ ପରମ୍ପରା ରକ୍ଷାକରିବା ପାଇଁ ସମୟ ଆସିଛି । ତା ନ ହେଲେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟର ବିକାଶକ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ଆଶାନ୍ୱରୁପ ସମ୍ପର୍କ ହାସଲ କରିହେବନାହିଁ । ସର୍ବଭାରତୀୟ ସ୍ତରରେ ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟର ବିକାଶ ନିମନ୍ତେ ବିଧିବଦ୍ଧ ଭାବରେ ଉଦ୍ୟମଚାଲିଛି । ଆମକୁ ସେ ସବୁ ପ୍ରତି ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ଦେବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ । ମହାଭାରତୀୟ ତଥା ଆନ୍ତର୍ଜାତୀୟ ସ୍ତ୍ରୋତକୁ ଆଖିଆଗରେ ରଖି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଶିଶୁସାହିତ୍ୟର ବିକାଶପ୍ରତି ଧ୍ୟାନ ଦିଆଯିବା ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ ଏବଂ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ହେବା ପ୍ରୟୋଜନ ।

Sailabala Mohapatra is a noted writer for children and storyteller. She is also actively involved in hosting, scripting, and producing children's programs in All India Radio and TV in Orissa.



TRANSITIONS IN THEATRE

DR. SAILESWAR NANDA

The origin of "theatre" dates back to the Vedic era. The "Natya Shashtra" was written by the great sage "Bharat". Lord Shiva is worshipped as "Nataraj", the Lord of Natya tradition. Natya includes dance, music, drama and rhythm. Ancient Orissa was enormously rich with Natya culture. In the temples of Orissa gods and goddesses were offered daily invocations in the form of Devadasi and Mahari dances. Widely worshipped, Lord Jagannath, the master of million hearts, never goes to bed without enjoying Devadasi dances, mingled with charming melodious songs from "Geeta Govinda" composed by the eminent Oriya poet "Jayadev". A special stage, known as "Natya Mandap" was the integral part of each temple, where such performances were staged regularly.

The "Sun temple" of Konark and many other temples built around one thousand years ago depict stone carvings of dancing girls with dramatic expressions in heart-touching poses. The theatrical exposition of the body language of these dancing girls and the other characters illustrate the artistic supremacy of the theatre culture of Orissa during those days. In addition, the presence of open-air stage at Khandagiri and Udayagiri caves at Bhubaneswar bears ample testimony to Orissa's rich theatre tradition dating back to prehistoric era. All these facts profoundly pronounce the age-old Natya tradition of this state.

In course of time, when Oriya language was enriched by contributions from eminent poets, i.e., chiefly through fourteenth to seventeenth centuries, the expressive dances were made more lively in their "Abhinaya" through addition of melodious lyrics intermingled with harmonious music. The lyrical creation of the epics, "Ramayana", Mahabharata, "Gopaleela" were depicted as drama in musical form on stage with theatrical movements. Those were known as "Leelas" i.e., "Ramaleela", "Krushnaleela", "Gopaleela" etc. Those leelas were greatly accepted by the common people throughout Orissa. That musical form of Oriya drama performed in open air is an important milestone in its cultural history and exists even today at the end of twentieth century.

Along with Leelas, many other types of folk theatres came in different regions of Orissa, reflecting cultural identities and heritage of those regions. The local traditions and customs have influenced those folk theatres to a great extent and many of them can be regarded as original masterpieces. Dasa Kathia, Dandanacha, Prahlad Nata in southern Orissa, Chhau Nacha in northern Orissa; Pala, Ghoda Nacha, Gotipua Nacha in eastern and central

Orissa have entertained Orissans for a long period of time. Those folk dances have some special features giving them distinct cultural recognition. Melodious songs, dances and music have been harmoniously intermingled with the central theme of the plays in all these folk dances to touch the core of the heart and meaningfully influence the audience.

Towards the later half of 19th century and early part of 20th century, the popular theatre in Orissa was termed as "Jatra" (Yatra). In Jatras, the pandal or stage is made at the centre and the audience sits all around the stage encircling it. The accompanying music party sits close to the audience on the stage. The artists use a narrow passage from within the audience to come to the stage from the green room. While acting, the artists have to move in all directions, so that the audience in all sides and corners can enjoy the acting equally. The "Concert" of the Jatra is quite enchanting, forceful and deeply entertaining. It attracts the audience as a prelude before the start of the real play and also thrills the audience with situational music during acting as interlude during the course of the Jatra. Usually, Jatra starts from the midnight and ends at dawn before sunrise. This time conveniently suits the working class people. There is no use of screens in Jatra. Compared to other forms of theatres, the themes enacted through Jatra convey powerful social messages. Besides social themes, historical and mythological themes have also been taken as the subjects of the plays.

In the early part of twentieth century, Jatra was modified and became lyrical. The delivery of dialogues was in lyrical form. One of the eminent pioneers of this revolution was "Baishnaba Pani". This form of theatre was known as "Geeti Natya". Till today, such musical Geeti Natya are very much popular in the coastal districts of Orissa. Mythological, historical and social themes have been taken up as the subject of these theatrical forms with much of humor and social satires, mostly with colloquial language.

The theatre movement passed through another transition during the second quarter of this century. The theatre turned from mass to class and open air to closed auditorium by both professional and amateur artists. Stage became unidirectional with three sides closed and the audience faced the open side of the stage conically. The use of screens, scenes, scenarios and drops, electrically with spot lights and background music adorned the drama. The plays became short and condensed to about three hours in stead of nightlong shows. Professional theatre parties like "Odissa Theatre", "Annapurna Theatre",

"Janata Theatre", "Kalashree Theatre" and some others were in the lime light in the pre-independence and post-independence era. This transition was conspicuous due to light, sound and selected literate audience. In light, spot, halogen dimmer, cyclorama, zigzag, clouds, moon, stars and many other modernized effects were given much importance. The music was not occasional or situational, but followed continuously throughout the drama. For convenience, the three hour long plays were divided into different acts, depicting different changeovers or time lapse. The writers of these plays were Kalicharan Pattnaik, Ramachandra Mishra, Gourishankar Ray, Kartik Ghosh, Gopal Chhotray, Byomkesh Tripathy, Narasingha Mohapatra, Rajat kumar Kar, Monoranjan Das and several others. The plays were classical type, with rich literary dialogues, climax, anticlimax, songs and dances.

In social themes, the subjects were mostly about class relationships between haves and have nots, rich and poor, higher and lower castes, or other social problems like child marriage, bonded labor, dowry system, untouchability and joint family system. Some of the outstanding plays of those days are "Bhata", "Chakri", "Babrubahana", "Manikajodi", "Amadabata", "Janani", "Buxi Jagabandhu", "Upendra Bhanja", "Juara Bhata", "Lakhya Heera", "Kansa Kabata" etc. These theatres were packed with emotions and unique sentimental stuffs. The evil forces or the anticharacters were always being punished at the end of the play with a specific social message. The characters moved the audience with laughter, emotion, anger, and tears according to the appropriate situations.

During the sixties of the present century, the next phase of the transition in theatre was evident through one set, one situation drama in the place of multi scene and multi situation drama. This experimental thought provoking new trend in drama was referred to as "Naba Natya Andolana" or new theatre movement. Play wrights like Monoranjan Das, Biswajeet Das, Bijoy Mishra, Kartik Rath, and several others took the leadership in this new trend. They followed the western playwrights like Ibsen, Henric, Bernard Shaw, Onil, Tennis William, Wis Pirandelo, Stingberg, August, Baket, Oeskar etc. A short theme, one situation, one particular incident or moment was dramatised with realistic touch. Symbolism, extencialism, absurdity, and antiplays took up the upper hand in such theatres. "Sagar Manthana", "Bana Hansi", "Katha Ghoda", "Shaba bahakamane" are few of these revolutionary plays. These experimental plays of course were not accepted by the mass than except some intellectual class of people, who were in favour of this newness in drama.

During the last quarter of the present century, the experimental, absurd plays have been replaced by psychological and analytical plays. Symbolism and realistic approach still continues in this phase of transition. Some

playwrights follow the traditional style and methods, few other completely follow the modernised changeovers shown by the experimental group. Basanta kumar Mohapatra, Bijoy Kumar Nanda, Govinda Chandra Senapati, Chandrasekhar Nanda, Bijaymohan Mohanty, Upendra Mallick, Ratnakar Chaini, Subodha Patnaik, Saileswar Nanda, Somanath Pal, Banabihari Panda, Baishnaba Charana Mohanty, Archana Naik and few others are the playwrights of this period. Their contribution to the oriya literature and the theatre movement of orissa is unforgettable.

Amalgamation of the traditional oriya drama, theatre, and the modernised symbolic theatre came in a theatric form known as "TAMSA". Jatin Das with his team started a satirical play named "Mogul Tamsa", which was presented both in indoor and outdoor stage, gaining good popularity.

At present, when acting, lighting, choreograph and direction are being taught as regular courses, newer dimensions are being evolved in the theatre movement. Stagecraft has become simpler. Black curtains now replace the sets. Light zones are made depicting different scenes. Stage properties and requisites have become less due to symbolic acting styles. Most modern and recent theatres are being played on streets. At some busy squares, bus-stands, railway platforms, the artist starts drama all in a sudden. The usual theme of such dramas revolves around social problems like alcohol abuse, drug abuse, dowry system, political hypocrisy, religious superstition etc. with their positive solutions. These are known as street plays.

During the last two decades, All India Radio and Doordarshan have also contributed a lot towards the popularisation of oriya theatre due to their wide viewers. But some critics still criticise the television for encroaching upon the popularity of stage drama. The theatre-lovers, while getting the entertainment at home do not like to come out to the theatre halls to enjoy the play. Hence popular theatres are in stress. This is a problem to all the theatres throughout India. But still, optimists have the hope of revival of the popularity of theatres in near future through modernisation.

Thus theatre movement in orissa has passed through several obstacles in different periods and the transitions are quite evident. As per the changes in social customs, familial relations, political environment and human values, the theatre has to change exhibiting the imprint of social life pattern. But the changes are acceptable till we maintain our cultural originalities and distinctions inspite of wide diversities in presenting the theatres to our masses. Integration of original qualities with modernised presentation style can make our theatre more outstanding and dynamic.

Dr. Saileswar Nanda is an eminent Oriya playwright, dramatist, artist and critic. Some of his plays have also been translated into Hindi. He is a past Secretary of the Sangeet Natak Akademi, Government of Orissa.

NO GROUP TOUR TO HEAVEN

DR. KABIPRASAD MISRA

Recently, after the Gujarat incident and burning to death of a missionary family in Orissa and killings in other States, headlines in most newspapers have been rightly screaming about the terrible effects of communal, casteist and religious (in fact it should be called anti-religious) feelings. Politicians, as usual, have taken their own respective party lines and instead of understanding and solving the problem, are actually inflaming passions of various groups based on their so called ideology. This has not helped the nation at all. We have become unwittingly the victim of mockery and shame in the world.

It seems we have become a nation of confused thinking. The author has never understood the line taken by some people against or in support of a murderer or a person who kills someone or burns or destroys a place of worship. The non-Hindu groups identify the murderer as a Hindu or whatever its subgroups and the Hindu groups immediately are on the defensive claiming that the person(s) concerned do not belong to any of the Hindu groups. This seems to be a very ridiculous stand because a murderer is a murderer no matter which faith or religion he claims to be belonging to. We don't have a Hindu murder or a Christian murder as much as we do not have an Islamic, burglary or a Buddhist rape. A law breaker is a law breaker by any standard and from any view point. Breaking the law at any level and certainly at the level of committing heinous crimes like rape or murder has to do only with the individuality of that person who commits the crime and has nothing to do with his political, ideological, religious or community beliefs because no religion or community or political group justifies any such crime (at least in theory nobody has done it so far). Therefore it is clear that instead of punishing the individual as an individual law breaker responsible for heinous crimes in his personal capacity, we should never identify him and give him the respectability of a particular faith, community or religion, because he has never been the representative of that particular faith as chosen by any authentic group to represent their views. Therefore his identity as a person committing the crime is simply as an individual. The author is not going to discuss the total untruth and absolute perversion of anyone claiming to represent any religion for committing such heinous crimes as no religion has ever justified hatred, violence and killings. In fact, all religions, without exception, advocate love, compassion, kindness, non-violence and peace (for this, the author does not have to quote the scriptures because the advocates of each religion in recent times have proclaimed from their respective scriptures this eternal truth exhaustively).

Conversion:

Then comes the most controversial and debated issue of conversion. This is again a matter so much misunderstood that it is difficult to even discuss the subject without passion. The author has discussed the topic with various people who are honest, sincere and devoted followers of Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism etc and is convinced that this matter is one of the most misconceived and misunderstood topics in our psyche. Conversion means 'changing from one type to another'. In the field of religion, it should mean total inner transformation of the person from one type of faith to another. The least important thing in this process is the external show or rituals concerned with the process because a person will not progress even an inch in his spiritual life if he is only making a show of it and not changing inwardly. But, now conversion seems to be a substitution of one form of ritual with another without an inner transformation.

There is another angle to this process which the author has never understood. To the best of the author's knowledge, (the author can make a very small claim that he has read with reverence to some extent the Gita, the Upanishads, the Bible, the Koran, the Buddhistic literature and other important scriptures of all the major religions of the world), no religion or scripture has ever said that adding numbers to a particular group of believers or religion will make their passage to heaven smoother. One goes to heaven or hell (if at all they exist) on individual merit and action and not on a group basis. In fact, there is no concept of a group tour to heaven in any religion. At the gate of heaven (if again such a place exists) neither St Peter nor Lord Yamaraj will ask "How many people have you brought with you?" The gates of heaven or hell are not closed or opened depending on lack of numbers or addition of large number of people by an individual. This is very clear in every religion and scripture. One "goes to" heaven or hell purely on individual merit and actions in his life (karma) and not on any group activity of the accompanying numbers. At any rate, people cannot accompany each other to heaven or hell because they mercifully die at different times and at different locations.

Therefore, logically, it does not matter whether you have converted more people to a particular set of belief or mode of worship or not. Does that mean there should not be any conversion at all? Of course, there should be conversions. And conversion is an absolute necessity, provided it is based on an inner transformation after realisation and conviction to follow a particular way of life

and worship. In strict spiritual sense there must be conversion for progress in spiritual life. Conversion from what to what? From a lower level to a higher level, from a grosser level to a subtler level of spiritual evolution automatically reflected in his attitude and activities. In fact this is the reason for which almost all the religions in one way or another advocate 're-birth' or the second birth of a person in his/her own life. Jesus said "you have to be re-born". Hinduism demands a transformation and a Brahmin is supposed to be born a second time, "Dwija" (meaning born a second time) after realising the ultimate futility of a materialistic lower level of existence based on temporary/sensual values and not on values for eternal life. In fact, this is the conversion which should be adopted by every individual in his own life. We all have to be converted not so much from one type of faith to another nor from one set of rituals to another but from a lower to a higher level. The path may also change from one type or form to another, provided the above goal is achieved through the newly adopted path by an inner transformation as per the person's attitude and approach to life. But, now conversion seems to be arising out of a sub-conscious social insecurity and instinct for survival in both of which the number is important.

The other argument in favour of the so called conversion is that if you have something good yourself you must offer it to someone else. This is certainly true but unless the person you are offering to is transformed or undergone inner evolution, he will not be able to share or experience the joy of the good thing that you have. Therefore, again conversion asks more for an inner evolution than an external show to please someone or for lucrative offers or a mass reaction.

Number may be important for the vote bank of a politician or in a group activity in the social level or a sports event. But it is never important in spiritual matters where the inner transformation is the only criterion for progress in life. Jesus in his own life never "Converted" anyone in the sense of our use of that term today but transformed thousands of lives he touched. In this sense, he certainly converted multitudes of people without hurting anyone. It is also worth while to note that in India, from 6th century BC (the time of Lord Buddha's birth) until about 10th Century AD there have been millions of conversions and re-conversions from Hinduism to Buddhism and vice versa without any ill feeling, hatred or murder whatsoever. Even in recent times Baba Saheb Ambedkar and his followers got converted to Buddhism in thousands without any violence, hatred or ill feeling from any source. This was because it was all spontaneous and hopefully voluntary acceptance of the faith and not forced on any one by any one. Therefore, it is really unnecessary to discuss about conversion if it is genuinely and honestly on the conviction and transformation of a person to a particular path or form of worship. It is purely an individual decision, based on

conviction and a call from the inner voice. Mass conversion from any religion to another, therefore, assumes a farcial status.

In the author's view therefore, conversion is a non-issue and has been there in India for the last 2500 years. The Hindus should be reminded that Hinduism has not died because of these conversions over last 2500 years nor will it ever die for the next 5000 years, because its values are based on a perennial philosophy and principles of a much deeper understanding of life and God. It is in fact a way of life and an attitude to life and the creation. A religion survives or dies, flourishes or perishes, by its inherent strength or weakness and not by the number it carries under its banner. All the major religions of the world have survived because of their strength. All barbaric religions like witchcraft, sorcery, etc. have disappeared (except in isolated pockets) because of their inherent weaknesses. If Hinduism has survived for more than 5000 years it is because of its vision and understanding of life and creation and also for advocating the transformation of life based on perennial values. If Christianity has survived 2000 years it is because of the message of love, compassion and kindness which was spread by the very embodiment of these exalted attributes of man in the Son of Man, Jesus Christ. If Islam has survived 1400 years it is because of social justice and dignity of every human being as propagated by its founder Prophet Mohammed whose life was an example to emulate in learning sacrifice for a higher cause and concern for fellow human beings. If Buddhism & Jainism have survived (both these religions do not believe in God), it is because of their profound faith in non-violence, non-hatred and love for peace. In fact, Indians should be proud that they are the only Nation in the world whose country has given birth to four major religions viz Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism and also has welcomed four other major religions into their own country viz Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. No other country in the world has this proud privilege and enviable record of religious confluence and tolerance. Therefore, Indians do not need a lesson from anyone else in religious tolerance. It is sad that when Arch Bishop of Delhi and Shahi Imam of Jama Masjid joined at a rally at Delhi recently, they did not take a Hindu leader with them. The author is reasonably certain that there are many Hindus who would have joined this rally without any hesitation. Let us not widen the great divide in our sub-conscious psyche. "Unity and not further division" should be our motto.

Lastly, the author wishes to conclude this piece by quoting one of the greatest saints of modern times, Swami Vivekananda who, in Sep 1893, at the Parliament of Religions in Chicago declared:

"Do I wish that the Christian would become Hindu? God forbid. Do I wish that the Hindu or Buddhist would become

Christian? God forbid....The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth....If the Parliament of Religion has shown anything to the world it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity, and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the fact of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written, in spite of resistance: 'Help and not Fight', 'Assimilation and not Destruction', 'Harmony and Peace and not Dissension'....

The Guru of Swami Vivekananda, Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa adopted in his own life Christianity and Islam and followed their modes of worship and ultimately declared that all faiths and paths lead to the same goal which Vivekananda beautifully described in his first address to the Parliament of Religions" on 11th September 1893. Quoting from the ancient Hindu hymn, he said, "As the different streams having their sources in different places all mingle their water in the sea, so, O Lord, the different paths which men take through different tendencies, various though they appear, crooked or straight, all lead to Thee...." The present convention, which is one of the most august assemblies ever held, is in itself a vindication, a declaration to the world of the wonderful doctrine preached in the Gita : "Whosoever comes to Me, through whatsoever form, I reach him; all men are struggling through paths which in the end lead to Me". Sectarianism, bigotry and its horrible descendant,

fanaticism, have long possessed this beautiful earth. They have filled the earth with violence, drenched it often and often with human blood, destroyed civilization and sent whole nations to despair. Had it not been for these horrible demons, human society would be far more advanced that it is now..." How relevant are Swamiji's words even today!!

Let us all 'convert' ourselves as well as each other every day by transforming as much and as many as possible in true spiritual sense. This is the best way we can bring spiritual joy and peace in our life. The Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi, when asked about his message to others, simply said" "My life is my message". This was the most profound message given by any leader, spiritual or political. Let our lives be our messages. He also said on one occasion while opening a Rose show at Delhi "The Rose does not preach. It simply gives its fragrance". Mrs Staines, the noble wife of the slain Australian missionary, has given the best fragrance of a spiritual life by asking for forgiveness for the people who committed the heinous crime of burning to death her husband and two young sons. "An eye for an eye would end up in the whole world becoming blind" said the Mahatma in Biblical Spirit.

Let us heal these deep cancerous wounds afflicting our Nation with prayers today. May the good Lord bless us with the wisdom and good sense of disseminating the fragrance of spiritual life in our country, embracing each human being with love, compassion and concern in the name of God who is the Father of all of us. Let mankind progress forward with a truly spiritual vision and not destroy itself with violence and hatred in the name of so called Religion. The spirit and language of every religion is one simple word, "LOVE", and never hatred.

Dr. Kabi Prasad Misra is a heart specialist associated with the Apollo Hospital, Madras. He takes an active interest in social issues.



Satya Das: An Interview

Satya Das, a Canadian Oriya, and a journalist, writer, and analyst has published his first book, *Dispatches from a Borderless World* which has been very well received both in Canada and elsewhere. The book portrays societies in transitions, as the progress of the global economy and the communications revolution shatters the notion of borders between people, cultures, and nations. The search for identity, both personal and national, in this new world is a recurring theme in this collection of perceptive dispatches and essays. Based on the author's extensive world travels and his columns for the *Edmonton Journal*, *Dispatches from a Borderless World* chronicles the end of old ways and traditions, and the uncertain beginnings of new ones. Judy Schultz writes: "Satya Das writes about a world where entire cultures are caught in the ebb and flow of a new global economy. This territory is wide-ranging—Asia, Europe, his home turf, Canada. In this collection of thoughtful, compassionate essays, he examines the human cost of the emerging social and economic order." The following interview was conducted by the Editor at Satya Das' book

launch at the Chapters Bookstore in Toronto.

Mr. Das, how long have you been in Canada?

I came at the age of 12 and have lived here for the last 31 years, mostly at Edmonton.

The title of your book, *Dispatches from a Borderless World*, suggests that you are widely travelled.

Oh, yes! I've travelled widely but always came back to Canada. I've been to China, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, England among other places. I really try to consider myself a global citizen, a citizen of the planet, and most of that comes from my own upbringing which was very much in a Gandhian tradition, and also from the position of Hindu philosophy in which you believe that there are many different aspects of searching for the same ultimate reality. And in that search, we do indeed live not in just a borderless world, but in a borderless universe, where distinctions are essentially illusions and there is a buy and sell of what I would call 'common humanity.'

How would you account for your choice to write on this theme [borderless world]?

It really has very much to do with my life and my observations. I've been greatly distressed by blood-boundaries, ethnic boundaries, societal boundaries because they are the root of violence. And when I study Gandhi's teachings about non-violence and imagine how they may be carried forward, it seems to me that the best way is to build civil societies, societies based on freedom and choice, compassion and dignity, all of those things in one package in a world with as few other borders as possible. Because without non-violence and compassion, which are the two basic Gandhian teachings, we really are doomed to a history of continuing bloodshed.

At one level I can understand why you get moved by bloodshed, suffering, physical humiliation, and violence and how this prompts and provokes you to approach all these issues from a common humanitarian perspective. But, from another level, the idea of a borderless world also implies globalization, a moderate (or high) level of global economic

interdependence and integration. How much of the latter do you think gets into your idea of a borderless world?

Well, it's a response to that because the reality of the economically borderless world is upon us, it's with us, and it's going to grow. What I'm arguing for is that we are not going to be sustained by economics alone and unless the notions of borderlessness also lead to cultural mingling and cultural interaction and a better understanding between peoples and societies, there is again a potential for conflict and violence because if you act by the precepts of one culture toward another and expect the foreign culture to behave to you according to your experience it's a foolish way to proceed. What I'm very much concerned about and what I've tried to reflect in my writing is that there should be a notion of cultural influence and cultural sharing and that it should flow both ways, that unlike the colonial eras where the unilateral imposition of a certain world order that there are many things that humans can learn from each other and if the interaction becomes human at the individual level, it's much harder to kill or hate somebody you know, it's much harder to demonize a friend. That's really the level we have to get to. If we don't do that, if it's economics alone, and economics is the only thing that counts, there will be resentment and conflict all over the place.

In sum, what you are trying to say is that cultures are in a state of flux, and that you also believe in some sense of acculturation, of people growing up within cultures and cultures growing and intermingling with each other...

I'm talking about permeable boundaries; I'm not saying boundaries shouldn't exist, I'm not saying that a culture that has a 5000 year old tradition should suddenly throw itself open to consumerism. But if you have permeable boundaries, you should be able to move through them freely while respecting the fact that they exist and that too as a form of borderlessness.

In relation to what you say, in the world around me, I notice two things. On the one hand and in an optimistic note, we see people networking globally, a resurgence in democratic ideals, of a renewed faith and emphasis on global human rights. However, on the other hand, and that is a sad aspect, we witness internecine wars and battles being fought out on ethnic and racial lines and some of us— Canadian and American citizens— who proudly like to be associated with ideas of global citizenship are instrumental in creating new borders and boundaries, most recently in Yugoslavia.

And that's the paradox that I find that the erection of blood boundaries is almost a response to the global economics and to the march of global economy and that one of the ways in which you define your difference is by seeking a racially or ethnically pure state where you pretend that no outside forces can permeate. It's sad, but I hope it is an evolutionary reaction because I think that blood boundaries again are a reversion to the sort of tribalism that has characterized human relationship for the longest time and perhaps are exacerbated or put into greater focus by the emergence of a global economy. But how does one mitigate those factors? Surely, one mitigates them by cultural accommodation. The difficulty with former Yugoslavia, as a political scientist you will agree, is that Marshal Tito was the only one who could hold it together because he molded it in a certain image, but the old hatreds were never erased; the blood boundaries were always there, they have only been suppressed. And for me to demonize only one side of the Balkans is quite...

In certain pages of your book I notice that there is some celebration of individual rights, say, a universalized version of human rights. How would you connect this belief to actual events where people around the world are demanding a set of non-negotiable cultural rights? For instance, people in certain parts of the world want to be governed by divine laws and not secular laws?

Yes, but the interesting thing is to consider where it comes from. As John Humphrey said and all the framers of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights agreed, this flows from human experience; it's not an imposition, or human creation. In fact, one of the sources that Humphrey and other creators that were multinational drew from were their own religious traditions: when they searched the root of every major religious tradition, they found compassion, dignity, non-violence, and universal love, and love of the higher defined entity as the commonality of all religions and they are the core values of the universal declaration and they are the values that go through it. So, in a sense, if you are saying that I don't accept the universal declaration of human rights, you are saying that I reject five millennia of human experience.

Closer home you know that Quebec is demanding a distinct society status within Canada. Wouldn't you agree that the Quebecois do indeed deserve a distinct recognition of their separate culture?

Of course, they do. I mean Quebecois deserve equality for just what their distinct society is really all about. When you look at the core of what a distinct society is, it's a matter of equals not feeling inferior. But essentially when you look at it, that's also a reaction to the fact that Canada is not the first post-modern, but a trans-modern state. That Canada moves beyond modernity, and the binding experience of being Canadian is a constitution, a citizenship, and a passport. We have created the borderless world in this country. This is a country where there is cultural mingling, its not enforced, its not legislated, it happens because of a deliberate policy choice taken years ago to invite the world to come and make a life in this country and become Canadians. And living in Toronto you can obviously see that. So, on the one hand, you have a 21st century matrix here—a model the world might wish to imitate— and, on the other, you have a distinct and strong 19th century European-style definition of nation, *la nation*, the nation being the people. So, you really are trying to establish boundaries around a culture, and what you are seeing in Canada is the clash between a 19th century European avocation of a territorially defined cultural boundary as a nation-state would be made in a trans-modern world where all those concepts have now become extinct and so you have this 19th century encore within an emerging 21st century sensibility. And Quebec itself is not immune to these changes, their world too is becoming borderless, as the colours of francophone immigration change.

You sound impressive. I want you to address something different now. Do you think it's easier to be cosmopolitan living in this part of the world?

Oh, much more so, yes! That's why I keep on saying that Canada is a model for the world to look at, not to adapt. But look at how we have made a country, where people are living together, not just tolerating, but actually celebrating the fact they live together in diversity. That's a counter to the common human experience of five millennia.

How would you relate yourself to the differences that divide the Indian society?

Well, India is going through its first evolution of real democracy. One can say that in the first forty-four years of Indian independence were transitions from elitist rule, and now elitism has given away to the birth of a more broadly-based society, democracy, and power-sharing and that is causing all sorts of pains. One of the pains associated with this is fascism, pure and simple, in which religious causes are used to persecute Christians who have been in India since long, and to persecute other minority groups. In the end, however, the people will be wise enough to reject all that.

What do you think of the caste distinctions in India?
I can't relate myself to that at all. As Gandhiji said, we are all children of God and we are all brothers and sisters and that's how I look at the whole of the world, not just India.

What message do you have for the younger generation of Oriyas?

Love each other, be open to other cultures and other experiences, practise and live a life of compassion.

Dispatches from a Borderless World



Satya Das

A TRANSITION

SOMESH DASH

Laughter, hugging, kissing, embracing,
All the facets of effective merry-making.
Slaps, pushes, and high-fives exchanged by pals,
Tears, embraces, and smiles worn by the gals.

Amidst this fanciful exchange of compliments,
The transparent sky suddenly becomes opaque.
Mother Nature itself applauds and cheers,
The boys that were and the men that will be.

When those small feet first entered the classroom,
They withered at the sight of larger feet.
As those feet walk upon the stage now,
Hundreds of little feet shake and quiver.

The brains, athletes, preps, and cheerleaders,
Have converged for a final salute.
To the roads of the future that shall lead them all,
Onto different paths, some that never cross again.

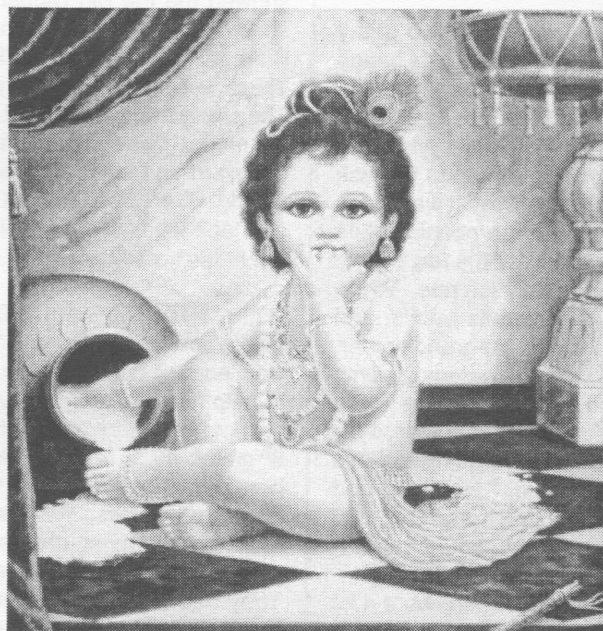
Yet these men and women shall retract their steps one day,
Some that were will be no longer,
The earth shall welcome the reunion,
Of those who shared the days of youth.

Somesh Dash is 19 years old and attends the University of California, Berkeley.. He wrote this poem at his high-school graduation. He is the son of Jnana Ranjan and Sweta Padma Dash of San Jose, California.



Artist: Shriharsha Shukla, 20 Years, Orissa
Courtesy: Family of Disabled

growing up



*I grow in worth, and wit, and sense.
- Lord Tennyson*

My India Trip

SUMAN PANDA

My family and I went on a trip to India on February 9, 1999. It was my second trip and we went on my birth day. I don't remember anything from my first trip because I was only one year old. I was scared about going because when I told the Indian kids in my class that I was going to India, they told me I would hate it and that India was stinky. I was also scared because I did not know anybody there.

After flying for a long time we landed in Calcutta. I was really surprised because there were palm trees everywhere and it seemed very different. The worst part of getting off the plane was the heat. It was very hot and humid. When we got off the plane in Calcutta, we went on a new plane to Bhubaneswar. It was an Indian Airlines plane and for a snack they said they were going to serve refreshments and sweets. I thought refreshments meant something like coke or a pop so I was really mad when they gave me water to drink with my snack. After the snacks were finished we landed in Bhubaneswar.

When we got off the Indian Airlines, I met two of my uncles (my mom's cousins) and my cousin Mama. I was happy that I finally made it to India. On the way to my mom's house in Cuttack, we took a taxi. The seats in the taxi were really high and the driver drove really fast because they didn't have any police cars on the road. My favorite part of the trip to Cuttack was counting all the cows and bulls along the way. It was funny to see the cows walking on the streets with the people, bikes and cars. I tried to reach out and pet a cow near the taxi but my Mommy yelled at me not to. That was a really fun ride. When we finally got to the house, all my grandparents, aunts, and uncles were waiting for me. I also saw my great-grandmother. I remembered her from when she was visiting my grandparents in Nashville. They all spoke in English with me but they spoke it really slow. Later that evening we went to visit another of my Mommy's uncles (her Mamu) because he was going to have heart surgery. Because of the time change, I was tired and very cranky when we were there. Even though it was only 6:00 p.m., it felt like it was midnight. I was also very bored there.

The next day we went to the stores. There were a lot of stores and they did not have doors and people kept walking in and out. The jewelry store we went to was really pretty with lots of jewelry. We stopped at a drink store and they did not have coke, but they had Fanta, Miranda, Limca and Thumbs-Up. I didn't like Thumbs-Up. It tasted funny so I tried the orange Miranda. This became my favorite drink in India. Going shopping in an Auto-ricksaw was fun. My Mommy and Daddy kept yelling for me to hold on tight and I would sometimes let go to scare them.

Later that afternoon my Mommy, Daddy, sister Poonam, two grandmothers, two grandfathers and my two uncles drove to my Daddy's Village. His village is called "Adheigundi" and it took us over 3 hours to get there. I fell asleep most of the trip. When we finally got there, it was night and very dark because the electricity in the village was not

working. I finally got to meet my cousin Deepali (age 7), my aunt (Bou) and my uncle (Nana) and my grandmother (Ma). I was really surprised when we got there because they had two bullocks. I had never met anyone that had bullocks for pets. The next day we had a lot of fun. We went with Deepali to feed the bullock and Poonam and I fed them cookies. We went across the street next to Deepali's friend's house. Her friend's name is Gita. Gita has a really neat house, it is made of clay and has straw on the roof. I asked my daddy if we could have a neat house like that. We had a lot of fun at Gita's because she put kum-kum on our forehead every night. She made really neat designs that covered most of my forehead and part of my cheeks. Bou painted my feet with a red paint called "alatha." It was so cool I asked her to do it everyday.

During the night we used lantern (they called it "lan-ton") for light because the electricity was gone. It felt like we were camping. I enjoyed stargazing with my daddy and he showed me the Big Dipper and Leo. It was easy to see the stars because there were no streetlights. During the daytime I liked going to the backyard and looking at all the pretty trees. There were mango, papaya, guava, lime, and tamarind trees. The mango trees had a lot of blossoms on them and some of the mango trees had tiny mangos on them. I liked hiking in the backyard and collecting neat things to show my Mommy and Daddy. The house did not have a bathroom inside the house so I took a bath near the well. I used cold water from the well but I didn't care because it was so hot in India.

I usually went to Deepali's tutoring with her. I usually took a book to read or worked on my India trip journal. Deepali was learning the English numbers and her alphabets, so I tried to help her learn. One day I went to school with Deepali and I did not like it there at all. She sent me with Gita, who was in the 8th grade. It was really boring in there. All the kids sat on crowded benches while the teacher talked really loud. The teachers still hit kids with rulers. The teachers took my animal fact book and looked at it. During recess, Gita took me back to Deepali who was at a pond with her friends. I dipped my feet in the pond. They had a big water fountain where you had to push a big handle up and down to get water. I went to Deepali's classroom and had to sit on the floor. The pigeons kept flying in and out. The kids there were rude. They all kept staring at me and saying things I could not understand. They also grabbed my books and started to look at it without asking me first. I was really mad and wanted to cry. It had been a horrible day and I wanted to go back home so Deepali took me back. I never went back to her school again.

One day we went to Mamali's house. She is Deepali's cousin. We played a lot of games and ran around a lot. I couldn't understand what they were saying to me but figured out the rules by watching them. I had taken my water bottle filled with lemon-aide. We took big sips of the lemon-aide and spit it at the cows and also pulled their tails. We had to stop because the person who takes care of the cows yelled at us.

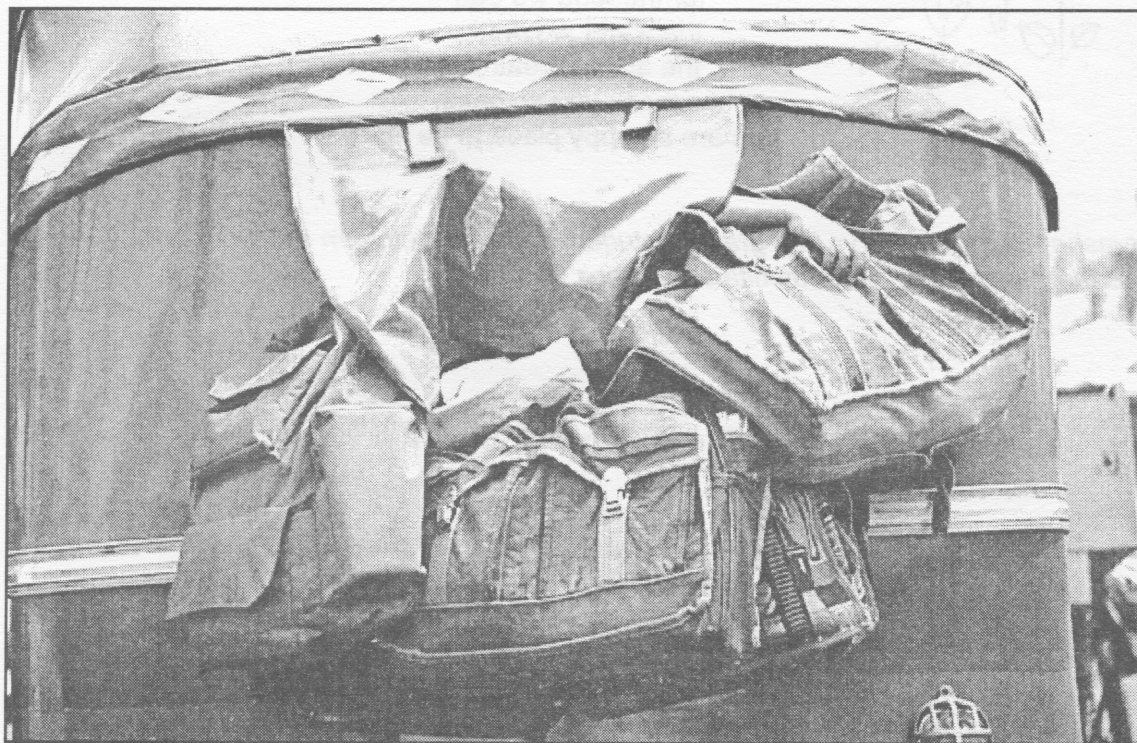
Later we went back to Deepali's house and then we went to pick Barakollis (Indian plum) from my Dad's aunt's house. Deepali taught me how to pick-up kollis and carry in my skirt. We picked a lot of kollis so the bottom of my skirt was heavy. Deepali and I did a lot of fun things together like bothering my grandmother (Ma,) while she took a nap after lunch. We liked to make her yell. The most fun I had was when Deepali and her friends took me to a mango orchard. They taught me how to throw rocks at the trees to get mangos down. All I managed to get from the tree was mango blossoms so we tried to climb up the trees. My Dad saw us doing this and got really mad at me.

The thing I did not like about India was the problem with the pigeons. They were everywhere and kept flying into the house if the door was not closed right away. Every morning I told Poonam to go outside with a stick and yell at the pigeons

and chase them away. She didn't care because she liked carrying a big stick.

The worst part of the trip was leaving the village and going back home. I was very mad because I loved it in India. We had to go back to Cuttack because the only airport in Orissa is in Bhubaneswar. I cried half way to Cuttack because I did not want to leave my Ma and Deepali. I made Ma come to Cuttack with us. The next day I was really sad when we got on the Indian Airlines. I was crying so much that my Daddy had to carry me onto the plane. When we got on the plane in Calcutta, I was mad and sad. I wanted to know why my Dad ever wanted to leave India in the first place. I want to go back again next year but Mommy and Daddy tell me I have to wait another three years. My India trip ended when we flew out of Calcutta.

*Suman Panda is 8 years old and is in the second grade. She is the daughter of Jogesh and Smriti Panda of Michigan. This story is the **prize-winning story** in the children's short story contest. **Congratulations, Suman!***



All the way to school. India

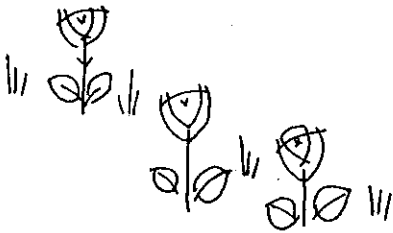
On Earth Day

PRATYASHA ACHARYA

Thank you, earth
for the mountains, valleys, and rivers;
beautiful flowers,
orange, blue, violet,
and marigold too,
colorful butterflies,
chirping birds that nest on you.

Thank you for the blue-blue stream
running through green-green grass;
oh, thank you so much for the
amazing, graceful animals;

for the food we eat,
the water we drink,
the air we breathe,
we thank you so much
you are a happy place to be in.



Pratyasha (Roma) Acharya is a grade 3 student in Jesse Ketchum Public School, Toronto; she is the daughter of Madhusmita and Ashok Acharya.

The Halloween Spook

SANJAY MISRA

Hey witches, witches!
Black cats, ghosts and ditches
And people died over in space.
The goblins and ghouls scare
The skeleton saw the blare
And Frankenstein ran away to another place.

Sanjay Misra lives in Philadelphia with his parents Chandra and Sudhansu Misra.

My Orissa Trip

BAGMI DAS

My family was in a rush. We were leaving for Orissa the next day. Our grandparents had missed us and my dad decided that all of us should go together and spend a month with them. So we were packing to go to Orissa. "Did you pack your big water bottle?" yelled mom. "It's very hot there." I was very excited. I had never been to Orissa after we left India. Dad went through so much trouble in settling down here and finally he got the job he wanted. I was born there but brought up here. I always missed my grandparents. My little brother Nirnay was also very excited. He couldn't pack but he helped me. At the age of four he was very helpful. We were eating snack when my mother said, "I am forgetting many things and I don't know what." I smiled knowing that I haven't forgotten anything and I was fully equipped with my cloths, toothbrush, toothpaste, toys and the biggest smile that the nine-year-old could make. When we were in the aeroplane the flight attendant was Indian. I became friendly to her. She was surprised to find out that it was Nirnay's first time visit. Swati, as she was called tried to speak in Hindi to Nirnaya. He didn't know how to speak in Hindi, but he understood as we used to watch Hindi movies at home. We reached Bombay the next day and then took a flight to Bhubaneswar. When we got out at Bhubaneswar, I took the first glimpse of Orissa after many years. It looked like the Indian railroad shows in public television with many poor people in the streets. My excitement was not there anymore when a diseased person touched me and begged money. Nirnaya didn't like it either. We were very tired all the way to our uncle's house. We were supposed to stay for a while and then go to my dad's village. When we reached in our village all my cousins, aunts, and uncles were there. Everybody carried Nirnaya. Our excitements came back. We played a lot and played in and around the big pond. It was very fun. I started enjoying my village. Sometimes we took trips to the bazaar and ate gulab jamun at the sweet shop.

One day we went to Nandan Kanan. We played in the playground and saw the Bengal tiger in the zoo. When the sun settled it was one of the most beautiful sites that I had ever seen. Once when we were travelling to one of my uncle's house in a different city in the train in the night, something woke me up. I opened my eyes to discover many people surrounding me talking, laughing, singing and smoking right in our reserved compartment. I complained to my dad and he complained to

the people. They finally became quiet after disturbing the people in the train who had been sleeping peacefully. When I got up in the morning to go to the bathroom, I couldn't find a way. People were everywhere sleeping and sitting on the floor. I cried and complained to my Mom and found out that my Mom and auntie hadn't slept the whole night fearing that those people might steal our luggages. I was very upset that there was nobody to talk to and I was angry that those people decided to come to our reserved compartment without having tickets and we paid so much for the tickets not to have goodnight sleep.

After one month we came back to USA. My school had started and I went back to school. When Ms Jones said us to stand in the queue to get out of the room to go to cafeteria for lunch, I realized what I missed in Orissa. Nobody was following any rules there. After we finished lunch we collected our trash and put them in the trashcan. Nobody do that in Orissa. They eat and then throw the trash to the road. Once I walked on a banana peel and fell down. Another time my shoes also became dirty with the dog stool on the road. But coming back home from the school I only had Nirnaya to play with. I missed my cousins and the temples and gulab jamun. I missed my grandparents who always used the word "our Ananya". I again became used to rules in the house and in the school. Although I wanted I could just go to Emma's house and play there, Mom told I should call their house before I go. I felt sad, as it was not easy here to go to my friend's house. I went to many of my cousin Mimi Apa's friends' houses in Orissa and even ate there without asking anybody. But I was happy to be here in USA where people never bothered me with their smoking, begging and diseased people touching me. I also missed cleanliness in Orissa.

Once I asked my Mom if all the Oriya people here could collect some money and help the people in Orissa. Mom told me that many people do that here but they do themselves, not together. According to her when many people are involved, fighting starts. She told me that I could help Orissa better with other kids when we grow up because we had the chance to know all good things of America and Orissa. From that day I am waiting to grow up and earn money and dreaming that together with friends like me we are bringing all good things of Orissa and America together and staying happily everafter.

Bagmi Das is daughter of Naresh and Bigyani Das. Bagmi's hobbies include reading, writing, sports, music, dance, travel and watching movies.

Feelings for my Beloved Country

SROTALINA NAYAK

I started writing this story in the last quarter of April of 1999, during my extended stay in an American society, being fed all the while on an alien culture during the day and by Oriya culture in the night by my parents whom I love very much. It is a piece of juvenility in my life and inspiration for me to converge the two cultures for our generations. I am growing like an American and also growing like an Oriya. The dialectic holds and so do my feelings.

I have always thought of myself as an Oriya, as do my parents and cousins in Orissa. It was not one of those ecclesiastical callings that make good fodder for a lazy biographer to say, "I am an Oriya" all the time. I am proud to be one. As a child, I had never wanted to become an alien but a domestic Oriya. I did learn Indian classical dances, Lord Jagannath Culture and admired the arts of Konark that depict the symbolism of our Sanative Culture.

People who have dug their toes have left a mark in the shifting sands of history and always attracted attention to the great personalities and lesser mortals like us. We are left wondering whether we are really great Oriyas or just roaring egomaniacs. However, Homo sapiens were created solely for this purpose. Our parents must have made us wonder about our culture or else the very existence of our culture would have been threatened. If "we would or could" be earthbound to the homeland then society would not be reduced to sterile rounds of logic and counter-logic of two cultures, and— what a wonder! — nostalgic feelings would vanish.

I enjoy the irony that as 'foreigners' and proud of ourselves, we the Oriyas, are reviving the philosophical rigor of our culture that started with Aryans & Dravidians. Let us be what we are!

Srotalina Nayak lives with her parents Surya and Sujata Nayak in Maryland.

FALL & SPRING

SURAJ MISHRA

Fall is here
Fall is there
Fall is everywhere !!!

Orange, brown, and red leaves are falling from trees
There is a lot of cold breeze
With some morning freeze

Raking leaves is lot of fun
The cleaning of the deck is already done

Halloween is here
I shall collect candies with my friend Sameer.

Spring is here
Spring is there
Spring is everywhere!!!

There is so much fun
And lots of sun

Colorful flowers are blooming
And a lot of birds are chirping
Mother's day is coming

Spring is lot of fun and it is cool
The best thing of all is my Short Pump School !!

Suraj Mishra is 7 years old and in 2nd grade. He lives with his parents Munmaya and Bidu Mishra in Richmond, Virginia.

MY VILLAGE

SOMAN PANIGRAHI

I have been to Orissa three times, the first two times when I was a baby boy, so I remember very little. But I keep hearing about Orissa from my parents. My Aja Aai and Jeje ma also ask us *Kebe puni asuchha?*

Last year I got the opportunity to visit again. My parents are from Baleshwar. In Baleshwar, my favorite places are my Aja Aai's house and my father's village. Now I would like to tell you about my village experience which I enjoyed the most during my last trip. From Calcutta, we took a train to Baleshwar. Everybody was anxiously waiting for our arrival. That day we stayed in Aja Ai's house. The next day, we went to the village by car. The driver was skillfully driving along the crowded streets, avoiding rickshaws, cyclists, pedestrians and sometimes even wandering cows. I closed my eyes when he was over-taking big trucks. I was surprised to see no lane separations on the National Highway!

My father's village is called Barunsing. Barunsing is very different from the cities. No buses, no cars, no trucks can be seen there. There is only a train station called 'Nilagiri Station'. Once we arrived in the village, I did *Mundia* to my elderly relatives. It took me a long time because my father has a large joint family.

One day, we planned to visit Mandagan, a nearby village. Fortunately, that day was *Saraswati Puja*. We woke up early in the morning, took a bath and wore our new clothes. Then we walked through the fields and crossed a small river. My cousin (She came from Australia) and I found two long, flexible sticks. We started cutting weeds by whipping them! It took us one and a half hour to reach there. First we went to the Primary School. The children decorated the school with coloured paper. Even grade one children helped. Everybody was excited. Then we went to the High School. The students there were cutting vegetables for the great feast. They had a big Saraswati statue decorated with flowers and lights. All of us offered flowers (*Pushpanjali*). They also had a loudspeaker playing a Hindi film song called *Dil To Pagal*

Hai. I had no clue what a Hindi film song had to do with *Saraswati Puja*. We walked back to our village. On the way, we stopped by a pond that had palm trees lined in a ring shape around it. We ate oranges, bananas and cucumbers. After I ate, I admired the butterflies, water lilies, herons and the reflection of palm trees in the water.

In the village, each day was exciting for me. I was free to roam around. Good thing I can speak Oriya, so I communicated well with everyone, especially with my Jeje ma. I played cricket with my cousins and other village children. One day, I watched my uncles fishing. They were catching fish with a large net. That day we ate very late but I had fun. Food was wonderful only if it had no pebbles. We drank fresh coconut water (*Paida Pani*). That was much better than the juice we get here in the supermarket. When we didn't have any plan to go anywhere, we played in the backyard which was a big vegetable garden. I got a chance to see different vegetable plants. Jeje ma was always working in the garden. I was excited to see the sunrise across the fields. The air was always fresh in the village. I enjoyed watching bullocks going to the fields. They were decorated with sandalwood paste and with flowers. I also enjoyed watching farmers working in the fields. They were working hard. They didn't have any machines to help them and they didn't even have any shoes. In the evening, it was nice to watch the cattle come back home from the grazing fields. When the sun set, the darkness spread, the stars were bright in the sky and the mosquitoes were out. So we had to sleep under the mosquito net. It was very dark at night. I had to use a flash light to move around. Sometimes I walked into a cat or a mouse. I could hear cats, dogs and even bats.

Everything was different in the village, but I enjoyed it very much. I felt that I belonged to the village. I not only belonged to my family but also to the whole village. I am the son of my parents but a brother or a nephew or a grandson or even a *Mamu* to others. Instead of calling it my father's village, now I say it's MY VILLAGE!

Soman Panigrahi is 8 yrs old, lives in Toronto with his parents, Gagan and Sabita Panigrahi.



I Wish I Had A Dog

BIPLAB DAS

Has anybody imagined life without a doggy? Well I've something to share with you, first why I can't have a dog. I believe (may be I'm wrong) my mother and father are allergic to dogs, because recently I heard both of them sneezing at a pet store, second why I want a dog. I am the only child between my mother and father. So I feel lonely, dogs are very playful companions. So a dog will keep me company in addition to my Gameboy, Nintendo and books. Finally when I'm going to buy a dog. My parents want me to be responsible for the dog, so they gave me a test. (To prove I'm a good pet owner). I had to take care of two fishes and they are doing well for six months but I had to let them go one day as we had to visit my grand parents and cousins in India for a month last December. I passed the test, but I don't know why my parents did not approve still. Oh! They're still treating me like a baby! While in India I discovered something. My grand parents own a dog named TOM. Surprisingly TOM eats man's food. I mean there is no special dog food for TOM. He eats Bhatta, and Tarkari. Tom has been leaving with them for last 11 man-years. I asked my Aai you could name your dog TOM, your peacock Monty and then why did you not name me Mike or Bob or something like that. This time my grand parents are going to talk to my parents for me to have a dog. May be that's why they approved. I don't when I'll get to have a dog, but I'm still waiting patiently and until then I will keep wishing.

Biplab is in 3rd Grade and goes to Bache-Martin School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

A Visit to Nandan Kanan

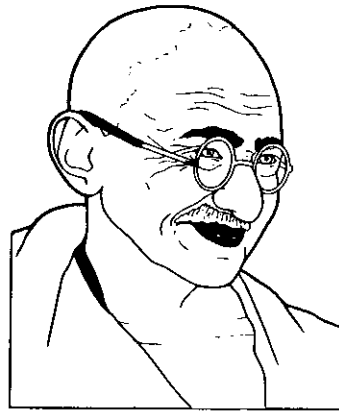
RUTUPARNA SARANGI

I once went to a zoo, Nandan Kanan,
There were many wild animals
And their king too.
All the animals were great,
But I liked the sleek striped tigers the best.
It was good that they were asleep
I was scared that they would bite.
When I saw that the zoo was filthy
I wanted an elephant ride.
The elephant didn't listen to the *Mounth*, his master,
Perhaps he guessed my pride.

Rutuparna Sarangi is 8 years old and is the daughter of Pitambar and Gitu Sarangi.

MAHATMA'S PHILOSOPHY OF NON-VIOLENCE & INDIA'S INDEPENDENCE

SWATI MISHRA



Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi (Gandhiji), who was born on October 2, 1869 in Porbandar, India, had an enormous influence on India's independence from Great Britain. He had great ambitions to free India without fighting a single war or applying a single violent action. He simply did not believe in violence. So then how did he win India's independence from Great Britain? Gandhiji was a very respected spiritual and political leader, often called Mahatma meaning "great soul". As he got older he became more interested in social issues than he was in politics. He believed strongly in democracy. He also had strong thoughts about civil rights. Most importantly, he thought that the way people act is more important than what they achieve. His wife, Kasturba, under the influence of Mahatma, also had strong thoughts about non-violence and many of the same things that Gandhiji also followed. To achieve independence from the British, Gandhiji had two most important agendas: 1) united Indians and teach them the power of non-violence; 2) fight with the British, not with conventional weapons, but with the weapon of non-violence. Gandhiji would sometimes say "Non-violence is a weapon for the brave." Indeed it is true. The weapon of non-violence is extremely powerful to win over the minds of the people.

Gandhiji was the author of several newspapers such as the Young India, Indian Opinion, and Harijan. He was also the author of a booklet called Hind Swaraj or also known as the Indian Home Rule which compared ancient Indian civilization to modern-day civilization. Young India was a weekly newspaper that Gandhiji wrote while he was travelling. He was its founder in 1919. He would often scold the public in the newspaper and teach them the right things to do. He had a lot to tell about his fasting. He also warned them about any dangers. The Indian Opinion was

a weekly newspaper founded in Durban by Gandhiji so he could communicate with the Indians in South Africa. It was printed in four languages: English, Hindi, Tamil, and Gujarati. The articles taught Indians politics and other everyday material that needed to be known. He wanted Indians to understand how to have a better community and how to be more welcoming towards non-Indians. The Harijan had been founded by Gandhiji in 1933 and referred to the untouchables. Upon writing this he set up a new ashram. Harijans are known as the "Children of God." Through these activities and newspapers he taught the Indians the power of non-violence, united them to take leadership, taught them to determine their own destiny and fight against British by non-violent means.

As Gandhiji began working for independence from Britain, he started to give up Western ways because he wanted to guide a life of sobriety and spirituality. By doing this he brought all people to believe in one god and preached Hindu ethics along with Christian, Muslim, and many other ethics. He also set up a number of ashrams open to anybody. There, he taught people good values to go by and how to live a plain and simple life. He taught truth, non-violence, and love. He would often say, "My life is my message." To destroy his efforts, British officers put Gandhiji in jail. He thought it was honourable to be jailed for a just cause. He then threatened to fast to death and was released. Each time, the British would free him because they thought that if he died in prison there would be violence throughout India. Still, Gandhiji often fasted and every Monday he would have what was called a "silent Monday" on which he would be completely silent throughout the whole day. When Gandhiji had his Great Fast of 1924 (which was 21 days with nothing but water) he shocked the nation into peace between the Hindus and

the Muslims but it did not last that long and the riots broke out again. Between 1922 and 1924 Gandhiji was put in prison along with several others for criticizing the British government and not obeying the rules. On March 12, 1930 a civil disobedience campaign began against Great Britain. Gandhiji was chosen by the All-India Trade Congress to commence the demonstrations. The campaign caused riots and put Gandhiji in prison but he still had demands for social reform. He also strongly urged a boycott on British goods. Again in 1942, he was put in jail by the British for not cooperating with England during World War II. While he was jailed he was chosen head of the campaign for India's independence. He was finally released two years later as a major figure of post-war negotiations.

The fact that Gandhiji was a major figure of post-war negotiations led to India's independence from Great Britain. India was independent on August 15, 1947. Gandhiji had freed India with the help of others as his support. Then, when Gandhiji was in New Delhi around the time that violence had erupted between the Hindus

and the Muslims who were having Partition riots, some Hindus were determined to kill him because they were very much angered by his relations with the Muslims. They thought he was being too generous to Muslims. On January 30, 1948 a Hindu extremist fatally shot him three times. Gandhiji had always tried to keep peace with everyone and yet he was struck with violence that led to death. He had once said "I am prepared to die but there is no cause for which I am prepared to kill." Many people around the world, not just Indians, remember Gandhiji as the "father of India". He has set an example for many human beings to follow. Gandhiji will truly be remembered as a "Fighter Without a Sword." His philosophy of non-violence made many believe that violence is wrong - you can achieve a lot more from non-violence and that to gain something you must lose something. What is most important is that he had won himself respect from all over the world by sacrificing himself for others. The very message "non-violence, is a weapon for the brave" became a reality which mobilized the minds of the aggressors leading to Indian independence over 50 years ago. Jayhind!!

Swati Mishra is 12 years old and in 7th grade. She lives with her parents Munmaya & Bidu Mishra in Richmond, Virginia.

BE THANKFUL

ABHISHEK MAHANTI

In 1995, my family and I went to India to visit our relatives. I was 7 years old at the time. On one of our trips, we went to Puttapurthi to see Sai Baba. I was happy because it was a nice and sunny day.

While we were waiting to go see him, I saw a man selling custard apple. I asked my mom to get some so I could eat it. It is my favorite fruit. She said yes. We sat down on a beat up old concrete bench. We devoured the sweet fruit, peeling it so we could eat the tender flesh of the fruit. It was delicious. When we were finished with the fruit, my mom was going to throw the leftovers away so that we could see Sai Baba. We were going to throw the peels away on the road. As we went toward the road, two little boys came and snatched the bag of peels right out of my mom's hand! They ran back to their shack that was made out of wooden poles and some cloth and devoured our leftovers.

I felt sorry for them. It made me feel thankful that everyday I can come home and know that I am safe and have a bed to sleep in. Some people just aren't as lucky as we are. We take the essential things, light, heat, and other things, for granted. Even something as simple as a book which may be a dream come true for an unfortunate person. Next time you turn on a light, or go to sleep in your bed, remember your good luck and be thankful.

Abhishek Mahanti is a 5th grader and lives with parents Surendra and Nibedita Mahanti in East Lansing, Michigan.

A Day I'll Never Forget

AMRUT PATI

Now I know that spending time with my father is a necessity. Even though he is not around on the weekdays (because of his job) I try to get the most out of our weekends. Sure, we have our day when we argue and have "off days" but hey, who doesn't? Anyway, I can remember the day I learned this lesson as if it were yesterday, but I learnt it the hard way.

One day (while I was attending the 6th grade) I hopped off the bus to find that my mom was not waiting for my arrival as usual. Instead, I found my neighbor, Julie, waiting for me and holding my four-year-old brother's hand. As I greeted her, I noticed an upset and worried expression on her face. However, I did not bother asking why as I was excited in anticipation of playing in my neighbor's home.

As we entered Julie's home, she gave me a small snack and let me play on their Sony Playstation with her son, Michael. Within a couple of hours I heard a rumbling noise on the driveway. As I glanced outside I noticed that my mother's bright gold Honda had pulled in. As she took my brother and me home, she started to bawl and her eyes dripped tears like a leaking faucet. Clueless about what was going on, I asked her to tell me why she was crying. She told me to take a seat with my brother on the sofa. I was then informed that everyone was sad because of my father's sudden heart attack. This was not the first time this had happened, but this incident had also occurred five years ago to Dad. It was all *deja vu*. I ran upstairs, locked my self up in my bedroom

and cried for hours. I had lost my appetite and barely got any sleep that evening.

I skipped school the next day and visited my father instead. When I walked into the room, the sight was horrid; to see my dad again lying on a bed sleeping with nose plugs shoved up his nostrils to aid breathing. The nurses, too, had attached intravenous tubes so that his body could consume appropriate nutrients. We all sat there and prayed to God. We wanted God to bless my father so that he survived. After a while, my mom and brother could not take the pain of looking at Dad any more and walked out of the room in agony. I, on the other hand, pulled up a chair and started talking to him. Though he could not really hear me, I told him how home was not the same, how it was dull without him. I talked about how I would do anything to have him home, working, driving around and spending quality time with me like we used to.

He stayed in the hospital for exactly two weeks, right through Christmas break. However the surgery was successful. He came home strong and happy, and for the first time I knew that my dad was a lot more than just ordinary. My dad was, and is, a fighter. He is strong, brave, and faithful to God. However, this event taught me a valuable lesson: anything can happen, anytime, anywhere. My message to you: spend time with those you consider close and the people you care most about. For you never know what may befall you: anytime, anywhere.

Amrut Pati is in the eighth grade and is the son of Mahesh and Nibedita Pati.

My special trip to India

ANAND PADHI

When I was 12 years old, my brother, and I went through a thread ceremony called brataghara in India.

A brataghara symbolizes the coming of adulthood. The concept is Jewish except that one has to dress up in traditional Indian clothing (dhoti and khurta) and sit near a fire while priests are sitting next to you saying chants, shlokas, and mantras. This goes on for a couple hours. After this, everyone: cousins, relatives, friends, and invitees give you gifts. These gifts can range from fifty rupees to handcrafted silver and gold coins. The money is meant for you to use when you get older. After the gifts were handed out, I was finally allowed to eat (you're supposed to fast before your brataghara).

Since I came to the U.S.A. at the age of seven, I don't remember a lot about India. I was forlorn at those times because I wished to be with the people who knew me the best and whom I knew the best, my friends, cousins, family members, relatives, and especially, my grandparents.

On our way to India, stepping off the last step from the plane, and onto the hot gravel, my feeling of yearning vanished like footprints that were there before a tide. I was detached from my physical desires, overwhelmed by just feeling good to be home. The sultry weather had no effect on my body at all. In fact, it actually felt good to feel the warm, humid wind caress my body. I was happy to be back in the country that I was born in and grew up in.

At the time, I knew why we were going to India; I had a brataghara to participate in. Even though I thought that it wasn't such a big deal that I was going to India, I was happy to see all my friends and relatives waiting at the gate on the tiny little airport of my hometown. I felt happy knowing that the people of Bhubaneswar weren't there just to help us with our luggage, but were there to see us and to welcome us back.

We finally rested in my grandparents' house after the whirlwind activity and joy that my brother and I were the center of. I was given more details about our brataghara. Everyone sat down and talked about what the ceremony was about. Suddenly, a feeling of pride, hope, and awe filled me at that moment. It was a cacophony of senses that raged through me, each one tearing me in a different direction. *I was going to become an adult.* I was happy because I would receive many responsibilities to go along with my newfound sense of adulthood. I was sad because I was leaving my childhood behind me, soon to be long forgotten in work. I was nervous and afraid because I wasn't sure if I was up to these responsibilities. Since there were so many thoughts going through my head, at the same time, anyone trying to converse with me at the point in time would've found it entirely impossible.

After much anticipation and preparation, the big day arrived. It was a bright, sunny, and beautiful day. I remember that the first thought in my mind wasn't about trivial things that comes to the mind of a kid when he wakes up. I was thinking more about what I could do to help, since I was going to be an adult. I was full of questions, asking whether if I had to do anything, who's going to be there, and what gifts I would receive after the ceremony was over.

We arrived at the Panthanivas. The place was elaborately decorated and traditional Indian music playing in the background. We met with our friends and relatives, and talked. Then we got dressed for the ceremony. I was excited, but also a little bit nervous because I didn't know if I would have to do anything during the ceremony.

My brother and I were sitting down next to the fire; we thought it was extremely hot and oppressive. The heat was overwhelming us. After the first minute, I was already covered with a fine sheen of sweat, and judging by my brother's restlessness, he was hot too. The priest sat next to us and started chanting mantras and slokas, we didn't understand him at all. I remember the confusion that was etched on my face as I tried to decipher the strange language he was speaking in. I heard a whisper from my side and looked towards it. It turned out to be my mother who was trying to tell me not to worry; I didn't need to understand every word. Still being a kid, I understood quickly and gave up trying to understand and instead looked around at who all were there that day. I yearned to get up and talk to all my friends I saw there, if just to get away from the heat! The only time I looked at the priest was when he either poured ghee or threw something into the fire, and when he leaned forward to put something on my forehead.

After the ceremony was over, I was relieved to be finally cooling down, happy because I was an adult, and because I had endured the extreme heat of the fire for such a long time. I realized then that it was time for the presents and gifts, and a childish part of me returned once again. Even though I barely knew some of the people that gave me presents (there were upwards of a hundred people), I was gleeful to be handed so many rupees and gold rings. I was naturally disappointed when my parents told me that I couldn't wear all my rings or use all the money everyone had given me right then and there, but I understood that they would be put to a greater use later on.

Then, it was time to have lunch. It was magnificent! There were so many types of food that I could barely decide what to eat first. Since I was so hungry, there wasn't any doubt as to what to eat: everything! Even though there were so many types of food, it took me little time to find my favorite amongst them: purees, chicken pulao and salad. I ate so much that the very thought of food made me sick.

That night, as I lay in bed, I was content to think on a full stomach. My mind went through a chain of thoughts like a movie-watcher going through popcorn. "What would I tell my friends about my trip?" "How will they react?" "Will the homesickness come back when I arrive?"

I was also very sad to be leaving my homeland yet again, probably for a longer time. In addition, the homework and the projects were piling up from school. I wiped away the tears that had suddenly formed in the corners of my eyes with a sudden fit of sadness. I was too old to cry like this! Adults don't cry! Then I realized that it's all right to cry, I had my reasons. One, I wouldn't be seeing my relatives, cousins, and grandparents for a couple years. Second, a lot of the friends I had there were moving to other places. And finally, I didn't know when I would see my grandparents again.

As we packed, I thought about the good things about going back to U.S.A. It would be good just to go to school and see my friends and teachers again. It would be even better if I could play basketball. I realized that the good things almost balanced the bad, and I consoled myself. I realized that sulking wasn't going to give me a ticket back to India. I decided to

smile more. It helped me out a lot, even though the first time I smiled after crying was when Alok told me a horrible joke.

A few days later, my family and I were on a plane headed for U.S. On the plane, I stared out into the night sky with the moonlight reflecting ever lightly off the top of the clouds. "So this is what being an adult feels like. I had gone through so many thoughts in such a short period of time that I was tired." Once again depressing thoughts sought to lure me into their murky depths, but there was a ray of hope that lured me to the top again. I couldn't dwell on the past, I was only thirteen years old, and I have a wonderful future ahead of me to look forward to. I shouldn't be feeling sad. I felt lucky that my parents took time off from work and us from school, just so I could participate in a ceremony that not many people in the world get to experience, let alone participate in! I was proud that my parents thought I was that important. I had gone through a *brataghara*, appearing as a boy, leaving as a man.

Even though it was a long time ago, the memory of my *brataghara* gets refreshed every time we go through our photo albums or when we watch the video along with our friends and family.

Anand Padhi lives in Ann Arbor, Michigan and is the son of Biswamitra and Chhabi Padhi.

Childhood Lost

ANANYA JENA

Santa Claus.
The Easter Bunny.
The Toothfairy.
Far-fetched fantasies I once believed.
My imagination stretched and soared into the
World of make believe.
Oblivious to the truth I was.
To me fiction was fact.
Then my wonderland was shattered.
Ruthless reality ripped my soul.
"There is no such thing as Santa Claus, The Easter Bunny,
The Toothfairy," echoed time and time again
through my thoughts.
My fantasies were now tethered, torn, tossed and cast aside.
My whole life has been choked with lies.
Every thing that had some significance
meant nothing anymore.
My innocence, lost forever.
Reality rained on my parade.

Ananya Jena is a 9th grader, goes to school in North Canton, Ohio and is the daughter of Bikram Jena.

The Green-Eyed Monster

RAJESH ACHARYA

There is a green-eyed monster amongst us
It's name is jealousy.
Its evil, monstrous, muddy mouth
Tells us what to believe.
But should you listen to its advice?
Will you be pulled into its evil clutches,
Or will it be your friend?
That's for you to decide when you meet it.
It soon will head for you
It will transform into someone, something you will listen to
Then pick your brain like a woodpecker into a tree
When the monster reaches its climax
When you burst, it will disappear
And leave you to take care of the mess.
It will strike a lot of people you know
But you can help to show them
If the green-eyed monster is good or bad.
Its job is never done
But we must not become it.

Rajesh Acharya is in the eighth grade and lives in Knoxville, TN. He is the son of Suresh and Rashmi Acharya.

Dreams

SUCHIT DASH

In a village far away in Orissa, there lived a small girl named Swapna. The word "Swapna" in Oriya means "dreams". That is exactly what Swapna was, a small girl with very big dreams. Her family was extremely poor. Her father was a rickshaw driver. These rickshaw drivers took people between places by placing them on a seat attached to a bicycle and then moved them along. Swapna's mother was a maid and would clean and wash the houses of rich people in the village. They lived a very hard life.

Three years before, a lady named Mrs. Rath built a school for the children of the poor. This school was located near the slums of the village. The school was created so that the children of poor villagers could be educated at least from 1st grade to 3rd grade. Kids of this age usually aided their mothers or fathers or began working for a small salary.

Swapna's goal was to become a teacher when she got older. She worked very hard on her studies with all the resources that were available to her. Her parents could not afford lamps, so she would usually study in the daytime. During exam times, she would have to study at night also. Her mother usually smuggled candles out of the homes of the rich people's houses she worked for. She gave her daughter these candles with the following advice:

"Swapna, take these candles. Let them show you the light that will give you a better future than mine."

Sometimes the candles would burn out and Swapna would lie awake at night, waiting for sunrise. When the sun rose in the morning, Swapna quickly bathed, got ready and began to study again. Many times, Swapna's father would come back home around this time. He was usually drunk and he yelled so loud that the neighbors would wake up.

Yet Swapna fought through all these difficulties. She had one goal in mind. She wanted to be a teacher. She was doing very well in school. She was the best in the class in math, science, and even English. One day her father came back after work and took Swapna away from her studies.

"Swapna, tomorrow is the last day of the school year isn't it?"

"Yes father."

Swapna's father looked at her for a few seconds. Then he said, "Tomorrow's the last day you'll be going to school. Ever."

Swapna was shocked. All these dreams, all those nights waiting for sunrise, would they be for nothing? There must be something wrong. He was not drunk. Then what seemed to be the reason for this interruption in her education?

"Father, I have to go to school. I want to be a teacher. I have to go to a new school next year where all the fourth graders go."

Swapna's father became very angry.

"Don't you care about us? You only want to do studying for yourself so that you can get a good job and leave us all to die. What a wonderful daughter I have! Did they teach you to think like that in 3rd grade? Then 4th grade will teach you even worse things."

"But father..."

"No buts. I need that money more than you do."

Swapna felt the tears begin to form in her eyes.

"For what father?"

"For my alcohol of course. You know I can't live without it."

Swapna was saddened very much. Her education, her entire life was going to be wasted in exchange for a couple bottles of alcohol.

"Father, I never ask for anything from you or mother. All the other kids play and act naughty all day. But I sit and study all the time. I do all my household chores also. This is the first time I'm asking you for anything. Please let me go to 4th grade. Can't you let me have a decent life? Can't I fulfill my dream?"

"Who taught you all this stupid talk. Forget your dreams. We are poor and we will always be poor. From tomorrow afternoon you will go to work and earn money."

Her father stormed out of the room and Swapna could hear him yell at her mother. Tears came down her face and she could not stop them. Her mother came in, but Swapna wasn't going to listen to anyone. Then she remembered. Mrs. Rath, the lady who lived on the other side of the village, had started this school. She could convince her father that Swapna needed to go to school and not to someone's house to work.

Swapna ran to Mrs. Rath and told her the whole story. When they returned, her father was getting ready to go out for the evening after his dinner. He was probably going to drink. Mrs. Rath and Swapna went up to him. Swapna's father looked at her with his red eyes.

"What do you want, lady?"

"I want you to allow Swapna to go to school and get a education."

"That's easy for the rich people to say. They have the money. We do all the work."

"Its not about the money, sir. I promise you, I will pay for half if you promise to pay for half. It's the best I can do." Mrs. Rath was pretty much begging him now.

"Don't waste your time lady. Swapna is going to work like every other daughter of rickshaw drivers in this village."

"Don't you want your daughter to be successful later in life?" Mrs. Rath asked him.

"This is my family, lady. I decide what is to happen and what is not. All I know is that I need to drink. If I can't drink, then it's not worth it." Swapna's father shouted these words and ran out of the house. Mrs. Rath had tears in her eyes.

"I'm sorry Swapna. I tried to do whatever I could. I guess it didn't work."

She left. Swapna lay on her bed thinking about how boring her life was going to be once school was over tomorrow afternoon. No more school friends, no more books, no more after school activities. She lay awake all night and realized that it was sunrise and school was only two hours away. I better finish reading my textbooks, she thought. That's all the learning I'm going to get for a long time.

Swapna got ready and went to school. She listened to every word the teacher said and made sure during recess that she remembered the lessons perfectly. Mrs. Rath came at the end of school and gave each kid a cookie as a treat for being such good students for the year. When it was Swapna's turn, she went to receive her cookie and did not even look at Mrs. Rath. She was too embarrassed.

As she got her cookie and turned around, she felt a hand placed on her shoulder. It was her father. He looked at her face and wiped the tears out of her eyes. He went up to Mrs. Rath.

"Mrs. Rath, I'm sorry about last night. I don't know how I said such mean things to you. I couldn't drink last night because I felt so guilty for what I was doing. I never had the choice of going to 4th grade. Nobody like you ever came to my dad and told him to put me in the next grade. Maybe that's why I don't think school matters. Maybe if I went to school I could have been rich and away from alcohol. So I've decided that Swapna will be a teacher, not a maid when she gets older. And she will go to 4th grade next year. In fact, here's the money I had planned to spend on alcohol last night. Please take it and use it for her education. I'll try to get more for her by saving up and not drinking."

Swapna couldn't believe it. He was actually letting her go to school. Mrs. Rath went to Swapna and gave her a big hug. Swapna then ran to her father and gave him a big hug.

"Father, this is the best day of my life. Nothing could have made it better."

"Wait Swapna, there is one more thing I need to ask of you before I let you go to school. But it's kind of embarrassing."

Swapna smiled.

"What is it father?"

"Well...could you please come home after school each day and teach me all the things they taught you in school that day. Maybe it could help me get a better job."

"Of course I can father. Of course I can."

Swapna, a 3rd grader, and her father, a rickshaw driver walked home that day.

Many years later, they walked along the same road together, as professor of English at a university and as manager of a shop.

Suchit Dash is 14 years old; he lives in San Jose, CA with parents Jnana and Swetapadma Dash. This story is the prize-winning story in the children's short story contest. Congratulations, Suchit!

ADVENTURES OF WINSTON WORM

ANANYA MISHRA

Winston Worm is looking for adventure. He has his hat. He has his rope. He is heading into the jungle. What will Winston find? Oh-oh! Better look behind you, Winston!

Winston heard "Cheep, Cheep". It was a bird. It was a toucan eating berries. Winston got his rope and roped the toucan. But he untied it because he thought he might need the rope again. Then he went on.

After an hour Winston lay down. Five minutes later he heard footsteps. It was a fisherman who needed bait. He caught Winston. Uh-oh! "But I can escape", thought Winston. When the fisherman opened his hand Winston slithered out and crawled away.

Then Winston found a kaleidoscope. He saw some interesting designs. "I'll keep it in my hat", said Winston. He went on. He suddenly got stuck inside a banana peel. He shouted "Help! Help!". A bear came by and heard his screams. He bent down and opened the banana peel. Winston was free! He climbed up a tree. In thirty seconds he was asleep.

Next morning Winston found two sticks and a rock. "I'll use it as a slingshot", he said. Just then a big, fat elephant came by. "I'm going to squish you if you don't get out of my way", it bellowed. Winston got his slingshot and shot it! It hit the elephant and broke his leg. "It hurts!" the elephant said. He called his mom. She helped him walk home.

After all these adventures Winston was tired and hungry. He missed Ma and Pa. So he went home.

Ananya, daughter of Snigdha and Srikanta Mishra, attends the 1st Grade Talented and Gifted (TAG) program at Pond Springs Elementary in Austin, TX. She loves to read and write, and is also taking Hindustani Classical Music and Bharatanatyam lessons.



When it Rains

Bagmi Das

It might be a very wet day
not a day to play
but a day to stay indoors
doing extra lessons and
sweeping all of the floors

sometime it may be fun
but without the sun
the day is really not done

because you can't run around
until it's dark
and you can't play in sand
with friends in the park
inside the house it feels like
wrapped around with chains
that's what happens when it rains.

Bagmi Das is a sixth grader gifted talented student at Patuxent Valley Middle School, Columbia, Maryland. She is learning Odissi and is the daughter of Naresh and Bigyani Das.

ORIYA " PARBA PARBANI "

PALLAVI PATNAIK

There are different kinds of festivals we celebrate here in Canada and in India. But the festivals of Orissa are quite different and unique in nature. There is a saying in Oriya " Bara Maasare Tera Parba ". The special Parbas or festivals we celebrate at home are Raja, Kumar Purnima, Prathamastami, Ganesh pooja and Saraswati pooja just to name a few.

My favorites are Raja, Kumar Purnima and Prathamastami. We celebrate Raja in the month of June for three days. Usually it starts on 13th of June every year and the first day is called "Saja Baaja". One thing I have observed that all the Oriya parba parbani are celebrated on different dates every year but somehow the Raja falls on either 13th or 14th of June every year, do you know why?

We celebrate all three days of Raja by getting up ready early in the morning, taking a shower and putting new clothes. We eat "Podo Pitha" in the morning and go to school. We get to wear our "Chudi" and "Paunji". Mommy puts "Alta" and "Mahendi" and we also eat a lot of "Meetha Paana". Mommy and Papa take us to the park to play on the swings. It is unfortunate that we can not put a Raja Doli in our backyard. Mommy says that in Raja, we are not supposed to walk on the ground (the mother earth) with bare feet. The last day of this celebration means "Basumati Gadhua". Basumati means "mother earth", and Gadhua means, "to take a bath". The best part of Raja for me is new clothes, Podo Pitha and Paan khiya. We make sure that Dad gets some fresh Paan from Toronto.

The other festival we celebrate is "Kumar Purnima". It teaches me to respect the nature. We get up early in the morning, take a shower and put on new clothes. We have to offer pooja to the "Sun" just before sunrise. We do pooja at the "Tulsi plant" we have at home. We offer five kinds of fruits along with, "Jahni kasi" and "Kakudi kasi". Jahni kasi is like baby

zucchini and kakudi kasi is baby cucumber. We offer pooja to sun and since the school is open we go the school looking forward to the evening. In the evening, we offer pooja to the young moon. Mommy says, "if you do pooja to the old moon you get an old husband". I don't think so. Do you? We enjoy making the "Chanda Chakata". We mix coconut, cucumber, banana, chhena and sugar and make into the shape of a full moon and put them on pumpkin leaves (Mommy makes sure that we save some pumpkin leaves from our vegetable garden and keep them in the refrigerator). After the pooja is over, we eat the Chanda chakata in hiding. We don't see each other while eating our chanda chakata. I wonder why? Then we go looking for the big yellow moon. We sing few lines from "Kumar Pune Janha Go.."

Another festival is Prathamastami the preparation for which starts quite earlier. Mommy plants the raw haldi (Turmeric) in our garden. When leaves come out and is of certain size, mommy puts them in the ziplock bag in the freezer. He collects as many as possible. The day of Prathamastami symbolizes a big celebration for the eldest child of the family. But at our home all three sisters participate in this celebration equally. After getting cleaned up and dressed with new clothes, mommy does "Bandapana" by putting chandan on our forehead. We enjoy the "Enduri Pitha" that mommy makes.

In all of this "Parba Parbani" celebration, whatever the theme may be the two things we like the most are new clothes and a variety of good foods. Mommy says, it is a matter of time when we will truly appreciate and learn the values of our "Parba Parbani". We are very happy and thankful to our parents, who go through all the trouble to teach us our culture, practices and language. As mommy always says, "you can't change who you are, so be proud of who you are."

Pallavi Patnaik is 9 years old and is a grade 4 student in Ottawa, Canada. She is the daughter of Prakash and Pushpa (Ellie) Patnaik.

Letter to a Child : The Story of Kharavela

SRIKANTA MISHRA

Many centuries ago, Orissa was called Kalinga. The people of Kalinga were fiercely independent. They fought many wars to prevent neighboring kings from conquering their land. For a while, Kalinga lost its independence to Magadha, which was a powerful kingdom in North India. But then came Kharavela, the mightiest king Kalinga had ever had. He ruled Kalinga during the middle of the 2nd century B.C - almost 2100 years ago! Kharavela also built the Khandagiri and Udayagiri caves near Bhubaneswar. Let me tell you a few other things about Kharavela, and what was happening in Kalinga during this period.

Kalinga had regained its independence from Magadha under Kharavela's father. However, it was still fairly weak. Several kings from Southern and Western India continued to attack Kalinga and harass its people. The capital city, Kalinga-nagari (near modern-day Bhubaneswar), had almost been destroyed by a major storm. In addition to this, the King of Magadha had stolen the sacred idol of "Kalinga Jina", which belonged to the people of Kalinga. All these were challenges Kharavela faced when he became king. His first concentrated on rebuilding his capital city. While this was being done, Kharavela started building up his army to tackle the neighboring kings. He then went to war with the kings of the Satavahanas,

the Musikas, the Rathikas and the Bhojakas, who were constantly attacking Kalinga, and defeated them. Kharavela's empire extended from River Krishna in the south to River Ganga in the north, and from the Bay of Bengal in the east to the central parts of modern-day Maharashtra in the west. Finally, the people of Kalinga could enjoy a long period of peace and prosperity.

In the eighth year of his reign Kharavela went to war with Magadha. He captured two major cities, and held siege the capital city, Pataliputra (modern-day Patna). It was then that Kharavela heard about the Greek invader, Demetrius, who was coming to attack Magadha. Kharavela was in a big dilemma. Should he join forces with Demetrius to defeat Magadha and take revenge for what Magadha had done to Kalinga? Or should he deal with Magadha later, and first drive the invader Demetrius out of India? Kharavela decided to put the interests of India ahead of Kalinga's interests. He led his army to Mathura to intercept Demetrius. Hearing about Kharavela's change of plan, and his reputation as a powerful warrior, the Greek king chose to withdraw. India had been saved from yet another foreign invasion. Kharavela then returned to Kalinga. Several years later, he finally defeated the king of Magadha and brought back the sacred "Kalinga Jina" idol.

After his big victory over Magadha, Kharavela realized that there were no more wars to fight. Peace had returned to Kalinga. He turned his mind to religious activities. Most of the people in Kalinga were followers of Jainism, a religion similar to Hinduism and Buddhism. However, there was no central place for Jaina monks to gather and perform their religious acts. So Kharavela decided to build a meeting and resting place for the monks. Carved into solid stone more than two thousand years ago, these caves are still here today. They are the Khandagiri and Udayagiri caves that we can visit a few miles away from Bhubaneswar. Kharavela's life history is also carved into a rock edict just outside "Hati-gumpha" (elephant cave) in Udayagiri. It is written in Prakrit, an ancient form of Oriya. Not many people can read it now, but that is how we came to know about Kharavela.

I hope you enjoyed the story of Kharavela. Now for some fun with history. Can you try locating Kharavela's empire on a map of modern-day India? How about finding the cities of Kalinga-nagari, Pataliputra and Mathura? Also, can you figure out how Demetrius might have traveled all the way from Greece to India? That's all for the time being. I look forward to sharing with you other stories from the history of Orissa!

Srikanta Mishra, Editor of the 1997 OSA Souvenir, lives in Austin, Texas.

Lessons From "Panchatantra"

KIRON SENAPATI

There is a lot of wisdom left behind by older generations in India in the form of folk tales. One compilation of such stories, called "Panchatantra", is famous for its lessons and knowledge. This book has lots of stories that I heard as a child and I believe that they have helped me in life. I have compiled the following story from memory and I hope you enjoy it as I did. The teachings from this story are applicable to our lives today, no matter where we live.

The Faithful Mongoose:

Once upon a time there was a lady named Sita who lived in a distant village in India with her year-old baby son Rahul. Sita had a mongoose as a pet. A mongoose is a small beaver-like animal found in India that kills snakes. People in India will keep a mongoose as a pet to protect themselves from poisonous snakes like cobras. One day

Sita left her pet mongoose with Rahul while she went out to the garden. A few minutes later when she returned, she saw the mongoose with blood on its mouth. She panicked and presumed that the mongoose had killed her baby. She immediately hit the little mongoose on its head with a broomstick and the mongoose died on the spot. On entering the house she saw her baby playing happily, and next to the baby was a dead cobra with its head chewed up. The mongoose had actually saved the baby from the snake, but it was too late to save the mongoose. Sita cried sadly and felt sorry that she had killed her loyal mongoose in such haste and without bothering to know the full facts.

The moral of the story is: **"Never act in haste without knowing the truth."**

Kiron Senapati lives in Tampa, Florida, with his wife Sukanya and daughter Gitanjali.

ହେଉ ମନେ ଥରେ...

ନଦୀୟା ବହାରୀ ମହାନ୍ତି

ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଘରର
ପଖାଳ, ପିଠା;
ଏବେତ ତାଙ୍କର
କପାଳ ପଟା ।
ହଜ, ହଜ କାହିଁ
ଲୁଚିଛି ଆଜ;
ହଜଇ ଏଣୁରୀ
ହଜଇ କାଂଜ ।
ଆରଣ୍ୟ ହଜଇ
ହଜେ ଚକ୍‌ଲି;
ମୁଆଁ ପିଠା ହଜେ
ମନକୁ ମାରି ।
ଛୁଞ୍ଚି ପତରର
ନମିଲେ ଦେଖା;
ପିଠାଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ
ସିଏତ ଚୋଖା ।
ନମିଲଇ ସିଝା
କାକରା, ମଝା;
ପେଟକୁ ମନକୁ
କରେ ଯେ ଥାଏ ।
ପୋଡ଼ିପିଠା ପୁଣି
ବୁଡ଼ା ଚକ୍‌ଲି;
ଦେବତା ଯାହାକୁ
ନପାରେ ଭୁଲି ।

ଜଗତର ନାଥ
ଶ୍ରୀ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ;
ବାଟେ ଅଟକାଇ
ଗୁଣ୍ଡିଚା ରଥ ।
ମାଉସୀମା' ଘରେ
ରହୁଛି ଲାଖୁ;
ବୁଡ଼ା ଚକ୍‌ଲିର
ସୁଆଦ ଚାଖୁ ।
ହଳଧର ପ୍ରଭୁ
ବଳଭଦର;
ଦହ ପଖାଳକୁ
କରି ଆଦର !
ନତି ଶାଗ ଦହି
ପଖାଳ ଖାଇ;
ତୁଳସୀ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ
ବରାଜୁ ଥାଇ ।
ଭୁଲିତୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ
ନଜ ଗୌରବ;
ପରଚଜ ଖାଇ
କରୁ ଗରବ !!
ହେଉ ମନ ଥରେ
ତୋ ସ୍ମାରମାନ;
ନଜ ଘରକଥା
ମନକୁ ଆଣ ।

ସ୍ୱୟଂ ନାରାୟଣ
ତୋହର ନେତା;
ତୋ କଳା ସଂସ୍କୃତି
ଜଗତ ଜିତା !!!

Sri Nadiabehari Mohanty is a noted children's writer, is famously known as 'Badabhai' in Shishusansar of All India Radio, Cuttack, and is the founder of 'Dhrubatarā', an institution for children's literature in Orissa.

'GHARE BAHARE'

PRIYANKA PATNAIK

When you step inside our home it gives you the feeling of a home in Orissa. Coming back from school after a long day, with a busload of kids here, it's kind of a shock. The door opens and you step into a whole different world! The first thing, the aroma of Oriya food fills the house, and in an instance I am trapped into another world.

Like always mommy is asking, "What did you do at school today?" and most likely the response is a casual "Nothing!" From that moment on, I have to turn my dial from English to Oriya. It's not that mommy won't understand English, but that's how we are brought up! All of a sudden, I am in a completely different dimension! Everything changes! We, my two younger sisters and me, all start to talk to mommy at the same time. Every now and then mommy reminds us "Talk in Oriya!" It's as if we're not Indo – Canadian Oriya, we are just Oriyas in a typical Oriya family. I still have friends, I still go to a normal school, but this is home.

How I deal with it? Well, there are different ways. But what helped me the most was to know the symbolism of Hinduism: the symbol of Ganesh. He always sits with one leg tucked in. We hear, see and observe all that is out in our world. But what we believe in is the "value". The value is ours, tucked inside our heart and mind and that rules! There is no force or friends that can tempt me to do things that we as a family believe in not doing.

I have just entered the so-called 'Teenage' era. I see a lot of things that my peers do or don't do. But, as an Oriya we have our values, our very different language, and last but not the least is FOOD! Even our festivities

are unique: Raja, Kumar Purnima, Prathama Asthami, Ganesh Puja, Saraswati Puja and many more. The "Habisha Daali" of Kartika is so yummy. We have so much to celebrate and we have celebrations almost every month. Savitri Amavasya is coming up and we are very much looking forward to that day. Oops! We kids don't observe that day yet, but we do know the significance.

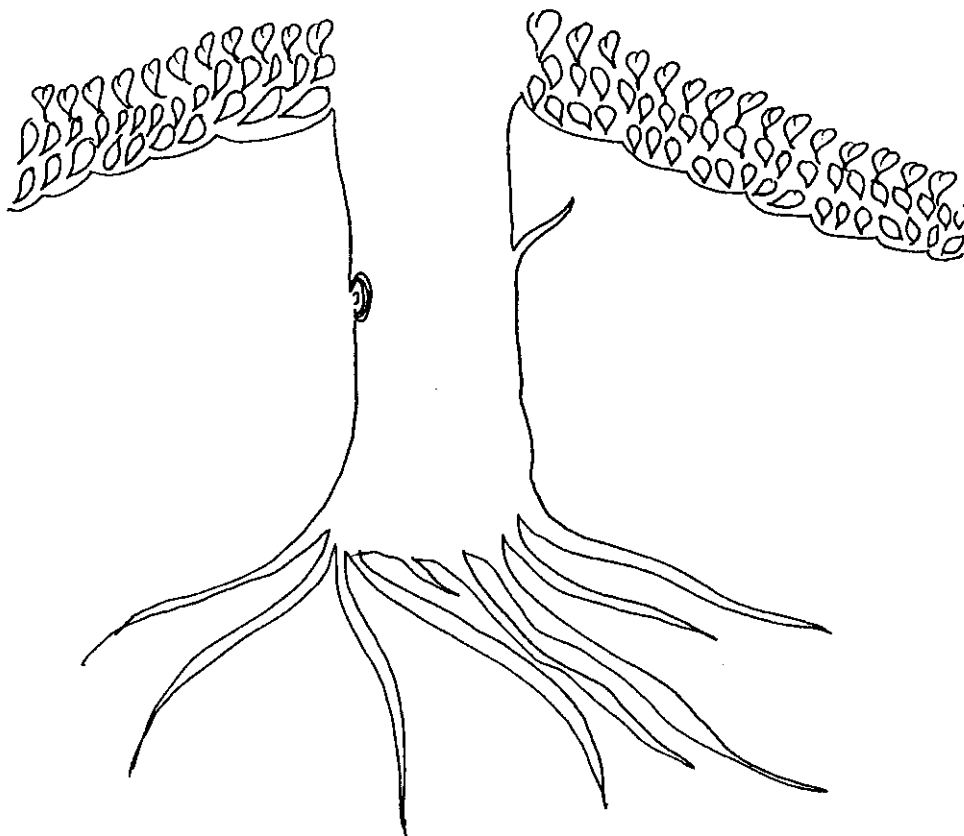
We speak Oriya at home, write to Aai, Aja and Bou (Jeje Maa) and also read small stories in Oriya. We love eating Podo Pitha, Chakuli Pitha, Aarisha, Kakara, Manda, Karanji and Enduri Pitha. Just think who has so many varieties of Pithas! And how can you ignore the temptation of eating Pakhala with Sukhua and Aaloo Bhaja!

All this makes me what I am today. I am proud of myself because I have the ability to read, write and speak Oriya. But to my disbelief, there are a lot of young oriya out there that are not encouraged to keep their oriya heritage. We are fortunate that in Canada, we live in a multicultural and multi racial society with ample of opportunities to keep our heritage alive.

About "Bahare" (outside), it is a completely different world. I hear from my own friends that their parents are getting separated, other kids having problems with drugs, depression, dropping out of school and getting bored with life. There is peer pressure of doing things such as going to movies alone, hanging out in the mall in-groups and sneaking out on parents. Sometimes I wonder, if each of us go back to our own heritage, it may offer us an alternate way thinking and solutions to all our problems! May be !!

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our roots



My Oriya Roots - A Personal Diary

BIJOY MISRA

In a society of many cultures and many ethnicities, it's always natural for people to ask us about our roots. In Indian tradition, the concept of roots and genealogy is not given the level of importance as it is given in the western society. By culture, the Indian society believes that life is eternal and hence any chance association at any time is only a small episode in the large panorama of eternity. However, on a more earthly point of view, one perceives small worlds and feels that he/she is part of a small group of people who follow particular traditions or speak a particular language. The latter is the story of Orissa and I attempt to summarize my personal observations about my roots in this essay.

Odra, Kalinga, Utkala, Oriya language, Orissa

My native area is now called Orissa and has been previously called Odra, Kalinga and Utkala in the past. The original name Odra was because of the vast areas of Java flowers that grew in the land. People who lived in the land were called Odras and were skilled archers. They were agriculturists and they participated in various wars. Gradually the southern part of the area came to be known as Kalinga, since people there developed various art forms. The Kalingans were sailors and highly independent. They were known to have blocked the ambitious plan of Emperor Ashoka in 3rd century BC. With their valor and strength, they developed a strong nation and created an independent and artful culture. The temple building commenced in Bhubaneswara in about 6th century AD and my ancestral family was invited from Kanauj to come to Orissa for the establishment of great *Sakti* temple of Biraja around 800 AD. Gradually it became the congregating ground for many other people and by about 1000 AD, the area had gained strong eminence as a center of knowledge, research, poetry, religion and construction. Literature of the time cites it with a geographical name of Utkala.

1000 AD also happens to be a milestone for the development of various languages and scripts around the world. Along with many other Indian and European languages, this time also saw the development of the Odia language. Odia was probably the name the locals called themselves. The name has stuck and has been anglicized to Oriya when the British ruled the area in the nineteenth century. Oriya language is recognized as an independent Indo-European language with its specific structure and script. While the word structure borrows heavily from Sanskrit, the composition and grammar is more colloquial.

There is a good mix of words which are of local origin and seem to suggest themselves in Burma and Indonesia. The latter corroborates the continued trade between these far away lands and the Kalingans. Assamese, Oriya and Bengali seem to be a triad of languages that probably had parallel development from linguistic point of view. Oriya script however differs strongly from the Assamese and Bengali, and points to a southern influence. The script uses rounded structures and were tuned to be written on palm leaves, hence it is probably of older origin.

While the Oriya literature from 15th to 18th century attained a high plateau, the strong conservatism in the area was seen adversely by the Mughals and the British. Because of its resistance to Mughal and British expansions, the area was left unconnected and was taken over by the Marathas for a hundred years. Eventually it was annexed to British India in 1803 and was ruled by remote administrative officials from Calcutta and Patna. Rejuvenation of Oriya nationalism occurred in late nineteenth century and eventually Orissa became an independent entity on April 1, 1936. The current boundary of the state was laid out in 1955 on the basis of Oriya speaking people identified through an official census. About twenty percent of the tracts remained outside the boundaries and was a matter of bitter contention during our young days in the 1950's.

Oriya Literature

Because of its stability and wealth, the region of Orissa has been a place of literary development for a long time. Many of the early Buddhist and Jaina monks received patronage and some major works were written on the land. While the original vedic poetry developed in north India, the late additions to the Atharva veda were developed in Orissa. The town of Puri and its environs have been a seat of Sanskrit scholarship from the vedic times. From the later achievements it would appear that there were strong contributions in mathematics, astronomy and engineering. The evidence has been circumstantial and not much research in excavating and procuring new information has been done. It's a duty for the future generations.,

The Oriya script came to its fullness in 15th century AD and Sarala Dasa of coastal Jhankada has been known to be the most prolific early writer in Oriya. He set the tone of the language for its constructs and rhythm. Such

constructs continue to be used until the present time. Given his own statement that he never went to school, one would imagine that the average conversational style of the language must have been of high calibre at the time. A period of devotional poetry for two hundred years set the basis of the Oriya society and its values. Jagannatha Dasa, Balarama Dasa and Achyutananda Dasa have been great Vaishnava poets. Late seventeenth century brought the melody and music to Oriya poetry that we appreciate today. The pioneering efforts were by Dinakrushna Dasa and Upendra Bhanja. These lyrics form the basis of Odissi music and give it the stance as an independent form of classical music. Upendra Bhanja was a poet of words and metres and his voluminous contributions are unparalleled in Indian literature. I enjoyed reading these poets when I was young, but some of the words were difficult. There is a whole mine of research waiting to be done to create a full story of the development of Oriya culture based on these writings.

In school, we were fond of the nineteenth century writers: Fakirmohan Senapati, Radhanath Ray, Madhusudan Rao and Gangadhar Meher. Fakirmohan wrote nice prose with great humor, Radhanath was powerful with his words, Madhusudan was simple and Gangadhar was lyrical. We enjoyed reciting and singing the poems. We would also read compositions of later writers like Gopabandhu Dash, Madhusudan Das and Nandakishore Bala. A new era poetry has been taking over the Oriya literature in the twentieth century and the beauty and rigor of the old poetry is almost lost. I liked the older rhythmic lyrical ornamental poetry and was also fascinated by the power of the folk poetry. Through the medium of musical drama, social issues could be depicted and instruction could be conveyed. Gradually these open air theaters have been taken indoors and a whole line of Oriya dramas have developed and become popular.

Oriya religion

As children, we would go every week with our mothers to the local *Chandi* temple. We were told that *Chandi* grants wishes that we pray for. We would light a lamp, fold our hands and try to murmur a wish. I had found a lot of people would speak their wishes loudly. Then some other people would speak a language that was not very comprehensible. The situation was different when we would visit the *siva* temple in our own neighborhood. Here one could play longer, sit on the stone bull in front of the temple. The priest gave us special leaves to eat and they tasted herbal. Finally we would take trips to Puri to visit the Sri Jagannatha temple and I would feel very happy with the temple, the ambience and the sea. Food in the Jagannatha temple was also delicious and one felt very happy with the surroundings. Ratha Jatra would be a special festival at Puri and there would be other festivals that we would visit. At home we made special lamp

decorations for Diwali and had a lot of fun with various pujas. Holi was always fun. The swings in summer came next. The *devi* puja in autumn would give us new dresses and bring a lot of noise and festivities to the streets.

To get reprieve from the natural weather events and to get cured from deadly diseases, Orissa has a tradition of resorting to the power of *Sakti*. *Sakti* bases on the principle that the disasters are caused by the ill-will or anger of the natural forces and would get remitted if we pray to *Sakti* with heart. It is believed that the eternal mother *Sati* was divided into fifty-one parts and different limbs fell over different parts in India. Orissa had the navel and so rose the *Sakti* temple at Biraja. The whole process of communication with *Sakti* and obtain results from such communications is called *tantra*, and Orissa has always been a center for tantric studies. In its prime time of sixth century AD, Bhubaneswar had 108 *sakti* temples each associated with a *bhairava*. The principal *Siva* temple at Bhubaneswar was built around 800 AD and is a majestic monument of art. After the temple at Biraja, the temple complex at Puri was built around around 1200 AD. The massive sun temple at Konarka, was built in the next hundred years and was the climax of the Orissa temples.

The modern Oriya religion is based on the theory that Sri Jagannatha is a living power like the *sakti* and is capable of helping the needy. People speak of astonishing miracles and the temple of Puri is one of the principal pilgrim centers of Hindu life. The deities are made out of wood and it's unique that the platform houses two brothers and their sister. The trinity has been interpreted in deep metaphysical ways and new theories evolve as more insight is attained. The wooden deities are buried every twelve years and new deities are installed reliving the faith among the devotees regarding the renewal and rejuvenation. The town of Puri had historic significance for scholarship and had attracted the great sage Sankara to visit in the 8th century AD. One of the four Sankara monasteries is established in Puri and continues as a guardian of Hindu beliefs and customs. The famous religious devotee Sri Ramanuja brought *vaishnava* views to Puri and Sri Chaitanya of Bengal made it his home. Lately, the temple of Jagannatha is treated as a shrine of Vishnu, though the rituals in the temple are tantric and vedic. The deities are treated as human beings and all arrangements are made for their daily living and comfort. The food and various snacks are served sixteen times a day and the quality of preparations is extremely delicious. The principal meals are cooked by steam and food is highly flavorful. Nobody should miss a meal at the Temple if you are at Puri.

Most villages in Orissa have a *siva* temple or a *devi* (*sakti*) temple or a temple for Sri Jagannatha. Some of the larger villages may have all three. It's usual for the villages to visit the temple after a bath and offer flowers to

the deity. Most social celebrations are held in the Temple and sometimes the Temple may have a school attached to it. Difficult areas, deep waters, mountains, waterfalls - all have an associated *devi* and people would tend to pray before undertaking difficult journeys or tasks. I have found that the faith of Oriya people in the principle of supernatural is deep rooted and the invocation is done with extreme sincerity. Beautiful prayers are recited and a lot of devotional worship is exhibited in ordinary settings. The strong undercurrent is that the human happiness is subject to *devi*'s forgiveness and we must always seek to be blessed. Sri Jagannatha is believed to be of assistance to all devotees without any regard to class, race or location. You should keep Sri Jagannatha in your heart, and that brings the devotional empowerment.

Srimad Bhagavatam, written in eleventh century AD, is one of the pre-eminent Hindu religious scriptures. Beautiful rendering of it was done in Oriya by Jagannatha Dasa in early sixteenth century. Oriya Bhagavata is very popular in the villages and the recitation of it has both cultural and religious identity. True happiness is internal and is aroused by devotion becomes the principal message of Srimad Bhagavatam. It champions the life of Sri Krishna and teaches the power of consciousness. Life is infinitely richer and brilliantly alert when it's conscious. Hence the goal of life is to arouse our consciousness of the life force in the universe and draw from it. It's believed that there is an infinite source and every one has a right to his or her share. The development of literature has also brought Ramayana to the socio-religious tradition and I remember spending nights every year to see Ramalila. The episode of Hanuman discovering Sita in a far away land is most memorable to me and I always feel that I would be equally lucky in discovering my lost friends. I learn from Ramayana that my efforts are not as sincere as Hanuman's and if they were, I do discover what I seek.

For children at school, the Ganesha and Saraswati pujas were very popular. We would get up very early on the puja days and go out to pluck flowers. Then massive amounts of flowers would be strung to make garlands and special foods would be prepared to be offered in the puja. We all put on new clothes and prayed in the puja. After finishing puja at home and with some food we would go to schools where we would participate in literary and musical programs. A puja would be done on a well decorated platform and a fine lunch would be served to all. We looked forward to puja every year and it was a tradition to launch a poem or an artwork as an offering in the puja. The older children always acted as "elders" to the younger children at the puja and all learned minor management skills through the process. In my years in high school, we would take the deity in a procession around the town and it was very enjoyable.

Oriya music and dance

From the traditional Oriya literature, it would appear that Oriyas were very musical. A cursory view on the present day society does not give that impression. However, the use of drums and percussion instruments is very popular. The Oriya beats are different than the classical northern or southern Indian beats and are driven by the dance steps that the music usually accompanies. The dance forms are most likely older than the musical tradition and are tantric in origin.

The late research has suggested that the Jaina caves in Bhubaneswara had a dance amphitheater associated with them. Given the use of these caves in 2nd century BC, the use of dance forms in Orissa life seems to be as old. The sixth century temples in Bhubaneswara do have dance forms carved on the temple walls and the carvings on other temples and finally on Konarka temple, makes one wonder about the deep association of dance in religious and social life. Apparently dancers were recruited for the temples and it was a ritualistic honor to perform in front of the deity. This tradition of dancers, called *devadasi*, was prevalent in most temples of India in medieval times. Outside the temple, the dance performance was done by specially trained male dancers called *gotipua*. Odissi dance is fluid, fast and driven by potent mime. Various religious traditions have influenced its growth. However only a few committed dancers and dance teachers have been instrumental in reviving the Odissi dance after India's independence. I have seen some of these dance teachers from close quarters and was always impressed by their utter humility and deep passion for dance.

A percussion instrument that keeps the beat in the dance is called *mardala*, which is a two-sided drum of equal tension. The instrument is also known as *pakhawaj*. This instrument has the ability to create fractional beats and such division has been a characteristic of Odissi music. Traditionally the vocalist would follow the dancer in creating the music and the instrumental musicians would assist the vocalist. While in earlier times of temple rituals, the music was only played in accompaniment to the dance, presently Odissi music is developing as a tradition of its own. The music is sweet and the melody is ornamental in vocal sounds. It takes considerable years of meticulous discipline and training to be a Odissi vocalist. In similar manner, long years of dedication and strong passion for expression becomes necessary to make an Odissi dancer. The exponents are not many, but the number is gradually building. There is no standard text on the subject and hence all training is received from the teachers. Considerable research is necessary to bring out illustrated texts on the subject.

Besides the traditional classical temple dance, Orissa is known for a variety of folk dances that is fun to watch and easy to participate. In tribal areas in west, simple beats of joyful dance is common. An old tradition of martial dance called *chhau* is popular over the northern region. However, the more folk style singing of *kirtan* is seen in all parts of the land. A literary style of interpretation of classical poetry is called *pala*, and is fun to watch. Subtle improvisation of humor in these presentations make the performance enjoyable and entertaining. I personally liked and organized a form of musical theater which is performed on mythological themes. Strong values of bravery, kindness, friendship and love can be shown through the musical metres and the organization of a whole party of it was a thrill. The club named *Sanskriti Vihara* continues to organize these Oriya traditions and one feels proud for the many volunteers who come to participate. In general, one believes that Oriya people like musical culture strongly and would support organized effort to sustain traditions. Efforts to sustain various forms of folk music and dance are a necessary part of the survival of the culture.

Oriya Art

In late November and December, our homes were beautifully decorated with white flowers and motifs painted on the floor. The fresh paint, made out of rice flour and water, had a sparkling beauty. Traditionally this was done at night after all had slept, such that the paint can dry without being trampled. These glorious improvised designs are only samples of rich cultivation of art that the Oriyas have developed over the thousands of years. Vegetable dyes and creation of large canvases of art have been the most important contributions from Orissa besides the huge stone temples. Flour mixed dyes decorate temples, houses, deities, faces and many objects of use. The motifs are traditional and befit the particular occasion. In villages it would appear like a new dress up every month.

Use of vegetable dyes in creating special cotton and silk stains has been a traditional patented endeavor. Unlike gold and silver emboidered clothes, the Oriya weavers use colored fabric to design gorgeous patterns. These individually woven clothes have been a treasure for generations. More intricate designs are done through metal fibres in gold or silver. An Oriya bride is spectacularly dressed up with these designed jewelry matching the patterns in her dress. The dress for the bridegroom is more simple and less colorful. Nevertheless, the designs of the stage and use of color in decorations make an Oriya wedding an eye-catching event. Many of the household utensils are etched with the traditional motifs and bring forth the general sense of art in life.

A special set of playing cards are created in western Orissa, which are individually created from lacquer and color dyes. Taking cues from mythology, these cards

are unique in their miniaturization, lines and curves. Similar miniaturization and excellent calligraphy is done of palm leaves to write manuscripts or make works of art. As we have seen before, various artistic designs converge in the large event of Ratha Jatra where the art and color play as much role as the religious sentiment. Objects of art in wood, ivory and horn are prominently made and displayed in these festive occasions.

Fine filigree work of silver has been the tradition of Cuttack, the place where I grew up. Fine fibres would be obtained from silver blocks by drawing them through small orifices. The artisans would make a charcoal stove and would use heat in creating loops and designs. The whole process of creating jewelry always looked magical. The art and the profession are passed on from father to son and specific designs become trade marks of families. These works are much appreciated in far away countries, but have not seen as much market that they deserve.

Oriya Food

If there is a single cultural attribute that would set apart the Oriya culture from other cultures in India and the world is its food. The variety of food is tremendous and is served plenty. Through a traditional belief, Sri Jagannatha is considered the king of Orissa and being the symbol of God, the offerings to Sri Jagannatha have to be the best in the world. The tradition of the Temple distills out to the Oriya homes, and the making and distribution of savory dishes have been the unique culture in Oriya households.

With grains, lentils, oil seeds and vegetables, the tradition goes to create specific dishes for different seasons. Pancakes of rice, gram-seed and pea-seed flour are popular year around. The aroma of the freshly harvested food is always different, and if done in season, the taste is blissful. Coconut and spices are used in vegetables and various mixes are tried. Vegetables are mostly boiled and well mixed with special recipes for creating a mix. The coastal people eat a lot of fish and boiled fish soup is popular. Sometime they eat goat meat, but beef eating is despised. Rice is the staple diet and various preparations of rice are made. Freshly cooked rice, cooled with water and served with tasty vegetables is extremely popular during the summer season. On special festival days, the intricacy of food preparation increases one hundred percent with various fillings, seasonings, layerings and mixings. The chutneys and pickles can make the food extremely appetizing.

Mangoes in summer season occasionally can replace meals. Mangoes are delicious and plentiful. Bananas are the other popular fruit. But it is the cooked sweets made out of cheese, lentils or oil seeds make Orissa a heaven for the sweet tooth. The large syrupy cheeseballs are indeed out of this world and can be a

meal in itself. The baked moist cheesecakes with nuts made on special occasions are a treat for the young and old. Sweets out of rice and other lentils with added nuts and spices are made on special occasions. Fried cakes and rice pudding are offered in *devi* temples and are consumed by people as a blessing. The weddings and special occasion festivities make a spectacle of Oriya hospitality and we had a lot of fun in eagerly consuming delicious foods on these occasions. The soft cheesecake served with milk at the northern temple of *Gopinath* must be relished to appreciate. The coconut balls and jaggery puffed rice were my personal favorites in Bhubaneswar. My friends from school and I would have cheeseball parties when we won trophies or had special occasion to celebrate. Food is fun!

Oriya Society and the Next Century

Oriyas are a sensitive, straight forward, fun loving and artistic people. A coherence of religious faith and independent tradesmanship has bound the nation for hundreds of years. Lately one finds erosion in its cherished values and lack of pride among its people to maintain the cherished institutions. We must do our best to stem the erosion.

Learned scholars say that the "nine year famine" of 1870's was the turning point in Orissa history. The massive deaths and lack of food for all made people insecure and the current situation is only a reflection of the post-famine psychology and not the grandeur of the heydays of Kalingan empire. However the late Orissa of 1990's sees a neglect of the Oriya language and that could be hurtful to the culture. A language is the backbone of a people's culture and it must be preserved and its literature enhanced. For job and economic reasons, bright young men get proficiency in science and engineering, but neglect to carry enough ability to read and understand the basis of their heritage. Such lack of understanding is unhelpful to their personal identity when such is challenged. It is needless to say that we think best when we think in our own language.

Orissa of the yore was known for massive engineering projects and the brains that went into produce them are similar to ours. We lack organization now to undertake large engineering projects and we must do our best to get organized. The part of Oriya disorganization has been the criticisms of work projects rather than creation of new projects. Our trust in our own ability has gone down and we have to push it high. We are the progenies of great forerunners and we have to take courage from all the diligence and foundations that have been created for us. No big construction gets completed in one's own life time. So we must make all efforts to contribute to the construction rather than be cynical about the lack of quick results.

The next century would wait for a new Orissa with its new young men as torch bearers. The young would be learned, industrious and vigilant to safeguard the treasures of Oriya heritage and help create a society that would boast of the fundamental values of independence and artistic form in Oriya life. Our cultural traditions of music and dance are just beginning to unfold and we would need huge efforts to delineate and authenticate the traditions. We have to unearth a large number of manuscripts and create a historical account of the development of Orissa culture.

The current Orissa is not self-sufficient in its economy and in its goods and services. The new generation has to take steps to exploit the mineral wealth of the area and create power and energy, thus making a better life of its people. Textile, filigree, stone and metal handicrafts have to be encouraged and sold in new markets. Oriyas abroad have a strong role in accomplishing this. Other avenues of income productions through forest goods, fisheries and technical manufacturing have to be attempted. The Oriya entrepreneurial attitude has to be revived.

The financial success without the culture and heritage is hollow and the two must go hand in hand. Massive amounts of Oriya books have to be distributed to libraries and youth organizations, and the Oriya language has to be restored to its pristine glory. All Oriya men and women must learn the language and designate important conversations in the language. Schools of art, music and dance have to be established and systematic disciplined research and training have to be undertaken in various fields of Oriya heritage. It is our responsibility to enhance the traditions that we had the privilege to inherit! The Oriya poet Gopabandhu Dash wrote:

ପୂର୍ବ ପୁରୁଷ ପବିତ୍ର ଶୁଣାନ
ଦେଶର ଜାତିର ଗୌରବ ଜ୍ଞାନ
ପୁଣ୍ୟ ମାତୃଭୂମି, ପୁଣ୍ୟ ଦେବାଳୟ
ଉଦ୍ଧାରିବା ଲାଗି କଲେ ତନୁ ଶୟ
ମାନବ ଜୀବନ ହୁଅଇ ସଫଳ
ଏ ମହା ଦୀକ୍ଷା କି ବୁଝିବ ଉତ୍କଳ?

Let all Oriyas say at the millennium that we understand.

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ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଅବସୟ

ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟଗୁରୁ ଶ୍ରୀ ଗଂଗାଧର ପ୍ରଧାନ

“ଉତ୍କଳେ ଉତ୍କଳ କଳା ପ୍ରବାଦ ରହନ୍ତି
ତାହାକୁ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନା ଅବା କେ କରି ପାରିଛି”

ଜିଳାକୃତିର ଉତ୍କଳ ଭୂମିର ନାମ ଉତ୍କଳ । କାଳକାଳ ଧରି କେତେ କବି, କଳାକାର ଉତ୍କଳ ମାଟି ମମତାରେ ଅନୁପ୍ରାଣିତ ହୋଇଅବତୀର୍ଣ୍ଣ ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି । ଇତିହାସ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ସ୍ମରଣ ରଖି ପାରି ନାହିଁ । ତଥାପି ସେମାନଙ୍କ କାଳଜୟୀ କଳାକୃତି ଉତ୍କଳ ବସରେ ଚିର ଭାସୁର । କଳାର କମନୀୟ ଭୂମି ଉତ୍କଳର ନାଥ ସ୍ୱର୍ଗ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କର ଚଉଷଠି ଉପଚାର ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ମାହାରି ବା ଦେବଦାସୀ ଅନ୍ୟତମ । ସେହି ମାହାରି ଓ ଗୋଟିପୁଅ ନୃତ୍ୟର ସମନ୍ୱୟରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟର ସୃଷ୍ଟି । ଏହି ନୃତ୍ୟ ଦୀର୍ଘ ୫୦ ବର୍ଷ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ତାର ଲାଲିତ୍ୟ, ମାଧୁର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଓ ଭାବାବେଗ ଯୋଗୁଁ ବିଶ୍ୱ ପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧି ଲାଭ କରିବା ସହିତ ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ବାଦନ ଶୈଳୀକୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଭାବେ ପ୍ରଭାବିତ କରିପାରିଛି ସତ, କିନ୍ତୁ ଆମ ରାଜ୍ୟରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ଗୀତ, ନୃତ୍ୟ ଓ ବାଦ୍ୟ ପ୍ରତି ସାଧାରଣ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଧାରଣା ରହୁନାହିଁ । କେବଳ ସତ୍ତା ସମିତି ହେଲେ ବଡ଼ବଡ଼ ନେତା ବା ବିଦେଶୀ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟଟକଙ୍କ ଆଗରେ ଏହି ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ଗୀତ, ନୃତ୍ୟ ଓ ବାଦ୍ୟ ପରିବେଷଣରେ ସାମିତ ହୋଇ ରହୁଛି । ସାଧାରଣ ଲୋକଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ଗୀତ, ନୃତ୍ୟ ଓ ବାଦ୍ୟ ଦୂରେଇ ଗଲା ପରି ମନେ ହେଉଛି । ଏହା ହେଲା ଓଡ଼ିଶାର କଳା । ଓଡ଼ିଶାବାସୀ ଏହି କଳାକୁ ତାଳେ ତାଳେ ବୁଝିଲେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଆଦର ବଢ଼ିବ । ଫଳରେ ସମାଜ ରେ ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଭାବର ଆଦାନ ପ୍ରଦାନ ନିମନ୍ତେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ଏକ ମାଧ୍ୟମ ହେବ । ତାହାହେଲେ ଯାଇ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ଗୀତ, ନୃତ୍ୟ ଓ ବାଦ୍ୟ ତା’ର ସାମାଜିକ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ହାସଲ କରି ପାରିବ ।

ସେ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଗ୍ରାମ୍ୟ ଜୀବନରୁ ସହର ଜୀବନ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଅର୍ଥାତ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରୁ ମହାବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟମାନଙ୍କରେ ନୃତ୍ୟ ସଂଗୀତ ଶିକ୍ଷା କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ ମାନ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଧାରିତ ନ ହୋଇଛି, ସେ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ମାନ ଉନ୍ନତି ହୋଇ ପାରିବ ନାହିଁ । କହିବାର କଥା, ଯେଉଁ ଦିନ ଗାଆଁ ଗହଳିରୁ ରାଜଧାନୀଯାଏଁ ଲୋକେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ କଳାକୁ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରି ପାରିବେ, ସେ ଦିନ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ କଳାର ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ରୂପରେଖ ଚିହ୍ନଟ ହୋଇ ପାରିବ । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ସରକାର ପାଖରେ ଆଧୁନିକ ନୃତ୍ୟ ସଂଗୀତ ଆଦରଣୀୟ ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ୁଛି । ଯେଉଁଦିନ ଲୋକେ ଜୟଦେବ, ଉପେନ୍ଦ୍ର ଭଞ୍ଜ, ଗୋପାଳ କୃଷ୍ଣ, ବନମାଳୀଙ୍କ ଗୀତକୁ ଗାନ କରି ପାରିବେ, ସେହି ଦିନ ଜାଣିବେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଓ ସଂଗୀତ ତା’ର ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟସ୍ଥଳରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଛି ।

ଗତ ୫୦ ବର୍ଷ ଭିତରେ ଯେଉଁ ବିଜ୍ଞାନ ସମ୍ପଦ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟାୟରେ ବହୁ ପଣ୍ଡିତ ଗୁରୁ ଏବଂ ଶିଳ୍ପୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ ଯେଉଁ ଧାରା ନିର୍ଣ୍ଣୟ କରାଯାଇ ଥିଲା, ମୋ ଅନୁଭୂତିରେ ତାହାର ବ୍ୟତିକ୍ରମ ପଡ଼ୁଛି । ମୁଁ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଗତ ଭାବେ କାହାକୁ ଭୁଲ୍ କହିବାକୁ ଦୃଃସାହସ କରୁନାହିଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଅନୁଭବ କରୁଛି ଯେ ଆଜିକାଲି ଓଡ଼ିଶୀରେ ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛାଚାରୀ ଭାଲିଛି । ଯଦି ଏହା ଅବ୍ୟାହତ ରହେ, ତେବେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀକଳାର ପ୍ରଥମ ବଂଶଧରଙ୍କ ଅନ୍ତେ ଏହା ଅନ୍ତଯାବ ଶୂନ୍ୟ ହୋଇଯିବ । ଯାହା ଫଳରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ସଂଗୀତର ଉଚ୍ଚମାନ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତେ ନିମ୍ନମାନରେ ପରିଣତ ହେବ ।

କଥାଟି ହେଲା ଆମ ପୂର୍ବଗୁରୁମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ପ୍ରୀତି ଅଧିକ ଥିଲା । ସେମାନେ କଳା ପାଇଁ ନିଜକୁ ଉତ୍ସର୍ଗ କରି ଦେଇଥିଲେ । ମାତ୍ର ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନର କେତେକ କଳାକାର ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଋଷା ଅପେକ୍ଷା ବୃତ୍ତି ପଛରେ ବେଶୀ ଧାଇଁଛନ୍ତି । ଅନେକ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଗୁରୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ବାହାରିଲେଣି, ଯେଉଁମାନେ ସମ୍ପ୍ରାନ୍ତ ପରିବାର ଔଷ୍ମାନଙ୍କୁ ଏବଂ ବିଦେଶୀମାନଙ୍କୁ କମ୍ ସମୟ ଭିତରେ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦେଇପାରୁଛନ୍ତି । ତା’ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟର ଅପଭ୍ରାଣ ଓ ବିକୃତ ପରିବେଷଣ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ମିଳୁଛି ।

ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟତଃ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନର ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଶିକ୍ଷକମାନେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଗୋଟିଏ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଖୋଲି ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି । ଏହା କିଛି ଖରାପ ନୁହେଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ପରିଚାଳନାର ଯନ୍ତ୍ରଣା ଓ ଢାଳା ଯେ ଅନୁଭବ କରିଥିବ ସେଇ ମାତ୍ର ବୁଝି ପାରିବ । ସେହି ଭୁଲ୍ ମୁଁ କି ମୋର ସ୍ୱସ୍ଥ କଳାକାର ଜୀବନକୁ ନଷ୍ଟ କରି ଦେଇଛି । ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ଗଠନରେ ଏତେ ସମୟ ଯାଏ, ଯାହାକି ଶିକ୍ଷକ ବା ଶିଳ୍ପୀର ସାଧନାରୁ ସମୟ ଅଭାବ ହୋଇ ପଡ଼େ । ଏହା ମୋର ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଗତ ଅନୁଭୂତି । ସେହିପରି ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଅଳ୍ପ କିଛି ଶିକ୍ଷାକରିଥିବା ଶିକ୍ଷକମାନେ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନମାନ ଖୋଲି ଦହଙ୍ଗ ହେଉଛନ୍ତି । ପରାଉଲେ କହନ୍ତି ଆମେ କଅଣ କରିବୁ, ଆମ ରାଜ୍ୟରେସରକାରୀ ବା ବେସରକାରୀ ଭାବେ କୌଣସି ଭଲ ବୁଦ୍ଧିରୀର ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା ନାହିଁ । ବାଧ୍ୟ ହୋଇ ଯେତେ ବିକଳରେ ଚିତ୍ତସନ୍, ଯାତ୍ରା, ସିନେମା ବା ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ଖୋଲି ବଞ୍ଚିବା ଛଡ଼ା ଉପାୟ ନାହିଁ । ତେଣୁ ମୋ ମତରେ ଏଇ ସବୁ ଯୋଗୁଁ ଆମ ରାଜ୍ୟରେ ଆନ୍ତର୍ଜାତିକ ସ୍ତରରେ ସମକକ୍ଷ ଶିଳ୍ପୀ ବା ଶିକ୍ଷକ ତିଆରି ହେବାର ଅଭାବ ପଡ଼ୁଛି ।

ଆଉ ମଧ୍ୟ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ମିଳୁଛି ଅଧିକାଂଶ ଅଭିଭାବକ ନିଜର ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କୁ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦେବା ପାଇଁ ଆଗେଇ ଆସୁଛନ୍ତି ସତ, କିନ୍ତୁ ଗୋଟିଏ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ- ଆଖି ପିଛୁଳାକେ ସେମାନେ ଯେପରି ଗୋଟିଏ ଗୋଟିଏ ଶିକ୍ଷା ବନି ଯିବେ । ଛଅ ମାସ କିମ୍ବା ଆଠ ମାସନୃତ୍ୟ ଶିକ୍ଷା କରିଥିବେ କି ନାହିଁ, ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଅନୁରୋଧ ଚାଲିବ ସଂସ୍କୃତିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମରେ ନୃତ୍ୟ ପରିବେଷଣ କରିବା ପାଇଁ । ପିଲାଟି କେଉଁ ସୋପାନରେ ଅଛି, ତାହା ସେମାନେ ବୁଝିବାକୁ ନାହାନ୍ତି । ନୃତ୍ୟ ଏକ ଦୃଶ୍ୟ କଳା । ସାମାନ୍ୟ ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ମଧ୍ୟ ଏଥିରେ ବାରି ହୋଇ ଯାଏ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଅଧିକାଂଶ ଅଭିଭାବକ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପିଲା ଯେତେ ବିକଳାଙ୍ଗ କଳା ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନ କରୁନା କାହିଁକି ସେଥିକୁ ଖାତିର ନ କରି ସିଧା ସଳଖ ମୁହଁରେ ଚଂଗ ମାରି ହଜାର ହଜାର ଦର୍ଶକଙ୍କ ସମ୍ମୁଖରେ ଛିଡ଼ା କରାଇବା ପାଇଁ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ । କିଛିଟା କରତାଳିରେହିଁ ସେହି ଆନନ୍ଦର ପରିସମାପ୍ତି ହୋଇ ଯାଏ । ଏହା ଫଳରେ କଠୋର ସାଧନା କରି ବିଦ୍ୟା ଶିକ୍ଷାକରିବାକୁ କେହି ମନ ବଳାଇ ନାହାନ୍ତି । ଯେଉଁମାନେ ନିହାଣ ମୁନରେ ପିଟା ହୋଇ ନ ବାହାରୁଛନ୍ତି ସେମାନେ ଅକାଳରେ ଝରିପଡ଼ୁଛନ୍ତି । ସେହି ଅଭିଭାବକମାନଙ୍କୁ ଖୁସି କରାଇବାକୁ ଯାଇ ଆଜିର ନୃତ୍ୟଗୁରୁ ତାର ବିଶିଷ୍ଟ ଶିକ୍ଷାପ୍ରଣାଳୀ ଭୁଲି ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲାଣି ଶସ୍ତ୍ର ନାଆଁ କମାଇବାର ପ୍ରୟାସ । ସେହିପରି ନ କଲେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଦାନାପାଣି ବନ୍ଦ । ଯଦି ଏହି ଭଳି ଚାଲେ, ତେବେ ଆଗାମୀ କିଛି ବର୍ଷ ଭିତରେ ଏହି କଳା ସଂସ୍କୃତି ରୂପେ ବିକଳାଙ୍ଗ ହୋଇ ଯିବ ।

ସ୍ୱର୍ଗତ ପୃଜ୍ୟା ଗୁକୁଣୀ ଦେବୀ ଅରୁଣେଇଙ୍କ ଉଦ୍ୟମରେ ନିର୍ମିତ ମାନ୍ଦ୍ରାଜ କଳାକ୍ଷେତ୍ରର ବିଧିବଦ୍ଧ ନିୟମାବଳୀ ରହିଛି, ଯାହାର ପରିସୀମା ଭିତରେ ଶୃଙ୍ଖଳା ବନ୍ଧ ଜୀବନ ନେଇ ଜଣେ କଳାକାର ଗଡ଼ ଉଠେ । ସେଠାକାର ଅଧ୍ୟୟନରତ ଶିକ୍ଷାଙ୍କୁ ସେଠାକାର ଭାଷା, ଚାଲିଚଳନ, ଖାଦ୍ୟପେୟ, ଅଭ୍ୟାସ ଓ ରୁଚି ସହିତ ନିଜକୁ ସାମିଲ କରି ଦୀର୍ଘ ଛଅ ବର୍ଷ କାଳ କଠୋର ସାଧନା ମନୋଭାବ ନେଇ ବିଦ୍ୟାଶିକ୍ଷା କରିବାକୁ ପଡ଼େ । ଯଦି ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ସମୟରେ ବିଦ୍ୟାର୍ଥୀ ନିଜକୁ ସକ୍ଷମ ମନେ କରିବ ତେବେ ଗୁରୁଙ୍କ ଅନୁମତି ଭିକ୍ଷା କରେ 'ମକ୍ଷପୁରୀ' ବା 'ଆରଙ୍ଗେତ୍ରମ୍' ନୃତ୍ୟ ପରିବେଷଣକରିବା ପାଇଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଆମେ ଛଅ ବର୍ଷ କଠୋର ସାଧନା କାହିଁକି, ଛଅ ମାସ ଭିତରେ ମଂଚରେ ନୃତ୍ୟଶିଳ୍ପୀ ଛିଡ଼ା କରି ପାରୁଛୁ । କିଛି ଅର୍ଥବ୍ୟୟ ଓ ଆମର ତଥାକଥିତ ନୃତ୍ୟ ସମାଲୋଚକଙ୍କ ପ୍ରଶଂସାହିଁ ଏଥିପାଇଁ ସର୍ବୋତ୍ତମ । ଅନେକ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ ଶିଳ୍ପୀ ଆମର ଭାଷା, ଭାବ, ରୁଚି, ଚଳଣୀ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀର ସୁକୁମାର ସୁଲଳିତ କଳା ଓ ଭାବ ଗୌରବ ସଂବଧରେ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଅଜ୍ଞ ହୋଇ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆମର 'କାନ୍ତ ନିଜସ୍ୱ ନୃତ୍ୟକଳାକୁ ନିଜର ଏକଗ୍ରୀବ ବ୍ୟବସାୟ କରିବାକୁ ପଛାଇ ନାହାନ୍ତି । ଏହିପରି କେତେକ ଶିଳ୍ପୀଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶିତ ହେଉଥିବା ତାଳ, ଲୟ, ଭାବ ଓ ରସ ବିହୀନ ସଂସ୍କୃତିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମକୁ ଦେଖିଲେ ଯେ କୌଣସି କଳାପ୍ରାଣ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ମଧ୍ୟ ତଳକୁ କରି ଦେବେ ।

ଆଉ ଏକ ଚିନ୍ତାର ବିଷୟ । ସ୍ଥାନ ବିଶେଷରେ ବମ୍ବେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ, ଦିଲ୍ଲୀ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ, କଲିକତା ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ, ରାଉରକେଲା ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ, କଟକଓଡ଼ିଶୀ, ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱରଓଡ଼ିଶୀ, ପୁରୀ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ, କାନାଡ଼ା ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ, ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମନ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ, ଆମେରିକା ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ଦେଖିଲେ କିମ୍ବଦନ୍ତ କିମ୍ବାକାର ଜଣାଯାଏ । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ସମୟରେ ଗୁରୁଙ୍କ ସଂଖ୍ୟା ବହୁତ ହୋଇ ଗଲେଣି, କିନ୍ତୁ ଶିଷ୍ୟଶସ୍ୟାଙ୍କ ସଂଖ୍ୟା କମିବାକୁ ବସିଲେଣି । ସଠିକ ଶିକ୍ଷକ ନ ହେଲେ ସଠିକ ଶିଳ୍ପୀ ତିଆରି ହୋଇ ପାରିବ ନାହିଁ । ଆଉ ମଧ୍ୟ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀର ଯେଉଁ ଯେଉଁ ପାହାଚଦେଇ ଶିକ୍ଷା ପାଠ୍ୟକ୍ରମ ଚାଲିବା କଥା, ସେଥିରେ ଅନେକ ବ୍ୟତିକ୍ରମ ଦେଖା ଯାଉଛି । ବ୍ୟାୟାମ, ପଦ ସଂଗଳନ, ଚାରି, ଭ୍ରମରି, ଖଣ୍ଡି, ଗଡ଼, ଅରସା, ମୁଦ୍ରା ବିନିଯୋଗ, ଶିର, ଦୃଷ୍ଟି, ଶ୍ରୀବା, ଏବଂ ତତ୍ ସହିତ ଭାବ, ରସ, ନାୟକ ଓ ନାୟିକା ପ୍ରଭୃତିକୁଣ୍ଡଳେ ଯୈର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଓ ନିଷ୍ଠାର ସହିତ ଅଭ୍ୟାସ ନ କଲେ ସେ କେବେହେଲେ ଜଣେ ଆନ୍ତର୍ଜାତିକ ସ୍ତରରେ ମାର୍ଜିତ ଶିଳ୍ପୀ ତିଆରି ହୋଇ ପାରିବ ନାହିଁ । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ କଥା ଦେଖା ଦେଇଛି । ଅଧିକାଂଶ ଏକକ ନୃତ୍ୟଶିଳ୍ପୀ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ ଅଭାବରେ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ସ୍ଥାନରୁ ଆର୍ଥିକ ସହାୟତା ଆଣି "କଏଟିଭ" ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ପରିବେଷଣ କଲେଣି, ଯାହା ଦ୍ୱାରା ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରତି ଏକ ଶକ୍ତ ଆଘାତ ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହୋଇଛି ।

ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ କେବଳ ନୃତ୍ୟ ସଂଗୀତରେ ସମସ୍ୟା ଦେଖା ଦେଇଛି ତା' ନୁହେଁ, ସମାଜର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଦିଗକୁ ଦେଖିଲେ ଦେଖା ଯାଇଛି ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ, ଶିକ୍ଷା, ଉତ୍ପାଦନ ଓ ସାମାଜିକ ସେବା କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ମଧ୍ୟ କେତେକ ସମସ୍ୟା । ଏହା କିଛି ପଦବୀଧାରୀ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଙ୍କ ପାଖରେହିଁ ଯାଇଛି । ସେମାନେ ସମାଜରମଙ୍ଗଳ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତେ ନିଜର ମଙ୍ଗଳ ସର୍ବଦା ଚିନ୍ତା କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ସେମାନେ ତାଙ୍କ ଉପରିସ୍ଥ ମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ସଚୀବ ତଥା ବଡ଼ପକ୍ଷମାନଙ୍କୁ ସମ୍ମୁଖ କରି ନିଜର ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛାବାଚ୍ଛା ଶାସନ ଯାହିର ରଖନ୍ତି । ଫଳରେ ଉତ୍କଳର ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ କଳା ବ୍ୟତୀତ ଅନେକ ପାରମ୍ପାରିକ କଳା ମଧ୍ୟ ଲୁପ୍ତ ବା ସୁପ୍ତ ହେବାକୁ ଯାଉଛି ।

ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ସେହି ଗାରିମାମୟ ସଂସ୍କୃତିକ ପ୍ରଭାବ ଯାହା ଏକ ଅନ୍ତଃସଲିଳ ଫଲ୍‌ଗୁ ଭଳି ପ୍ରଭାବିତ ହୋଇଛି, ତା'ର ମୌଳିକତା ନିଖୁଣ ଭାବେ ରକ୍ଷା କରିବାକୁ ହେଲେ, ତା'ର ବିଜୟ ବୈଜୟନ୍ତୀକୁ ବଡ଼ଦାଣ୍ଡରେ ଉଡ଼ାଇବାକୁ ହେଲେ ଓ ତା'ର ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠାକୁ ସର୍ବାଙ୍ଗ ସୁନ୍ଦର କରି ବଜାୟ ରଖିବାକୁ ହେଲେ, ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ନିଷ୍ଠାପର ସାଧନା ଓ ପ୍ରଚଣ୍ଡ ଅଧ୍ୟବସାୟ ଏକାନ୍ତ ଭାବରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ।

- ବମ୍ବେ ଉତ୍କଳ ଜନନୀ -

Guru Gangadhar Pradhan is a renowned Odissi dance teacher and choreographer.

A Few New Facts About Lord Jagannath

Dr. Satya Narayan Rajguru

The existence of the Jagannath temple at Puri in Orissa binds each Orissan to a common responsibility of explaining the phenomenon of Jagannath to the non-Oriyas. Dr. Satya Narayan Rajguru, an eminent epigraphist of Orissa, did just that all his life. In this following article, he recorded his latest findings about the temple and its history.

Today we find that the concept of Jagannath Dharma is widespread throughout the world. That is why many scholars are engaged in research to find out the original theory about the philosophy which grew around Lord Jagannath of Puri.

People in general are very much misled by the wrong information propagated through the later Puranas and Madala Panji (which is held as an authentic text on the origin of Jagannath worship, construction of the main temple, and the installation of the wooden deities). But after the discovery of a number of copper plate inscriptions of the 13th century AD, the scholars now put the date of construction of the temple to the reign of the Ganga Kings. Though there are some definite indications in ancient inscriptions and in several Sanskrit dramas of a much older temple of "Purusottama Dev" on the shore of the ocean, the historians now have come to a conclusion that there was already a temple of Purusottama in existence somewhere on the shore of the ocean before the main temple was constructed. The location of the ancient place, however, is still not clearly established from the existing evidences.

In 1960, while I was visiting the temple along with some fellow pilgrims, I noticed the Nrusimha temple beside the Mukti Mandap. It was stripped of its lime and mortar coatings, revealing a part of the stone wall, which contained some inscriptions. Possessed by a great curiosity, I scratched away a larger part of the wall and found that it was a stone inscription of 12th century AD. The 5th Srahi or Anka (the period of reign) of great king Chodaganga was inscribed there. Thus, the inscriptions can be assumed to be from 1139 AD, the time of Chodaganga's reign.

In 1960, the Oriya Sahitya Academy published the third volume of my "Inscription of Orissa". I published my first reading of the inscription in that volume. At that time Dr. Harekrusna Mahtab encouraged me a great deal in my effort and wrote the foreword for the book. I remember we had requested the Archeological Department of India to give us permission to strip off the entire coating of the wall so that many more of those inscriptions could be exposed. But our request remained unheeded for nearly thirty years. After the Government of Orissa's repeated demand, the permission was ultimately given to us in 1989.

Then only could we strip the walls and take the estampage of the inscriptions. During that time, a few research papers were already being published on the subject on behalf of the Jagannath University at Puri. Major Batakrusna Mohanty, the Chancellor, persuaded the university to give the project to me. I was in charge of collecting and interpreting those inscriptions of the Puri temple.

I started my project in 1989 and divided it into two parts. The first part was published in 1992 as soon as it was completed. That year in the month of April, the Governor of Orissa, Sri Jajnadatta Sharma inaugurated the event. The second part is complete now and awaiting publication. I would consider it a great success and fulfillment of a lifelong dream of mine when both the books are published.

In the following passages I will briefly give new information about Purusottam Jagannath Dev, which are the results of my interpretation.

1. Before the new temple was built, Sri Purusottama (Nilamadhava) was residing in Nrusimha temple (located within the Puri temple complex).
2. At one point in time a part of the northwest side of the old Nrusimha temple got damaged. Most possibly for that reason, the deity was relocated to another site.
3. At that time, king Chodaganga Dev made three stone deities: those of Sri Purusottama, Sri Balabhadra, and Devi Subhadra, and installed them at the new location.
4. In 1147 AD, Chodaganga gave the charge of his kingdom to his eldest son, Kamarnav Dev, and then stayed at Puri to oversee the construction of the main (bada deula) temple.
5. An inscription at the temple indicates that Salla, the architect of the main temple (Shrimandir) belonged to a pure artisan class and he provided funds for a lamp to be lit continuously in the Nrusimha temple in honor of the god.

6. King Chodaganga himself was well versed in all religious texts (Dharma sastra) and was quite a scholar of Vedantic philosophy. He was extremely well educated in Sanskrit literature. That is why his eulogist praised him as "Kapat Kalidas" (Kalidas in a new body). Another inscription in the temple revealed that Chodaganga started a new style of administration.
7. Chodaganga himself was decorated with such titles as "Param Maheswar" (great worshipper of Siva), "Param Vaisnava" (great worshipper of Visnu), and "Param Brahmanya" (great worshipper of Brahma). He installed the three deities in the temple conforming to his faith in three gods: Siva as Balaram (Sankarsan), Purusottama as Jagannath, and Subhadra Devi as symbol of Brahma the creator.
8. Chodaganga died before the temple was completed. It took another 90 years to complete the temple. This information was gathered from a copper plate inscription where it was stated that King Ananga Bhima Dev constructed the temple in 1230 AD.
9. The three deities which were placed in the relocated temple were made of stone and had hands and feet like any other Hindu icon. The reason for this assumption is that a contemporary temple, the Ananta

Vasudev temple at Bhubaneswar built by Chandrika Devi, the widowed daughter of Ananga Bhima Dev, has those three deities in stone showing hands and feet. Those three deities in that temple do not resemble the modern deities of the Puri temple. Most probably the old deities of Jagannath temple were of stone and those at Ananta Vasudev temple were mere replications of the old ones.

10. It is at the base of the wall at the Konark temple that we get to see the modern image of those three deities, which are without hands and feet. From this one can assume that the wooden deities without hands and feet were installed at a date after the construction of the Ananta Vasudev temple in 1178 AD.
11. The origin of the wooden Brahma (Daru Brahma) and the incident of Nabakalebar (The Renewal of God's body) have been described in great detail in the second volume of my book. There, I also described the great chariot festival of Sri Jagannath, and the rights of the sabaras in the Jagannath temple.

Translation: Manjari Mohanty, Virginia Beach, Virginia

From Neeladri, Special Issue for Ratha Yatra, 1994



Karma Yogi Gopabandhu: An Architect of Modern Orissa

MANOJ PANDA

The history of humanity is replete with numerous sagas, delineating the razzle-dazzle of material India and how she was the cynosure of the wonder-struck world. India invited the roving eyes of the ruthless invaders, who made bee-lines to her door-step to plunder her fortune, to torture her peace-loving subjects, to scar their religious psyche and to push her into the murky abyss of indigence. It didn't stop there. With the stupefying ravages of Qasim and continuing with the ricocheting thunders of Ghazni, Timurlong, Chenghiz Khan, Mughals and aggressors of a similar ilk, Mother India fell myriad notches in the scale of prosperity. In their wake, came the wily Britishers, in the ruse of mercantilists to spread tentacles of imperialism, decimating the forays of the Portuguese and French forces. Nonetheless, India survived these opposing torrents by her sturdy spiritual bulwark of resilient courage, tackling fortitude and towering uprightness.

Incessant torments of the rapacious assailants taught India to be united. They stirred up the national consciousness from its deep-seated reverie. This happened gradually. The magic wands of the visionaries did the trick of imbuing this contagious enthusiasm of uniting against the aggressors to taste the nectar of freedom. But it was not easy, as the fabric of Indian nationalism teems with religious, class, caste, and regional variations. The emergence of national consciousness among Indians during the nineteenth century was due to the consolidation of British power. This consciousness found universal appeal throughout the length and breadth of the country. In this national uprising, Orissa also played her humble part valiantly according to her strength and capacity. On the forefront of this gallant armada, there were many sons of Mother Orissa, who sacrificed and toiled to their utmost to make the crowning glory a reality. Utkalamani Pandit Gopabandhu Dash is one of those illustrious sons, who illumined the spirit of his motherland into lofty prominence.

The advent of Woods dispatch and the establishment of Calcutta University in 1857 and subsequent founding of Ravenshaw College at Cuttack in 1868 helped a great deal in the spread of higher education in Orissa. It provided a necessary and valuable impetus for Oriyas to get higher education in their chosen fields of study. This in turn helped conceive an elite class of Oriyas who collaborated to participate actively in the prevailing socio-political milieu. They championed the cause of Oriya nationalism and put Orissa in the national mainstream for propagating the consciousness to be independent from the foreign rule. In this movement of the struggle for

independence, Pandit Gopabandhu Das played a significant role. Through his selfless political work, resourceful patriotic pen and compassionate, large heart for the downtrodden, Gopabandhu blazed a unique trail for the Oriya nation.

This great soul was born into a poor Brahmin family on October 9, 1877 in the village of Suando in Puri district of Orissa. After finishing his early education, he graduated from Ravenshaw College in 1904 and got his B.L. (Bachelor of Law) degree from Calcutta University in 1906. Although he joined the Cuttack Bar, he could not heed the call of his motherland to help alleviate her distress, so he quit his practice and dedicated himself in the service of the nation.

In the early nineteenth century, Utkala Gauraba Madhusudan Das organized the Utkal Union Conference, which owed its inception to the Ganjam National Conference, with the help of the provincial rulers namely Rajendra Narayan Bhanjadeo of Kanika, Sreeram Chandra Bhanjadeo of Mayurbhanj, Raja of Khallikote and a band of influential Zamindars. From 1903 to 1920, this conference served as a unified platform for Oriya speaking tracts in the erstwhile Bengal, Bihar and Madras Presidencies, to express the legitimate concerns of Oriyas. This conference became known as Utkal Sammilani in later days. Pandit Gopabandhu played a key role in the merger of the activities of Utkal Sammilani with the National Congress in 1919, to form a united front against the British Rule. Utkalamani presided over the Chakradharpur session, where the resolution of this historic unification with National Congress was carried out.

Gopabandhu's keen sense of providing a yeoman's service at the organizational and personal level to the needs of the destitute warrants no elucidation. He established Utkala Youngman's Association in July 1904 with some enthusiastic followers to provide social service. The relief work of his group in the flood of 1907 and subsequent famine of 1908 is noteworthy. His selfless service to the distressed masses was indeed exemplary.

The visionary in Gopabandhu realized that proper education is the backbone of a nation's progress. Thus, he wanted to establish a school which could be a model for posterity, where ideals of patriotism, selfless social service, honesty and other noble virtues alongwith the traditional education, would be instilled into young minds. His idea came to fruition when he established a Middle English School at Satyabadi in Puri district on August 12,

1909. In the cozy bosom of the natural greenery, in the rhapsodic liting of feathered beings, and backed by the tender care of some great minds of that era, many bright young people found an ideal environment. Attracted by the noble intents of Gopabandhu, a number of educated Oriyas offered their valuable services to the school and quit their otherwise lucrative careers. Pandit Nilakantha Dash, an M.A. in Philosophy, came to Satyabadi in 1911. Acharya Harihar Dash resigned from P.M. Academy in Cuttack in 1912 to join the school. Pandit Godavarisha Mishra, an M.A. in Economics, joined the school in April 1913 after completing his studies at Calcutta University. Pandit Krupasindhu Mishra, an M.A. in History joined in 1914. High school classes were opened in 1912. The school was recognized by the Calcutta University until 1917. When Patna University was established in 1918, the school was transferred to its control.

Under the guidance of the erudite teachers, the students of Satyabadi were groomed to be noble citizens. The true spirit of education, sacrifice and service were infused into their hearts. Satyabadi School, a brainchild of saint Gopabandhu went a long way towards furthering the interest of propagating the mantra of national consciousness among Oriyas and at the same time helped elevate the spirit of Orissa to a higher plane. The ideal confluence of ancient Gurukula culture and the prevailing educational system found a befitting expression on the lush "Bakula Bana" of Satyabadi.

The journalist in Gopabandhu blossomed when he started the great Oriya daily, "Samaja". Even now, "Samaja" is widely read in Orissa, immortalizing the contributions of Punyashloka Gopabandhu.

Gopabandhu was a venerable member of the Bihar-Orissa council. He was elected to the council with Braja Sundar Das in 1916. His role, portraying the plight of poverty-stricken masses in the council and getting the appropriate aid for the same, is legendary. He was an eloquent speaker. He criticized the Government about the administrative negligence in Orissa, about the economic policy that was responsible for the decline of the indigenous industries like salt industry in Orissa. His effort in improving the cottage industries is laudable. His historic showing of the samples of inedible foodstuff consumed by famine stricken people to the Council is memorable even today. Such was his determination to help the people. Such was his selfless service. He towered over the stinking politicians, whose priority was to hoard fortune for them and their kith and kin, by snatching the bread from famished mouths. When partisan mutual destruction and self-aggrandizement becomes the driver, then the patriotism and selfless service bundles down to the back seat. Shame on those politicians who hijack the concept of public interest, to construct their filthy mounds of riches and hurtle the nation towards abysmal antiquity. It is high

time that every one of them should take a leaf from the book of Mahatma Gopabandhu and pledge themselves to realize their capability as responsible citizens.

In the meantime, the great country India was awakening to national consciousness. She was casting off her ere-long slumber. She was coming into terms with her continuing predicament. Mahatma Gandhi's leadership was gaining momentum among the masses. Gandhiji started this new strategy of non-cooperation applied with non-violence as a new weapon to free India. The resolution of non-cooperation movement was passed in the Nagpur session of National Congress in 1920. Heedlessness of the Government to the persistent plea of Gopabandhu for the betterment of the people formed the springboard for him to bolt into the Non-Cooperation movement.

Thirty-five delegates from Orissa were present in the Nagpur Conference of Indian national Congress. Prominent among them were: Pandit Gopabandhu Dash, Niranjana Pattnaik, Bhagirathi Mahapatra, Jagabandhu Singh, Mukunda Prasad Das, Jadumani Mangaraj and Harekrishna Mahatab. The delegates supported the motion for the formation of Provincial Congress Committee on a linguistic basis. On this basis Utkala Pradesh Congress Committee was formed in 1921 with Utkalamani Gopabandhu Dash as the first president. Dr. Ekram Russol, Bhagirathi Mahapatra and Brajabandhu Das were elected as vice-president, secretary and joint-secretary respectively. Under the able leadership of Gopabandhu this committee did a lot of useful work. The message of Gandhi was propagated to every nook and corner of Orissa. The movement of national consciousness donned a new outfit. Nationalist people like Nabakrushna Chowdhury, Gopabandhu Chowdhury, Nityananda Kanungo, Rajakrishna Bose etc. joined hands with Gopabandhu.

In this way, Mahatma Gandhi came to Orissa for the first time in 1921. Gopabandhu organized a mass meeting at the riverbeds of Kathajodi. He translated the speech of Mahatma to Oriya for the people. This created unprecedented enthusiasm among the people and Orissa plunged into the struggle for independence wholeheartedly. For this, Gopabandhu, along with Jadumani Mangaraj and Harekrishna Mahatab, was imprisoned. He was released in 1924. Immediately after that, he organized the first session of Utkala Pradesh Congress Committee. A women's branch of Congress was created in that session with Sarala Devi at the helm. Mahatma Gandhi came to Orissa in 1925 and again in 1927 at the invitation of Gopabandhu. He was a charismatic leader of the masses who toiled day in and day out, giving his best to make Orissa march in the path leading to a progressive horizon.

Besides his zealous political, social and educational activities Pandit Gopabandhu inspired the

masses through his great poems. The magic touch of his pen aroused the sleeping nationalism of the multitude. He was instrumental in bringing out the noble intents of the public of that era. At the same time, he provided a fertile field for them to work on it. His poems speak of his deep spiritual feelings and his earnest beseeching for the Lord's blessing in improving the fate of Orissa. He was a true Oriya, both in public and private. His attitude of antithesis towards violence, aggression, oppression and lawlessness is evidently portrayed in his poems which he composed while in the prison. Following quotations from his brilliant masterpieces in Oriya glean the glimpses of his aforesaid virtues.

His heart sings out in his poem "Nityadhaama Nilaachala" :

Naahin jaativaeda, naahin dharmavaeda
saamyamaitree mantra gaaae jaara Veda
kae kariba bhabae
daebataa maanabae
Nilachalae taara prabaesha nishaedha ?

This indicates his secular attitude. Also it indicates his message of Equality and friendship. Again in the same poem he says about truthfulness:

Saahi, karae jaehu satya aacharana
satya aaraadhanaa, satya sambhaashana
bhitara baahaara
jaara satya saara
sukhae dukhae sadaa satya jaa sharana.

Then he says that freedom is everyone's birthright. He describes how this freedom works. He says that:

Swaadheenataa maanaba ra janma adhikaara
swaadhina bhaashana aau swaadheena bihaara.
Swaadheena jeebana puni swaadheena samiti
chaari stambhae maanaba ra samaaja sanstithi.

Again, thinking of the cowherd boy coming with his bullock cart after a tiring day, he writes:

Hala laeutaai aasuthaaae Bhoi
mundae ghaasa gochhaa haatae paanchana.
balada udaai diae kaebae gaai
"kimpaa chhaadigalu tu laikhyana ?"

All the pieces above from his great poems illustrate his large patriotic as well as compassionate heart.

Gopabandhu's eventful life came to an end on June 17, 1928. India in general and Orissa in particular lost an able son who was a real Karma Yogi and set an example of noble living for eternity. He was a matchless freedom fighter, a great patriot, a praiseworthy social worker, a far-sighted and a loving leader and above all an inspiring poet all rolled in one. He will forever shine as the crest jewel in the diadem of mother Orissa, enlivening the lives of legions. An inspired poet writes:

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again;
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure.....

The above lines are true indeed for the saint Gopabandhu, who engraved an immortal niche for himself, in the hearts of millions by the sheer strength of his emblazoned character and unparalleled contribution to the treasure trove of the great land that is Orissa.

Manoj Panda lives in Detroit, Michigan with his wife Mita and three year old daughter Maitreyee.

REMEMBERING BUBU APA

ANADI NAIK

Bubu apa chose the role of becoming an ordinary housewife. Yet, she was committed to social change. In her personal life she married outside her language, province and caste. It was not unusual for her as her parents had set a precedence years ago.

Bubu apa, who changed her name from Uttara Choudhury to Uttara Desai, was born in 1928. Her parents Malati and Nabakrushna Coudhury actively took part in freedom struggles. In 1932, as a toddler she accompanied her mother to Bhagalpur jail in Bihar. From her childhood she learned to defy the British rule. In those days political activism also required involvement in social activism. She picketed in front of liquor stores, helped the women of the Masjid Gali of Cuttack to learn spinning and become productive and earned respect. She participated in these activities with a teenager's enthusiasm. While her parents continued their struggles against the Raj, she spent most of the childhood with her grandmothers on both sides. Snehalata Devi, her maternal grandmother used to be the superintendent of the girls dormitory at Santi Niketan and prior to that Headmistress of a Government Girls' High School. Her paternal grandmother, Padmavati Devi, carried a strong feeling about right and wrong and was brimming with Oriya values. As a child, she learnt to stand her ground while giving due respect to her elders.

Bubu Apa was enrolled in the Girls' High School in Patna. Those were the days of the war. In opposing the British rule, both her parents courted repeated imprisonments. As the empire became increasingly nervous about the war it sought to mobilize and seek support from its subjects. Pupils at school were required to salute the Union Jack and chant "God save the King." Her mother, Malati Devi, was chosen by Gandhiji to be the first person in Orissa to protest against India's involvement in the war. Knowing that her mother would do this, how could Bubu apa salute the British flag? She refused. While the entire school chanted "God save the King" she sang BANDE MATARAM. And when everyone saluted the British flag, she sat down. This act was provocative enough; she was thrown out of the school. But, she proudly left the school. Like many others, she joined the freedom movement.

For India's womenfolk this was a glorious period. They showed their valor and determination to fight and continuously challenge the British Raj. Bubu Apa participated in the Quit India Movement and went to jail. Numa (mother Malati Devi), Bou (aunt Rama Devi), Chuni apa (cousin Annapurna Maharana), Masi (Mangla Sengupta), and Dukhi apa (Sarala Devi) were already there along with a host of other relatives and acquaintances. She found plenty of friends in Kirana, Godavari, Parvati, Mala and Susila in jail. All of them — girls in their teens — had to maintain a daily schedule of discipline under the watchful eyes of Bou, Numa, and Dukhi apa.

After independence, Bubu Apa taught at Baji Rout Chhatrabas in Anugul following which she was sent to Sevagram for teachers' training in basic education. Unlike the traditional teaching, basic education emphasized on Gandhian principles. In Sevagram she met Narayan Desai, the son of late Mahadev Desai, Gandhiji's deceased secretary. Narayan bhai is a well-known anti-nuclear activist. After the wedding, both Narayan and Uttara worked for basic education in rural Gujarat.

Over the years, Bubu Apa immersed herself in various nonviolent programs and social reform issues. She preferred to work behind the scenes as a mother and a housewife. Bubu apa was proficient in Oriya, Bengali, Hindi, Gujarati, and English. She translated Kalindi Charan Panigrahi's 'Matira Manisha' into Gujarati.

For her valor and grit, Bubu Apa belonged to that band of sisters who genuinely were the daughters of fire in Orissa. Each one of them remained active in social issues till the end. These women, unlike Bubu Apa, came from ordinary families. They had very little formal education. Yet, with extraordinary courage they fought against the British. They belonged to an age of fire in Orissa. Individually, they are not mentioned in our history books; yet, we owe a large measure of our good fortune to their courage and sacrifice. Personally, it was a great joy for me to know them and see them in action in later years as mothers, aunts, and mentors. Parvati Giri, Godavari Das, Kiranabala Mohanty and Uttara Desai: they were Orissa's 'AGNI JUGAR KANYA' — daughters from the age of fire.

Anadi Naik lives in Mount Airy, Maryland with his wife, Carroll.

ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ଏକ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଧାରା ଆରତୀ ମିଶ୍ର

ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତର ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରାୟତା ସମ୍ପର୍କରେ ବହୁ ଆଲୋଚନା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ହୋଇଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଯେ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଏହାର ଶୈଳୀ ସମ୍ପର୍କରେ ଏକ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦିଷ୍ଟ ରୂପରେଖା ସୁସ୍ପଷ୍ଟ ନ ହୋଇଛି, ଯେ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଏହା ଏକ ବିବାଦୀୟ ବସ୍ତୁ ହୋଇ ରହିବ । ଭାରତୀୟ ସଂଗୀତ ଏକ ମୌଳିକ ତତ୍ତ୍ୱକୁ ଆଶ୍ରୟ କରିଥିଲେହେଁ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ଭେଦରେ ଅବନ୍ତୀ, ପାଞ୍ଚାଳି, ଉତ୍ତମାଗଧୀ, ଉତ୍ତର ଭାରତୀୟ ଓ ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ଭାରତୀୟ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଗାୟନ ଶୈଳୀ ପ୍ରଚୁରିତ ହୋଇ ଆସିଛି ।

ପଣ୍ଡିତ ଅହୋବଳ କୃତ ସଂଗୀତ ପାରିଜାତ, କଲ୍ୟାଣାଧର 'ସଂଗୀତ ରତ୍ନାକର' ପଣ୍ଡିତ ଦାମୋଦର ଙ୍କ 'ସଂଗୀତ ଦର୍ପଣ' ଇତ୍ୟାଦିରେ ଉତ୍ତର ଭାରତୀୟ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ସଂଗୀତର ଏକ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଶୈଳୀର ରୂପରେଖା ସ୍ପଷ୍ଟ ହୋଇଅଛି । ସେହିପରି ପଣ୍ଡିତ ଭେଙ୍କଟ ମନ୍ତ୍ରାଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ରଚିତ "ଚତୁର୍ଦ୍ଦଶା ପ୍ରକାଶିକା" ଓ ଭାବ ଭକ୍ତ ଏବଂ ପଣ୍ଡିତ ରାମ ମାତ୍ୟଙ୍କର "ସ୍ୱରମେଳ କଳାନିଧି" ରେ ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ଭାରତୀୟ ସଂଗୀତ ପଦ୍ଧତିର ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଶୈଳୀ ବିଷୟରେ ଆଲୋଚନା କରା ଯାଇଛି । କିନ୍ତୁ କୃଷ୍ଣଦାସ ବଡ଼ଜେନାଙ୍କର 'ଗୀତ ପ୍ରକାଶ' ରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତର ଶୈଳୀ ସମ୍ପର୍କରେ ଧାରଣା ସୁସ୍ପଷ୍ଟ ନୁହେଁ । ଶ୍ରୀ ହରିଚନ୍ଦନ କୃତ 'ସଂଗୀତ ମୁଦ୍ରାବଳୀ' ଓ ପଣ୍ଡିତ ପୁରୁଷୋତ୍ତମ ମିଶ୍ରଙ୍କର 'ସଂଗୀତ ନାରାୟଣ' ଗ୍ରନ୍ଥରୁ 'ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ' ସଂଗୀତ ସମ୍ପର୍କରେ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତର ଏକ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଶୈଳୀର ଧାରଣା ସୁସ୍ପଷ୍ଟ ନୁହେଁ । 'ଗୀତ ପ୍ରକାଶ', 'ସଂଗୀତ ମୁଦ୍ରାବଳୀ', 'ସଂଗୀତ କଳ୍ପଲତା' ଇତ୍ୟାଦିର ରଚୟିତା ଉତ୍କଳୀୟ ଅଟନ୍ତି । ଏହି ଗ୍ରନ୍ଥ ଗୁଡ଼ିକରେ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ର ସମ୍ପର୍କୀୟ ମତବାଦରେ ବିଶେଷ ପାର୍ଥକ୍ୟ ନାହିଁ । ତେଣୁ ଗ୍ରନ୍ଥ ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଉତ୍କଳୀୟ ନିଜସ୍ୱ ସଂଗୀତ ଉପରେ ଆଧାରିତ ବୋଲି କୁହାଯାଇପାରେ ।

ପଣ୍ଡିତ କୃଷ୍ଣଦାସ ବଡ଼ଜେନା ଙ୍କ ମତରେ ଗୀତର ଅର୍ଥ ଶୁଦ୍ଧ ମଧୁର ବୈଚିତ୍ର୍ୟ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ରଚନା (ରଞ୍ଜକ ସ୍ୱର ସଂଯୋଜ୍ୟ ଗୀତମ) । ତାଙ୍କ ମତରେ ଗାୟକ "ସ୍ୱର ତାଳ ପଦତମକମ୍" ହେବା ସ୍ଥଳରେ "ଗାନ", ମନୋରଞ୍ଜକ ଓ ଜନରଞ୍ଜକ ହେବା ଉଚିତ୍ । ରଞ୍ଜକ ଶବ୍ଦର ଅର୍ଥ କେବଳ ମନୋରଞ୍ଜକ ସ୍ୱର (Notes) ବ୍ୟତୀତ, ଓଜନ (Weight), ପ୍ରସାଦ (Clarity), ଅଳଙ୍କାର (Beautification) ହେବା ଦରକାର । ତାଙ୍କ ମତରେ ଉତ୍ତମ ରଚନାର ମାନ ଏହିପ୍ରକାର -

- (କ) ଲୟ ଓ ଯତି (Pause) ରେ ବିଭିନ୍ନତା ।
- (ଖ) ଗମକର ବ୍ୟବହାର ଏକ ପ୍ରଧାନ ଅଙ୍ଗ ଯାହା ଆଉ ଦେଖା ଯାଉନାହିଁ ।
- (ଗ) 'ମାତୁ' ର ପ୍ରୟୋଗ ହେଲା ରଚନା ଓ ତାହାର ପରିବେଷଣର ସାବଲୀଳ ଗତି ।
- (ଘ) ଦକ୍ଷତାର ସହିତ ରାଗ ଓ ଗୀତର ମନୋରଞ୍ଜକ ବିଧ୍ୱାର ।
- (ଙ) ରସପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଓ ସାବଲୀଳ ଗତିରେ 'ତାନ୍'ର ପରିବେଷଣ ।
- (ଚ) ନୂତନତ୍ୱ ସହିତ ବିଶିଷ୍ଟ ଶବ୍ଦ ଓ ସ୍ୱରର ଗାୟନ ।
- (ଛ) ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ବାକ୍ୟରେ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଗୁଣ, ଅଳଙ୍କାର ଓ ରସପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଅବତାରଣା ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ।
- (ଜ) ବାଉଁଶର ଏକା ସ୍ୱର ବା ରଚନାର ଅବତାରଣା ହେବାନାହିଁ ।

ଏହି ସମସ୍ତ ନିୟମାବଳୀ ଜାଣି ମଧ୍ୟ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ଗୀତର ଶୈଳୀ, ଏହାର ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ପାଦରେ ଅଗ୍ରସର ହେବାର ନିୟମ, କେଉଁ ପ୍ରକାର ଅବତାରଣା ଦୋଷମୁକ୍ତ ବା ଦୋଷଯୁକ୍ତ ସେ ବିଷୟରେ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଧାରଣା ମିଳୁନାହିଁ । ତେଣୁ ଶୈଳୀ ସମ୍ପର୍କରେ ଅଧିକ ଗବେଷଣା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ । ଗ୍ରନ୍ଥ ଅନୁଯାୟୀ ଯେପରି ହିନ୍ଦୁସ୍ଥାନୀ ଓ କର୍ଣ୍ଣାଟକୀ ଦୁଇଟି ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ପଦ୍ଧତି ଭାବରେ ପରିଗଣିତ ହୋଇଛି 'ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ' ଏ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସେହିପରି ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ପଦ୍ଧତି ଭାବରେ ପରିଗଣିତ ହୋଇପାରୁନାହିଁ । ତେଣୁ ପଞ୍ଚମ ସାରସଂହିତା ସଂଗୀତ ରତ୍ନମାଳା, ରାଗବିଜ୍ଞେ, ଜଗମୋହନ, ଛାନ୍ଦ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ତତ୍ତ୍ୱ ସଂବଳିତ ଗ୍ରନ୍ଥ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ସମ୍ୟକ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟାଲୋଚନା କରି ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତର ଶୈଳୀ ସଂପର୍କରେ ସୁସ୍ପଷ୍ଟ ଧାରଣା କରାଯାଇପାରେ । ଏହାଛଡା, କବି ସମ୍ରାଟ ଉପେନ୍ଦ୍ର ଭଞ୍ଜ, ଦୀନକୃଷ୍ଣ ଓ କବିସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଗୋପାଳକୃଷ୍ଣ ଆଦିଙ୍କର କାବ୍ୟ କବିତା, ଉତ୍କଳର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ସ୍ଥାନରେ କି ଶୈଳୀରେ ଗାୟନ କରା ଯାଇଛି ତାହା ଅନୁସଂଧାନ ଓ ଗବେଷଣା ଦ୍ୱାରାହିଁ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତର ଶୈଳୀ ପ୍ରତିପାଦିତ କରାଯାଇ ପାରିବ ।

ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତ ଉତ୍ତର ଭାରତୀୟ ସଂଗୀତ ରୁ ଉତ୍ପନ୍ନ ନହେଲେମଧ୍ୟ ଏହି ପଦ୍ଧତିରେ ପ୍ରଭାବିତ ହୋଇଛି । ଉତ୍ତର ଭାରତର ଗୋବର ହରି ବାଣୀର ଦୁପଦ ସହିତ ପୁରାତନ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀର ସାମଞ୍ଜସ୍ୟ ରହିଛି । ଆଳାପ ମଧ୍ୟ "ତୋମ୍ ନୋମ୍" ରେ ଓ ମର୍ଦ୍ଦଳ ବା ପଞ୍ଜାବଜ ଉଭୟ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ବ୍ୟବହୃତ ହୋଇଛି । ମାତ୍ର ଦୁପଦର ପ୍ରଚଳନ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀରେ ଖାରବେଳଙ୍କ ନିର୍ମିତ ଖଣ୍ଡଗିରି, ଉଦୟଗିରି ଓ ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ କାଳରେ ବହୁ ମନ୍ଦିର ଗାତ୍ରରେ ମର୍ଦ୍ଦଳଧାରୀ ନୃତ୍ୟାଙ୍ଗନାଙ୍କର ମୂର୍ତ୍ତି ରହିଛି । ତେଣୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତ ଉତ୍ତର ଭାରତୀୟ ସଂଗୀତରୁ ପୁରାତନ ମଧ୍ୟ ହୋଇପାରେ । ସେହିପରି ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ଭାରତୀୟ ପଦ୍ଧତି ସହିତ ସାମଞ୍ଜସ୍ୟ ମଧ୍ୟ ରହିଛି । ଉତ୍କଳୀୟ ରାଜା ମାନଙ୍କର ଦାକ୍ଷିଣାତ୍ୟ ବିଜୟ, କାହ୍ନୁ ରାଜଜେମାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ବିବାହ ଓ ଦାକ୍ଷିଣାତ୍ୟର ସଂଗୀତଜ୍ଞଙ୍କର ଉତ୍କଳୀୟ ରାଜପାଲରେ ଉପସ୍ଥିତି ଦ୍ୱାରା ଓଡ଼ିଶୀର ଶୈଳୀ ଦାକ୍ଷିଣାତ୍ୟ

ସଂଗୀତରେ ପ୍ରଭାବିତ ହେଲା । ପଲ୍ଲବୀ ଶବ୍ଦଟି ଦାକ୍ଷିଣାତ୍ୟର "ପଦମ୍, ଲୟମ୍, ବିନ୍ୟାସମ୍" ରୁ ଆସିଛି । ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତର ରଚୟିତା ଉପେନ୍ଦ୍ର ଭଞ୍ଜ, କବୀସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ, ଗୋପାଳ କୃଷ୍ଣ, ଗୌରହରି, ଧନଞ୍ଜୟ ପ୍ରଭୃତି ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଅଧିବାସୀ ଅଟନ୍ତି ।

ସେହି ସମୟର କବି ମାନଙ୍କର ରଚନା ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ଭାରତରେ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ଦାକ୍ଷିଣାତ୍ୟ ପଦ୍ଧତିର ସୂତନ୍ତ ରାଗ ଉପରେ ଦେଖାଯାଏ । ଯଥା - ସାବେରି, ମୋହନୀ, ମାୟା ମାଳବ ଗୌଡ଼ା, କାମ ବର୍ଦ୍ଧନୀ, ଶଙ୍ଖରାଭରଣ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି । ଏହି ରଚନା ଗୁଡ଼ିକ, ରାଗର ଶାସ୍ତ୍ର ଆଧାରିତ ରୂପରେ ରଚିତ । ଏହାଛଡ଼ା କିଛି ରଚନା ଦେଖିବାକୁ ମିଳେ ଯାହା ଉତ୍ତର ଭାରତୀୟ ହିନ୍ଦୁସ୍ଥାନୀ ପଦ୍ଧତିରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ଅଛି । ଯଥା - ବାଗେଶ୍ଵୀ, ମହାର, ରାଗେଶ୍ଵୀ, ଭୂପାଳୀ, ଖମ୍ବାଜ, ଦେଶ ଓ ଏପରି ଆଉ ଅନେକ ରାଗ । ଏଥିରୁ ପ୍ରତୀତ ହେଉଛିଯେ ଏହା ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତ ଉପରେ ପ୍ରଭାବ ମାତ୍ର କାରଣ ଏହା ବ୍ୟତୀତ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଅନେକ ରାଗ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତରେପ୍ରଚଳିତ ଯାହାକି ଉତ୍ତର ଭାରତୀୟ ଓ ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ଭାରତୀୟ ପଦ୍ଧତି ରେଦେଖାଯାଏ ନାହିଁ । ଯଥା - ଦେଶାକ୍ଷ, ଧନାଗ୍ରୀ, ବେଲାବଳୀ, କାମୋଦୀ, ବରାଡ଼ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି । ଯହାକୁ ଆମେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀର ସୂତନ୍ତ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ର ସମ୍ପଦ ରାଗ ଭାବରେ ପ୍ରତିପାଦିତ କରି ପାରିବୁ । ଏହା ମଧ୍ୟରୁ କିଛି ଶାସ୍ତ୍ର ସମ୍ପଦ ଓ କିଛି ପାରମ୍ପରିକ ହୋଇଥିବାରୁ ଯଦି ଏହି ସୂତନ୍ତ ରାଗ ମାନଙ୍କର ଶାସ୍ତ୍ର ସମ୍ପଦ ରୂପ ରେଖା ଉପରେଅନୁସନ୍ଧାନ କରାଯାଏ ତେବେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତର ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟତା ପ୍ରମାଣ କରିବା ସହଜସାଧ୍ୟ ହେବ ।

ଏହା ବ୍ୟତୀତ ଆଉ କିଛି ରାଗ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀରେ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ଯାହାର 'ନାମ' ହିନ୍ଦୁସ୍ଥାନୀ ଓ କର୍ଣ୍ଣାଟକୀ ପଦ୍ଧତି ରେ ରହିଛି । ମାତ୍ର ଏହାର ରୂପ ସୂତନ୍ତ । ଏହି ରାଗ ଗୁଡ଼ିକର ଉତ୍ପତ୍ତି ଓ ପ୍ରଚଳନ କିପରି ଓ କାହିଁକି ହେଲା ତାହା ଜଣାଯାଇନାହିଁ । ଉଦାହରଣ ସ୍ଵରୂପ - ମଧ୍ୟମାଦୀ, ବସନ୍ତ, ଖମ୍ବାବତୀ, ଶ୍ରୀରାଗ, ମଧୁକିରୀ, କୋଳାହଳ, ଗୁଣକିରୀ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି । ଏହି ସମସ୍ତ ରାଗର ସ୍ଵରଗତ ଓ ରୂପଗତ ପାର୍ଥକ୍ୟ ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ କରିବାକୁ ଗଲେ ତାହା ଏକ ସୂତନ୍ତ ପ୍ରବନ୍ଧରେ ପରିଣତ ହେବ । ଯଥାର୍ଥରେ ଆମେ ବା 'ପଦ୍ଧତି'ର ରଚୟିତା ମାନେ ଯେତେ ଉତ୍ତର ଭାରତୀୟ ଓ ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ଭାରତୀୟ ପଦ୍ଧତିରେ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ରାଗ ମାନଙ୍କର ସୂତନ୍ତତା ପ୍ରତିପାଦିତ କଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଉଭୟ ପଦ୍ଧତିରେ କିଛି ରାଗ ବ୍ୟବହୃତ ହୁଏ ଯାହାର ରୂପରେଖ, ମେଳ ଓ ସ୍ଵର ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଉଭୟ ପଦ୍ଧତିରେ ବ୍ୟବହୃତ ହେଉଛି । କେବଳ ମାତ୍ର ଭନ୍ନ ନାମରେ ଯଥା - ହିନ୍ଦୁସ୍ଥାନୀ ଦୁର୍ଗାରାଗ, କର୍ଣ୍ଣାଟକୀରେ ସୁକ୍ଷ ସାବେରୀ, ହିନ୍ଦୁସ୍ଥାନୀ ଭୂପାଳୀ, କର୍ଣ୍ଣାଟକୀର ମୋହନୀ, ହିନ୍ଦୁସ୍ଥାନୀର ଅହିର ଭୈରବ, କର୍ଣ୍ଣାଟକୀ - ଚକ୍ରବାକ ଏହିପରି ଆଉ ଅନେକ । ଏଠାରେ ଭିନ୍ନତା ଆସୁଛି କେବଳ ଗାୟନ ଶୈଳୀ ନେଇ । ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତର ରାଗ ଉତ୍ତର ଭାରତର ହେଉବା ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ଭାରତୀୟ ହେଉ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତର ଗାୟନ ଶୈଳୀର ସୂତନ୍ତତାହିଁ ଏହାକୁ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ମର୍ଯ୍ୟାଦା ଦେଇ ପାରିବ ।

ଶୈଳୀ ସମ୍ପର୍କରେ ବଡ଼ଜେନାଙ୍କର 'ଗୀତ ପ୍ରକାଶରୁ' ଆରମ୍ଭକରି ସଂଗୀତ ମୁଦ୍ରାବଳୀ ଓ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଗ୍ରନ୍ଥରେ ଫକ୍ଷାକରଣ ନଥିବାରୁ ଏହି ସମସ୍ୟାର ଉତ୍ପତ୍ତି । କେବଳ ପାରମ୍ପରିକ ବିନ୍ୟାସରୁ ଏହା କାଳକ୍ରମେ ଗୁରୁ ପରମ୍ପରାରେ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ହୋଇ ଆସିଲା । ତେଣୁ କେହି କେହି ଓଡ଼ିଶୀରେ ହିନ୍ଦୁସ୍ଥାନୀ ପଦ୍ଧତିର ରାଗାଳାପ, ରୂପକାଳାପ, ବୋଲତାନ ଆଦିରେଇ ତ କେହି କେହି କେବଳ କର୍ଣ୍ଣାଟକୀ ପଦ୍ଧତିର ଗମକ ଓ ଶୈଳୀରେ ପରିବେଷଣ କଲେ ।

ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ଶରୀର ପରି 'ତାଳ'କୁ ସଂଗୀତର ହୃଦୟନ୍ତନ କୁହାଯାଇପାରେ । ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତରେ ବ୍ୟବହୃତ ଅନେକ ସୂତନ୍ତ ତାଳର ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ 'ଗୀତ ପ୍ରକାଶ' ଓ ସଂଗୀତ ମୁଦ୍ରାବଳୀ ଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଏପରି କିଛି ତାଳ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତରେ ବ୍ୟବହୃତ ହେଉଛି ଯାହାର ବିଭାଜନ (ବୋଲ୍ ନୁହେଁ) ହିନ୍ଦୁସ୍ଥାନୀ ପଦ୍ଧତିର ତାଳ ସହିତ ସମାନ, ଯଥା - ଝମ୍ପତାଳ ଓ ଚମ୍ପା, ଅଙ୍ଗ ଓ ଚଉତଳା, ଆଦିତାଳ ଓ ତ୍ରିତାଳ, 'ବୃହତାଳ' (ଯାହା ଉଭୟ ପଦ୍ଧତିରେ ଏକା ନାମ) ଇତ୍ୟାଦି । ଏହି ତାଳ ବ୍ୟତୀତ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀରେ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ନିଜସ୍ଵ ତାଳ ମଧ୍ୟ ଅଛି ଯଥା - ଏକ ତାଳ (୪ ମାତ୍ରା) ଏହାର ଛନ୍ଦ ଓ ଗତି 'କରିବା' ପରି ନୁହେଁ । ଖେମତା (୬ ମାତ୍ରା) ଗତି ଓ ଛନ୍ଦ 'ବାଦରା' ପରି ନୁହେଁ । ରୂପକ (ମାତ୍ରା ୬), ତ୍ରୀପଦା ଓ ତ୍ରୀପୁଟ ହିଁ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀରେ ବ୍ୟବହୃତ ହେଉଥିବା ସୂତନ୍ତ ତାଳ । ଏହା ବ୍ୟତିତ ଆହୁରି ଅନେକ ତାଳ ଅଛି ଯାହାର ବିଷୟ ଆଲୋଚନାକୁ ନଯାଇ 'ହାକୁ ଉଦାହରଣ ସ୍ଵରୂପ ଦେଲି ।

ଓଡ଼ିଶୀର ପ୍ରାଚୀନତା ଓ ଏକକତା ପ୍ରତିପାଦନ କରିବାକୁଯାଇ ଅନେକ ଗୁଣୀ ଅନେକ ମତ ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି । ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତ ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ତମ ଓ ହିନ୍ଦୁସ୍ଥାନୀ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ସଂଗୀତ ଓ କର୍ଣ୍ଣାଟକୀ ପଦ୍ଧତି ତହିଁରୁ ଉତ୍ପନ୍ନବୋଲି ମଧ୍ୟ ଅନେକଙ୍କର ମତ । ଏହି ପରିପ୍ରେକ୍ଷିରେ ରାଗ 'ଲଳିତା' ବସନ୍ତରେ ବର୍ତ୍ତୁର କରବା । ରାଗ ଲଳିତା ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତରେ ଏକ ବହୁ ପୁରାତନ ଓ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ରାଗ । କୃଷ୍ଣଦାସ ବଡ଼ଜେନା ମହାପାତ୍ରଙ୍କର 'ଗୀତ ପ୍ରକାଶ' ଗ୍ରନ୍ଥ ଯାହାକି ଉତ୍ତର ପୂର୍ବ ଅଞ୍ଚଳର ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ସଂଗୀତ ସଂପର୍କିତ ଏକ ଅମୂଲ୍ୟ ଗ୍ରନ୍ଥ । ତହିଁରେ ସେ ରାଗ ଲଳିତାର ସ୍ଵରୂପ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନାରେ ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତିଯେ "ଏହି ଲଳିତ ସ୍ଵର ସଂପନ୍ନ ରାଗଟି 'ଟଙ୍କ' ରାଗରୁ ଉତ୍ପନ୍ନ । 'ସା' ସ୍ଵର ଏହାର ବାଦୀ ଓ ସଂବାଦୀ ଉଭୟ । 'ରେ' ଓ 'ପା' ସ୍ଵର ବର୍ଜିତ ଅଟେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏଥିରେ ପ୍ରୟୋଗ ହେଉଥିବା କୋମଳ ସ୍ଵର ସମ୍ପରେ କିଛି ଲେଖା ନାହିଁ । ମାତ୍ର ଏହି ରାଗରେ 'କୋମଳ ଗା' ଓ 'କେମଳ ଧା' ସ୍ଵରର ପ୍ରୟୋଗ ହେଉ ଥିବାର ଏକ ନିଶ୍ଚିତ ରୂପରେଖର ପରିଚୟ ମିଳୁଛି ।

ଭେଙ୍କଟ ମଞ୍ଜୁଙ୍କର ଚତୁର୍ଦ୍ଦଶୀ ପ୍ରକାଶିକା (୧୬୬୦) ଅନୁସାରେ ରାଗ ଲଳିତା ଗୌଲ ମେଳରୁ ଉତ୍ପନ୍ନ ହୋଇଛି । ଏହି ଗୌଲ ମେଳରୁ ଗୁଣ୍ଡକୀୟ, ଗୁଞ୍ଜରୀ ସାବେରୀ ଓ ମଲହରୀ ଓ ଆଉ ଅନେକ ରାଗ ମଧ୍ୟ ଜନ୍ମିତ । କର୍ଣ୍ଣାଟକୀ ପଦ୍ଧତିରେ ଏହି ଲଳିତା ରାଗରେ ବ୍ୟବହୃତ ହେଉଥିବା 'ଅନ୍ତର' 'ଗା' ଓ 'ଶୁଦ୍ଧ ଧା', ଉତ୍ତର ଭାରତୀୟ ପଦ୍ଧତିର 'କୋମଳ ଧା' ଅଟେ । 'କାଳୀ ନି' ମଧ୍ୟ ଉତ୍ତର ଭାରତୀୟ ପଦ୍ଧତିର

‘ଶୁଭ ନି’ ଅଟେ । ଉତ୍ତର ଭାରତୀୟ ସଂଗୀତରେ ଏହି ସ୍ୱର ସମୂହ - ‘ସା ଗା ମା ଧା ନି ସା’ ଅନ୍ୟ ଏକ ସୁମଧୁର ରାଗ “ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରକୋଷ” ନାମରେ ପରିଚିତ । କାଳକ୍ରମେ “ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରକୋଷ” ରାଗର ଅନେକ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ହୋଇଥିବାର ଦୃଷ୍ଟ ନିଳେ । ଏହି ରାଗର ଜାତି ଷାଡ଼ବ (ରାଗ ବିଜ୍ଞାନ ଥଣ୍ଡ ଭାଗ) ଅନ୍ୟମତରେ ଜାତି ଔଡ଼ବ (ରାଗ ପ୍ରବୀଣ, ପଣ୍ଡିତ ଗଣେଷ ପ୍ରସାଦଶର୍ମା) । ରାଗ ଲଳିତାର ମଧ୍ୟ ଜାତି ଔଡ଼ବ ।

ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ଗ୍ରନ୍ଥରେ ରାଗ “ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରକୋଷ” ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ଯାହା ଲେଖା ଦେଖିବାକୁ ମିଳେ ତହିଁରୁ ଏହା ହିନ୍ଦୁସ୍ଥାନୀ ପକ୍ଷତୀର ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ଦଶଆଟରୁ ଉତ୍ପନ୍ନ ହୋଇନାହିଁ । ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ଭାରତୀୟ ପକ୍ଷର ଅନୁଯାୟୀ ପଣ୍ଡିତ ଭେଙ୍କଟମଙ୍ଗଙ୍କର ୭୨ ଆଟ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ଏହା କରିବାନୀ ଆଟ ଅନ୍ତର୍ଗତ (ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ନାମ କିରଣାବଳୀ) । ଏହି ‘ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରକୋଷ’ ରାଗ ମାତ୍ର ୫୦ ବର୍ଷ ହେଲା ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ହୋଇଛି । ଏହା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଏହି ରାଗର ସ୍ୱରୂପ ଝଟ୍ଟ ହୋଇ ନଥିଲା । ଏହା ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ମନୋରଞ୍ଜକ ସ୍ୱର ସମାବେଶରେ ଏକ ଶୁଦ୍ଧ ମଧୁର ରାଗ ହୋଇଥିବାରୁ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଏହାର ବହୁ ପ୍ରଚଳନ ଦେଖାଯାଏ ।

ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ କୁହାଯାଇ ପାରେଯେ ଯେହେତୁ ବଡ଼ଜେନା ମହାପାତ୍ରଙ୍କର ‘ଗୀତ ପ୍ରକାଶ’ ଗ୍ରନ୍ଥରେ ଲଳିତା ରାଗର ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ ଓ ସ୍ୱର ସମୂହର ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ ବହୁ ପୁରାତନ (୧୫୫୯ - ୧୫୬୮) ତେଣୁ ଏହି ‘ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରକୋଷ’ ରାଗଟିର ଉତ୍ପତ୍ତି ‘ଲଳିତା’ ରୁ ହିଁ ହୋଇଛି । ବଡ଼ଜେନା ରାଗ ଲଳିତା କେବଳ ‘ଟଙ୍କ’ ରାଗରୁ ଉତ୍ପନ୍ନବୋଲି ଲେଖିଥିଲା ବେଳେ ଏହା ଭୈରବୀ ଆଟରୁ ଉତ୍ପନ୍ନ ବୋଲି ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ ନାହିଁ । ଯାହାକି ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ସୁଗର ବିଶ୍ଳେଷଣ ଏବଂ ଏହା ଅଯୌକ୍ତିକ । କାରଣ ଏହା ଗୌଳ ମେଳରୁହିଁ ଜନ୍ମିତ । ଯଦି ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତର ରାଗ ରାଗିଣୀ ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ଭାରତୀୟ ରାଗ ରାଗିଣୀରୁ ଆସିଛି ବୋଲି ଆମେ ପ୍ରମାଣିତ କରିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁ ନାହିଁ ତେବେ ‘ଲଳିତା’ ରାଗଟି ଉତ୍ତର ଭାରତୀୟ ପକ୍ଷରେ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ଭୈରବୀ ଆଟରୁ ସମ୍ଭବ ହେବା ଅଯୌକ୍ତିକ ନୁହେଁ ? (ସ୍ୱର ସମୂହ ମଧ୍ୟ ଭିନ୍ନ)

ସମସ୍ତ ଦିଗରୁ ଆଲୋଚନା କଲେ ଏହିପରି ପ୍ରତୀତ ହେଉଛିଯେ ରାଗ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରକୋଷ ହିଁ “ଗୀତପ୍ରକାଶ” ରେ ପୁରାତନ ‘ଲଳିତା’ ରାଗରୁ ଉତ୍ପନ୍ନ ବା ଏକ ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ କାଳୀନ ରୂପାନ୍ତର । ଏହାର ମଧୁର ଓ ମନୋରଞ୍ଜକ ସ୍ୱର ସମୂହରେ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ହୋଇଛି ଯାହାପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଜୀବିତ (live) ଓ ଗତିଶୀଳ (moving) କଳାର ନିଦର୍ଶନ । ତେଣୁ ଏଠାରେ ଦୃଢ଼ତାର ସହିତ କୁହାଯାଇ ପାରେଯେ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତ ଏକ ବହୁ ପୁରାତନ ପକ୍ଷର । ଉତ୍ତର ଭାରତୀୟ ସଂଗୀତରେ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରକୋଷ ରାଗଟି ଏହାର ଉଦାହରଣ । ପର୍ଯ୍ୟାଲୋଚନା କରାଗଲେ ଏହିପରି ଆହୁରି ରାଗ ରାଗିଣୀ ଯାହା ହିନ୍ଦୁସ୍ଥାନୀ ପକ୍ଷରେ ବ୍ୟବହୃତ ହେଉଛି, ତାହା ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତର ମୂଳ ରାଗ ବା ଜନକ ରାଗରୁ ଉତ୍ପନ୍ନ ହୋଇଥିବାର ପ୍ରମାଣ ମିଳିବାର ଆଶାଅଛି ।

Arati Misra is a highly accomplished Odissi and Hindustani classical singer and a top grade artist in the All India Radio.

ଆମେରିକା ଚିଠି

ଶ୍ରୀ ଜାନରଞ୍ଜନ ଦାଶ

ମୋ ମାସର ଶେଷ ସପ୍ତାହରେ ଆମେରିକାରେ ମେମୋରିଆଲ୍ ଦିବସ ବୋଲି ଛୁଟି ପାଳିତ ହୋଇଥାଏ । ଏହିଦିନଟି ଦେଶ ଗଠନ ସମୟର ଶହୀଦ ତଥା ପୁରୁଷ ପ୍ରାଣ ହରାଇଥିବା ସୈନିକ ମାନଙ୍କ ଲାଗି ଉଦ୍ଦିଷ୍ଟ। ଶନିବାର, ରବିବାର ଓ ସୋମବାର - ଏଭଳି ୩ ଦିନ ଛୁଟି । ଆମେ ସାନଫ୍ରାନ୍ସିସ୍କୋ ସହରଠାରୁ ପ୍ରାୟ ୩୫୦ କିଲୋମିଟର ଦୂରରେ ଏକ ଆଶ୍ରମକୁ ଗଲୁ । ଅନେକ ବର୍ଷ ତଳେ ସ୍ବାମୀ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରୟାନନ୍ଦ ଏହି ଆଶ୍ରମକୁ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା କରିଥିଲେ । ଆଶ୍ରମର ନାଁ କ୍ରୀଷ୍ଣାନନ୍ଦ । ପିଲାଛୁଆ ସମେତ ପ୍ରାୟ ୬୦ ଲୋକ ।

ଚାରିଆଡ଼କୁ ଚାହିଁଲେ ହିମାଳୟ ପରି ଦୃଶ୍ୟ । କାଳିଦାସଙ୍କ ରଚିତ କୁମାରସମ୍ବର ପ୍ରଥମ ଦୁଇ ଧାଡ଼ି ମନେପଡ଼ିଲା -
ଅସ୍ତ୍ୟୁରସ୍ୟାଂ ଦିଶିଦେବତାମ୍ ହିମାଳୟୋନାମ ନଗାଧିପତିଃ,
ପୂର୍ବାପରୌ ତୋୟା ଦିଶିବଗାନ୍ଧ୍ୟା ସ୍ଥିତଃ ପୃଥାବ୍ୟା ଇବ ମାନବଃ ।
ବିରାଟ ବିରାଟ ଲମ୍ବା ରେତରଡ଼ ଗଛ ଆଉ ବିଶାଳ ପାହାଡ଼ର ସମନ୍ୱୟ ଏକ ଐଶ୍ୱର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଶାନ୍ତି ପରିବେଶ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରୁଥାଏ ।

ଶୁକ୍ରବାର ରାତିରେ ପହଂଚିଲା ବେଳକୁ ୭ଟା ବାଜିଯାଇଥିଲା । ସ୍ବାମୀ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରାନନ୍ଦ ସେତେବେଳକୁ ପହଂଚିସାରିଥିଲେ । ସକାଳୁ ଭୋର ୫ଟା ବେଳେ ଶଯ୍ୟାତ୍ୟାଗ । ଠିକ୍ ୬ଟାରେ ଧ୍ୟାନ ଆରମ୍ଭ । ୪୫ ମିନିଟ୍ ପରେ ଚାହାପାନ ୧୫ ମିନିଟ୍ । ସକାଳ ୭ଟାରେ ପ୍ରଥମ ଲେକ୍ଚରର ସ୍ବାମୀଜୀ ଦେଲେ । ଶ୍ରୀ ଶଙ୍କରାଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟଙ୍କ ରଚିତ ବାକ୍ୟବୃତ୍ତି, ଯେଉଁଥିରେ ମହାବାକ୍ୟ “ତତ୍ ତ୍ୱ ଅସି” ର ପୁରା ବ୍ୟାଖ୍ୟା କରାଯାଇଛି, ଆମର ପାଠ୍ୟପୁସ୍ତକ ଥିଲା । ଦିନରେ ୩ଥର ଛାସ । ସକାଳ ୭ଟାରେ, ଦିନ ୧୦ଟାରେ, ଏବଂ ଉପରବେଳା ସାଢ଼େ ୩ଟାରେ । ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାରେ ଭଜନ ଏବଂ ସତ୍ସଙ୍ଗ । ସେଠି ଟେଲିଫୋନ ନାହିଁ କି ଟେଲିଭିଜନ ନାହିଁ । ଭୋଜନ ସବୁ ସରଳ ଏବଂ ନିରାମିଷ । ବାଜେ ଗପସପରେ ସମୟ ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚ ପାଇଁ ବେଳ କି ସ୍ଥଳ ନାହିଁ । କେମିତି ୩ଦିନ କଟିଗଲା ଜାଣିହେଲା ନି ।

ସ୍ବାମୀ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରାନନ୍ଦ ଯୁବକ, ବୟସ ମାତ୍ର ୩୮ । କର୍ଣ୍ଣଟକ ପ୍ରଦେଶର ଲୋକ । IIT ମାଡ୍ରାସରୁ ଇଲେକ୍ଟ୍ରିକାଲ୍ ଇଞ୍ଜିନିଅରିଂ ରେ ମାଷ୍ଟରସ୍ ଡିଗ୍ରୀ କଲା ପରେ ୨ ବର୍ଷ ବୃକ୍ଷରୀ କରିସାରି ସେ ବମ୍ବେର ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରୟାନିଶନରେ ଯୋଗଦାନ କଲେ । ସେଠାରୁ ବ୍ରହ୍ମଚାରୀ ଟ୍ରେନିଂ ନେଲା ପରେ ସେ ବମ୍ବେ, ବାଙ୍ଗାଲୋର, ଏବଂ ଦିଲ୍ଲୀରେ ବେଦାନ୍ତ ଦର୍ଶନ ପଢ଼ାଇଲେ । ପ୍ରାୟ ୪ ବର୍ଷ ହେବ ସେ କାଲିଫର୍ଣ୍ଣିଆର ସାନଫ୍ରାନ୍ସିସ୍କୋ ସହରରେ ରହି ଆତ୍ମମାନଙ୍କୁ ବେଦାନ୍ତ ପଢ଼ାଇ ଆସୁଛନ୍ତି । ଅତୀତ ଜ୍ଞାନୀ ଏବଂ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବିନୟୀ । ଆତ୍ମର ଏବଂ ବ୍ୟବହାରରେ ତିଳେମାତ୍ର ଗର୍ବ କିମ୍ବା ବଡ଼ପଣିଆ ମନୋଭାବ ନାହିଁ । ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ସମାନ ଭାବେ ଦେଖିବା ଏବଂ ସମ୍ମାନ କରିବା ତାଙ୍କର ବିଶେଷତ୍ୱ । ଏହି ସମଭାବ ବା ଇଂରାଜୀରେ ଯାହାକୁ କୁହାଯାଏ, equanimity, ଭଗବତ୍ ଗୀତାରେ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନା କରାଯାଇଛି । ସ୍ବାମୀଜୀ କହନ୍ତି ଯେ ଇଂରାଜୀ ଶବ୍ଦ same ସଂସ୍କୃତ ଶବ୍ଦ “ସମ” ରୁ ଆସିଛି ।

ପ୍ରକୃତରେ କହିବାକୁ ଗଲେ ଆମକୁ ଜଣାନଥିଲା ଯେ ଶଙ୍କରାଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଏଭଳି ଗୋଟିଏ ବ୍ୟାଖ୍ୟାନ କରି ବାକ୍ୟବୃତ୍ତି ଲେଖିଥିଲେ । ପ୍ରଥମ ଭାଗରେ ୨୩ ଟି ଶ୍ଳୋକରେ ତ୍ୱଂ ଶବ୍ଦର ଅର୍ଥ କରାଯାଇଛି । ତାପରେ ୧୦ଟି ଶ୍ଳୋକରେ ତତ୍ ଶବ୍ଦର ଅର୍ଥ । ଏହି ମହାବାକ୍ୟରେ ମଣିଷ ଏବଂ ଭଗବାନ୍ ଏକ ବୋଲି ପ୍ରମାଣ କରାଯାଇଛି । ଯେଉଁ ଶକ୍ତି ଦ୍ୱାରା ସମଗ୍ର ଜଗତ ପରି ଚାଲିଚାଲୁ, ଯେଉଁ ସଜ୍ଜିବାନନ୍ଦ ବ୍ରହ୍ମନ୍ ଆମ ସମସ୍ତ ବସ୍ତୁଶକ୍ତି ଅହ ରହ ନିରୀକ୍ଷଣ କରିଚାଲିଛି, ସେହି ଶକ୍ତିରୁ ଆମେ ସବୁ ଜାତ ହୋଇଛୁ, ସେହି ତତ୍ (That) ଆମରି ଭିତରେ ବିରାଜମାନ । ତେଣୁ ତତ୍ ତ୍ୱଂ ଅସି ର ଅର୍ଥ That Thou Art ମାନେ ଜୀବାତ୍ମା ଏବଂ ପରମାତ୍ମା ଏକ । ସଜ୍ଜିବାନନ୍ଦ ବ୍ରହ୍ମନ୍ । ଅଦ୍ୱୈତ ବେଦାନ୍ତର ମୁଳମନ୍ତ୍ର ଏହି । ଦ୍ୱୈତ ନାହିଁ ଛାୟୋଗ୍ୟ ଉପନିଷଦରେ ଏହି ମହାବାକ୍ୟ କୁହାଯାଇଛି । ଅନ୍ୟ ୩ଟି ମହାବାକ୍ୟ ହେଲା, “ପ୍ରଜ୍ଞାନଂ ବ୍ରହ୍ମ” (ଆତ୍ମେୟ ଉପନିଷଦ), “ଅୟଂ ଆତ୍ମା ବ୍ରହ୍ମ” (ମାଣ୍ଡୁକ୍ୟ ଉପନିଷଦ), ଏବଂ “ଅହଂ ବ୍ରହ୍ମସ୍ମି” (ବୃହଦାରଣ୍ୟକ ଉପନିଷଦ) । ପ୍ରତିଟି ମହା ବାକ୍ୟ ରେ ଜୀବାତ୍ମା ଏବଂ ପରମାତ୍ମାର ଐକ୍ୟତ୍ୱ କଥା କୁହାଯାଇଛି ।

ହିନ୍ଦୁ ଧର୍ମ ଛଡ଼ା ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଧର୍ମାବଲମ୍ବୀଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଏହା ହୃଦୟଙ୍ଗମ କରିବା କଷ୍ଟ । ଅନ୍ୟ ଧର୍ମରେ ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ଏବଂ ଭଗବାନ ପୂରା ଅଲଗା । ଭଲକାମ କଲେ ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ଭଗବାନଙ୍କ ପାଖକୁ ଯିବାର ପ୍ରୟାସ କରିବ । କିନ୍ତୁ ସେମାନେ ଏକାକାର ଏହା ବିଚାର ଶକ୍ତିର ବାହାରେ । ହିନ୍ଦୁ ମାନେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଏହାକୁ ହୃଦୟଙ୍ଗମ କରିବା ସହଜ ନୁହେଁ । ସେଥିଲାଗି ଆମର ଶାସ୍ତ୍ର ଯଥା ବେଦ ଏବଂ ଉପନିଷଦ୍ ଅଧ୍ୟୟନ ଏକାନ୍ତ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ।

ଶ୍ରୀ ଶଙ୍କରାଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ରଚିତ ଆତ୍ମବୋଧ, ତତ୍ତ୍ୱବୋଧ, ବିବେକବୃତ୍ତାମଣି ତଥା ବାକ୍ୟବୃତ୍ତି ଭଳି ପ୍ରକରଣ ଗ୍ରନ୍ଥ ମାନଙ୍କରେ ଅଦ୍ୱୈତ ବେଦାନ୍ତ ଦର୍ଶନ ବ୍ୟାଖ୍ୟା କରାଯାଇଛି । ଶରୀର, ମନ, ଓ ବୁଦ୍ଧି ସ୍ୱାରା ନିଜକୁ ପରିଚିତ କରି ମଣିଷ ଦୁଃଖ ଭୋଗ କରୁଅଛି । ଯଦି ଉପରେ ଯେଉଁ ସଚ୍ଚିଦାନନ୍ଦ ବ୍ରହ୍ମନ୍ ଅଛନ୍ତି ତାଙ୍କୁ ହୃଦୟଙ୍ଗମ କଲେ ଚରଣାନ୍ତ ପ୍ରାପ୍ତି ସମ୍ଭବ ।

ଆଶ୍ରମରେ ୩ ଦିନ ରହିବା ସମୟରେ ମନରେ ଏକ ଅଭୂତପୂର୍ବ calmness କିମ୍ବା ପ୍ରଶାନ୍ତି ଆସୁଥିଲା । ତାହେଲେ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ହେଲା, ସବୁ ସମୟରେ ଉଚ୍ଚ ଶାନ୍ତି କିପରି ପ୍ରାପ୍ତ ହୋଇପାରିବ? ଆମର ଦୈନିକ ଜୀବନ ଭିତରେ ଏକ ଶାନ୍ତ ସମାହିତ ପରିବେଶ ପାଇବାକୁ କିଏ ଭଲ ନ ପାଇବ? ସବୁବେଳେ ସେହି ରାଗ, ଦ୍ୱେଷ, ଅହଙ୍କାର, ଇର୍ଷା, ସ୍ୱାର୍ଥପରତାକୁ ନେଇ ମଣିଷ ଦୁଃଖରେ ହତସନ୍ତ ହେଉଛି । ପ୍ରଥମ କାମ ହେଲା, ନିଜ ମନକୁ ଅକ୍ଳିଆରକୁ ଆଣିବା । ସେଥିଲାଗି ଧ୍ୟାନ ଏବଂ ଜପ ର ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ବହୁତ୍ । ଛଳନାର ଜୀବନକୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ନିଜେ ଯାହା ସେଇଆ ହେଇ ରହିଲେ ଅନେକ stress କମିଯିବ । ଅପରକୁ ସ୍ୱେଦ ଶୁଦ୍ଧା ଦେଖାଇବା ଏବଂ ସରଳ ଜୀବନଯାପନ କରିବା ଶାନ୍ତି ପାଇବାର ଏକମାତ୍ର ପନ୍ଥା । ସେଥିଲାଗି ତୈତ୍ତୀୟ ଉପନିଷଦର ବାଣୀ ସର୍ବଦା ସ୍ମରଣୀୟ:

ଓଁ ଭଦ୍ରଂ କର୍ଣ୍ଣେଭିଃ ଶୁଣୟାମ ଦେବାଃ । ଭଦ୍ରଂ ପଶ୍ୟେମା ଶକ୍ତିଃ ଯଜତ୍ରାଃ ।
 ସ୍ଥିରୋକ୍ଷେପୁଷ୍ପଂ ସସ୍ମନୁଭିଃ । ବ୍ୟଶେମ ଦେବହିତଂ ସଦାୟଃ ।
 ସ୍ୱସ୍ତି ନ ଇନ୍ଦ୍ରୋ ବୃଦ୍ଧଶ୍ରବାଃ । ସ୍ୱସ୍ତି ନଃ ପୁଷା ବିଶ୍ୱବେଦାଃ ।
 ସ୍ୱସ୍ତି ନସ୍ମାଶୋ ଅରିଷ୍ଟନେଭିଃ । ସ୍ୱସ୍ତି ନୋ ବୃହସ୍ପତିର୍ଦଧାତୁ ।
 ଓଁ ଶାନ୍ତିଃ । ଶାନ୍ତିଃ । ଶାନ୍ତିଃ ॥

ସ୍ୱାମୀ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରୟନନ୍ଦଙ୍କର ଇଂରାଜୀ ଅନୁବାଦ: O ye Gods, may we (always) hear with our ears what is auspicious, O worshipful Ones, may we with our eyes always see what is auspicious. May we live the entire span of our allotted life hale and hearty, offering our praises (unto Thee). May *Indra*, the ancient and the famous, *Pusan* (Sun) the all knowing, the Lord of Swift Motion (*Vayu*) who saves us from all harms and *Brhaspati* who protects the spiritual wealth in us - bless us (with intellectual strength to understand the scripture and the resolute heart to follow the teachings). *Om* Peace ! Peace ! Peace!

Jnana Ranjan Dash lives in San Jose, California with his wife Sweta Padma and two sons. He has been writing "America Chithi," a regular column in the newspaper "Samaj," for the last 14 years. This is a sample published in Orissa two years ago.

ସାଧକ ଫତୁରାନମ

ରମା କର

ଫତୁରାନମ ୧୯୧୫-୧୯୯୫ ଆଧୁନିକ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟରେ ଜଣେ ଅପ୍ରତିଦ୍ୱନ୍ଦ୍ୱି ପ୍ରଜ୍ଞ । ଫକୀର ମୋହନଙ୍କ ଆଦର୍ଶରେ ସେ ବ୍ୟଙ୍ଗ ଗଳ୍ପ, ଓ ବ୍ୟଙ୍ଗ ରଚନାମାନ ସୃଷ୍ଟିକରି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟରେ ଏକ ଅନନ୍ୟ ପ୍ରତିଭା ଭାବରେ ନିଜକୁ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା କରି ପାରିଥିଲେ ।

ତାଙ୍କୁ ପାଶ କରିମଧ୍ୟ ସେ ତାଙ୍କର ନହୋଇ ବାଣୀ ସାଧନାରେ ବ୍ରତୀ ଥିଲେ । ଛାତ୍ର ଅବସ୍ଥାରୁ ପରିହାସ ପ୍ରିୟ ଏହି ପ୍ରଜ୍ଞାଙ୍କ କୃତିରାଜିରେ ସ୍ୱତଃ ପରିଦୃଷ୍ଟ ହୁଏ ହାସ୍ୟରସର ଉଚ୍ଚଳ ପ୍ଲାବନ । ସରଳ ଭାଷା ଓ ବ୍ୟଙ୍ଗମୂଳକ ଶୈଳୀରେ ଯେ କୌଣସି ଗଂଭୀର ପରିବେଶ ଓ ପରିସ୍ଥିତିକୁ ଲଘୁ କରିବାରେ ସେ ଥିଲେ ସିଦ୍ଧହସ୍ତ ।

ଫତୁରାନମଙ୍କ ପିତୃଦତ୍ତ ନାମ ରାମଚନ୍ଦ୍ର । ଏହି ଛଦ୍ମ ନାମକରଣର କାରଣ ସମ୍ପର୍କରେ ସେ କହନ୍ତି - ମେଡିକାଲ ସ୍କୁଲରେ ପଢ଼ିଲାବେଳେ କଟକ ଷ୍ଟେସନ ପାଖରେ ଥିବା ଏକ ଇଉନଂ କୁବକୁ ସାଥୁମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ସେ ଯାଉଥିଲେ । ଥରେ ତାଙ୍କ ଯିବାରେ ଡେରି ହୋଇଗଲା । ସେହି କୁବରେ ଜଣେ ବଙ୍ଗୀୟ ଭଦ୍ରଲୋକ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ସଭ୍ୟଙ୍କୁ ଗୋଟିଏ ଗୋଟିଏ ସାଧୁ ପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ନାମରେ ଯଥା - ବିଶ୍ଵବାନନ୍ଦ, ପ୍ରଣବାନନ୍ଦ, ଯୋଗାନନ୍ଦ, ବିବେକାନନ୍ଦ ଇତ୍ୟାଦିଙ୍କ ନାମରେ ନାମିତ କରୁଥିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କର ପହଞ୍ଚିବା ଡେରି ହୋଇଯାଇଥିବାରୁ ସବୁ "ନମ" ସରିଯାଇଥିଲା । ତେଣୁ ସେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖି କହି ଉଠିଲେ ତୁମେ ହେଲ "ଫତୁରାନମ" । ନୂଆ ନୂଆ ଲେଖା ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲାବେଳେ ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ ଭୁଲରୁ ରକ୍ଷାପାଇବାପାଇଁ ରାମଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ତାଙ୍କ ରଚନାରେ ଏହି ଫତୁରାନମ ନାମଟି ଦେଇଥିଲେ । ନାମଟି ଏପରି ଲୋକପ୍ରିୟ ହୋଇଗଲାଯେ, ସେ ତାଙ୍କର ଭୂସମ୍ପତ୍ତି କାଗଜପତ୍ରରେ ଯଥା ପଟ୍ଟା, ପାଉତିରେ ଏହି ନାମଟି ଦରଜ କରିଥିଲେ ।

କହିବା ବାହୁଲ୍ୟ ଯେ - ଫତୁରର ଅଭିଧାନିକ ଅର୍ଥ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଧାନ ବା ସର୍ବସ୍ୱାନ୍ତ । ଫତୁର ବା ସର୍ବସ୍ୱାନ୍ତ ହେଲାପରେ ଯାହାର ଆନନ୍ଦର ସୀମା ଅସୀମ ସେ ଫତୁରାନମ । ପ୍ରାଚୁର୍ଯ୍ୟ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଜନ୍ମଗ୍ରହଣ କରି ଏବଂ ଅଭାବ ଅନାଚନ ଠାରୁ ଦୂରରେ ରହି ଜଣେ ବେପାରୀ ମଣିଷ ଭାବରେ ଦିନ କଟାଇଥିବା ରାମଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ଯେ ପରମ ଦୁର୍ଗତି ତଥା ଅସୁସ୍ଥତାର ଶିକାର ହେବେ ଏକଥା କେହି ଭାବିନଥିଲେ ।

ଦିନେ ପରିହାସରେ ଯେଉଁ ଫତୁରାନମ ନାମଟି ସେ ପାଇଥିଲେ, ତାହାର ଯଥାର୍ଥତା ଅନୁଭବ କରି ନିଜେ ଦୁଃଖ ସାଗରରେ ଉଡୁଡୁ ହୋଇ ମଧ୍ୟ ଅନ୍ୟର ମୁହଁରେ ହସ ଭରି ଦେବାର ସଂକଳ୍ପ ସେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିନେଲେ ।

୧୯୩୮ ମସିହାରେ ମେଡିକାଲ୍ ସ୍କୁଲରୁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ୩୯.୪୩ ପି ପାଶକଲେ । ଏହିଠାରୁ ତାଙ୍କର ସୁଖମୟ ସମୟର ସମାପ୍ତି ହେଲା । କୁଷ୍ଠବ୍ୟାଧିଗ୍ରସ୍ତ ହୋଇ ସେ ଘରକୁ ଫେରିଲା ବେଳକୁ ପିତାଙ୍କର ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ସ୍ୱାମୀଙ୍କର ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ଓ ପୁତ୍ରର ବଡ଼ରୋଗ ଗ୍ରସ୍ତ ହେବା ଦେଖି ମାତା ଧରାଶାୟୀ ହେଲେ ।

ସେ ନିଜେ ତାଙ୍କର ଥିଲେ । ତେଣୁ ୮/୧୦ ବର୍ଷ ନିଜେ ନିଜର ଚିକିତ୍ସାରେ ଲାଗି ପଡ଼ିଲେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଭାଗ୍ୟର ବିଡ଼ମ୍ବନାରୁ ସେ ରୋଗମୁକ୍ତ ହେଲା ବେଳକୁ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିଶକ୍ତି ହରାଇବସିଲେ । ସଂସାର ପ୍ରତି ତାଙ୍କର ବିରାଗ ଭାବ ଜାତ ହେଲା ।

ସେ ବିବାହ କଲେ ନାହିଁ । ସାଧୁ ସନ୍ଥ ଭଳି ଜୀବନ ବିତାଇବାକୁ ଛିର କରି ସେ ଗେରୁଆ ଫଟେଇ ପିନ୍ଧିଲେ, ମୁହଁରେ ଦାଢ଼ ଓ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ଜଟା ରଖିଲେ । ଝେପୋ, ପିରିଞ୍ଜ, ବଦଳରେ କଲମ ଧାରଣ କଲେ । ବିଜ୍ଞାନ ପ୍ରତି ଆକୃଷ୍ଟ ଫତୁରାନନ୍ଦ, ସମୟ ଚକ୍ରରେ କଳାର ପୂଜାରୀ ହେଲେ ।

ବଂଧୁ ପଡ଼ନ୍ତି, ସେ ଶୁଣନ୍ତି । ଏହିପରି ତାଙ୍କର ଅଧ୍ୟୟନ ଚାଲୁରହେ । ହାସ୍ୟରସ ତଥା ବିଦୁସୀମୂଳ ରଚନାର ସଫଳ ପ୍ରକ୍ଷା ଭାବରେ ସେ 'ରାମଚନ୍ଦ୍ର' ନାମରେ ପରିଚିତ ନୁହଁନ୍ତି । ଛଦ୍ମନାମ 'ଫତୁରାନନ୍ଦ' ନାମରେ ସେ ଲୋକପ୍ରିୟ ।

ସାହିତ୍ୟ ସାଧନାର ପୃଷ୍ଠଭୂମି

୧୯୨୦ରେ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇଥିବା ଭାରତୀୟ ଜାତୀୟ ଆନ୍ଦୋଳନ ୧୯୩୦ ରେ ନୂତନ ରୂପ ନେଲା । ଅହିଂସା, ଅସହଯୋଗ, ଆନ୍ଦୋଳନର ପ୍ରଥମ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟାୟ ସମଗ୍ର ଭାରତରେ ଯେଉଁ ରାଜନୈତିକ ଚେତନା ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିଥିଲା, ତାହା ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟାୟରେ ଆହୁରି ଦୃଢ଼ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ହୋଇ ଇଂରେଜ ଶାସନର ଛିଡ଼ିକୁ ଦୋହଲାଇ ଦେଲା । ୧୯୩୦ ରୁ ୧୯୪୦ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଭାରତୀୟ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ଆନ୍ଦୋଳନ ଦେଶର ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଜନଜୀବନକୁ ଝର୍ଣ୍ଣ କରି ରାଜନୈତିକ, ସାମାଜିକ ଏବଂ ଅର୍ଥନୈତିକ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ଅନେକ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନର ସୂତ୍ରପାତ କରିଥିଲା, ତାହା ଫତୁରାନନ୍ଦଙ୍କ ଲେଖନୀରେ ଝଙ୍କ ଓ ଜୀବନ୍ତ ।

ତା'ର ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ସମୟରେ ପଣ୍ଡିତ ଗୋପବନ୍ଧୁ ଦାସ, ଗୋଦାବରୀଶ ମିଶ୍ର ଏବଂ କାନ୍ତକବି ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀକାନ୍ତଙ୍କ ମହାନ ଆଦର୍ଶରେ ସେ ତାଙ୍କ ରଚନାକୁ ସୁଦୃଢ଼ କରିଥିଲେ ।

ତାଙ୍କର ବ୍ୟାଧିଗ୍ରସ୍ତ ଜୀବନର ଜନ୍ମଣା ଜର୍ଜରିତ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତ ଗୁଡିକ ରଂଗ-ରସରେ ଭରି ଉଠି ଆତ୍ମପ୍ରକାଶ କରିଥିଲା ସାହିତ୍ୟ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ । ସାହିତ୍ୟ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଜୀବନକୁ ଚିହ୍ନିବା, ମଣିଷ ମନର ଭାବକୁ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିବାରେ ସେ ସ୍ୱର୍ଗୀୟ ଆନନ୍ଦ ଅନୁଭବ କରୁଥିଲେ । ତେଣୁ ତାଙ୍କର ସୃଷ୍ଟି ମାନବିକତାର ମଧୁର ଝର୍ଣ୍ଣରେ ମଧୁମୟ ଓ ଅମୃତମୟ ହୋଇଛି ।

ଇଂରେଜ ମାନଙ୍କ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଆଗମନରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଧର୍ମ, ସଂସ୍କୃତି, ରୀତିନୀତି ଏବଂ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଓ ସଭ୍ୟତାରେ ଯେଉଁ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ପରିଲକ୍ଷିତ ହେଲା, ସେ ସବୁର ବାସ୍ତବ ଚିତ୍ର ଓଡ଼ିଆ କଥା ସାହିତ୍ୟରେ ପ୍ରାୟତଃ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ମିଳିଥାଏ ।

ଉନବିଂଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀର ଶେଷଭାଗରୁ ବିଂଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀର ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟାର୍ଦ୍ଧ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଭାରତୀୟ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ସଂଗ୍ରାମର ଚିତ୍ର, ବାଉଁଶ, ରାଜନୈତିକ ଚିନ୍ତା ଓ ଚେତନାର ପ୍ରତିଟି ରୂପ ଫତୁରାନନ୍ଦଙ୍କ କଥା ସାହିତ୍ୟକୁ ସୁସମୃଦ୍ଧ କରିଛି । ସମଗ୍ର ଭାରତୀୟ ସ୍ତରରେ ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହୋଇଥିବା ଜାତୀୟ ଚେତନା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଉପନ୍ୟାସ ଭିତରେ ବିଶେଷ କରି ଫତୁରାନନ୍ଦଙ୍କ ସୃଷ୍ଟିରେ ଗଭୀର ଭାବରେ କ୍ରିୟାଶୀଳ ହୋଇ ଉଠିଛି ।

ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ସମୟରେ ଭାରତବର୍ଷର ରାଜନୈତିକ ଅସ୍ଥିରତା, ଆର୍ଥନୀତିକ ବୈଷମ୍ୟ, ନିର୍ବାଚନ ପ୍ରତିଶ୍ରୁତି ଭଙ୍ଗ, ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତାର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ, ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀଙ୍କର କଳ୍ପିତ ରାମରାଜ୍ୟର ଅସାରତା, ସାଧାରଣ ଜୀବନର ବିପର୍ଯ୍ୟୟ ଫତୁରାନନ୍ଦଙ୍କ କଥା ସାହିତ୍ୟରେ ଯେପରି ଭାବରେ ରୂପାୟିତ ହୋଇଛି, ତାହା ଅନ୍ୟତ୍ର ବିରଳ ।

ଦେଶର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଯୋଜନା ଓ ବିକାଶ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ସଚେତନତା, ରାଜନୈତିକ ସଙ୍ଗତ, ସଙ୍ଗୀର୍ଣ୍ଣତା, ସ୍ୱାର୍ଥପରତା ଏବଂ ଖଣ୍ଡିତ ଜୀବନ ଧାରାର ଅନେକ ଯୁଗଯନ୍ତ୍ରଣାର ସ୍ୱର ଫତୁରାନନ୍ଦଙ୍କ କଥା ସାହିତ୍ୟକୁ ଉଜ୍ଜୀବିତ କରି ସର୍ବ ଭାରତୀୟ ସ ମସ୍ୟା ସହିତ ନିଜକୁ ସାମିଲ କରିପାରିଛି ।

ଫତୁରାନନ୍ଦଙ୍କ ସ୍ମୃତି ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ

ଫତୁରାନନ୍ଦଙ୍କ ରଚିତ ହାସ୍ୟରସ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ବ୍ୟଙ୍ଗ ବିଦ୍ରୁପ ଭରା ଗଳ୍ପ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ହେଉଯା, ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଚୂଷ, ସାହିତ୍ୟ ବେରଷଣ, ବିଦ୍ରୁଷକ, ହସକୁରା, ମଙ୍ଗଳବାରିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ସଂସଦ, ନିଦା ବେହେଲ, କଲିକତି ଚେଙ୍ଗ, ସାହିତ୍ୟ ବକ୍ସାବକ୍ଷି, ଅଟଳିବାଜ, ନବ ଜିଆ, ଗମାତ ଓ ଉପନ୍ୟାସ 'ନାକଟା ଚିତ୍ରକର' ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ପ୍ରଧାନ । 'ଟାହୁଲିଆ' ଓ 'ମୟରା' ତାଙ୍କର ଦୁଇଟି ଗଳ୍ପ ଗ୍ରନ୍ଥ ।

ଚଳନ୍ତି ସମାଜର ଚରିତ୍ରମାନଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ, ସେମାନଙ୍କର ସ୍ୱଭାବ, ଚଳଣି, ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଓ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ପ୍ରେମକୁ ସେ ଯେପରି ବିଦ୍ରୁପ କରିପାରନ୍ତି, ବୋଧହୁଏ ସେଥିରେ ସେ ଅଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ । ତାଙ୍କର ବ୍ୟଙ୍ଗ ପରିହାସ ମୂଳକ । ସେଥିରେ ସେ କାହାକୁ ଆଘାତ କରି ନାହାନ୍ତି ।

ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ଦିବସ, ପ୍ରତିଶୋଧ, ପ୍ରାୟଶ୍ଚିତ, ଆଇନ, ଠାକୁର ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା, ଘୃସ, ମୁର୍ଖ, ଗାନ୍ଧି ସ୍ମୃତିପାଣ୍ଡି, ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା, ମରୁ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦର, ମୁକ୍ତି ଓ ଆତ୍ମବଳି ପ୍ରଭୃତି ଗଳ୍ପ ଗୁଡିକ ଫତୁରାନନ୍ଦଙ୍କର ହାସ୍ୟରସାତ୍ମକ ଗଳ୍ପଧାରାରୁ ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ବ୍ୟତିକ୍ରମ ଅଟେ । ଏ ଗୁଡିକରେ ଜୀବନର ଗୁରୁଗମ୍ଭୀର ଭାବ ଏବଂ ତତ୍କାଳୀନ ସାମାଜିକ ଜୀବନର ମନ୍ଦ୍ର ଆଲେଖ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣିତ ।

ନାକଟା ଚିତ୍ରକର ଓ ଫତୁରାନନ୍ଦ

ଫତୁରାନନ୍ଦଙ୍କ ସାହିତ୍ୟରେ 'ନାକଟା ଚିତ୍ରକର' ବହୁଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ବିଶେଷ ଗୁରୁତ୍ୱପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ । ଏହା ଫତୁରାନନ୍ଦଙ୍କର ଏକମାତ୍ର ଉପନ୍ୟାସ । ନିଜର ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀ ତଳକୁ ଏହା ତାଙ୍କର ସବୁଠାରୁ ପ୍ରିୟତମ ରଚନା । 'ନାକଟା ଚିତ୍ରକର' ଛଡ଼ା ପ୍ରେମପ୍ରସଙ୍ଗ ତାଙ୍କର ଆଉ କୌଣସି ସାହିତ୍ୟରେ ମିଳେନାହିଁ । ଏହି ରଚନାର ଚିତ୍ରକର ଚରିତ୍ରଟି ସହ ତାଙ୍କ ନିଜସ୍ୱ ଜୀବନାଭୂତି ଜଡ଼ିତ ।

ଫତୁରାନନ୍ଦଙ୍କ ଗଳ୍ପଗୁଡିକରେ ହାସ୍ୟ ଓ ବ୍ୟଙ୍ଗ ଯୁଗପତ୍ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ । ତାଙ୍କର ହାସ୍ୟ ବେଦନା ବୋଧରେ ପ୍ରାଣବନ୍ଧ । ତାଙ୍କର ବ୍ୟଙ୍ଗ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଗତ କୁସ୍ୱାରଚନା ବା ଆଶେପ ନୁହେଁ - ଏହା ସମାଜର କଲ୍ୟାଣମୁଖୀ । ତାଙ୍କର ହାସ୍ୟ ଓ ବ୍ୟଙ୍ଗର ଅନ୍ତରାଳରେ ଅଛି ସ୍ତମ୍ଭ ମାନସର ବିଦ୍ରୋହ, ବିରୋଧ ଓ ସଂସ୍କାରର ଅଭବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ।

Rama Kar is a writer and the wife of Late Bichitrananda Kar, Editor of 'Matrubhumi.'

ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ପୂଜାଛୁଟି

ପରାଶର ମିଶ୍ର

ତା ପରିସର ଓ ପରିସୀମାରେ କି ଉଦ୍‌ବେଗ, ଉନ୍ମାଦନା
ଲୁଚାଇ ରଖିଥାଏ ଯେ ହୃଦିୟବା ବଚିତ୍ର ହୁଏନା
ପୂଜାଛୁଟି ଆସିଗଲେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ
ସ୍ନେହ, ମମତା ଓ ଆନନ୍ଦର ମୋଟା ଦଉଡ଼ାରେ ବନ୍ଧା ହୁଏ
ତାଙ୍କହାକ, ସାଙ୍ଗସୁଖ, ଭାଇବନ୍ଧୁ, ସମ୍ପର୍କୀୟଙ୍କ
ଯିବା ଓ ଆସିବା
ବନ୍ଧୁଙ୍କ ନିର୍ଜନ ଘର, ସୋମାସେଟ ଆଉ
ଚୌକିର ଶୂନ୍ୟତା ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରନ୍ତି
ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ଯିବା ଆସିବାକୁ, ଧାଁଧପଡ଼କୁ ଆଉ
ମିଛିମିଛିକା ବ୍ୟସ୍ତତା ମଧ୍ୟରେ ପୁରୁଷ କରିବାର ସମୟକୁ ।

କିଏ କହେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ସବୁ ଦିନ ତ ଛୁଟି ଦିନ
ପୁଣି ପୂଜାଛୁଟି କଅଣ ?
ସହଜ ଓ ସରଳ ଭାଷାରେ ପଚାରି ଦେ :
ପୂଜାଛୁଟି କାହିଁକି ଓ କେମିତି
ଫିନ୍‌ଫିନ୍ ଧୋତି ପଞ୍ଜବୀ ପିନ୍ଧି ବାହାଦୁରୀ ମାରୁଥିବା
ଭଦ୍ରଲୋକ ଓ ବଡ଼ବାବୁଙ୍କୁ
ଲିଭାଇଜ୍ ଜିନ୍ ପିନ୍ଧି ପପ୍ ଗୀତ ଶୁଣୁଥିବା କଲେଜ ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ
ପ୍ରତିଟି ସହର ଓ ଗାଁର ଟାଣୁଆ କର୍ମକର୍ତ୍ତାଙ୍କୁ, ଯୁବନେତାଙ୍କୁ
ନ ହେଲେ ପୁଣି ଜୀବନ ଯୁଦ୍ଧରେ ପରାସ୍ତ ନ ହୋଇ
ନିଇତି ରିକ୍‌ସା ଟାଣୁଥିବା ରାମୁଡ଼ୁ ଓ ତାର ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ।

ତା ପରେ ବୁଝିଯିବୁ
ଛାତ୍ର ଧର୍ମଘଟ, ବେକାରୀ ସମସ୍ୟା, ହରତାଳ, ଜିନ୍ଦାବାଦ,
ମୁର୍ଦ୍ଦାବାଦ, ଅଖବନ୍ଦ, ଚକବନ୍ଦ - ସବୁ ସମସ୍ୟାକୁ
ସାମୟିକ ଭାବେ ଭୁଲି ଯାଇ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ପୂଜାଛୁଟି
କେମିତି ସୁଖି ଦିଏ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ବକେୟା ରଣ
ଦେବାନେବାର ହିସାବ ନିକାଶ ।

ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଆସିଲେ ସିନା ଦେଖନ୍ତୁ, ଅନୁଭବ କରନ୍ତୁ
ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଗର୍ବ, ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଅହଂକାର
ସହର, ବଜାର, ରାସ୍ତାଘାଟ, ଗାଁଗଣ୍ଡା ସବୁ ଆଲୋକିତ
ହୋଇ ଉଠନ୍ତି ନାଲି ନେଳି ଆଲୁଅରେ
ସବୁଆଡ଼େ ପୂଜାମେଡ଼, ଶୋଭାଯାତ୍ରା, ଆନନ୍ଦ ଓ ଉନ୍ମାଦନା ।

ଲୋକ ଭିତରେ ନ ମିଶିବୁ ତ ନ ମିଶି
 ଦେବୀ ମାଙ୍କୁ ଦର୍ଶନ କରି ହାତ ନ ଯୋଡ଼ିବୁ ତ ନ ଯୋଡ଼ି
 ଘଣ୍ଟ, ଘଣ୍ଟା, ଖଣ୍ଡ, ଆଳତୀ, ପୂଜାପାଠକୁ
 ନ ଶୁଣିବୁ ତ ନ ଶୁଣି
 ନିଜ ଅନ୍ଧ, ନିଜ ଅନ୍ଧିତ୍ୱ, ନିଜ ପୁରୁଷପଣିଆକୁ
 ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ନେଇ ଚାଲି ଆସ ଦହିବରା, ଗୁପ୍ତପୁ, ଚାଟ୍ ଦୋକାନକୁ
 ଆରମ୍ଭ କର ଗୁଲିଖଟି, ଚର୍ଚ୍ଚବିତର୍କ :
 ବିଦେଶୀ ଶକ୍ତିର ହାତ
 ବଣ୍ଟର ଅର୍ଥନୀତି, ରାଜନୀତି, ମୁଦ୍ରାଫିତୀ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ।

ପୂଜାଛୁଟିର ଚମକ ଓ ଚାତୁରୀରେ
 ଓଡ଼ିଶା ହୋଇଯାଏ ଧ୍ୱନିମୟ
 କାହାରି ଆଖିରେ ନିଦ ନ ଥାଏ କି ମୁହଁରେ
 କ୍ଳାନ୍ତି ନ ଥାଏ
 ଆନ୍ତରିକତା ଓ ଆତ୍ମୀୟତାର ତୋରରେ
 ହିଂସା, ଦ୍ୱେଷ, ପରନିନ୍ଦା ସବୁ କିଛି
 ବନ୍ଦ ରୁହେ ସାମୟିକ ଭାବରେ ।

ସମୟ, ସୁବିଧା, ସୁଯୋଗ ଦେଖୁ
 ଥରେ କେବେ ବାହାରି ଆସ
 ନିୟମାନୁବର୍ତ୍ତୀତ ଯାନ୍ତ୍ରିକ ବାଣ୍ଟାୟତାରୁ,
 ଦୟାର କୋଳାହଳରୁ
 କମ୍ପ୍ୟୁଟର୍, ଟିଭି, ଭିଡ଼ିଓ, ସେଲଫୋନ୍, ଇମେଲ୍ ସାମ୍ରାଜ୍ୟରୁ
 କାନାଡ଼ା, ଆମେରିକାର ସୁଖମୟ, ଆନନ୍ଦବାୟକ
 ରୁଟିନ୍ ବକ୍ଷା ପରିବେଶରୁ
 ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସହର କି କେଉଁ ଏକ ଗାଆଁକୁ ।

ଆ ଦେଖ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟର ନିଇତି ଉଠାପକା ଖେଳକୁ
 ଜହ୍ନର କଳା ମେଘ ଭିତରେ ହଜିଯିବାର ବ୍ୟାକୁଳତାକୁ
 ଆ ଶୁଣ କୋଳାହଳମୟ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ନୀରବତାକୁ
 ଝର୍ଣ୍ଣ କର ଲଙ୍ଗଳା ପାଦରେ ମାଟିର କମନୀୟତାକୁ
 ଅନୁଭବ କର ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଉଦାରତାକୁ
 କିଛି ନ ଥାଇ ବି ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ସବୁ କିଛି ଥାଏ
 କିଛି ନ ଦେଇ ବି ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସବୁ କିଛି ଦିଏ ।

Parasara Mishra lives in Toronto, Canada with his wife Rekha and daughter Lipi.

The First Ten Days after My Last Day

SURENDRA NATH RAY

Many from Orissa converged in the North America during the 1960s in their youth. This aging group now has children who are grown up and some of them, like my own, are raising their own children. Most of us came with a few dollars, not knowing the next step and ultimately established here nicely. In doing so, we struggled and as a result could not spend enough time to transmit our knowledge of many socio-religio-cultural aspects of Oriya life to our children. Even if there are some temples all over the North America, the priests are non-communicative with our children and grand children because of language barriers. The temples are not in close proximity to many Oriya families either. In an emergency, American friends and relatives, out of confusion, ask questions on how to express their condolences or pay respects to dear ones in case of a death. This includes wanting to know more on dressing up, sending flowers, ritual observance, etc. My own children have expressed their ignorance in the case of such emergencies. What is more important, because of the wide diversity among our own local practices that we knew back in Orissa, there is no set way to teach our children.

The following are few acceptable do's irrespective of our diversities. The mourning described here is for Hindus. For Muslims, there are perhaps some guidelines available in this country. The knowledge is derived from experience and observation and in no way a recipe of the best way to do it. Perhaps some day, a book on the whole subject of mourning will be found necessary. The practices recommended here are a modified, practical version of the authentic way as done in Orissa but applicable there as well, at least for the city dwellers.

It is recommended that you leave instructions for your children on subjects like whether the body has to be incinerated or buried.

Mourning Period: 10 days: On the 11th day, friends and relatives are invited, after an offering to God.

Who should Observe: Spouse and children at the first level, Grandparents/children and near relatives at the next level.

God Worship: None by the first level mourners for 10 days. If you have deities in your house, the next level of mourners can make offerings. During the mourning period, temple visit is prohibited for the first level mourners.

Dress Code: White, except for suits which should be dark. For all level mourners, all dresses must be washed on the 10th day. No new dresses can be used during the 10 day period.

Etiquette: Flowers to the mourning family are not appropriate. Only visits are allowed. Cards can be sent. Showing up on the 11th day is customary.

Shaving, Nail cut, and Haircut: Not allowed for the first level mourners.

Food: Vegetarian for 10 days but items such as oil, butter, turmeric, onion, garlic, exotic food and spice not appropriate. Usually cumin and chilli pepper are good and several foods can be prepared using only these. Burnt food such as barbeque are not allowed. Restrictions are relaxed for the second level of mourners. Nonvegetarian foods are not allowed in the household. Except for the mourners, no one can accept food in the mourning household.

Last rites: If desired, ashes can be saved to be dumped in a holy river. The ashes should be saved in a box wrapped in a new red cloth, and evening incense and lighting provided every day. The box cannot be touched except for dusting etc. after which one should take a bath and wash used clothes. Occasional flower offering is acceptable.

Surendra Ray lives in North Potomac, Maryland with wife Sukanti.

The First Ten Days after My Last Day

CHRISTOPHER KATHIRAY



on the wings of poesy



What makes the poet the potent figure that he is, or was, or ought to be, is that he creates the world to which we turn incessantly and without knowing it and that he gives to life the supreme fictions without which we are unable to conceive of it.

- Wallace Stevens

Listening to the Silence

=====

babru samal

I put the tired day to sleep
On the lap of the night
Cleansed him of all the worries
off the dusts of displeasure of life
Turned off all the lights of anticipation
And switched off the voices
Telling me what is right or wrong
And listened to the silence
Inside me
Just for a while.

The silence
Creeping thru the canyons of my mind
And telling me stories
Things of the past
The awesome things
The awful things
The dreams that bloomed
The dreams that bombed
And asking me
Did you learn any thing?
Am I supposed to?

The silence
Told me to appreciate
and enjoy
my pleasure and my pain
Not to be scared to
dream
dare
dive
And
drive for life
without always asking
What are you up to, kid?
Does it matter?

The voice
Resonating with every pulsation in me
Told me
To string the moments
The fleeting moments
The heavenly moments
The hellish moments
The variegated beads
on the necklace of my life.

=====

Babru Samal lives in Moorpark, California.

Evening Ritual (after a visit to a Koraput village)

JAYANTA MOHAPATRA

Somewhere
there are these barren hills which no one climbs
Somewhere too
a funeral group waits patiently in a jungle clearing
for the body which will not return to ash
Somewhere there is an evening treating underfoot
the sleeping village in its mud caked breath
while old fireflies
only let in the sprawling darkness once again

Mean of me, I realize
to come into the light of the old man's lamp
and point out the moon-washed peaks revealed
in his daughter's mirror full of his tears
The look of a woman's limbs quickening inside her
as I tie her up in the long leaves of *mandia*
The tenderness and ochre of a land
bound together with the bodies of kraits and cobras

In time maybe, the rock shall loosen
and the edicts of them float away in the wind
For the way of thought or meaning is not easy
among those hooded hills which no one climbs
I move my hands
and the chains of inference clink with me
as the August day of God
flits among the trees on either side
of the lonely pitted path in the pale moonlight
A long long way from the clean streets of New Delhi
is this village behind a night of glass
I remember the old man saying if I wanted to help them,
if I had seen anything there that mocked my world
Here was the light that stumbled on my words

The last time, I know, I took what I could see
Now perhaps, I'll wait for morning,
my sleep nourished from people
who had caught the moon in their tears,
the shadows thick with the ashes of burnt stars
Somewhere
August will be August still,
and over the hills will float poets' dead words
and I shall forgive myself this,
for I am only a man.

Jayanta Mohapatra is an internationally acclaimed poet. His poems have been widely published and translated into many languages. Jayanta Mohapatra lives and writes in Cuttack.

India

KATE CROSS DAS

Sing temples, ring your morning bells! Awaken birds, deafen, strike my heart with ancient grace.
Crowflight against the sky, black against lapis, fade to sketches in air.
Sunset cymbals and incense, sand of gold, fringed by the rose horizon
above the Bay of Bengal.

Dust and pearl, silk, gold and coral, coal fire in silver mist, dawn.
Mud and thatched homes, the worn wood of bullock carts, pounding their way on redstone roads; day.
It rises over red filigree, sun, over patterns of millions of sandaled feet,
over mosque and temple, water and stone, all mantras that never change.

Dry breath of wheatsong, song from Veda to modern rock,
the sitar hum of hope, of morning rotis and curry, of fish drying on beaches,
of paper twists filled with treats at Puri,
of brass and crafts in the market place,
of children filling the edges of each street like the bright bougainvillea.

May evening murmur like prayer and folding hands
to greet each dawn and each person.
May the nuclear birthing of recent days never destroy this land,
that morning bells and crowflight can continue without
a mushroom cloud.

Kate Cross Das is the wife of Debendra K. Das. The poem captures impressions of India from her many trips there since 1978. Deben and Kate live with their son, Sunit, in Fairbanks, Alaska.

କାହିଁକି ବିଭୋଳ ହେଲି?

ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀଧର ନାୟକ

ଆଜି କି ଆବେଗେ ଗୀତ ଲେଖିବାକୁ
କାହିଁକି ଶପଥ ନେଲି
କାହା ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶେ ସ୍ତବ ସାଧନାରେ
ସ୍ବପ୍ନ ବିଭୋଳୋ ହେଲି !
କିଏ ସେ ଦିବ୍ୟ ମୂର୍ତ୍ତି ମୋ' ଆଗେ
ଛିଡ଼ା ହେଲେ ଆସି କିବା ଅନ୍ତରାଗେ
କହିଲେ ତାଙ୍କର ସୃଷ୍ଟି ଲୀଳାର
ମହିମା ଦେବାକୁ ମେଲି
କାହିଁକି ବିଭୋଳୋ ହେଲି?
ଆତମିତ କଥା ତାଙ୍କ କାର୍ତ୍ତିର
ବୟନ କି ହୋଇ ନାହିଁ
ମୋ' ପରି ଜଣେ ଅଧମ ହାତରେ
ବାକି ଅଛି ହେବା ପାଇଁ?
ହେଉ ତେବେ ଯଦି ଏଇ ତାଙ୍କ ଇଚ୍ଛା
ଆଖି ପତା ମୋ'ର ହେଲା ଲୁହ ଭିଜା
ମଥା ନତ କରି ତାଙ୍କ ଶ୍ରୀଚରଣେ
ସବୁ କିଛି ସଂପି ଦେଲି
ଖାଲି ଲେଖିବିନି, ଗାଇବି, ନାଚିବି
ଅଗ୍ନି ଶପଥ ନେଲି ।
ଆସହେ ପୂଜ୍ୟ, କରିନିଅ ମତେ
ତୁମ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟର ଯୋଗ୍ୟ,
ମୋ' ରଚନା ପଥେ, ଭଲ ମନ୍ଦ ଯା'
ସବୁ ହେଉ ତୁମ ଭୋଗ୍ୟ ।
ତୁମ ଶୁଭ ନାମେ, ନବ ପରିଚୟେ
ଜାଗିବି ମୁଁ ଆଜି ମହା ନିର୍ଭୟେ
ମୁଁ ହେବି କେବଳ ନିମିତ୍ତ ମାତ୍ର
ତୁମ କାର୍ତ୍ତିର ଭେରୀ
ତୁମେ ହିଁ ପୁଞ୍ଜିବ, ନିଜେ ହିଁ ନାଚିବ
ବିଶ୍ବ ଜୀବନ ଘେରି ।

Sri Laxmidhar Nayak was recently awarded the prestigious "Atibadi Jagannath Das" by the Orissa Sahitya Academy for his lifelong contributions to Oriya literature. He is a renowned Oriya writer, and also a past recipient of Orissa Sangeet Natak Academy Award.

Weal, Woes and Beyond: Prologue to Epilogue

MANOJ PANDA

Genesis may be with silver spoon
Or may be shorn of petals strewn;
Elation twined with travail of life
Barge swirls in Karmic strife.

Mother, wife and cherishing others
Father, husband and smiling neighbors;
Always offer their helping hands
Being in myriad needs and demands.

Mesh of kinship and allied affection
Hinge on expectant, surreal transaction;
When one fails to measure up to the other
Long sworn bonding slackened asunder.

Contingence in everything, motions this world
To get something in return to give first in grand;
Selfishness, covetousness and spitefulness alike
Spawning their fiendish clan in unrelenting hike.

Pleasure and pain juxtapose the other
Enacting the histrionics of illusion further;
Mortals become pawns at baton swinging circumstance
Essaying to wiggle out to celebrate the deliverance.

Thinking oneself a cog in the great wheel of creation
Offering one's reward in Almighty's devotion;
"He is actual Doer" and "I merely an instrument"
Should prevail the maxim, working in detachment.

Neither there is merriment nor presiding predicament
Both act as sides of the fleeting coin of temperament;
Equanimity when triumphs against diabolics in cahoots
Paves the way for "true state" reconciling with the roots.

When kindness is showered devoid of any restriction
And noble work is performed sans fruit of action;
Unrequited bliss pours into every pore of subsistence
Divinity glistens forth in ubiquitous eloquence.

Manoj Panda lives in Detroit, Michigan with wife Meeta and three year old daughter Maitreyee.

ତୁମ ଉପସ୍ଥିତିର ପ୍ରମାଣ

ମନୋରମା ମହାପାତ୍ର

ତୁମେ ଇଚ୍ଛା କଲାମାତ୍ରେ ନେଇଯାଉ ମୋତେ
ଦୃଶ୍ୟମାନ ଜଗତର ଅନେକ ଦୂରକୁ
ତୁମେ ଇଚ୍ଛା କଲେ ମୋତେ ବହିରାବରଣ ଚିରି
ଠେଲି ଦେଇଯାଉ ମତେ ଅନ୍ତର୍ଜଗତକୁ !

ଆପଣା ଇଚ୍ଛାରେ କେବେ ଥିଲି ବା ମୁଁ ଇଚ୍ଛାମୟୀ
ଏବେ କିନ୍ତୁ ତୁମ ଛଡ଼ା କିଛି ନାହିଁ
ତିଳେ ମାତ୍ର କିଛି ମୋର ନାହିଁ ।
ତୁମେ ହିଁ ଚାହିଁଲେ ମତେ ଦେଇଯାଉ ପ୍ରବେଶାଧିକାର !
ଚାହିଁଲେ ବି ଦେଇଯାଉ ନିର୍ବାସନ
କରି ମଧ୍ୟ ବହିଷ୍କାର
କରି କି ପାରିବ ମତେ ଅନ୍ତରୁ ବାହାର ?

ପାଦ ଦେଲ ବୋଲି ତମେ ପଣ୍ଡ କୁଟୀରରେ ମୋର
ମୁଁ ପାଇଲି ଶେଷହୀନ ଭାବର ସଂପଦ
ତୁମ ଗୁଞ୍ଜରଣ ଶୁଣି
ମୋ ଭିତରେ ଖୋଲିଗଲା ମଧୁସ୍ରାବୀ
ଗୋଟିଏ ଆହ୍ୱାନ ।

ମିୟମାଣ ମୋ ଭିତରେ
ତୁମ ଇଚ୍ଛା ହୁଏ କ୍ରିୟମାଣ
ତୁମଠାରୁ ଦୂରରେ କି ନିକଟରେ
ଯେଉଁଠାରେ ଥିଲେ ହେଲେ
ମୁଁ ତ ଆଉ ଖୋଜିବିନି
ମୋ ଭିତରେ ତୁମ ଉପସ୍ଥିତିର ପ୍ରମାଣ ।

Manorama Mohapatra is a prolific writer, poet, journalist, orator, and philanthropist of Orissa. She is currently the Editor of "Samaj." These poems were published in her recent book "Baidehi Bisarjita," an anthology of poems with deep spiritual significance.

ALL FOR THE SHARING

Pallavi Raut Sodhi

Give me eyes to see...

The frescoes whose beauty I feel.

The waterfall whose music I hear.

The face of the girl
Who laughs out tinkling clear.

The house you turned into a home.

The sun you say that blinds you.

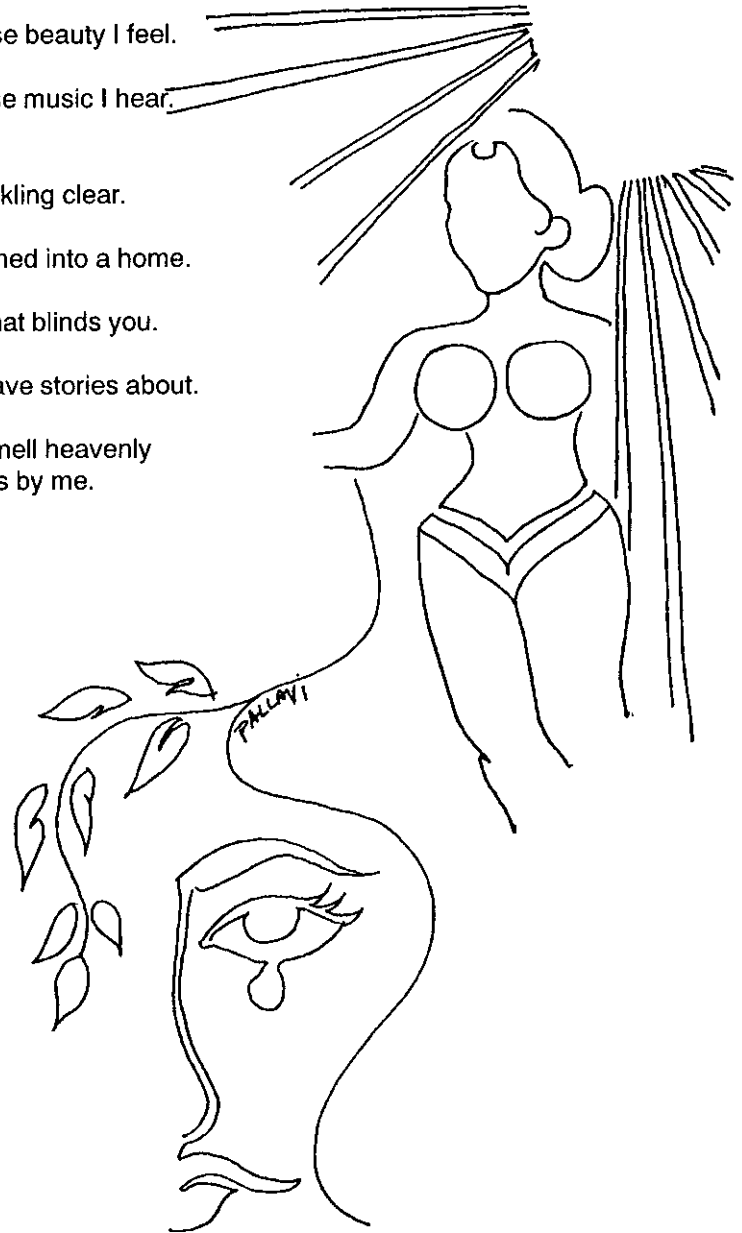
The moon you weave stories about.

The flowers that smell heavenly
each time you pass by me.

Each sound is rich
with a beauty so rare.
I feel it all
with a hunger unappeased and bare.

If I could but see
this beauty so bright
once, only once...
I would gladly
pass on my new gift of sight
to the next one in the dark.
To be passed on
the next one in the dark
To be passed on
To the next one in the dark.

All for the sharing
of this beauty around us
that begs to see and feel and touch.



Pallavi Raut Sodhi lives in Toronto with husband Sajneet Sodhi. She is an artist and she has sketched the above illustration.

ଲୋତକ ଧାରା

ସ୍ନେହ ମହାନ୍ତି

ସେ ମୋର ଲୋତକ ବିନ୍ଦୁ
ଝରେ ଯେବେ ପଣତ ଭିଜାଇ
ଅକୁହା କଥା ତି ମୋର
କହିବି ବୋଲି ପରେ, ସେ କି ଝରେ ଷକାନ୍ତରେ ।

ଅମୁତ ଶିଶିର ଟୋପା
ମୁଖ ସମ ତିକି ତିକି ବନ୍ଦୁ
ନ କହୁ କଥା ସିଏ,
ସେ ଯେ ମୋର ଦରଦର ବନ୍ଦୁ ।
ଯାହା ମୋ ଜୀବନ ଗାଆ
ରଚକ ମୁଁ ବସାଦ କବିତା
ହେ ସୁଖୀ ଗଢ଼ିଛ ତୁମେ
ସୁଖ ପରେ ଦୁଃଖମୟ ଜୀବନ ଲତିକା ।

ଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ ଭାବେ ଯାହା କିଛି ଦେଇଛି ଅଜାତ
ମୋର ଏଇ ତତ୍ତ୍ୱ ଅଶୁ ମୁଖ ସମ ମାଳି
ଜାଳି ଦେବ ତୁମ ପାଶେ ତୁମରି ଦରବ
ଅନ୍ତର କରବ ଶୂନ୍ୟ, ଲୋତକ ମୋ ବନତ ଶୀଖାଳି ।

Sneha Mohanty lives in Huntington Beach, California, with her husband Nirod and daughter Lisa.

Canadian Oriya
Soni Dasmohapatra

Sat sri akal.
Chem che.
Thumi kamon achho?
Tumhara hal aaj kaisa hai?

Where are your parents from?
What place did you say?
Orissa? Where is that?
I don't think I have ever heard of it in any way.

Do you know of a state on the eastern coast of India?
The place where Lord Jaganath stays.

The land of Odissi dance,
A dance which Madonna has highly praised?
Come on what are you talking about?
Be a little more clear.
Why don't you explain this some more?
I am not sure I fully understand, I fear.

I am not Punjabi, Gujarati, Bengali or Hindustani.
I don't know what else to say.
Come be with me for a while,
Maybe you can understand that way.

These communities are large in Canada.
Therefore they are commonly known.
Oriya people are scarce.
But that does not mean they are all alone.

Soni Dasmohapatra lives in Edmonton, Alberta.

Actual Arrival

Surya Nayak

People work hard
Often to achieve, but
Arrive at the threshold
Of a small attic.

See through a dim light
Few piles and unforgettable past.

An intense body ache
Of the brain.

I saw a passerby woman
Looked at her belly, that
bore you and me,
Wrinkled, like spiders' web
And Hungry.

Breasts flip flapping dialectically
To the Old Age

Surya Nayak is a poet and lyricist. He is widely published and won recognition for his poetry. His lyrics are also recorded and sung by leading singers from Orissa. He regularly contributes to the journal of OSA.

Love

SANGITA MISRA

Soft caress
Warm embrace
Sweaty palms
Loving arms
Stolen kiss
Heart beats that miss
Drunken gaze
A confused maze
That's what love is all about.

Sangita Misra is a reference librarian at Queensborough Public Library at Jamaica, NY and lives with her husband Sameer and two children Soumya & Satwick in Bayside, NY.

ନିଜକୁ ଚିହ୍ନିବା ପ୍ରୟାସରେ

ଶ୍ୱେତପଦ୍ମ ଦାଶ

ଆଖିରୁ ବୁହଇ ଲୁହ ଧାର ଧାର ଧାର
ଦୁଃଖ? ଅନୁଶୋଚନା? ବା ଆନନ୍ଦର?

ଦୁଃଖ ?

ଗଭୀର ନିଦ୍ରା ଭାଙ୍ଗିଯିବାର
ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଶେଷ ହୋଇ ଯିବାର
ମୋ ପୁଅ, ମୋ ଝିଅ,
ମୋ ବର, ମୋ ଘର,
ମୋ ନିଜ ହାତରେ ଗଢ଼ା ହୋଇଥିବା ସୁନାର ସଂସାର
କେହି ନୁହେଁ ମୋର, କିଛି ନୁହେଁ ମୋର
ଏପରି କି ଏ ଶରୀର ବି ନୁହେଁ ମୋର ।

ଅନୁଶୋଚନା ?

ବୃଥା ଧାର୍ଯ୍ୟୁଲି ମରାଚିକା ପଛରେ
ମୁଁ ଲଢ଼ିବି, ମୁଁ ଜିତିବି,
ମୁଁ କରିବି, ମୁଁ କରାଇବି
ମୋର ଜୟ ଜୟକାର ।
ମୋର ବାହୁବଳ, ମୋର ଧନବଳ, ମୋର ଜନବଳ
ସମସ୍ତେ ହେବେ ମୋର ଅକ୍ତିଆର
ମିଳିବ ତେବେ ଯାଇ ଆନନ୍ଦ ଅପାର ।

ଆନନ୍ଦ ?

ଯାହାପାଇଁ ଦଉଡ଼ୁ ଥିଲି ସବୁରି ପଛରେ
ଯାହାକୁ ଖୋଜୁଥିଲି ଅନ୍ଧକାରରେ
ଏବେ ଜାଣିଲି
ସେ ଅଛି, ମୋର ଅତି ନିକଟରେ
ଦଉଡ଼ିବା ଲୋଡ଼ା ନାହିଁ, ଖୋଜିବାକୁ ହେବନାହିଁ
କେବଳ ଉପଲବ୍ଧ କରିବାକୁ ହେବ
ସେଇ "ମହାନନ୍ଦ" ଭାବ ମୋରି ଭିତରେ ।

Sweta Padma Dash lives in San Jose, California with her husband Jnana Ranjan Dash and two sons.

REAL BEAUTY

TANUJA TRIPATHY

Beauty evokes magic
 eyes convey the language of the soul
smiles portray the feelings of the heart
 and posture defines one's approach.
Beauty uses its own language
 its real essence lies in kindness
it lies in sweet words, uttered
 and it lies in endurance and patience.

As a helping hand
 goes and helps unconditionally
the beauty of its possessor
 increases drastically
It is in humanity
 it is in sympathy
that beauty gets defined
 more as it glistens in empathy.

As I did myself realise
 what beauty stands for
I took to discovering it really
 and to increase its fervour
I asked my heart and soul
 I questioned my dreams and wishes
I shaped my strivings and aims
 as that's what real beauty preaches.

Having recently moved to the US, Tanuja Tripathy lives in Fort Wayne, Indiana with her husband.

ପୁଣ୍ୟପ୍ରଭା ନାରୀ

ଉତ୍ତରା ଦାସ

ପୁରୁଷ - ତମେ ଏକ ପେଶୁଲମ୍
ଦୋହଲୁଛ ଦେହାତିରୁ ଆତ୍ମା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ
ତମେ ଏକ ଆଦିମତା ଆଦିମରୁ ଅନନ୍ତ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ॥

ଭିଜିଯାଏ ଲୁହରେ, ଦୁଃଖରେ ନାରୀ
ପରିଣତ ବୟସର ସଂଶୟ ପାଖୁଡ଼ା ମଉଳି ଯାଏ
କେହି କେବେ ବୁଝେ ନାହିଁ ନାରୀଟିର ମନ
କଥାରେ କଥାରେ ଉଦାମତା ବୋଲିତ
ତମେଇ ପୁରୁଷର ଆଲେଖ୍ୟ
ତମେ ଏକ ଆଶୀର୍ବାଦ ଲୁଲୁପିତ ଶିଖା
ସେଇଥିପାଇଁତ ପୁରୁଷକୁ ଗାଇବୁଲେ ଜୟଜୟକାର
ବାଞ୍ଛିଯାଏ ନିଶଇ ମନଟେ ସେହି ଏକା ନାରୀଟିର ମନ ॥

କିଏ ବୁଝେ ଯେ ନାରୀଟିଏ ଜନ୍ମରୁ ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ
ଚାହିଁଥାଏ ପୁଣ୍ୟପ୍ରଭା ହେବା ପାଇଁ
କିଏ କାହିଁ ମୁକୁଳେଇ ପାରିଛି ନାରୀଟିକୁ ପଙ୍କରୁ, ପାପରୁ
କିଏ ଅବା କାହିଁ ମୁକ୍ତି ଦେଇ ପାରିଛି
ଭିଜେଇ ପାରିଛି ଦେହ ମନ ପୁଣ୍ୟରେ ପୁଣ୍ୟରେ
ମିଶେଇ ପାରିଛି ମନ ଆତ୍ମାରେ ନଶ୍ୱରତାରେ
କିଏ ଅବା ଭେଟିଛି ସେହି ପରମ ପୁରୁଷ ଯିଏ ଏକା
ପାଦରୁ ବେଡ଼ି ଖୋଲି ଦେଇ ପାରେ
ଆଦରି ନେଇ ପାରେ ନାରୀଟିକୁ ନିର୍ବିକଳ ଯାଏଁ ॥

ସେହିତ ଏକା ଭିନ୍ନ ପୁରୁଷ ନାରୀର ମନପାଇଁ
ସେ ଅଭିନ୍ନ ପ୍ରିୟତମ ପରମ ପୁରୁଷ
ଯା ପାଦରେ ଏମିତିକା ନାରୀଟି ଲୁହଲହୁ ଏକାକାର କରିଦିଏ
ବରି ନିଏ ଦୁର୍ଗମ ଚଳାପଥ ପ୍ରିୟତମର ସପକ୍ଷତା ପାଇଁ ॥

Uttara Das is a regular contributor to the OSA souvenir. She lives with her husband, Binay Das, in Bangalore, India.

nostalgia nostalgia



I think it is all a matter of love: the more you love a memory, the stronger and stranger it is.
-Vladimir Nobakov

Nostalgia isn't what it used to be.
-Anonymous

GIVING MY BABY AWAY

Ghanashyam Mishra

It is a warm October evening, somewhat warmer than normal fall weather in the South. The Carolina Sun is about to set over the Ashley River swamp. Dozen of species of birds, waterfowl and butterflies are returning to their nests. Colorful fall foliage has cast its reflections in the black water lagoons of the famous Magnolia Garden, a historical landmark of South Carolina established almost 300 years ago. The rustling noise of swaying Cypress moss and Water Oak branches has mingled in unison with the instrumental music of the quartet occasionally interrupted by the shrill noise of a flock of peacocks. A beautifully decorated white arch is set in the middle of the lush green lawn facing about 80 guests seated on white lawn chairs. I am standing next to my daughter, my right arm locked around her left arm as the father of the bride.

I look at my daughter Anita. She seems to be anxious but happy. My thoughts drift beyond time and distance. Anita is our second baby. She was born in Orissa, when I was 10,000 miles away trying to educate myself for a better life for my family and me. According to Oriya tradition, girl babies were named after thirty days of birth. I sent a letter to my wife to name her Anuradha. Anuradha is one of the brightest stars in the sky. I never knew that I would not see my little bright star for three years. When she got her naturalized citizenship, we changed her name to Anita. By the time she became a teenager, she wanted to change her name back to Anuradha. There was too much paperwork involved. We left it alone. Everybody called her Ani. At Bolangir, in her grand parent's home, everybody called her Tiki, the little one.

The groomsmen are gathering next to the arch. There seems to be some delay. I look at the bride again. She has a pretty face and a sharp nose like her mother. I remember how she hated her nose as a teenager. Her older sister used to taunt her, "Ani, I can fix your ugly face and nose, when I become a plastic surgeon". Typical sibling rivalry. The pressure of growing up in America as a teenager. The girls have to look pretty to be accepted socially. The girls have to be appreciated by the boys by the time they are in middle school. Suddenly the well wishing parents become enemies. The strangers become friends. We did not pay any attention until her junior year in high school when we took her to a plastic surgeon. The surgeon took one look at her and said, "Anita, millions of girls in this country would love to have a nose like yours.

If you decide to go for it here is a nose chart". That was the end of her ugly nose story and she did not have to go through the ordeal of 'repairing' her nose!

She is a beautiful bride. Her long white dress is dragging on the ground and two thick strands of her pitch-dark hair curling around her neck. She is wearing a string of white pearls and a halo of sweet smelling gardenias interspersed with green leaves decorating her hair. Tim and Anita wanted a Hawaiian ceremony, since Tim spent his childhood in the Aloha State. She is looking like a perfect Hawaiian bride.

We have to wait for a few minutes. The best man has to run to the Carriage House to pick up the laces (Hawaiian garlands) the couple will exchange. My thoughts drift back a quarter of a century. It was another October.

I met my little baby for the first time when she was a three-year-old toddler. She was wearing a small dress, barefoot and was running around to catch a little baby chick in my father-in-law's courtyard in Bolangir, Orissa. Tiki looked pretty with dark hair and big eyes. I wanted to lift her up and hold close to my chest. I wanted to tell her that I loved her and missed her for three long years. I wanted to apologize for missing her first smile, her first words, and her first toddling steps. She came into my arms for a minute and then pulled away. To her I was a total stranger. My in-laws had told her that I was her Papa and I was there to take her back to her mom and her sister in America. She said "Hi Papa" and then hid behind her grandmother.

When I came to the U.S.A. as a graduate assistant, I promised my pregnant wife that she would join me after six months. The six months turned into one year and when she traveled with our oldest daughter, nobody could arrange a passport and visa for the little infant. I took a long trip to New York by a Greyhound bus to meet my family and I was disappointed that our little one did not make the trip. My wife was very unhappy in her new surroundings. The one-bedroom graduate circle apartment was very confining. It was snowy and cold in September in the so-called Happy Valley nestled in the Allegheny Mountain Ranges of Central Pennsylvania. The furnishings were a ten-dollar bed and an eight-dollar sofa purchased in an auction. Cooking utensils, plates and silverware were retrieved from the laundry room. Half of

my \$200 graduate assistant's salary was going for the rent. My wife started babysitting at twenty-five cents an hour to supplement our family income. With her savings she purchased a sewing machine. She used to go to G.C. Murphy Co. to buy pieces of remnant fabrics for less than a dollar so that she could make little dresses for our two year-old daughter, Seema.

Over the next two years, we struggled and survived. Finally, I graduated and started looking for a job. There were plenty of jobs. The Vietnam War escalation had revved up the American industry. Engineers were in high demand. But after two dozen applications, I never got a call for an interview. I asked my professor, my only reference, for the reasons. He had a simple response. Without any hesitations he said, "Look son, I do not have anything personal against you, but all you Indian, Pakistani and Chinese students should get your education and go back to your own country. Coming from a different cultural background, you will never be accepted in this society". In my next application, I did not give his name as a reference. I was called for an interview and was offered a job in a coal mine in West Virginia at \$1000 per month. I was very happy. That was an excellent starting salary in 1969. We moved to a three bed room company house 10 miles from Blacksville, West Virginia. The nearest gas station, where we could buy a loaf of bread or a gallon of milk was 12 miles away. We could not drink the well water, as the groundwater in this part of the country was contaminated with acid mine drainage. I had to carry 10-gallon plastic water cans from the mine office for drinking and cooking. But the rent was very affordable at thirty dollars a month, including the utilities.

By this time we had a little baby boy. The baby was sick and his mother got sick. It was life threatening. We struggled and somehow survived. We were desperate to get our little Tiki from India. Somehow India and Orissa seemed to be on a far-off planet. Hundreds of letters, tons of paperwork and still nobody can get a passport or visa for our baby. My well wishing mother-in-law wanted to keep Tiki at Bolangir for good. I was angry and upset. My wife suffered silently and blamed herself for putting too much trust in my abilities. Almost daily, we had shouting matches, blaming each other.

In October 1972, I left my sick family in the little coal camp in West Virginia to get our little baby from India. I had a round trip TWA ticket for \$450 and a reduced fare ticket for Tiki. My plan was to stay one week in Orissa, befriend my daughter and bring her back to U.S.A.

It was not an easy task. Tiki was a favorite of grandpa, grandma, aunts, uncles and the servants in the house. Papa was a stranger. A talking doll from her sister did the miracle. By the third day, Tiki could sit on Papa's lap and hear a short story for a few minutes. A few trips to

the local ice-creams store further strengthened the father-daughter relationship. Still I was not too sure if I could take her to Bombay by train and then the long trip to U.S.A. It sounded like "mission impossible."

Grandpa and aunt Kuni accompanied us to Hyderabad. After a one day stay at Raj uncle's house we, father and daughter, got into a first class cabin. Tiki was playing with her talking doll when the train started moving. As grandpa, aunts and uncle said "bye-bye," the three-year old's world came crashing down. She realized that she was going somewhere with this stranger called Papa. I had to hold her tight so that she could not jump through the moving train's window. I tried to play with her, tried to tell her about her mom, her sister and the little baby brother in U.S.A. Her big eyes were full of tears. She was sitting on my lap; she did not trust me. After an hour she fell asleep and did not wake up until we were at Santacruz Airport, Bombay.

A couple of huge C-17 transport planes fly low over our heads from the Charleston airport. The groomsman has not returned with the laces from the Carriage House. In the Hawaiian wedding ceremony planned, the laces made out of sweet smelling tropical flowers and leaves are to be exchanged between the couple. Mr. Kekoona, the Hawaiian priest, is standing under the arch and looking at his watch. Anita is looking worried. I am getting upset at Tim, my would-be son-in-law. I controlled my anger and squeezed my daughter's hand." Every thing will be alright, Baby, "I said.

Everything was not exactly all right, when I got our little baby to Santacruz Airport that October morning, 25 years ago. As I was going through immigration and customs clearance, one of the khaki-clad, rude and unsmiling officials noticed that Tiki did not have a P Form clearance. It was explained to me that she could not travel without that piece of document. The P Form, as I learnt, was a form required by the Indian Government's Revenue Department to ensure no Indian citizen leaves the country without paying all taxes owed to the government. I pleaded with the officer and his supervisor. The baby had no assets or income. I, the father, had cleared my P Form three years ago. I had paid my airfare in rupees and was carrying \$8 in my wallet. I was a green card holder and I explained why our little baby could not accompany her mother. The two men conferred together for a few minutes and allowed us to board the plane. I sighed with relief and settled down in the New York bound TWA Boeing 747. The plane was to stop at Tel Aviv and Rome enroute to New York.

We were about to land at the Tel Aviv airport, when the pilot announced that the plane has lost all its hydraulic brake fluid during the flight. He had to circle the airport for 30-40 minutes before the daybreak so that he could land the plane with the air brake system. I looked at the sleeping

little baby on my lap and a chill ran through my body. In the early seventies, the mid-east skies were not safe. I held my daughter close to my chest and prayed. Fortunately, we landed without incident. Tiki woke up and cried. She was hungry and she wanted a toast and omelet. I hurried to the restaurant and ordered her breakfast. She was delighted to see her favorite morning meal. Before she had taken a bite, the pilot of the plane came running in looking for us. There had been a bomb threat to blow up the airport and we were to board the plane immediately for take off. The repairs could wait until Rome. I collected my baby, her toys, and the omelet and ran back to the plane. As the plane was taxiing, Tiki was screaming. She did not want to be tied down by the seat belt. Everybody in the plane was looking at me suspiciously. I did not know whether they thought I was a mid-eastern national trying to kidnap a baby. I remember that a week after our return to the United States, a terrorist bomb exploded at Tel Aviv airport lounge and killed 32 Puerto Rican pilgrims.

We landed at Rome in the afternoon. The plane's brake system could not get repaired in time. Tiki wanted rice and milk. I could not call my wife that we are delayed and will not arrive at Pittsburgh that evening. I left a message through the airline to call my wife. She should call Larry, one of my office assistants to pick us up at Pittsburgh the next morning. We arrived at the J.F.K. airport at midnight. TWA arranged for a hotel room at the airport. I was glad to find some rice and milk for Tiki in the restaurant. Tiki talked a lot to her mom in telephone and then slept like an angel. Early morning, the airport limousine took us to La Guardia airport. We had plenty of time to enjoy buttered toast and omelet. After we got on the Pittsburgh bound plane, my little angel fell asleep. Larry met me at the airport and I carried Tiki to the car. She slept through the 75 miles of car ride to our home in West Virginia. When I carried her to her sister's bedroom, I asked everybody to be quiet. I squeezed my wife's hand. There were tears in her eyes, there were tears in my eyes. Finally, after waiting for months and years, my little family was together.

Six months after Ani's arrival, we moved to Morgantown, West Virginia, where my wife was to start residency program. We found a 3-bed room modular home close to the W.V.U. Medical Center. We were not too sure whether we could afford to buy. The price was \$26,000. We could pay the monthly payment of \$180 per month, but we did not have money for the down payment and the closing costs. Our bank savings were less than a thousand dollars. I borrowed \$1600 from our company's credit union to pay for the closing.

It was not easy to find a baby sitter to take care of three little children. My wife was unhappy after three years of unemployment and even if she was a physician, she could not write a prescription for her own sick children.

She was prepared to give all \$5000 of her annual salary to a baby sitter. We started to go through another series of opportunities, challenges, heartaches and pains, long working hours and sleep deprivations as a young working couple. My wife was on call every third day. She worked a 90-hour week. I used to commute 70 miles roundtrip to my work place. We continued to struggle and survive in a society and culture totally different from that in Orissa. Our three children grew up in a very protective environment with a lot of care, love and parental guidance. We encouraged them to take piano lessons, dance lessons and join the local chapter of Brownies. From nothing, we tried to give them everything. We tried to convince them the right from the wrong, good from the bad. We tried to give them a pleasant secure childhood with a balance of love and discipline. We compromised many of our values and traditions to allow them to grow up in a society that was different from ours. Only the future will tell how we shaped our future generations in our adopted land.

The laces are brought in. The bridal party gets into a flurry of activities. Anita has a small bridal party. Donna, her best friend from the Medical University of South Carolina is the Matron of Honor, Lisa and Minisha, her two cousins, are the Bridesmaids, and Noah and Alex, our twin grand sons are the ring and lace bearers. Tim's niece Ella is the flower girl. The quartet starts playing. We are signaled to move forward one at a time. I see smiles on every one's face. There seems to be festive mood. I am not too sure about my state of mind. Under normal circumstances I should be happy. But that is not the case.

In the past year, during their courtship, engagement and while making plans for their wedding, Anita had tried to distance herself from our family. We liked Tim the first time we saw him. He greeted us with Namaste. We wanted to know Tim, the person; about his family and about his likes and dislikes. We never got a chance to know our future son-in-law or his family. Anita started spending weeks with his parents in Florida and with his grandmother in San Francisco. For months, we were in darkness. She did not inform her mother about her formal engagement until two months after she received the ring. Her mother was deeply hurt. Her own daughter did not want to consult her in the best event in her life. How come a stranger had more influence on our daughter than the two loving parents did? Finally, the last straw broke the camel's back. Anita moved to California with her fiancée six weeks before the wedding. Everybody said it was a common practice in the nineties. Just because it was the nineties, wrong behavior did not become right. Certain fundamental and basic morality and values do not change. My wife refused to attend the wedding. A day before the wedding, I was not too sure if she would show up. To my great relief, she came. She looked very pretty in her black and gold sari. She was holding our little grand daughter Natalie and talking to our oldest Seema. The three of them looked like a picture-perfect family.

The quartet plays, "Here comes the Bride". Everyone stands up. I step forward with my daughter's arm locked in mine. Very soon, our little baby will leave the Mishra family. She will be Mrs. Henderson. I control tears in my eyes as walk past the guests from Pennsylvania to Florida, New Jersey to California and Hawaii. The music stops. I stand in front of the decorated white arch. The Hawaiian priest Mr. Kekoona asks, "Who is giving this woman away"? I say, "I do". I turn back to the front row of seats and take a handkerchief from

my pocket and wipe my tears. I squeeze my wife's hand and mutter, "I think they are happy".

I look at the western sky. The clouds have drifted away. The pink haze in the horizon is turning into a reddish glow as the sun sets over the Ashley River Swamp. Hundreds of chirping birds, waterfowls, butterflies and dragonflies are returning to their nests. Our little birdie is about to fly to her own nest 3000 miles away, somewhere in California.

Ghanashyam Mishra is a 1961 engineering graduate of Banaras Hindu University and is presently employed as a Senior General Engineer in the U.S. Department of Energy. His reminiscence on the day of his daughter's wedding most likely mirrors the struggle, survival, and success story of many Oriya parents.

A Marriage of Cultures

LEENA DEHAL

Seven years ago, I would not have believed you if you told me in addition to trying to keep my tenuous grip on my Oriya culture, I would also be in the unique position of attempting to learn Punjabi culture as well. My marriage to a man whose family hails from the Punjab has changed all that.

At the University of Western Ontario, I was hanging out in one of the grub spots with a friend (called "The Pick Up", no less), when I was introduced to a handsome sardar by the name of Narinder Dehal. He seemed like a nice enough fellow, and became one of a large circle of friends.

As time passed, it became apparent that we were destined to become more than friends, and three and a half years later, he proposed marriage. My immediate and happy response was an emphatic "YES", without any regard for what was to come ... the blending of the Oriya and Punjabi cultures.

The first issue was the wedding itself. Having decided that we would have both Hindu and Sikh ceremonies we had to choose whose religion was going to go first. Luckily, the Sikh religion requires that the wedding must be completed before noon, so that issue was relatively easy to settle. But what of the reception? It is well known that the average Oriya does not have the ability or inclination to dance at a wedding, while for the Punjabis it is a firm requirement. Did my husband to be tell me this in advance of the wedding? No! Unfortunately for me, this came as a surprise on the dance floor after both weddings had been completed. My first "natch" lesson occurred without warning on my wedding day. Sadly, it also seemed to be my new husband's first lesson as well!

It was nice to see some of my bold and brave Oriya friends and relatives braving the laughter of their peers to join the full force Punjabi celebration on the dance floor.

As the years passed, I began to pick up bits and pieces of the Punjabi culture from my new family. I also took the initiative of taking a high school class in Punjabi, with a number of first generation Punjabi kids who were taking the course as an easy credit. My teacher was wonderful, and provided all sorts of primary level work for the oldest student (by then a university graduate) who also happened to be the weakest, but the most enthusiastic student. I was also fortunate in having supportive classmates who would clap and cheer when on the few occasions when I would give correct answer. They also enjoyed the fact that they could get extra help in their Science courses once a week from me.

I went back to university to get a Bachelor of Education, and this is where my real learning began. I moved in with my in laws for the duration of my 8-month program. I was exposed to real Punjabi cooking (tasty!) and lots of conversational Punjabi. I learned enough words to get through listening to a conversation, and my mother-in-law even bought me a taped course on how to learn Punjabi on your own.

After seven years, I certainly cannot speak Punjabi, but I have learned enough to not look incompetent at weddings. I have also learned the names of the foods I like! But, most importantly, I have learned that Oriyas and Punjabis are not too dissimilar in their cultures, which prize family and friends above all.

Leena Dehal lives in Toronto with husband Narinder.

I Spent Three Years in India

KRUSHNA MOHAN DAS

I went to India to retire after spending about 40 years in America. I found that India has gone through profound changes. In many aspects, some changes are spectacular and give an impression of prosperity. However, for the most part, the improvements in all aspects of human life have remained blotchy and questionable. Many aspects of the changes that I observed are not good. The leaders and the masses are trying their best to steer the ship through very troubled waters. I would like to give a summary of what I experienced and felt during these years of retirement.

Population

There is a population explosion in all the states, which is apparently beyond control. Although the figures mentioned are less than a billion, a true enumeration will probably exceed that. There is an uncontrolled rise in birth rate along with reduction in death rate. The population, instead of being an asset, is a heavy burden on society, particularly because of a seeming lack of responsibility of the society for its own well being. Wherever you look there are people. When you travel, you see numerous population centers and townships that have grown at the intersections. Many big townships have grown at these places, although most amenities for these townships are still lacking.

Education

More than 50% of the population of the country is illiterate. This is admitted in various statements by the government. The government and the society are trying to educate the masses, but the resources and infrastructure are inadequate. Since there is no minimum income level for the people, children and young adults do not share in the education facilities available. Hungry people have no time for education.

Some efforts have been made in the past 10 years for free lunches at elementary schools. This is welcome, although full of problems and corruption. Therefore, it leaves more than half the people uneducated. These people have no skills other than in field and agricultural labor. The other half of society, which is somewhat educated, are changing a rainbow that is not present. There are no opportunities for proper practical education on a mass scale and for those who are educated, the opportunities for employment are minimal.

Health

The most lucrative business in the country today is health care, because Everybody- young, old, rich, poor- needs it. The facilities for health care are totally inadequate.

Educated healthcare workers are far less in number than required. They charge exorbitant fees from people who cannot even afford 2 meals a day. Government hospitals and dispensaries are totally inadequate and improperly distributed. Because of a lack of resources, the government and society have no control over public health problems. Sanitation in the cities and newly emerging towns is inadequate. There is a lack of funding for these efforts.

Employment

The majority of the people, educated or otherwise, are not employed. Opportunities for employment are inadequate. Only 5-10% of educated people get employment and the rest are running around aimlessly, hoping that something might come their way. This problem becomes compounded by the addition of millions of people every year. About half of the people are not educated enough to have any opportunity for employment. The other half have followed the old system of education which does not include much practical experience. Although a large number of young people graduate with graduate degrees and post-graduate degrees, only a small percentage gets success in employment. Although these opportunities have been growing recently, the population growth is hampering available resources. One visible gap appears to be in the area of practical and hands-on experience for students in any field of their education. Doctors, engineers, veterinarians and scientists consider their duties confined to books and desks and are not willing to handle practical projects. Everybody orders other people to do their work. The society seems to be one where people order others to do their work and ultimately, the job is done by the least trained person. The government seems to have abdicated its responsibility to provide opportunities for employment to the masses. Although they are very vocal about it, non-Governmental organizations provide very scant opportunities for these people.

Leadership

There is a great chase in our society for political leadership everywhere you look, because these political leaders have access to power, privilege and purse strings. The majority of the politicians are selfish to the core. They take care of themselves and only think of helping others in society when it is essential for their survival in progress. Politicians have divided the country into thousands of sub-communities with their own group interests. There are many political parties in this country, which overlap each other concerning their programs and principles. The majority of the political parties have grown beyond the spirit of sacrifice and

community service of Gandhi's times. Even Gandhi's name has been splattered with mud in various parts of the country. The real spirit of sacrifice and humanitarian activity that got India its independence and beginning prosperity has been forgotten. Every body has become overly selfish. Somehow, both educated and uneducated people have accepted selfishness as a dignified way of life. Social service and sacrifice of the old times are considered dirty words.

Corruption

The present Indian society is drowning in corruption. Anybody who has some power peddles it for a fee. The fee either goes to him, his family, or his cronies. This system does not leave any space for honest and selfless workers. The westernized competitiveness has dignified these selfish endeavors. In a society like India's, only self enterprise can succeed. Because of the abject needs of the people, corruption multiplies tenfold. Governmental programs against corruption are all hogwash, they are not at all effective. Selfishness appears to be the creed, which is of uppermost importance in the minds of all.

Caste System and other Divisive Forces

One of the greatest banes of Indian society today is the caste system and the division of its people into various

groups. Politicians obtain great success using these divisive forces in society today. They thrive on the various aspects of the system. Lower castes are encouraged to rebel against the upper castes and other privileged classes. These politicians only succeed in dividing the village society based on these castes and sub-castes, without any real advantage to these various castes. That means that in a village, a united voice no longer exists about projects, because various castes have different interests, which clash against each other. Instead of trying to remove the caste barriers from the society, various governmental hubs are perpetuating the caste system. This is helping other religions to take vulnerable segments into their folds. Therefore, it ultimately creates animosity between the religions and amongst the castes of the same religion. The caste system is a terrible legacy that Indian society should overcome soon.

In summary, one is bound to be despondent seeing the present situation in India. However, this society is very old and very strong, particularly in the area of its traditions, which have been holding it together for centuries. What the present society needs is a new generation of leaders who have the true spirit of patriotism and sacrifice for the masses. This society is the call of not only the present, but the future as well.

Dr. K.M.Das is a founder-member of the Orissa Society of the Americas, and was a recipient of OSA's Utkaliya award, along with wife Basanta Kumari Das, in 1993.

DEATH OF A DREAM

SHABNAM DAS

Sitting on my front steps in my hometown of Cuttack, I looked at the skies and wondered if the skies in New York looked the same. My only dream was to be one of the million people who I had seen (in movies) walking the crowded streets of New York. I would be in blue Levis jeans, carrying a brown paper bag full of groceries walking up to my apartment back from my advertising school. I would stop somewhere for coffee and sandwiches, read my Advertising Age and think what a wonderful life I had.

I came here through different routes, with different dreams and different aspirations. But one thing that I had in common with everyone else was the lanes and bylanes that we had all left behind in our hometowns. The little

streets that wove into each other and spilled out on to the one main street that all of us owned.

Coming to American was the ultimate dream. The world was conquered. Vini, Vidi, Vici.

But then how did a "DREAM DIE?" I realized it is the mind which conquers all, not the body. I might be standing in the middle of a six-lane highway but my mind is as narrow and closed as the little lanes and bylanes back home. With my clothes, my car, my house and my child with an accent, I might be the embodiment of the American Dream, but what about my mind, Why did I leave it behind?

"ABSIT INVIDIA"

DON'T KILL DREAMS —

Shabnam Das lives in Maryland, is an investment banker, and also President of an up and coming Design Studio, 'Shades and Hues.'

MORE VILLAGE EXPERIENCES

SMRITI REKHA PANDA

We recently went on a trip to India. We had not been there in over five years. The big difference in this trip was the inclusion of our two children, Suman (age 8) and Poonam (age 2). As the time for our trip approached, Jogesh's eyes sparkled with excitement while mine showed apprehension. Sometimes, navigating myself through the village was a challenge in itself, let alone handling it with two children. We tried to prepare Suman by telling her all the fun she would have seeing her cousin Deepali (age 7) and her grandmother (Ma) and seeing where daddy grew up, as we softly weaved in "no pizza or chocolate chip cookies" for a while. I thought to myself that things would be different during this trip. We had recently built a new house in the village, one that had indoor plumbing (toilets and shower), a dining area and a modern kitchen with electric ranges. No more going outside to take a bath or to use the toilet. No more trying to figure out how to light a "*kat-ha chul*" (wood stove), or maintaining my balance while sitting on the "*pidha*" (low sitting stool).

After having arrived in Bhubaneswar and en route to Cuttack, the children were wild with excitement at seeing the streets crowded with cars, motorcycles, rickshaws, bikes, people, cows and goats. Suman thought everything was "so cool" and Poonam wanted to know if we were at "Old MacDonald's farm" because of the livestock along the roadside.

As we departed for the village the next day, there was a motorcade with aunts, uncles and cousins who wanted to send me to my in-laws home with respect to tradition. We were all excited. Jogesh was so excited that he could not stop talking the whole trip (3 ½ hours). As we traversed the "now familiar road," I recalled my first trip down this road. This time I was not afraid or apprehensive. I felt more confident and looked forward to seeing my in-laws and the people of the village. Besides, things were going to be different this time because of the new house and all the new amenities. As we approached the village, it was already evening and we could make out silhouettes of people at the roadside homes and shops. As we got closer to Jogesh's village, there was an unusual stillness in the air, which was broken by the deafening sound of our motorcade. The whole village seemed dark as if in mourning. As we reached Jogesh's home, it was totally dark, just like every other house in the neighborhood. Jogesh asked all of us to stay in the cars while he went inside to check things out. He was gone for what seemed

like an eternity. During his absence, people from nearby homes came out to inspect the headlights. My uncle wanted to know the reason for the darkness. We were informed that the village has not had electricity for three weeks and no one knew when it would be reconnected to the village. Apparently, the transformer to the village burnt out and needed to be repaired. When the electricians came to fix the problem, they realized that people in the village had not paid their electric bills in almost five years. They had other monetary worries, such as daughter's weddings and sons' education to be concerned with. They were content with the lanterns and oil lamps. As I tried to absorb all of this information, I felt stunned. It was as though someone had thrown a brick at my head.

Jogesh finally appeared, holding a lantern, and we were guided through the gate and into the house, while being advised to "watch our steps." The first several moments were confusing, with people running around in the dimness. The children clung to me in their confused state as they were introduced to their grandma, cousin, aunt and uncle. I looked around and liked the spaciousness of the new house. My aunt came and sat down beside me. She informed us that parts of the house were not yet complete (it had only taken 3 years). Upon inquiring, I learned that the bathroom was not completed. The sparkling white toilet sat in a spare room collecting dust while birds occupied what should have been the bathroom and shower. I envisioned our lives for the next three weeks without indoor plumbing or electricity. As the world prepared for the next millennium, we went back to the turn of the century.

The children were incredibly resilient to the new environment. Everything was new, different and exciting. Poonam loved not having restrictions. She went from a totally childproofed home to having everything at her fingertips. There were so many things to explore that she never played with the toys I had taken for her. She attached herself to her grandmother as if she were a leach. The two were inseparable. She insisted on sitting on a *pidha* and eating with her hands instead of utensils. The whole family was thrown into the challenge of keeping her out of the cowshed and preventing her from running to the neighbor's house to see the goats, or trying to jump into the well because she thought it was a small swimming pool. The bullocks in the cowshed got the surprise of their lives as Poonam and Suman fed them cookies.

Poonam usually walked around holding a big stick, pretending to herd the livestock. Suman became a shadow to her 7-year-old cousin, Deepali. Although one spoke only English and the other spoke only Oriya, they seem to communicate through hand gestures and facial expressions. They each transferred a little bit of themselves to each other.

During this trip, I went to the interior of Jogesh's village for the first time. One of the relatives had invited us to lunch. Word got out that we were going to walk through the village to get to Lilly's house. This was an opportunity for some to see "American People", although I hardly considered myself or my children "American people." Lilly's house was close to a mile away, just a 'short walk', I was told. For a non-walker like myself, it was a bit too far to walk. My mother-in-law reminded me to make sure that my veil was low enough to cover my face while I walked. I tried to envision myself walking the rocky road while trying to keep my face veiled and carrying a two-year-old without tripping and falling. Luckily, there was an auto-rickshaw visiting a neighbor's house, and Jogesh made arrangements for us to ride instead of walk. As we got to Lilly's house there was a crowd of people at the doorway. I thought, wow! Lilly has invited a lot of people to lunch. It turned out that they had invited themselves to come and spend time visiting with us. I met a lot of people who had lots of questions, such as, can I understand the language, do I know how to cook rice and dal, how much money did we earn, what was the price of our home, how did we spend all our money, etc. At first the line of questioning seemed rude and intrusive, but I understood that they were just curious and did not mean to be rude. I learned all the village gossip and about the increase in divorces in the village. Now that I had taught myself the dialect of the area and their idioms, I was feeling a lot more at ease. I met people to whom I was related by marriage. I was Khudi (aunt) to several girls not much younger than myself, and grandmother to some babies and toddlers. Not wanting to be an insulting grandmother, I held all the babies on my lap and didn't utter a word when a baby relieved himself in my lap. Poonam kept asking why the baby was not wearing a diaper. It was wonderful to meet Jogesh's old school friends and people who had known him since he was a child. (Lots of embarrassing stories about him). What I saw was a lot of curious faces who wanted to know more about a world that was different from the one they had known since birth. Many of these people had never gone beyond a five-mile radius of their home. After an interesting afternoon, we knew we had to get home quickly before it got dark.

Life without electricity definitely had its challenges, but we seemed to manage. I must have looked pretty disheveled without being able to use of the hairdryer and the hot curling brush. I became accustomed to putting my hair in a scrunchi under the veil of my sari, so I wasn't

too concerned about the stringiness. My bangs however were another story. Since I couldn't style it with the hot curling brush, it fell all over my face. I tried to pin them back with bobby-pins, but they kept slipping out. After awhile, I just gave up. While packing for our trip to India, I chose not to spend time ironing our clothes, since they would get crumpled in the luggage. Well, needless to say, Jogesh and I both wore wrinkled clothes most of our stay since the old coal iron had been tossed and replaced with a newer, handy, dandy electric one. One afternoon, I looked in the mirror and looked at my University ID card and started to chuckle, thinking, what would my colleagues think if they saw me this way? We also had to use our video camera very conservatively since we could not re-charge the battery while in the village. I sure was glad we had charged it in Cuttack. The bright side of it all, I suppose was that I didn't worry about the high voltage and the possibility of getting electrocuted.

Without electricity, the nights in the village were both magical and ominous. As the sun started to set, there was panic in the voices of people. Children needed to finish homework, women needed to make sure all the chores were done and there was plenty of water stored in the house. Once darkness arrived, the whole village usually went silent. During the evening the whole family usually sat around a lantern or a gas light in the "agana" (courtyard) or in the kitchen. The children loved the *chuli*. Suman wanted Jogesh to get some marshmallows for us to toast since we had an open fire. They enjoyed putting logs into the *chuli* and watching as the food cooked. Suman was a little hesitant to eat the food because the food cooked on the *chuli* had a different color and a smoky smell. During the evening hours, the children stayed pretty close to Jogesh and me. Bedtime for the children was interesting. I usually groped around in the dimness of the lantern, trying to locate their pajamas, and shaking out the bed while Jogesh hung the mosquito net. The mosquitoes seemed to feast on Suman, Poonam and me. No one else seemed to be bothered by them. Poonam wanted to know why the mosquitoes loved her so much and kept kissing her all the time. She did not love them back. We had to change our bedtime routine to do away with reading bedtime stories. It was a little hard to read in the dim light of the lantern and hard for Poonam to see the pictures. The concept of night-lights was another issue. If I left the lantern in the bedroom, the kerosene smell made it hard for the kids to breathe. If I removed the lantern, it was too dark for them to sleep and they felt unsettled. I just prayed they would fall asleep quickly.

In the late evenings, looking into the distant, it appeared as if the village was at a standstill. Voices had been replaced with sounds of nocturnal creatures, twittering away in the distance, and life had been replaced with indistinguishable shadows. It was as if the homes had been swallowed by the darkness for which the lanterns

and oil lamps were no match. The darkness and the sounds made me uneasy. I was so sure I would step on a snake or a strange creature. Although everything around us looked so eerie, the sky looked magical, as if someone had sprinkled gold glitter on a black canvas. I looked up in amazement, as I had never seen so many stars so clearly back in Michigan. Jogesh pointed out the different constellations to Suman and me. I asked him how he could identify them so easily and he told us how he and his father had stood in that same spot and stargazed. His father had taught him the constellations and now he was going to teach them to Suman.

I am always amazed at the speed in which people do things in the village. One morning, when I was getting ready to take a bath, my sister-in-law asked me to wait, that she would join me during the bath. We had only one bathroom, so I was not sure how we were going to take a bath at the same time. I went into the bathing room and struggled to close the door (it was a makeshift door so it didn't shut tightly). She said that she would bathe outside, near the well. By the time I had finished undressing and was ready to start my bath, she was already done with her bath and was in dry clothes. She decided to go back to the house. A few minutes later, I heard rustling outside of the bathing room. It turned out to be my mother-in-law, who decided to brush her teeth near the well. The neighbor (Rupa), and her father-in-law, saw my mother-in-law and decided to come and get water from the well and chat with my mother-in-law. Rupa figured it was me taking a bath, since the door was closed. They continued to chat, oblivious to the fact that I might want some privacy. I felt so uneasy by their presence outside that I was literally holding my breath. Rupa asked my mother-in-law if I always took such long baths and used so much water. She wanted to know how much water I had, and my mother-in-law told her that I had two pails of water. "What! Two pails of water?" exclaimed Rupa. "What does she need so much water for?" All along, I had been wondering how in the world I was going to wash my hair with only two pails of water. Their presence outside of the bathing room felt like such a violation of my personal space. I had expected everyone to leave and come back after I was done, and not stand right outside and hold a discussion. Even after finishing my bath, I stood motionless, shivering

in my wet clothes because I was too uncomfortable to reach for my dry clothes while they were all still out there. I was feeling so embarrassed that I waited until they had all left before I was willing to come out of the room.

While visiting our backyard one morning, I realized that I was not very good at identifying plants. While walking back to the house, I stopped to admire the waist high chili plants. I noticed that to the side was a patch of luscious, light green leaves. I thought it was a spinach patch and was thrilled, since I loved spinach. I figured that it must be a popular type of spinach, since the neighbors also had a similar patch of greens. Excited, I went back and suggested potato and spinach for lunch (*alu & saga bhaja*). My sister-in-law had no idea what I was talking about, so she asked my mother-in-law to accompany me to the backyard to identify what I had seen. As we reached the patch, I bent over to pick the leaves and she told me not to bother with the plants, since they still needed growing time. I asked what type of spinach they were, and she said they were called "*dhuan patra*". I thought to myself, "*dhuan*" means smoke and "*patra*" means leaf; they must call it that because of the light green color of the leaves. Later that day, I told Jogesh about my discovery. He called his mother over and asked if she was growing *dhuan patra*. He started to laugh when he heard I suggested that we all have some for lunch that day. He just looked at me and asked if I knew what *dhuan patra* was, and I replied that it was the spinach in the backyard. He chuckled as he told me that the *dhuan patra* were tobacco leaves and the plants I saw outside were tobacco plants. They were called *dhuan patra* because people smoked them. My eyes widened with shock and my jaws dropped open. The irony of it all was that here I was, the champion of 'lock up all the cigarette makers and tobacco growers', and my mother-in-law and her neighbors were growing the stuff.

By the end of the trip, we had all forgotten about our lives back in Michigan. It was nice to get a break from the hustle and bustle of our daily routines and just enjoy the sedateness of the village life. The children had a wonderful time and couldn't wait to go back again. I know I look forward to returning to the village again, so that I can soak up the sunrise through the palm trees.

Smriti Panda is a counselor at the University of Michigan. She is married to Jogesh Panda and has two children, Suman and Poonam.

A Tale Twice Untold: An Hungarian Interlude

LALU MANSINHA

(In the spring and summer of 1999 NATO military aircraft bombed Kosovo and Serbia. The TV images brought back memories of October 1956 when I crouched in a basement as bombs dropped, in a conflict not far from Serbia, but far away from my ancestral village on an island in Chilika Lake.

Until this day I have not been able to tell anyone, including my parents and siblings, of this episode of my life. My father was a poet and a philosopher and had spent a lifetime studying major world religions, finally settling on the teachings of Buddha, embracing the 'dharma' of non-violence and love. Bata, with his Buddhist faith, would have been crushed to learn that his eldest son had participated in mortal combat. My mother was perpetually worried about our safety and wellbeing...She would have collapsed if she knew that so many times during October and November of 1956 her firstborn faced the danger of extinction. It is ironic that at age 19 I relished the thrill and excitement and danger of combat, and yet when it came to telling my parents I became a coward. In the end it was easier not to tell them.

Three decades later I tried to tell my children of the four weeks of my life in 1956. I showed them the scars on my left elbow and on my chest. They simply laughed at me, and passed off my story as another reason not to trust any adult over 30. And so I put to paper my story, as I am getting along in years and wish to record my account for posterity.)

Walking out from the dark house into the brilliant sunshine of a lovely autumn day, my eyes took some time to adjust. Ah! to smell the fresh air, and hear the birds sing! The small house in which I have been staying was in a clearing in the forest, well hidden by the greenery. Through the line of trees I could see the ripples on the lake. It was one of those mornings when the beauty of nature saturates and enhances the senses. The world was beautiful; and there was peace and harmony across the land.

Well, not quite. I had arrived (or rather, I was brought) just two days before at this secret hideout in the forest. My presence outside the camouflaged house was not for the purpose of admiring the beauty of nature, but to act as a scout for signs of enemy activity. At first there was nothing to report. Then I heard the drone of a plane. Instinctively my gaze turned skywards and I scanned for the plane through the wispy clouds, and, finally, saw a moving dot, a small plane, weaving in and out of the clouds, heading towards the lake. It was too high to be a danger to us, or so I thought. Then, as I watched, a tiny dot separated from the plane, and then another. There was a momentary glint, a pause, then another glint. The glinting dot appeared to be getting larger and larger. In a flash I realised that the dot coming towards me was a bomb dropped by the plane. I ran back into the small house screaming "Bomb! Bomb!" in my accented English. Not that my accent made any difference. Magda and Nadia knew only a few words of English. Whether it was my agitation or the words, the message got through. Nadia and Magda rushed down the staircase into the basement, dragging me by the hand. We threw ourselves into a crouching position. We barely made it when there was the boom of the first bomb. There were three more bombs,

each a bit farther away. The small basement shook each time. The dust and smoke filled the air and we all started to cough. But we were alive.

The sound of anti-aircraft guns could be heard. Must be Russian, as our side had no heavy weapons. If the Russian batteries across the lake are firing, then the moving dot I saw in the sky must be a plane from our side. But our side had no planes. Then it dawned on me. 'Those idiots', I muttered to myself, 'they bombed us instead of the Russians across the lake'.

Two swaggering air force types had stopped by the night before. They looked hungry and Nadia gave them food and asked about where they were headed and how far the Russians were. The two must have said something about walking towards the Austrian border. With her eyes blazing Nadia asked why they were not fighting for Hungary. The two said they were from the air force and did not know how to fight on land. 'Well', said Nadia, 'go bomb them'. 'The Russians surrounded the airbase during the night. We two escaped; others were not so lucky. We are pilots, but we have no planes, no bombs.' 'Nonsense', said Nadia, 'go find a plane and bomb the Russians'.

Then Nadia pointed at me and said 'Before you go find out who this Gypsy boy is and what he wants'. 'You mean you don't know who he is? He may be an agent.' So the young airman pulled out his gun and pointed it at me. Nadia pushed his hand away. 'Don't be stupid. I know he is not an agent. If he were, I would have shot him myself.' 'How do you know?' 'He looks gypsy, but he is not Hungarian. I do not understand a word he says. He does not understand anything I say. He does not eat what I cook and doesn't drink beer. Imre brought him here and

said something about India'.

The second airman took his gun out and pointed it at me. 'I do not trust any gypsy'. 'He is no gypsy', said Nadia. 'Besides', she said, pointing at the girl, 'Magda thinks he is OK'. Magda, who looked about 17, smiled and lowered her eyes, but did not look in my direction. There were still two guns pointed at me.

The two airmen knew some English. I told them my story. They translated into Hungarian for the benefit of Nadia and Magda. Then suddenly, unexpectedly, Nadia banged the table with a large ladle and said 'That's enough. We know that he is on our side. You two go and find a plane and bomb the Russians. He will stay here and help us until Imre comes and takes him.' Then turning to me Nadia asked 'What's your name?' There followed peals of laughter as Magda, Nadia and the two airmen and tried to pronounce 'Lalu'. For some reason it was a tongue-twister for them. Finally Magda said 'I will call you Laszlo' (a common Hungarian name pronounced laslo). That is the name that stuck with me.

Nadia was angry with all Hungarians who were leaving. It was clear that the two airmen were headed for Austria when they stopped by the house, more or less along the path by which I had entered Hungary. Something about Nadia's angry words must have fired some spark. The two got up and left, muttering about finding a plane.

We came to know afterwards that they found two small aircraft in an airfield just west of Sopron. They loaded the bombs and then proceeded to drop them by hands. Out of the eight bombs they carried up, four hit our area. The other four apparently did fall on the Russian side, without doing much damage. As with so many young Hungarian men and women that October and November, they were killed, shot down by Russian anti-aircraft guns. They knew they would be shot down. They went on a suicide mission, knowing fully that their slow trainer would be an easy target.

I do not know if Nadia ever regretted talking the two young airmen a certain death. This was not a time for sorrow or mourning. Thousands of people were slaughtered each day. So two with whom we laughed a few nights before should not matter. But they did matter to me. I kept remembering their smirks when they struggled to say 'Lalu' and the smile when they solved the problem by calling me 'Laszlo'. I was haunted by imagining the instant of death when a bullet tore through the body or the plane hit the ground. I would imagine the thoughts that went through their minds even as the heart beat for the last time. But more than that, I was tormented by other senses of this war, that of the sound of bones of unarmed young men and women crunching under a Russian tank, or a Katyusha rocket obliterating a small crowd, the cry of the wounded, the smell of burnt flesh, the scattered body parts, the stench of death, these are

my images of that combat. These are my nightmares and torments to this day.

In all combat there is a combination of expectation, trepidation and exhilaration. There is a fear of the known and unknown. But all this lasts until the first sight of death, the first cry of the injured. Then all feeling is replaced by the most elemental instincts of survival. I wish I could state that I was brave in combat. In fact it was more drudgery than bravery. Most of the time we were on the move, either looking for a target to hit, or just hiding. I was unwashed, tired, miserable and hungry. This was my first time outside India and food was a major problem. Hard to believe that I longed for the miserable hostel food at Kharagpur.

We in Hungary, and I use the term 'we' with deliberation, fought against horrific odds. We had some light weapons and some ammunition. In open country we were no match for the well armed Russian units with tanks and machine guns. But in the wooded regions and the cities, we were able hold them off. There was always the possibility of being killed or captured by the Russians, or the Hungarian secret police, the hated AVH.

I was paired with Viktor, a forestry student at Sopron University. I had picked up a few words of Hungarian, but virtually all the conversations passed over me. Viktor was the leader, and I followed as a dumb soldier. Initially we searched for stragglers or single Russian tanks. But soon the tank commanders learnt not to send the tanks singly, or the tanks came with protective infantry. With no heavy weapons in our hands, the fighting was one-sided and quickly degenerated to sniping. At the beginning the Russians were a trifle gentle with civilians. But with mounting losses, they started wholesale destruction of city blocs to remove a single sniper.

Mostly Viktor and I put all our efforts into not getting killed. I was a little careless one day. A slight mistake, an exposure of few seconds and I was hit. A bullet nicked me on the left elbow and then hit my rib on the right side. Viktor dragged me to the side and found some rags to tie me and took me back to the hidden safe house with Magda and Nadia.

There was only one possible outcome to this unequal struggle between fully armed Russian troops and a rag tag people's soldiers with no arms, no coordination, no command. With the capture of Budapest and major provincial centers all resistance in Hungary ceased by mid-November, 1956. The day after I was hit Viktor returned, crestfallen. His eyes had no hope. He said Budapest was now under Russian control, as were most other cities. Hundreds of thousands of Hungarians were streaming across the border into Austria. 'It is a matter of a day before Russian units reach Sopron, and then the border will be

sealed. We will all be shot. We got to escape now.'

We walked towards Sopron; in twos, agreeing to meet at a village on the west side. From Sopron we walked towards the Austrian border, avoiding main roads, fearing fast moving advance Russian columns and also the feared AVH, the secret police. About 1 km from the border we saw an uniformed soldier approaching. There was no place to hide. But he came by, smiled, and told us not to go towards the bridge at Andau, as thousands are going that way and the Border Patrols have received orders from the Russian commander to shoot to kill. He showed us a path to the south of Andau. The border was 1 km away. 'Wait until dusk, then wade through the Einser Canal. After the Canal do not stop. Keep walking quickly until you cross the border, about 300 meters away.' Finally we were there. Magda stopped, prostrated herself and kissed her beloved Hungary 'Good Bye'. Nadia scooped up some soil and tied it in a rag and carried it with her. I looked at Viktor. My gruff 'commander' of the last two weeks sobbed uncontrollably.

In a way until this point I, nineteen years of age, was still on a schoolboy streak of adventure. As a colleague in Canada pointed out later, I viewed war as a chess game, with no human consequences. But seeing all three with tears streaming down their cheeks, suddenly made me realise the personal grief the refugees had to bear. I did not know anything about their parents, friends and families. They did not know if they would ever see their families again.

We walked on towards Neustadt a small town. I have the vaguest memories of that night. I was so tired and numb and hungry that all feeling had left me. I just shuffled along. We came to a road and we were met by people speaking German who gave us bread, cheese and water and directed us to the camps, just outside Neustadt. Next morning the four of us stood in line together at the refugee-processing center and slowly inched our way to the desk. The Austrian official looked at me, looked at my Indian passport, shrugged and pointed me towards a door on his right. The other three moved on. Two days later I was put on a plane to New Delhi by the Austrian authorities. I went back to IIT Kharagpur to classes. To my classmates I told that I had gone home.

In 1959 I came to the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada to study towards a Ph.D. in Physics. I was walking on campus one day and suddenly I heard a familiar voice shout 'Laszlo'. I jumped. Magda ran and hugged me. 'I found you. I thought I would never see you again.' she said over and over again as she cried. The Bank of Montreal had a branch right under the Registrar's Office on the UBC Campus and Magda had found a job there as a teller. 'Viktor is here too'. She told me that the entire Faculty of Forestry of Sopron University, Professors

and students, fled Hungary as a group. The University of British Columbia, having learnt of their tribulations, invited the entire Faculty to come to UBC, and continue. In a unique arrangement, Sopron University student attended classes by Sopron University faculty and graduated with a Sopron degree. And so Viktor simply continued his interrupted education. Until this emotional display I had no idea that Magda would miss me.

At UBC I stayed in the student residence and the next day as I pushed my tray along the dining room meal line, I saw Nadia standing behind the counter and serving food. 'Gypsy Boy, I was so happy when I heard you are here. After we split up at the line in Neustadt, I looked all over for you. I carried some spare bread with me to give you if I saw you by chance. Then I read all these stories about famine in India, and I worried about you.'

Life is stranger than fiction. I meet Nadia half a world away, displaced in time and space, and she is still serving me dinner! Anyway, for the next three years, until I finished my Ph.D., I always had extra helpings of whatever Nadia thought was good for me. Once in a while she will bring a little package from her home, saying 'I made this last night.' She kept an eye on all of us and whenever I passed her in the cafeteria line, she would tell me 'She is not here yet' or point at the table where Magda would be sitting and say 'Go there Gypsy Boy, Gypsy Girl is waiting for you'.

We all had been in the trenches together. There was the deep bond of comradeship of arms. At UBC Viktor, Magda and I were together a lot. For the first time, we actually conversed. During my few weeks in Hungary I did not pick up much Hungarian and they did not speak English then. Now Magda, Viktor and I discussed literature and music and philosophy. We found that we had lots in common and whiled away lots of time together. Once in a while Magda would prepare delicious goulash or Chicken paprika, Viktor would bring a bottle of wine and we would have a party. Other evenings the three of us would go off to hear the Vancouver Symphony. Those were the warm and glowing days.

At this point I should recount as to how a boy from around Chilika Lake happened to be in Hungary. My formative years were spent in Sambalpur in the fifties, first at Chandrasekhar Zilla School and then at Gangadhar Meher College.

By the late 1940s, after the end of the Second World War, Josef Stalin, the Soviet Dictator had a powerful and fearsome image worldwide. Partly this was due to Soviet defeat of Germany, and Stalin's total control of the states in Eastern Europe. He was feared, as was his secret police, which could reach anywhere in the world. US anticommunist propaganda which vilified Stalin, had an

unintended effect of making him even bigger than life.

It was in this backdrop that during a school visit to Bangalore in 1953 I saw flags flying at half-mast. On inquiry, a passerby told me that Marshal Stalin was dead. That was stunning news indeed. With this feared dictator gone, the world expected the Soviet Empire to unravel. The final curtain on the collapse of Stalin style communism was not to happen until the actual dissolution of the Soviet State into Russia and other countries in the early 1990s. But the stirrings had started in March 1953.

As a student at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, I produced a daily handwritten newsheet called 'B-M News'. I scanned the shortwave broadcasts around the world during the night and published a daily handwritten sheet with the latest in world news. B-M News was usually 24 to 48hrs ahead of the Calcutta newspapers in reporting major news.

The main events in Hungary were:

- 1949 Laszlo Rajk, Hungarian communist leader was arrested as a 'Titoist' and executed, under Stalin's orders.
- March 1953 Josef Stalin dies.
- *February 1956 At the 20th Party Congress Khrushchev denounces Stalin and his actions in the past.*
- *March 1956 Matyas Rakosi, First Secretary of Hungarian Communist Party, declares that Laszlo Rajk was innocent for the crimes for which executed.*
- *June 1956 Polish workers demonstrate in Poznan; put down by army.*
- *6 October 1956 Rajk is ceremonially reburied. A crowd of 200,000 people crowd the streets in Budapest.*
- *16 October 1956 Students in Szeged form a new (non-communist) union, MEFESZ, and call for support from universities throughout Hungary.*
- *21 October 1956 Gomulka elected First Secretary in Poland, in spite of Soviet opposition.*
- *22 October 1956 Students in Technological University vote to join MEFESZ.*
- *23 October 1956 Mass public demonstration in Budapest. Government calls in Soviet tanks and troops.*
- *24 October 1956 Street battles against soviet tanks and troops. Many are killed.*

Writing a list like this conveys nothing about what I felt in Kharagpur those nights, listening to shortwave stations around the world. When 200000 people turned out for the Rajk reburial in Budapest, I knew something was going to happen. But I did not expect the street battles on October 24. The news reports described the struggle by students and workers to fight against Russian tanks and troops.

Words are insufficient to convey the depth of my anger. I was particularly upset and angry that boys of my age were being mowed down by machine guns and tanks, just

because they wanted freedom. There was no television then. Just from the radio reports I formed an image of brave and defiant students facing the tanks. I felt an anger that permeated the body. It was a deep disquiet, a sense of injustice of fate at allowing youths in the bloom of life to be killed. My horror and anger rose to a point that I felt that I had to go and fight with the students in Hungary, to take part in their struggle.

In another sense what I felt was what young men have done since the dawn of history. It is an infectious call to war for all young men. What was unusual in this case is that I heard the call to battle half a world away... As in all combat, one hopes to be victorious, even as one recognises the distinct possibility of death. I took a conscious decision. I do not recall a sense of fear or being afraid. It was as if both life and death were equally acceptable outcomes. And yet during the four weeks in 1956 I felt invincible.

Morning of October 25 I told my classmates that I had to go home to Cuttack. With whatever money I had, I booked a ticket to Delhi. On arrival in Delhi I went to Lufthansa airline and insisted on seeing the manager. It is easy to imagine the conversation between an unkempt Indian student with the German manager. He listened to me politely 'I want to go to Hungary to fight the Russians'. 'Why?' I explained my deep anger at students my age being killed. 'Sorry, I cannot do anything.' Even after he said 'No', I kept talking about freedom and struggle and youth. 'Stop babbling. What do you know about fighting?' Instead of answering, I asked him 'What do you know about fighting?' 'I was in an airborne unit. We landed on the top of a fortress in Belgium.' 'You served under General Student?' I asked. 'You know about Colonel-General Student?' I told him that I thought Student was a brilliant General; unfortunately hit by a sniper shortly after the assault on the fortress. At this point he looked at me closely for the first time. 'I was young like you once. I had fever in my blood too'. We talked for an hour. After that he said 'I would be proud to have a son like you. My own son is not interested in anything'. He arranged for everything, ticket, visa and a contact in Vienna. I took off the same night. The manager took me to the airport.

I had expected to go to Budapest, to join the students. But instead the contact in Vienna took me to Neustadt, a small town in Austria, near the border with Hungary. Here Imre met me and took me down to the house in the forest where I met Nadia and Magda. It is in the nature of covert operations that the personnel operate on a need-to-know basis. After I left Delhi no one asked me why a student from India wanted to go to Hungary. Only Nadia wondered later.

Between October 23, 1956 and November 4, it looked as if the people of Hungary finally won their freedom. It

turned out it was just a lulling illusion. Well-armed Soviet units entered Hungary in the night, in a second military intervention in two weeks. Between November 5 and 11 the people put up a heroic resistance. But except for a few pockets, Russian troops gained full control of the country. There was a mass exodus of the people into Austria. I returned to Austria on November 10.

I was away from my classes for three weeks. I was

all agog to tell my classmates my adventures. But everytime I tried, I was met with laughter. 'You listen to shortwave radio too much'. 'You should come to the movies with us more often'. The conversation would return to Nargis, Raj Kapoor, Nutan and other latest antics from filmdom.

Life is stranger than fiction, and often fiction appears more real than life.

Lalu Mansinha lives in London, Ontario. In his youth he enjoyed the stories about Baron Munchausen.

ସ୍ମୃତି

ଜୟଶ୍ରୀ (ରାନୁ) ମାହାନ୍ତି

ଆମ ଗାଁ ମଝିଘରେ ମୋ (ଜେଜେ) ମା କୋଳରେ

ଭାଙ୍ଗି ଗଲା ନିଦ ବୋଉର ଡାକରେ
ମଲ୍ଲିପୁଲ ଗଛରୁ, କିଏ ନେବ ଶ୍ଵେତାଞ୍ଜଳି
ରହିଯିବ ତୋ ମଲ୍ଲିମାଳ ଅସମ୍ଭବ ହୋଇ

ଆଖି ବୁଜି ବୁଜି ପହଞ୍ଚିଲି ଆମ ଘର ଅଗଣାରେ
ଦୂରରେ ପଡ଼ି ପଶୁରିଲି ବୋଉକୁ ଅନ୍ଧାର ରାତିରେ
(କହ ବୋଉ) ମଲ୍ଲି କିଏ ବଢ଼ିଗଲେ, ଆଉ ତାରା କିଏ ଆକାଶରେ
ହସି ହସି ବୋଉ, ମୁଁ ଗଡ଼ି ଗଲୁ ବଢ଼ିଗୁ ଭତରେ

ଜତନେ ଗୋଟି ଗୋଟି ମଲ୍ଲିପୁଲ ଭରିଲି ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ
ଭାବି ଆଜି ଗୁଢ଼ିବି ଗଜରା, ମଲ୍ଲି ପୁଲରେ
ଛିଞ୍ଚି ଦେବି, ସେ ଗଜରା, ତୁଳସୀ, ଚନ୍ଦନରେ
ଅତି ଶରଧାରେ ଦେବି ପିନ୍ଧାଇ ଶ୍ୟାମଙ୍ଗ ଗଳାରେ

ଭାବୁଥିଲି କେତେ ଭାଗ୍ୟ ଯ ମଲ୍ଲି ପୁଲର
ହୃଦୟରେ ପାଇବ ସ୍ଥାନ, ମୋ ଶ୍ୟାମଙ୍ଗର
ଲେଖିଲି ପାଖୁଡ଼ା ଉପରେ, ମୋ ପ୍ରେମର କାହାଣୀ
କଥା ଦେଲା ମଲ୍ଲି କହିବ ଶ୍ୟାମଙ୍ଗ ମୋ ବିରହ ରାଗିଣୀ

ଯିବୁନିକି ଗାଧେଇ? କହିଲା ବୋଉ ଧୂରେ ମୋ କାନରେ
ତେରି କଲେ ଭରି ଯିବେ ଲୋକ ଗାଧୁଆ ତୁଠରେ
ଲାଜେ ହସି ତର ତରେ ବାନ୍ଧିଲି ଗଜରା ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ
ଜତନେ ରଖୁ ସେ ସ୍ମୃତି ମୋ ହୃଦୟ ଫରୁଆରେ

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ହେମ ଶସ୍ୟର ହେମ ମାଉସୀ

ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରା ମିଶ୍ର

କୌତୁହଳ ଓ ଉଦ୍‌ବେଗରେ ମୋ ମନ ଉତ୍‌ଫୁଲ୍ଲ ହୋଇଯାଉଥାଏ । ପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧ କବି ମାୟାଧର ମାନସିଂହଙ୍କ ପତ୍ନୀ ହେମଲତାଙ୍କ ସଂଗେ ମୋର ପ୍ରଥମଥର ପାଇଁ ଦେଖାହେବ, ସେଇ କଥା ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ହେଉ ନଥାଏ । ଶାହୀଦୀ ଠିକ୍‌ରେ ସଜାଡ଼ି ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ନାଲି ଡିପାଟିଂ ଲଗାଇ ଚପଲ ଦୁଇଟି ଗଲେଇ ଦେଇ ତରତର କରି ମୁଁ ଗାଡ଼ରେ ବସିଗଲି ଶୁକ୍ରବାରର ଏକ ଅଳସ ମଧ୍ୟାହ୍ନରେ ।

ସେତେବେଳେ ହେମଲତା ମାନସିଂହ ଔଶିଂଚନ୍‌ରେ ତାଙ୍କ ପୁଅ ଲଳିତ ବାବୁଙ୍କ ପାଖେ ରହୁଥାଆନ୍ତି । ଫିଲାଡେଲ୍‌ଫିଆରେ ମନରଞ୍ଜନ ବାବୁଙ୍କ ଘରକୁ ବୁଲି ଆସିଥାଆନ୍ତି । ଗାଡ଼ିକୁ ସିଧା ଚଲାଉ ଚଲାଉ ପିଲାଦିନର ସ୍ମୃତିସବୁ ଆଖିଆଗରେ ଛବିପରି ନାଚି ଉଠିଲା । କିଶୋରୀ ଜୀବନରେ ମୁଁ କବି ମାନସିଂହଙ୍କ କବିତା ପଢ଼ିବା ପାଇଁ ବହୁତ ବ୍ୟାକୁଳ ଥିଲି । ଆମଘରେ କାବ୍ୟ, କବିତା, ବହି ବା ପତ୍ରିକା ବେଶୀ ନ ଥାଏ । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ସାଇ ପଡ଼ିଶା ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ ବହୁତ ଖୋସାମତ କରି ମୁଁ ମାନସିଂହଙ୍କ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ କବିତାଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ପତ୍ରିକା ମାନଙ୍କରୁ ବହୁତ ଯତ୍ନ କରି ପଡ଼େ । ଥରେ ଖରାଛୁଟିରେ କବିଙ୍କର 'ପ୍ରେମଶସ୍ୟ'ରୁ ଗୋଟିଏ କବିତା 'ଅଭିମାନ' ପତ୍ରିକାପରେ 'ହେମଶସ୍ୟ'ର ନାୟିକା କବିପତ୍ନୀ ହେମଲତାଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖିବା ପାଇଁ ବହୁତ ଇଚ୍ଛା ହୋଇଥିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ବାହାଘର ପରେ ମୁଁ ବମ୍ବେ ଓ ପରେ ଆମେରିକାରେ ଆସି ରହିଲି । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବହି ବା ପତ୍ରିକା ପଢ଼ିବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ଆଉ ବେଶି ମିଳିଲାନି । ତେଣୁ ମୋର ଏ ଇଚ୍ଛା କେବଳ ମୋ ମନରେ ରହିଯିବ ବୋଲି ଭାବିନେଲି । ହଠାତ୍ ଦିନେ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାବେଳେ ମନରଞ୍ଜନ ବାବୁଙ୍କ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ମିନିଅପା ତାକି କହିଲେ "ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରା, ମାନସିଂହ ମଉସାଙ୍କ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ହେମମାଉସୀ ଆମଘରକୁ ଆସିଛନ୍ତି । ତୁମେତ ଘରେ ଅଛ, ଖରାବେଳେ ଆସି ତାଙ୍କ ସଂଗେ ଗପସପ କଲେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଭଲ ଲାଗିବ ।" ତାଙ୍କ କଥା ସରୁ ନ ସରୁଣୁ ମୁଁ ବଡ଼ ପାଟିରେ କହିଲି "ମିନିଅପା, ନିଶ୍ଚେ ଆସିବି ଆଉ କହିବାକୁ ଅଛି ।" ମନେ ମନେ ଭାବିଲି ଯେଉଁ ହେମଲତାଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖିବା କେବଳ ମୋର ଭାବନାରେ ରହିଯିବ ବୋଲି ଭାବିଥିଲି ତାହା ଆଜି ସତ୍ୟରେ ପରଶତ ହୋଇଛି । ରୁଟ୍ ଔନ୍ ପାଖେ ଟୋଲ୍ ପଇସା ଦେଉ ଦେଉ ମନେ ମନେ କହିଲି 'ମଲ୍ଲ ଖୋ ଜୁଥିଲା କାକର ପାଣି, ବଇଦ କହିଲା ଦିଅ ତୋରାଣୀ' । ମୋ ମୁହଁକୁ ଦେଖି ଟୋଲ୍ ବୁଥରୁ ମୁହଁ ବାହାରକରି ଆତେନ୍‌ତାଙ୍କୁ ମତେ ପଚାରିଲା 'ପାର୍ଡନ୍ !' ତା କଥା ଶୁଣି ମୁଁ ପ୍ରକୃତିସ୍ଥ ହେଲି । ଗାଡ଼ି ଚଲାଉ ଚଲାଉ ହେମଶସ୍ୟର କବିତା ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ମନେ ପକେଇବାରେ ଲାଗିଲି । ଭାବିଲି ମାଉସୀଙ୍କୁ କବିଙ୍କ ବିଷୟରେ କିଛି ପଚାରିବି । କିପରି ଏତେ ସୁନ୍ଦର ସୁନ୍ଦର କବିତା ଲେଖୁଥିଲେ । କିଏ ତାଙ୍କର ଲେଖା ଗୁଡ଼ିକର ପ୍ରେରଣା ଥିଲା ।

କବିର ମନୋଭାବ, ଆକାଂକ୍ଷା ଝରିପଡ଼େ କବିତାର ଛନ୍ଦରେ ତାଙ୍କ ପ୍ରିୟ ପାଇଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ କବି ବଧୂ ଯିଏ ସୁଖ, ଦୁଃଖ ଖରା ବର୍ଷାରେ କବି ଭଳି ଉଦାସୀନ ପୁରୁଷ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ପଥ ମିଳାଇ ନିତି ଚାଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ଜୀବନ କିପରି, ସେ ବିଷୟରେ କିଛି ଆଭାସ ପାଇବା ଆଶାରେ ଗାଡ଼ି ଜୋର୍ ଜୋର୍ରେ ଚଲେଇଲି ।

ଗୋଡ଼ ଚିପି ଚିପି ଯାଇ କଲିଂ ବେଲ୍‌ଡି ଦବେଇଲି । ବାହାରେ ଗୋଲାପ ଗଛର ଧାଡ଼ିରେ ଗୋଲାପ ଫୁଲ ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ମତେ ଚାହିଁ ଯେପରି ହସି ହସି ମୋର ସ୍ନାତ୍ତ କଲାଭଳି ଲାଗିଲା । ମନରେ ଏକ ଅତୁଟ ଆଲୋଚନ ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହୋଇଯାଉଥାଏ । ଦୁଆର ଫିଟେଇଲେ ନିଜେ ହେମଲତା ମାନସିଂହ । ବୟସର ମଧ୍ୟାହ୍ନରେ ତାଙ୍କର ମୁହଁଟି ଯେମିତି ସୁତେଇ ଦେଉଥିଲା ଏ ମୁଖ ଯୌଦର୍ଯ୍ୟ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଦିନେ ହେମଶସ୍ୟ ଲେଖିବା ପାଇଁ କବିଙ୍କୁ ପ୍ରେରଣା ଦେଇଥିବ । ସାମାନ୍ୟ ହସି ସେ କହିଲେ, "ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରା ଆସ, ମିନି କହିଯାଇଛି ତୁମେ ଆସିବ ବୋଲି, ମନରଞ୍ଜନ ବାହାରକୁ ଯାଇଛି ଏଇଲେ ଆସିବ ।"

ଆମର ପରିଚୟକୁ ସରଳ କରିଦେବା ପାଇଁ ମୁଁ କହିଲି” ମୋ ଭିତରେ ଲେଖକ କୁଞ୍ଜବିହାରୀ ଦାଶଙ୍କୁ ଆପଣ ବୋଧହୁଏ ଜାଣି ପିବେ?”

-ହଁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଓ ତୁମ ନାନୀ ପ୍ରେମଲତାଙ୍କୁ ମୁଁ ଭଲ ଭାବେ ଜାଣିଛି । ତୁମେ ପରା କଣ ଓଷସ୍ସ ମାଗାଜିନ୍‌ରେ ଲେଖାଲେଖି କର ?

-ହଁ ଅଳ୍ପ କିଛି ଲେଖିଛି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା ଥିଲେବି ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ ଲେଖିପାରୁନି । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବହି, ପତ୍ରିକା ପଢ଼ିବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ବେଶି ପାଉନି ତେଣୁ ଲେଖାର ଛନ୍ଦ ଆସୁନି । କେବଳ ଭାବନାକୁ ନେଇ କଣ ଲେଖିହୁଏ ? କିଏ ମୋ ଲେଖା ଛପେଇବ?

-ଛାପୁ ନ ଛାପୁ ଲେଖା ଲେଖି ଆରମ୍ଭ କର । ଭାବନାର ପଛରେ ଛନ୍ଦ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଆସିବ ।

ତାଙ୍କ କଥା ଶୁଣି ମୋ ମନରେ ଏକ ଅଭୂତ ଆଲୋଚନ, ଉଦ୍‌ବେଗ ଜାତ ହେଲା । ତାଙ୍କୁ ମୁଁ ପ୍ରଥମ ଥର ପାଇଁ ଭେଟିଛି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଲାଗିଲା ଯେପରି ସେ ମତେ ଅନେକ ଦିନରୁ ଜାଣିଛନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କର ସରଳ ଆତ୍ମୀୟତା ମତେ ତାଙ୍କ ଆଡ଼କୁ ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କ ଭଳି ଟାଣି ନେଉଥିଲା । ମନର ଉଦ୍‌ବେଗକୁ ଚାପି ନିଜର ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଗଲି,

-ମାଉସୀ, ‘ହେମଶସ୍ୟ’ ପଢ଼ିଲା ପରଠାରୁ ଆପଣଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖିବା ପାଇଁ ମୋର ବହୁତ ଇଚ୍ଛା ଥିଲା । ଆପଣଙ୍କୁ କବିଙ୍କ ବିଷୟରେ କିଛି ପଚାରିପାରିବି?

ତାଙ୍କ ଉତ୍ତରକୁ ଅପେକ୍ଷା ନ କରି ପଚାରିଲି,

-କବିଙ୍କର କେଉଁ ଗୁଣଟି ଆପଣଙ୍କୁ ଅତି ମୁଗ୍ଧ କରିଥିଲା ସେ ବିଷୟରେ କିଛି କୁହନ୍ତୁ ।

ଉପରକୁ ଚାହିଁ (ବୋଧେ କବିଙ୍କର ସ୍ମୃତିକୁ ମନେ ପକାଇ) ହେମ ମାଉସୀ କହିଲେ,

-ମାନସିଂହ ବଡ଼ ଅଭିମାନୀ ଥିଲେ । ଦୁଃଖକୁ ସେ ସବୁବେଳେ ଚାପି ରଖନ୍ତି । ଅନ୍ୟର ଦୁଃଖକୁ ସେ ନିଜର ଦୁଃଖ ବୋଲି ଭାବୁଥିଲେ । ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ଦୁଃଖ ତାଙ୍କ ହୃଦୟରେ ଥିଲା । ସେ ଚାହୁଁଥିଲେ କେବଳ ଲେଖିବେ ଓ କବିତାର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନର ମାୟାମୟ ପରିବେଶରେ ବିଚରଣ କରିବେ । ନିଜର ଅଭାବ ସତ୍ତ୍ୱେ ସେ ଅନ୍ୟପାଇଁ ନିଜର ସବୁକିଛି ଦେବାପାଇଁ କୁଣ୍ଠିତ ନ ଥିଲେ । ସେଇ କଥାଟି ମତେ ଏ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଅଭିଭୂତ କରେ ।

-ତାହାହେଲେ ଆପଣ ବୋଧେ ଆପଣଙ୍କର ସବୁ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ଅଳି ଝଳି ପାଠପଢ଼ାର ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ନେଇଥିବେ ? ଶୁଣିଛି ଆପଣଙ୍କର ସବୁ ପିଲାମାନେ ବହୁତ ପାରିବାର ।

ମୋ କଥା ଶୁଣି ସାମାନ୍ୟ ହସି ହେମ ମାଉସୀ କହିଲେ,

-ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ସେ ଭାରି ଭଲ ପାଉଥିଲେ । ମୁଁ ଭାବୁଥିଲି କବିମାନେ ସଂସାର ପ୍ରତି ଉଦାସୀନ । ତାଙ୍କର ପିଲା ଛୁଆ , ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ କାହା ପ୍ରତି ମୋହ ନ ଥାଏ । ତାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ କବିତା ହିଁ ସବୁକିଛି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏଇଟା ମୋର ବୁଝିବାରେ ଭୁଲ୍ । ଯେତେବେଳେ ମୋର ପଦ୍ମଶ୍ରୀ ନାମକ ଝିଅର ଦେହାନ୍ତ ହୋଇଗଲା ସେତେବେଳେ ସେ ବହୁତ ଦୁଃଖୀ ହୋଇଥିଲେ । କିଛିଦିନ ଲେଖାଲେଖି ଛାଡ଼ି ଦେଇଥିଲେ ।

କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତାରେ ସମୟ ଶୀଘ୍ର ଶୀଘ୍ର ଗଡ଼ିଗଲା । ଇଚ୍ଛା ନଥିଲେବି ସେଦିନ ସେତିକିରେ ମୁଁ ଘରକୁ ଫେରିଲି । ବାଟରେ ଆସିଲା ବେଳେ ବାରମ୍ବାର ହେମ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କର ହସ ହସ ମୁହଁ ମୋର ମନେ ପଡ଼ି ଯାଉଥାଏ । ଯେଉଁ ହେମଲତାଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ ଯୌବନରେ ମୁଁ ଏତେ ରଂଗ ଦେଖିଥିଲି ସିଏ କେବଳ ହେମଶସ୍ୟର ନାୟିକା ନୁହଁନ୍ତି, ଜଣେ ସୁଦକ୍ଷା, ସ୍ନେହଶୀଳା ନାରୀ ସେ କଥା ଭାବି ଭାବି ଘରକୁ ଫେରିଲି ।

ହେମମାଉସୀଙ୍କର ଆମେରିକାରେ ରହିବା ଭିତରେ ମୋର ତାଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗେ ଅନେକଥର ଦେଖା ହୋଇଛି, ଫୋନ୍‌ରେ ବହୁତଥର କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା ହୋଇଛି । ସାକ୍ଷାତ୍‌ରେ ବା ଫୋନ୍‌ରେ ହେଉ ସବୁବେଳେ ସେ ମତେ ଲେଖିବା ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରେରଣା ଦେଉଥିଲେ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବହି ଓ ପତ୍ରିକା ମୋ ପାଖକୁ ପଠାଇ ମତେ ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ ଲେଖିବାପାଇଁ ଉତ୍ସାହିତ କରିଥିଲେ ।

ଯୋଗକୁ ତାଙ୍କର ଆମେରିକାରେ ରହିବା ଭିତରେ ମୋର ସାନପୁଅ ସଂଜୟ ଜନ୍ମ ହେଲା । ଅନେକ ଦିନପରେ ପିଲା ହେବାର ଯିବାରୁ ମତେ ବଡ଼ ତର ଲାଗୁଥିଲା । ବେଶୀ ଭାରି ଜିନିଷ ନଉଠାଇବାକୁ ମାଉସୀ ସବୁବେଳେ ମତେ ତାଗିଦା କରୁଥାଆନ୍ତି । ପୃଷ୍ଠିକର ଖାଦ୍ୟଖାଇ ଓ ଭଲ ବହି ପଢ଼ି ଦେହ ଓ ମନକୁ ଫୁର୍ତ୍ତି ରଖିବା ପାଇଁ ସେ ସବୁବେଳେ କହୁଥାଆନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କ କଥା ମତେ ବହୁତ ଭଲ ଲାଗୁଥିଲା । ବୋଧେ ବୋଉ ବା ଶାଶୁ ନଥିବାରୁ ମୁଁ କେବେ ଏପରି ସ୍ନେହଭରା ଉପଦେଶ କାହାଠାରୁ ପାଇ ନଥିଲି ତେଣୁ ସେ ସବୁ କଥା ମୋ ପାଇଁ ନୂଆ ଥିଲା । ଖରାଦିନେ ତମନ ଲଗାଇ ଦେହକୁ ଶୀତଳ କଲାପରି ମୁଁ ତାଙ୍କ କଥାରେ ମନକୁ ଭୁଲାଇ ନେଉଥିଲି । ସମୟ ସୁବିଧା ପାଇ ସେ ଔଶିଂଟନରୁ ମୋ ପାଇଁ ଗୋଲାପଜାମୁ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପତ୍ରିକା ପଠାଉଥିଲେ । ସବୁବେଳେ କହନ୍ତି, "ନିଜ ପାଇଁ ନଭାବି ପିଲା ପାଇଁ ଖାଆ ଓ ପଢ଼, ତାହାହେଲେ ସିନା ପିଲା । ବଳବାନ୍ ଓ ବୁଦ୍ଧିଆ ହେବ ।"

ମାଉସୀଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗେ ମୋର ରାଜନୀତିଠାରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରି ସିଲେଇ, ରୋଷେଇ, ନାରୀଙ୍କର ସ୍ବାଧୀନତା ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ବିଭିନ୍ନ ବିଷୟରେ ଗପସପ ହୁଏ । ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ଏପଟ ସେପଟ କହି ତାଙ୍କଠୁ ଗାଳିବି ବହୁତ ଖାଇଛି । ଥରେ ଆମଘରେ କଣ ମନମାଳିନ୍ୟ ହୋଇଥାଏ । ମାଉସୀଙ୍କ ଫୋନ୍ ସେତିକି ବେଳକୁ ଆସିଲା । ଆଗ ପଛ ନବିତାରି କଥା ବାହାନାରେ ମୁଁ ପଚାରିଲି, "ମାଉସୀ ଆପଣତ ଏତେ ବଡ଼ କବିଙ୍କର ପତ୍ନୀ, ଜଣେ ସ୍ବାମୀ ପ୍ରତି ସ୍ତ୍ରୀର କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ କଣ କହିଲେ ।" ମୋ କଥା ଶୁଣି କିଛି ସମୟ ତୁପ୍ ରହିବା ପରେ ମାଉସୀ କହିଲେ, "ତୁମେମାନେତ ନୂଆ ଯୁଗର ଝିଅ ବୋହୁ, ତୁମ ମାନଙ୍କର ସ୍ବାମୀ ମାନଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗେ ସମାନତା ଦରକାର । କିନ୍ତୁ ମୋ ମତରେ ସ୍ବାମୀର ହସ, କାନ୍ଦ, ଭଲ, ମନ୍ଦ, ଦୁଃଖ, ସୁଖରେ ନିଜକୁ ଏକାନ୍ତ କରିନେବା ସ୍ତ୍ରୀର ଧର୍ମ । ଦୂର ପର୍ବତ ସବୁବେଳେ ସୁନ୍ଦର, କିନ୍ତୁ ପାଖକୁ ଗଲେ ତାହା କେବଳ ପଥର । ତେଣୁ ନିଜ ପରିବାରରେ ଯାହା ଥାଏ ସେତିକିରେ ସନ୍ତୁଷ୍ଟ ରହିଲେ ପରିବାର ସୁଖୀ ହୁଏ ।" କଥାଟା ମୋ ମନକୁ ଭାରି ପାଇଲା ।

ସବୁଦିନ ସମାନ ରହେନି । ମାଉସୀଙ୍କ ଆମେରିକା ଛାଡ଼ିବା ଦିନ ଆସିଲା, ସେ କଥା ଭାବି ମୋ ମନ ଭାରି ଦୁଃଖ ହୋଇଗଲା । ପିଲାଦିନରୁ ମୁଁ ମା ଛେଉଣୁ ଥିଲି । ବାହାହେଲି ବିନାଶାଶୁଘରେ । ତେଣୁ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କର ଅମାୟିକ ସ୍ନେହ, ଉପଦେଶ ମୋ ପାଇଁ ନୂଆ ଥିଲା । ସେ ସବୁର ସମାପ୍ତି ଦିନ ଆସିଗଲା ଜାଣି ମନରେ ରାଗ ଓ ଅଭିମାନ ଆସିଲା । ଏକାନ୍ତରେ ମନକୁ ବୁଝାଇଲି, ସବୁ ଜିନିଷ ସବୁବେଳେ ରହେନି । ସବୁକଥା ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ମିଳେନି । ମୋ ସାନପୁଅ ମୋ ଆଖିରେ ଲୁହ ଦେଖି ତାର ହାତ ମୋ ଆଡ଼କୁ ବଢ଼ାଇଲା । ସଂଜୟର ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ ଆଙ୍ଗୁଳି ଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ଚାପିଧରି ମନର କୋହକୁ ଛାତିଭିତରେ ରଖି ତାକୁ କହିଲି "ତୋ ମା ଉଡ଼ାଜାହାଜରେ ଉଡ଼ି ଚାଲିଗଲେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ।" ମୋ କଥା ଶୁଣି ସେ କଣ ବୁଝିଲା କେଜାଣି ଖିଲ୍ ଖିଲ୍ କରି ହସି ଉଠିଲା । ତା ହସ ଦେଖି ମୁଁ ଭୁଲିଗଲି ମୋ ନିଜର କୋହ । ମାଉସୀଙ୍କର ସ୍ନେହକୁ ମୁଁ ଆମ ବାଡ଼ିରୁ ମଲ୍ଲୀଫୁଲ ସାଉଁଟିଲା ପରି ଛାତିଭିତରେ ସବୁଦିନ ପାଇଁ ରଖିଛି । ଯାହାର ସୁଗନ୍ଧ ଏବେବି ମୋ ମନରେ ମହକୁଛି ।

'ହେମଶସ୍ୟ' ପଢ଼ିଲା ପରେ ଦିନେ ଭାବୁଥିଲି 'ହେମଶସ୍ୟ'ର ନାୟିକା ହେମଲତା ନିଷ୍ଠେ ବହୁତ ଲାବଣ୍ୟମୟୀ ହୋଇଥିବେ । ଯାହାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ କବି ମାନ୍‌ସିଂହ ଏତେ ସୁନ୍ଦର ସୁନ୍ଦର କବିତା ରଚନା କରିଥିଲେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ତାଙ୍କ ସହ ଭେଟ ହେଲାପରେ ଜାଣିଲି ସେ ହେଉଛନ୍ତି ମୋର ଅନ୍ତରର ଅତି ଆଦରଣୀୟ ହେମମାଉସୀ, ଯାହାଙ୍କ ଅମାୟିକ ସ୍ନେହ ମୋ ମନରେ ରଖିଛନ୍ତି ।

Chandra Mishra lives in Philadelphia with her husband. She is grateful to Prof. Lalu Mansinha for having encouraged her to write her feelings.

The Only True Democracy?

SHEELA HOTA-MITCHELL & ROSS MITCHELL

In November 1998, my husband Ross and I embarked upon a journey of great significance. For me, an Oriya and first generation Canadian, it was a visit to my parent's home country and family members I had not seen for over 14 years; quite an event in itself. For Ross, it was a whirlwind meet-and-mingle with his wife's numerous relatives and an adventurous expedition to an exotic tropical country.

If you were to ask us about our first impressions of India, it really would be a loaded question. India bombards all of the senses with its uniqueness.

Smells... the distinctive combination of odours of diesel, mesquite, and incense... this is the India which greets a new traveller... a sort of *namaskar* to the nasal passages.

Sounds... honking, rumbling trucks and cars, bicycle bells, words fusing into a medley of languages, "Saar, pleez, dallar"...

Sights... vehicles and animals of every imaginable sort, weaving around each other in an intricate road dance; limb-less, sight-less beggars at street intersections; men in dress shirts and pants clutching cell phones; street children wearing Tommy Hilfiger T-shirts (unauthorized copies, of course) and peddling magazines and facial tissues to the bored middle-classes seated in the comfort of their Ambassador cars; women in colourful saris precariously perched side-saddle on the backs of scooters with one arm around the driver (husband?), and the other arm around a baby.

We began our 5 week visit to India bright and starry-eyed, tour books and itineraries in hand, ready to experience it all. We were to spend one and a half weeks in North India (New Delhi, Agra and Jaipur) and the remainder of the time in Orissa. Unfortunately, illness (Delhi belly, or specifically, Jaipur belly!) kept us confined to our Amulya-mamu's home in New Delhi, with a worried uncle, cousins, servants, and friends tending to our feverish and dehydrated selves. Connections to a World Health Organization doctor (a fellow Oriya, no less) lots of bed rest, oral rehydration, and some good STRONG antibiotics, and we were on the road to recovery. However, the illness did colour the rest of the trip for us and we remained completely preoccupied and overly-cautious about food for the remainder of the trip.

Once in Orissa, where the majority of my relatives live, we added "relative-visiting" to our schedule of sightseeing and shopping, and visit we did! We met with as many of the Mansinha clan as we could, as well as most of the Nandas... in fact, of Mom's 11 siblings living in India, we met up with 10 (plus their spouses, children, and grandchildren, wherever possible). Ross and I were both utterly overwhelmed with the kindness and generosity of my relatives. After an almost 15 year absence, I had forgotten how affectionate and wonderful they were. Every time we visited someone, we were provided with warm hugs, excited conversations, and, what had become a staple snack for us, endless cups of *cha* and biscuits!

Of course, we couldn't leave out all the wonderful sightseeing we did. We were lucky enough to spend a day at Chilika lake, the largest saltwater lake in Asia, and enjoy a relaxing boat ride out to a marsh where various ducks and flamingos were taking a break during their annual migration to the Madagascar Islands from chilly Russia. We made a trip to Puri where we saw the Jagannath temple. Although Ross (a non-Hindu) was not allowed inside the temple complex, he did manage to get a wonderful view of it and some fabulous pictures from his perch on the roof of a library across the street. He did get to see the remains of the great Sun Temple at Konark. We actually spent a good three hours, with Surya Himself warming our backs, as we were led from carving to carving by our knowledgeable guide (who also took it upon himself to provide me and Ross with an additional mini-tour of some of the erotica; he must have mistaken us for newlyweds!). I can really see why this masterpiece at Konark was designated the eighth wonder of the world.

I wish I could say that everything about our trip to Orissa was perfect. The one thing that caused us the greatest difficulty was adjusting to the Indian methods of driving. This does NOT mean simply adjusting to being on the left side of the road. In fact, the driving conditions affected Ross to such an extent, he was inspired to come up with what he saw as the "Rules of the Road: What They Didn't Teach You in North American Driving Schools"

Most Indian road users observe a version of the Highway Code based on an ancient text. These 12 rules of the Indian road are published for the first time in English.

ARTICLE I

The assumption of immortality is required of all road users.

ARTICLE II

The following precedence must be accorded at all times. In descending order, give way to: cows, elephants, heavy trucks, buses, official cars, camels, light trucks, buffalo, Jeeps, ox-carts, private cars, motorcycles, scooters, auto-rickshaws, pigs, pedal rickshaws, goats, bicycles (goods-carrying), handcarts, bicycles (passenger-carrying), dogs, pedestrians.

ARTICLE III

All wheeled vehicles shall be driven in accordance with the maxim: to slow is to falter, to brake is to fail, to stop is defeat. This is the Indian drivers' mantra.

ARTICLE IV

Use of horn (also known as the sonic fender or aural amulet): Cars (IV,1,a-c): Short blasts (urgent) indicate supremacy, ie in clearing dogs, rickshaws and pedestrians from path. Long blasts (desperate) denote supplication, ie to oncoming truck, "I am going too fast to stop, so unless you slow down we shall both die". In extreme cases this may be accompanied by flashing of headlights (frantic). Single blast (casual) means "I have seen someone out of India's 870 million whom I recognize", "There is a bird in the road (which at this speed could go through my windscreen)" or "I have not blown my horn for several minutes." Trucks and buses (IV,2,a): All horn signals have the same meaning, viz, "I have an all-up weight of approximately 12.5 tons and have no intention of stopping, even if I could." This signal may be emphasized by the use of headlamps (insouciant). Article IV remains subject to the provision of Order of Precedence in Article II above

ARTICLE V

All manoeuvres, use of horn and evasive action shall be left until the last possible moment.

ARTICLE VI

In the absence of seat belts (which there is), car occupants shall wear garlands of marigolds. These should be kept fastened at all times.

ARTICLE VII

Rights of way: Traffic entering a road from the left has priority. So has traffic from the right, and also traffic in the

middle. Lane discipline (VII,1): All Indian traffic at all times and irrespective of direction of travel shall occupy the centre of the road.

ARTICLE VIII

Roundabouts: India has no roundabouts. Apparent traffic islands in the middle of crossroads have no traffic management function. Any other impression should be ignored.

ARTICLE IX

Overtaking is mandatory. Every moving vehicle is required to overtake every other moving vehicle, irrespective of whether it has just overtaken you. Overtaking should only be undertaken in suitable conditions, such as in the face of oncoming traffic, on blind bends, at junctions and in the middle of villages/city centres. No more than two inches should be allowed between your vehicle and the one you are passing - and one inch in the case of bicycles or pedestrians.

ARTICLE X

Nirvana may be obtained through the head-on crash.

ARTICLE XI

Reversing: no longer applicable since no vehicle in India has reverse gear.

Cars, trucks, scooters, pedestrians, dogs and cattle: these are the things perpetually competing for space, sometimes in motion, all working together in a strange harmony unappreciated by foreigners. This is the way of India. As my uncle, Kunu-mamu, so succinctly put it "India is a true democracy... everyone- dogs, cows, people- moves at will" (this was said, of course, with a good-natured and tolerant grin).

Happily, we discovered the beautiful and beguiling Orissa in the form of lazy villages, remarkable feats of architecture, gorgeous temples, and artwork that screamed out to be taken home and appreciated in our humble little side-split in London Ontario. And last but not least, we will always remember our relatives who demonstrated an entirely new facet to the phrase "loved ones" ... they generously, selflessly and whole-heartedly gave of their time, resources, and kindness. That is probably the most cherished memory of all that we brought back with us.

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spinning yarn



Literature is a luxury; fiction is a necessity.
-G. K. Chesterton

ANTS

GOPINATH MOHANTY

Slowly they moved up, the two tired feet, one after the other. The muscles of the leg tore apart, something hammered inside the chest furiously. Sweat-drops hung from the rim of the hat as rain-drops from the eaves. The shorts and the shirt were dripping wet and yet the body moved, as if leaning on the wind! Presently it was the top of the hill. Ramesh paused.

Far far below, the forest of tall trees looked dense-dark. The forest seemed to climb down the stairs of the valley to the nether region! But up there, the bald floor of the hill glittered in the sun, grass-rimmed, with the blue sky all around.

It was no joke climbing hills, Ramesh told himself. But how could a young officer say that to the older people accompanying him! So he brushed away his pain, almost by an act of will, and with teeth pressed against the lower lip joked to them, 'What! Tired out by this much only!' and then his lean wiry figure scuttled across pointed, rough stones.

His *chaprasi* Binu came up, sighing like an engine; his huge turban slowly rising like an earth-coloured mushroom. Dark and stockily built, gold rings in nose and ears, a flask and a gun slung round the neck: that was Binu. He came up and stood behind Ramesh as a signboard.

Waves of a choral song's refrain came up from down below: *baile, baile*. One, then a second, then another. Eight figures slowly emerged from behind the tall grass. Kondhs in loinclothes, with baskets carried at the two ends of poles balanced on the shoulder. The song ended. Binu shouted, 'Lazy bones, how-so-much you chide them they will always trail behind.' 'We have become rather old,' somebody retorted, and then they broke into peals of laughter and sat a little apart lighting their home-made cigars.

Binu served tea from the flask. And sipping tea under that *amla* tree Ramesh asked. 'Have you come this way before, Binu?'

'Yes, sir, last time two years ago, and many times before that.'

'Did any other officer walk up this way?'

'So many, sir. This is after all on the road to the market.'

Ramesh felt somewhat depressed. Ever since childhood his greatest passion and pleasure lay in a feeling of superiority, of being ahead of all. That was indeed a long

and chequered story of success! That insignificant, rustic poor boy from a village in North Balasore gradually growing up to his present status; from the school to the college, friends losing out in life's cruel race, falling behind, seen no more; scholarships, medals, prizes, memories of success. Then the job, unknown people coming to be introduced, the *chaprasi's* salute, the supplication of the Insurance Agent and the inevitable marriage proposals. The world cared for him, saluted him. Those early successes in life's struggles, self-importance gradually maturing into self-confidence, making him feel he was somebody. Those innumerable others around him were of no significance except as providing backdrop for his glowing self.

But that uneasy persistent feeling at every step! People had been before him, there were footprints ahead on the road and in comparison he was so small. At least while climbing the hill he could work himself up to some happiness for was he not the first man from civilization walking up that way? But now even that imagined pleasure was slipping away. And Binu was describing vividly the *Burra Sahib's* five-day camp on this hilltop, the hunting, the merry-making and the dances that had transformed it to a city!

That was merely another time. Men had come and gone away; only the forest looked dark as ever. Binu reminisced: 'No more the dense forests of those days, wild animals prowling everywhere. The Kondhs have cleaned up everything. Here itself were Kondh villages; when the forests vanished the tigers rampaged in the villages and the villagers had to move away.'

'These days there are no forests? Then what are these?'

'Yes, the chopped-off trees also grow again and make a forest. But those forests!'

Ramesh thought of the endless stream of men roaming the forest; penetrating, recoiling and coming back again, the thin hill-stream of their happiness and pain that never died and even now murmured as it rushed down the pebble-bed.

He felt a sudden burst of anguish that dulled his acute awareness of separate self and merged it into the eternal stream.

A thin line of ants had already formed around the broken bits of biscuits. Ramesh was startled and smiled to himself: 'Here too the ants!' They reminded him of the hidden subterranean roots of his visit to the hills.

He asked Binu, 'You think we can catch the rice-smugglers?' 'Most certainly, sir. Whichever way it goes the smuggled rice has to appear in Kaspawalsa market. It is only 10 a.m. now and climbing down that valley we will be at the market before two. And then, where can they escape? We will catch them all.' 'Fine, let us then move without any more delay.'

Binu was vexed at the prospect of no rest, even up here. And he shouted at the Kondhs, directing them to move. The Kondhs also muttered their dissatisfaction. No rest, only run and run fast. In their strange primitive language they showered abuse on Binu and his forefathers. These fellows, they thought, knew only how to order: Bring water, fetch fuel-wood, carry luggages. And they learnt only a few words of command. No harm abusing them soundly! And the Kondhs talked among themselves what fools these fellows must be trying to catch people for selling rice across a border. Hunger was universal and whoever wanted rice had a right to purchase it wherever he could. Whatever could be the crime in that? And who after all produced the rice? Or could it be that these people had separate laws of justice; laws under which it was a crime to distil liquor, to chop off forest trees, to purchase rice, to sit down when tired after a long day's trek carrying heavy luggages? But there was no time to talk further. The *chaprasi* had started abusing, the officer had started walking fast. The Kondhs got up. All their complaints joined up to a song with a refrain.

The dense forest lay ahead. Down the valley the road opened up as a tunnel. Their song in chorus pleased Ramesh. How soothing it sounded! What did it mean? Maybe some community legend.

'Binu', Ramesh roared.

Binu ran up to him full of bitterness and abuse inside. At fifty-five, *sans* six teeth, the bald patch ever growing on the head, the body wanted leisurely pace, quiet and ease. But this young officer would hurry up everybody, run as mad himself and drive others mad. Binu had enough to live on and could easily do without the job. But minus the power it gave him, would he not be shorn of his magic, reduced to only another person among those numerous insignificant others on whom he had fed all his life? And it was this fear of losing the powers of the mysterious magic, the terrible charm that drove Binu up the hill.

'Binu, how nicely these folks sing,' Ramesh said.

'Very nice indeed, sir.'

'But what does it mean?'

Tossing his *pugree* from side to side and giving another

twist to the betel inside his mouth Binu explained as a wise man, 'Of course, it is that song of the Chaitra festival.'

'But what does it mean?'

'That same old story of Dhangdas and Dhangdis and their love for each other.'

'Do they always sing this song?'

'Always, sir!'

'But does *baile* mean jasmine?'

'You have got it right, sir. At this rate, you will be a master of their language in no time.'

Ramesh was pleased with this answer and asked, 'Do they sing songs even in ripe old age?' 'In this country of ours none ever grows old, sir.' Ramesh took mental note. *Baile* is jasmine and the Kondhs only sing of love.

And Binu felt happy at having befooled Ramesh.

And the Kondh labourers continued their trek singing their tale of woe, the unending story of misfortunes; all the while heaping abuses on the officer and his wretched *chaprasi*. Groups of Kondhs met them along the road, laughed, exchanged jokes, joined the music and partook of the same cruel destiny of pain. They could so easily share the mocking spirit of the songs! When there was a lull in the singing Binu shouted at them and asked them to continue. 'None grows old in our country': Binu's own words took a new shape and meaning for himself. He thought of his youngest wife, his third, whom he had snatched away from many eager hopes, by paying extra 'bride-price' to her parents. In this land of forests superiority consisted in snatching away things and in that man excelled animals at times. But Binu's trickery concealed of a life-time. He had orchards, lands, houses, cattle-everything but a child of his own. With growing years he felt this vacuum more and more. He remembered his youngest wife and became anxious as to how his two elder wives would be treating her. In this country, if a woman did not feel happy with her husband she just left. Binu started worrying whether his youngest wife was happy with him. And then he remembered that young *chaprasi* Bisi, a distant grandson who often came to his house to crack jokes at his grandma!

'Binu.'

'Yes, sir.'

'How is it that this smuggled rice is not detected any earlier? For smuggling to Madras they must be stacking the rice somewhere and the businessmen must be carrying stock from there. But though we have by now trekked four days from Koraput, nowhere we saw any such thing.'

'It could be detected only if it moved in bulk, sir.' Saying this in disgust Binu remembered how he himself had been able to smuggle out a hundred maunds of rice at exorbitant rates. He believed that in a society which left everybody to fend for himself, pulling others' legs, trying to cheat others and thrive and their expense was only natural and right. Breaking rules for one's own selfish ends and fearing

lest one is caught were natural corollaries of such a selfish system, he thought. He tried to twist the direction of the conversation.

'Not much rice is being smuggled away by isolated individuals. At the market, sir, you will see only small buyers from the plains down below, with ten kgs., twenty kgs. of purchases. Only a few miles away is the Madras border and there the businessmen would be waiting with bullock carts, hessian bags and pots of money. Then cartloads of rice would move to Vizagpatam, Parbatipur and other places. Businessmen, after all, know the secrets of the trade, sir.'

Ramesh became serious. 'We have to catch the stock of rice before it reaches the traders.'

His eyes shone with the strange, fierce light of a hunter's eyes. A single theme was haunting him. Why should others steal away our rice? He felt it was an interference in his personal rights that must be resisted.

While speaking of 'our rice', his consciousness pictured one thing only: he was an Oriya, behind him lay the history of Orissa, the story of wars, empires and expansion at the cost of others. From the dust-heap and broken bricks of the past his mind returned to the degeneration of the present and sought to put the blame for this on the neighbouring states.

Fellows have already eaten up this country and made it all hollow. What now again? he asked himself. He remembered the prey down the forest roads. His mind got intoxicated with the prospect of hunting down the rice smugglers. 'If only I catch them' he clenched his teeth.

But he did not know what he would do if he caught them.

He hurried down the slope of the hill.

It was late winter and the heat of the walk gave the feeling of spring. Trees were full of foliage and flowers. At the end of the slope was a small village. Mango groves, fields, treshing grounds, rows of houses. Along the road stood a small boy and seeing unknown persons, he cried for his mother and ran away. That was only the beginning. The calves tethered on the roadside strained at the ropes and started mooing. The womenfolk withdrew inside and stared with big blank eyes. One by one the villagers came near. Ramesh felt it was a known picture. His feet started dragging. He stood in the shade of a spreading tree and looked back. The hill stood behind him as a monstrous ghost of the imagination. Binu was coming down slowly panting and the Kondhs behind him almost running.

'Can we get some drinking water here, Binu,' he asked.

'Of course, sir.' Binu was all attention. He opened the luggage pack and ran into the village with a glass and a *lota*. The Kondhs sat down for a little rest. Ramesh waited.

In no time a *charpoy* was produced, somebody stood with a *lota* of hot milk. Another with a bunch of ripe bananas and a mixed drone of Oriya and Telugu entreated him, 'It is already too late, sir, and the sun has climbed almost to the top of the sky. The villagers would feel most unhappy sir, if you do not pause here for some food and rest.'

Rest! Ramesh laughed to himself. That self-same invitation all along the way. As if walled-in by forests and hills men only wanted to lean on one another. Pause here for a while, stay in our village for the night. Shadows of known trees, the slow, trailing smoke on half-recognized thatched roofs, men and women engaged in the familiar rituals of daily living. Men in forests, on the hills, everywhere the known world of them.

And yet, he had to move. That affectionate welcome of the village left behind world persists as a sweet smell for a while and then drift away in the indifferent wind.

Binu returned with some water. Ramesh drank it off and said, 'Let us now move'. Suddenly an old woman appeared and stood in his way. A smile lighting up her time-worn face she said, 'At this late hour, my dear son, how can you go without some food? Would your mother have left you like this? Don't you have mothers and sisters in this village?'

Everybody smiled. The old woman was of the Kondh-Dora caste, an admixture of Kondhs and Telugus.

Suddenly Ramesh felt heaps of cool shade piling on his sunburnt eyes. But he said loudly, almost trying to persuade himself, 'No, no, we have to move. There is so much to do.' He dragged himself away. The shadow of that old woman's mother-face remained transfixed in his memory. Like all mothers' eyes, her eyes looked deep inside and an eternal 'alas' floated on her lips. She had no caste, no language. She was mother. The job on hand was forgotten for a while. But it came back again when he saw people on the way to the market with headloads of rice.

'Binu, how far is the market now?'

'Just a little ahead, sir. We have almost reached.'

'Take care, no shouting, no noise any longer.' Binu cautioned the Kondhs not to sing any more and walk silently. It was now a silent, cautious march like hunters in the forest. Deep silence reigned outside but there was so much noise raging inside. Ramesh raced hurriedly in his mind over the projected action. He would not merely stop the smuggling for a day; he would suggest a permanent cure for this evil in his report to the Government. That would bring him commendation, recognition and hasten his pace up the ladder of progress. It was like winning a prize or a special credit in the examination. He felt he richly deserved it. For was he not like Livingstone in Black Africa trying to locate the original source of illegal

smuggling across the border? He felt overwhelmed with his own efficient and skillful handling of the matter.

A little ahead, on the roadside, a family was having the day's food in the shade of a tree. A small child twitching its wiry hands and feet violently lay on the ground, with its face to the sky. The blue sky was rent by its sharp cry. The shriveled figure of a young woman in rags, hair all disheveled, left her leaf-plate of food and without even washing her hands, pulled away the torn rags covering her breasts and hurriedly put them to the child's mouth. The dried-up breasts dangled like rags. With the child clutched in her arms the young mother kept staring at the strangers. As though she was no person, but only some disheveled hair and two indifferent distant eyes! There was no eagerness for any news, no care for anybody's eminence in those eyes. The world outside hardly existed. Seeming to look out on the world outside, it really looked, deep down in the flesh, to the dregs of the life-force where ultimate hunger pained, ultimate love covered bird-like offsprings under its protective wings. Three others were also eating rice, an old man, an old woman and the husband of the young woman. Only bones and skin, caves of eyes and masses of dense hair on the head. The eyes sometimes glittered. The little rice shone on the leaf-plates. It was no eating, it was a hungry dog's gobbling-up food, breathlessly. Under the tree the decrepit cooking vessels with broken rims and the improvised fire-pots lay gaping at the sky. The entire picture attacked Ramesh with its naked reality.

'The Telugus from the valley, sir. So many like them roam the jungles driven by hunger.'

'Where is your home?' Ramesh turned to them. After two more repetitions of the question, the old man replied, without lifting his head from the leaf-plate and looking rather annoyed, 'Simachalam'.

Binu explained to Ramesh that the place was sixty miles away. Ramesh remembered: once upon a time it was a part of Orissa. History stood before him as a huge dark hill, then it grew smaller and smaller almost becoming a mound of earth and then, suddenly it sank in the gaping, cold eyes of that young mother who was now feeding and fondling the kid. Ramesh knew in a flash that the place may no longer be in Orissa, but it was there very much a part of the wide world and its people who were condemned to their ancient hunger. 'So many like these are roaming the forests, sir. The bigger fear of hunger has made them fearless of the lesser categories like forests and the wild animals,' Binu said.

'Quite so, quite so,' the Kondhs echoed. They had drawn nearer and an old Kondh said, 'When hunger or pain attacks, men are all alike. Look! how hungry we have started feeling. Where is the arrangement for food, *chaprasi* babu?'

Silently Ramesh walked ahead. Suddenly he felt a creeping confusion darkening his objectives. He wanted to do justice, but no longer knew what that word meant. Always he had depended on the short-cuts of established ways and conventional modes, always he had bowed to established laws, written rules and had felt it wrong to look deeper to see what lay behind them. Sometimes his sense of justice and fairplay had conflicted with the law but he had persuaded himself that after all duty was always hard and relentless like the churning of a machine. Driven by hunger somebody had stolen something, his pregnant wife had perhaps rolled and cried on the verandah of the *cutchery* with a year-old child in her arms and entreated that there was none else to support them. But nothing had mattered; a thief, after all, had to go to prison. That was the law. Somebody else had suffered a year's imprisonment for the theft of a pumpkin because of five earlier convictions. Relentless and cruel were the demands of duty, he concluded; no place for softness there. He resolved afresh; he had to catch the rice-smugglers. The noise of the market now sounded near. The rotten fishy smell of raw-hide was everywhere. Men emerged in groups from behind the forest trees. Some had headloads, other baskets hung from the two ends of poles balanced on the shoulder. Small children peeped out of a few baskets. Bunches of fowl, legs tied together and heads looking down, dangling various other commodities, and rice. The prey seemed very near at last. Ramesh felt a sudden thud in his chest. Almost running down the stairs of stones he shouted, 'Binu, now we have had them!'

The market lay before them. Men huddled together, swarming all around like ants. A kaleidoscope of colours, many smells, an orchestration of droning sounds. Raw-hide's offensive smell choked the air; rows of stalls sold dried fish. Flies buzzed everywhere; so did the men. The smell of illicit liquor came wafting in the breeze from the neighbouring forest.

Lepers and men with 'yaws' disease, like dogs with weeping wounds, patches of raw wound of 'yaws' with small dark insects sitting on them. Healthy men and women pushing their way through the milling crowd. That was the market. Ramesh suddenly noticed a young girl with the colour of *champak* flower and a well-carved body. One of her cheeks had a patch of 'yaws', the other cheek was looking red but there also 'yaws' had started. Yet she had decorated herself with flowers and moved slowly, a picture of grace, munching something. And she looked from the corners of her eyes which seemed to smile and invite others to a play. Ramesh closed his eyes and leaned on a tree in the centre of the market. Waves of noise were breaking on his ears. The mind's eyes saw that young girl with 'yaws' on the cheeks and smile in the eyes. The Kondh boys danced on the hill-top.

And then he knew. In the midst of dense forests, on the top of hills man lived. The fire in his fireplace survived the howling wind and the cruel merciless weather.

For man was the Dalua paddy; the more water, the more the plant grew. 'Yaws' on the cheeks and smile on the leprous face. Straining all the life-force a rose had blossomed even though its petals were crooked and worm-eaten. It may wither and fall. Yet it smiled.

Binu opened the flask and poured out tea. 'Sir,' he called. Ramesh opened his eyes. The crowd was growing thicker around him. Binu whispered in his ear, 'A lot of rice is selling, everything can be caught but not right here. There is a strategic point beyond the market, a narrow depressed lane leading to a thatched house. There we can wait. From there it would be almost like shooting a tiger from a *machan*.' Binu smiled.

All of them went there. Ramesh sat on a chair. Binu left, saying, 'Let me now go and give final touches to the operation.'

Ramesh kept sitting. A little further away on an elevation on the hill-slope was a Kondh *bustee*. *Charpoys* were spread out in the open. Dogs waited near men, wagging their tails. Some kids were beating a huge drum to their heart's content. On a doorstep an old man sat vomiting. An old lady anxiously caressed his back. Must be malarial fever. A goat stood on heaps of rubble and munched the twigs of some tree. Time flew by as Ramesh kept his eyes fastened on that scene. He wiped the sweat from his body, tired to take out the dust of the market from the nostrils. The day was drawing to a close, shadows lengthened in the late winter sun and the picture of an ordinary *bustee* with its simple everyday world lay spread out in that faded background.

Suddenly somebody started weeping. People ran out of all houses and rushed to that house from where the weeping came. In no time, in front of the house and at the doorsteps there was a crowd. Scratching their cheeks and beating their chests they all wept bitterly. Gradually it transformed itself into a rhythmic, piteous fury, a chorus of death-music.

'Alas! Alas! He is dead, he is dead.' Binu came back, almost from nowhere. 'I have arranged everything, sir. The *paiks* were in the market. I have asked them to drive all the smugglers here.'

'What happened there, Binu?'

'Nothing very much, sir. Somebody is dead. Must be out of hill-fever. Nothing new in that.' Binu kept standing behind Ramesh. Ramesh kept listening to that weeping. Ever new, ever old. And the wheel turned, life, death, reproduction. Every picture melted and changed. In his mind's eye floated up his village Kantipur in North Balasore. His home, parents, neighbours, known old men, known children and known girls; all the distance from the burning-

ghat to the centre of the village, to the place of Chandi. Death, life, regeneration. There too lived men who loved peace and tranquillity, who had no quarrel with life and who suffered pain even though doing no harm to others.

The refrain of the chorus of the death-song continued.

So many had gone earlier, so many. In dark nights the villagers light up torches of fire and invoke them, 'Come back in darkness, return in light.'

The vast plain of death lay ahead of him. There, language and country did not divide. All were equal and eternal.

Standing behind, Binu too thought of his home, his youngest wife. Would Bisi be coming? Suddenly he slapped his own cheeks. Ramesh looked at him. Binu was rubbing his cheek with his palm. 'This place is full of very big mosquitoes. Their bite is very painful,' he added.

Ramesh was startled. He could see himself lying on bed, shivering. Eyes bloodshot, body dark as a bear. It would start at one hundred and three degrees temperature and make one feel like biting, abusing, running mad.

Vomiting, heat, mounting heat and then?

Birth, death, reproduction, birth, death.

One does not think of the law. Birth, death, man. As if he suddenly saw everything with new eyes! Men walked, many men, getting lost in the dark. But the stream did not die. It flowed on and on. The market was coming to a close. Men were moving. He felt he knew everybody, all these people, in person. Pressure of wants at home, oppression of life outside. And yet they moved on. Caste and language did not matter. They were men. His villagers, known men. In the unending stream an ant looked up to other ants, an ineffable smile flowed from its dried-up eyes as it seemed to say: 'We are brothers, we walk on our feet and work with our hands: we belong to the same land, this ancient earth under the sky. Our enemy is common: those who snatch away the little food from our mouths crush us to death and heap hot ashes and cinders on us.'

The stream of ants flowed on. In the depth of Ramesh's mind the unextinguished lamp of smile and fire continued to burn.

Suddenly there was commotion outside. The *paiks* were coming, followed by men carrying baskets and bags. In a moment Ramesh was transformed into his official self, stood up and accepted the salute of the *paiks*. Binu rushed forward and said, 'They are being dragged here in groups.'

The *paiks* said, 'Kindly see, sir, how these fellows were smuggling away rice from this market to the plains below, the baskets and bags have only a top-dressing of chillies,

turmeric and tobacco but below these there is rice. They will sell the smuggled rice at exorbitant rates. For a handful of rice they will eat up the flesh and blood of men.'

Ramesh looked again. An army of skeletons stood facing him. Ribs showed as iron shafts of a hoeing machine, skins dangled on the ribs as on a bat's body, the bodies of all twisted, bent, only heaps of oil-less hair on the head and tiny flickering eyes. Were they men or the ghosts of men? Entreating in their strange language; now weeping, now pointing to their cavelike bellies and mouths, now dangling their slender, weak, twig-like hands. In the *bustee* on the other side, the dead body was brought out of the house. Presently men were jostling about, throwing their heads forward and weeping in chorus, 'Alas! Alas! Who snatched you away? What ate you up?'

And down there in the narrow lane below the *bustee*, the living ghosts entreated and prayed, beating their chests, and heads: 'Oh God Almighty, Oh father.' The *paiks* roared, and Binu shouted, 'No, no that won't do. Open up the bags, show the rice.'

Ramesh closed his eyes, something tottered and crashed inside him. The exhaustion and hunger of the long trek closed in and submerged him. Eyes shut, he could only see the confused, crazy, co-mingling sea of men, 'yaws' on the cheeks, smile on the face, shriveled skin on the body and glitter in the eyes. Everything was mixed up, inseparable; the piteous wailings for the dead, the heart-rending cry of deprivation and poverty, the fire and storm raging in the caves below the eyes. He opened his eyes and looked; the cry was continuing. 'Have pity, sir, have mercy almighty, see our condition.' Before him stood a tall skeleton of a man, almost made of dried palm-leaf. Two long hands went up, joined in salutation and then slowly drooped down. They could crumble to pieces anytime! An empty, hoarse voice entreated, prayed, 'Have pity, my father.' What was the language? Ramesh did not know. But the meaning went in. Prostrate on the ground and stretched right up to his feet that shadowy figure raised its head and the eyes looked Ramesh straight in the face. That look took the shape of the look of some known person, known to Ramesh, known to all. It went out of every person when hunger struck and looked quizzically as if from a mirror. Ramesh felt he knew all

these people intimately, like his villagers. He was no longer seeing their shapes and forms; the intimacy of their inner self overpowered him. That shape just before him was his long-dead 'Sapana' uncle, the same disheveled hair, the madman's unshaven face, those gaping pits on the thresholds of the bones. Only he looked more tired, more hungry, more frightened by the terrible vision of death. That other old man, moustached, all bent and crooked, was none other than the hapless blacksmith of Kantipur village!

And those urchins with only skin and bone. Were they not his village boys who had entered his garden and ate up all the raw guavas? And those women looking like tattered, frail, leaking boats? Were they not his village womenfolk rushing to collect fallen dry leaves for fuel early in the morning? Ramesh tried to hide his eyes, hanging down his head. Only, his brief murmuring words could be heard, 'Go, go away.'

Binu could hardly believe what this Officer was saying. Did he seriously mean it? Anxiously he entreated, 'Sir, but sir.' But Ramesh only repeated, 'Leave them. It is getting late. Go away, go.'

Binu groped in his memory for the image of authority. Certainly it was not like this: this young boy, soft and kind-hearted, hardly knew the world. Moustaches just sprouting, slim, with a delicate voice. Hardly an officer, he concluded. Real authority was like tiger. Binu had seen many down the years. In his twisted lips there was a strange expression. Partly in smile, partly in ridicule.

Ramesh kept standing. Before his consciousness there was no more any history. Time had ended. There was no Kapilendradev, no Purushottam, no Konarak. There was no special distinctive image of the men who form the backbone of a country or a nation. History was devoid of sense, meaning. There was nothing but ants, ants; everywhere, hungry ants carrying mouthfuls of food to live, to survive and the stream of ants converging on ant-heaps for a new lease of precarious life. The ant wanted to live. Ramesh felt a cold shudder. The brief sunshine of later winter had faded. All around a thin layer of blue haze was spreading. It was evening. He felt the cold of *Magh* month inside.

Gopinath Mohanty was a renowned Oriya fiction writer and winner of the prestigious Jnanapitha Award. He successfully drew upon and integrated tribal themes into the mainstream literature. 'Paraja' is one such work. This story has been translated from Oriya by Sitakanta Mahapatra.

ଅଭିଶାପର ଅନଳକ୍ଷିଣା

ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ବୀଣା ମହାପାତ୍ର

ବାହାରୁ ଆସି ବସିପଡି କହିଲା ସୁନୀତା "ବୋଉ, ମୋର କିଛି ଚିଠି ଆସିଛି କି?"

"ନା ତା!"

"ଦିଲ୍ଲୀ ଯୁନିଭର୍ସିଟିରୁ ଚିଠି ଆସିଯିବାର କଥା -- ଏତେ ଡେରି ହେଉଛି କାହିଁକି?"

"କି ଚିଠି?"

"ଏଇମାସ ଏଡମିଶନ୍ ଚିଠି ପୁସ୍ତକରେ ଏତେ ଭଲ ମାର୍କ ଆସିଛି ମୋର ନିଶ୍ଚିତ ଭାବରେ ହେଇଯିବ ବୋଲି ସମସ୍ତେ କହୁଛନ୍ତି ।

"ବୋଉ ତିକେ ଜୋର ଦେଇ କହିଲେ, "ହଉ, ଥାଉ, ଥାଉ । ସେ ଚିଠି ଆସିବାର କିଛି ଦରକାର ନାହିଁ ।"

"କାହିଁକି ମ? ଏମିତି କଣ କହୁଛୁ, ଭାବିଭାବି ମୋର ରାତିରେ ନିଦ ହେଉନି ।

ହେଲେ ମୋର ଭାବନାଟା ଶେଷ ହୋଇ ଆସିଲା ।"

"କି ଭାବନା ଯେ?"

"ଏଇ ତୋ ବିଭାଜନ କଥା । ଜାଣୁ, ତୋତେ ସେମାନେ ପସନ୍ଦ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ସେଦିନ ପରେଶକୁ ତ ଦେଖିଲୁ, ସେତ ସୁନ୍ଦର ଆଉ ଭଲ ପିଲାଟିଏ ।"

"ଓ! ସେଇ ଯୋଉ କହୁଥିଲା ମୁଁ ଜଣେ ବିଜିନେସ୍ ମ୍ୟାନ ।"

"ଧେଡ଼ ସେମିତି ଛିଗୁଲେଇ କାହିଁକି କହୁଛୁ ମ ! ଜାଣୁ, ସେମାନେ କେତେ ବଡ଼ଲୋକ?"

"ଜାଣେ, କଟକରେ ତିନି ଚାରିଟା ହୋଲ୍‌ସେଲ୍ ଏଜେଣ୍ଟ, ଆହୁରି ଅଛି ଔଷଧ ଦୋକାନ, ବିରାଟ ଲୁଗା ଦୋକାନ, ଏୟାର୍ ତ?"

"ଇଏ କଣ, କମ୍ ହେଲାଣି ।"

"ହଁ, ବହୁତ ବେଶି । ହେଲେ ଜଣଙ୍କର ତ ନୁହେଁ, ତିନି ଭାଇଙ୍କର ଏକତ୍ର ବିଜିନେସ୍ । ସେଥିରୁ ଜଣଙ୍କୁ କେତେ ପଡୁଛି କି ?"

"ସେମିତି କଣ ହିସାବ କରାଯାଏ ? ସାନପୁଅ କେତେ ଚେଲ୍‌ହା । କେତେ ଆଡ଼ାରେ ଚଳନ୍ତି ସେମାନେ !"

"ତତେ କହିଦେଲି ବୋଉ, ମୁଁ ଏଇଲେ ବାହା ହେବିନି । ପାଠ ପଢ଼ା ମୋର ସରିନି ।"

"ସେମାନେ ତ କହିଲେ, ବେଶି ପାଠପଢ଼ା ତାଙ୍କର ଦରକାର ନାହିଁ, ତୁ କାହିଁକି କଷ୍ଟକରି ଦିଲ୍ଲୀରେ ରହି ପାଠ ପଢ଼ିବୁ ? ସମୟ ନଷ୍ଟ କରିବୁ ।"

"ସମୟ ନଷ୍ଟ ? ବାଃ, ଭଲ ବୁଝିବୁ ତୁ, ପାଠ ପଢ଼ିଲି, ମାନୀ, ଜ୍ଞାନୀ ହେବା ପାଇଁ । ଯେଉଁ ସମୟ ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚ ହେବ, ସେଇଟା ହେଲା ସମୟ ନଷ୍ଟ ?"

"ତୋର କିଛି କଥା ଶୁଣାଯିବ ନାହିଁ । ତୋ ବାହାଘର ଆସନ୍ତା ମାସରେ ଆମେ ଠିକ୍ କରୁଛୁ । ବାହାଘର ପରେ ବି ପଢ଼ି ପାରିବୁ । ସେମାନେ ବି ସେଇଆ କହିଛନ୍ତି ।"

"ବାହାଘର ପୂର୍ବରୁ ସେମିତି ବହୁତ କଥା କହିଥାନ୍ତି ବର ପକ୍ଷ, ପରେ ସେକଥା କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକାରୀ ହୁଏ ନାହିଁ । ଲିପୁ, ବିନା, ରୀନା ଏମାନେ କଣ ଆଉ ପାଠ ପଢ଼ି ପାରିଲେ ? ଝିଅ ମାନେ ବାହାହେବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ସବୁ ପଢ଼ା ସାରିବା ଦରକାର । ବୋଉ, କାହିଁକି ତୋର ଏତେ ଚିନ୍ତା, ସେ ପିଲା ନ ହେଲେ କଣ ଆଉ କେହି ପାତ୍ର ଭୂତିବେନି ପରେ ! ତୁ କାହିଁକି ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ହେଉଛୁ?"

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କିନ୍ତୁ ସୁନୀତାର କଥା ରହଲାନି । ବାପାଙ୍କର ହଠାତ୍ ହାର୍ଟ ବେମାରୀ ବାହାରିବାରୁ, ଟିକେ ଭଲ ହେଲା ପରେ ଜିନ୍ଦ୍ ଧରିଲେ, ସାନ ଝିଅର ବାହାଘର ସାରିଦେଲେ ଶାନ୍ତି ଲାଗିବ ବୋଲି ।

ବାହା ହୋଇଗଲା ସୁନୀତା ।

ବାହା ହୋଇଯାରି ବ୍ୟବସାୟୀ ପରିବାରରୁ ଆସି ଏକ ଅନ୍ୟ ପୃଥିବୀକୁ ପ୍ରବେଶ କଲା ସେ । ଏଠାରେ ପାଠର ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ବୁଝିବାକୁ କେନ୍ଦ୍ର ନାରାଜ । ସିନେମା ଦେଖା, କଲିକତା, ବମ୍ବେ ବୁଲାବୁଲି କରିବା ନେଇ ବେଶି ସମୟ କଟିଲା । ଖରାଦିନ ଦାଝିଲି, ସିମ୍ଲାରେ ବେଶ୍ ବୁଲା ହେଲା । ତିନି ବର୍ଷ ଭିତରେ ଦୁଇଟି ପୁଅ ହେଲେ ଦୀପୁ, ପୁପୁ ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ଏ ବୁଲାବୁଲି ବେଳେ, ସବୁବେଳେ ପରେଶ ଯାଉ ନ ଥିଲା । ବିଜିନେସ୍ କାମ ପାଇଁ ଅନ୍ୟଆଡ଼େ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଯିବାକୁ ହେଉଥିଲା । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଘରୁ ଅନୁପସ୍ଥିତ ରହଲା ବେଳେ ପରେଶର ଅନେକ କଥା ଗୁଡ଼ ରହ ଯାଇଥିଲା ସୁନୀତାକୁ ।

ହଠାତ୍ ଦିନେ ଖବରଟା ପାଇଁ ଅବାକ୍ ହୋଇଗଲା ସୁନୀତା । ପରେଶ ଆଉ ଜଣେ ପଂଜାବୀ ଝିଅ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ପ୍ରେମରେ ଲିପ୍ତ । ଝିଅଟି ସୁନ୍ଦରୀ, ତାଙ୍କରି ଅଫିସ୍‌ରେ କାମ କରେ । ତମକି ପଡ଼ି ସୁନୀତାର ଅନେକ କିଛି ମନେ ପଡ଼ିଗଲା । ବହୁଦିନ ଧରି ସିନେମା ନେଇ ଯାଇ ନାହିଁ ପରେଶ । ଯା' ମାନଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ଯାଇଛି ସେ । ଅନେକ ଦିନରୁ ସୁନୀତା କିଛି ଉପହାର ମଧ୍ୟ ପାଇନାହିଁ ପରେଶ ଠାରୁ । ପୂର୍ବରୁ କିନ୍ତୁ ପ୍ରତିମାସରେ ସୁନ୍ଦର ସୁନ୍ଦର ଦାମୀ ଉପହାର ଆଣି ଦିଏ ସେ । ମନା କଲେ କହେ, "ଉପହାର କିଣିବା ମୋର ଗୋଟିଏ ହବି । ତୁମେ ମତେ ମନା କରନା ।"

ସେଇ ପରେଶ ଏବେ ଦୁଇ ବର୍ଷ ହେଲାଣି କିଛି ଉପହାର ଦେଇନି । ତା ହେଲେ ଉପହାର ସବୁ କଣ ଅନ୍ୟଆଡ଼େ ଚାଲି ଯାଉଛି ? ରାଗରେ ଅଛ ହୋଇଗଲା ସୁନୀତା ।

ଏହା ଭିତରେ ବିଜିନେସ୍ ସବୁ ବକ୍ଷ ହୋଇଗଲାଣି ଭାଇ ମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ । ଜଣେ ଭାଇ ପରିବାର ସହ ଭାଇଜାଗ୍ ରେ ରହୁଛନ୍ତି । ଆଉ ଜଣେ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱରରେ ରହୁଛନ୍ତି । ସେ ଓ ପରେଶ କେବଳ ଘରେ ରହୁଛନ୍ତି । ଅନ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କୁ ଯାଇ ପରେଶ କଥା କହୁବା ପରେ କେନ୍ଦ୍ର ଆଉ ଏସବୁ ଭିତରେ ପଶିବାକୁ ରାଜି ହେଲେନି । ଝଟ୍ଟ କହିଦେଲେ, "ଦେଖ, ବ୍ୟବସାୟୀ ପରିବାରକୁ ଆସିଛ, ଏସବୁ ଟିକେ ସହବାକୁ ହେବ । କଣ ଅସୁବିଧା ହଉଛି ? ତୁମେ ତ ବେଶ୍ ଆରାମରେ ଅଛ । ଏସବୁ କଥାରେ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ପୁରାଅ ନାହିଁ, ପୁରୁଷ ପିଲା, ହାତରେ ପଇସା ଅଛି, ଟିକେ ଫୁର୍ତ୍ତି, ମଉଜ କରିବନି ? ଏ ସବୁକୁ ଏତେ ବଡ଼ କରି ଭାବୁଛ କାହିଁକି ?"

କଥାଗୁଡ଼ାକ କହି ସେମାନେ ତୁପ୍ ରହଲେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ବସ୍ତୁତ୍ୱରେ ଅବାକ୍ ହୋଇଗଲା ସୁନୀତା । ପାଠପଢ଼ାର ଅଭାବ, ମଣିଷକୁ କେତେ ନିମ୍ନକୁ ନେଇଯାଏ, ଏଇ ପ୍ରମାଣିତ ହୋଇଗଲା ସେପରି । ଭଲ ଖାଇ, ପିଇ, ବୁଲାବୁଲି କରିବାଟା ହେଲା ଗୋଟାଏ ଜୀବନ । କଣ କରିବ ବୁଝି ପାରୁ ନ ଥିଲା ସେ । ପରେଶକୁ ବୁଝାଇଥିଲା ବହୁତ । ଅନୁନୟ ହୋଇ କହିଥିଲା, "ଦେଖ, ମୋତେ ନ ପଚାରିଲେ ବି ପୁଅ ଦୁଇଟାଙ୍କ ମୁହଁକୁ ଟିକେ ଚାହିଁ ! ଗୋଟିଏ ଚାରି ବର୍ଷର, ଗୋଟିଏ ଦୁଇ ବର୍ଷର, ଏଭଳି ଅଜ୍ଞାନ ଶିଶୁଙ୍କୁ କଣ ମୁଁ ଏକା ଏକା ଚଳାଇ ପାରିବି?"

ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଇ ଥିଲା ପରେଶ, "ତୁମର ବାପଘରଟିଏ ଅଛି, ତୁମର ଆଉ ଅସୁବିଧା କଣ ? ବାପା, ମା ଜୀବତ, ଭା ଇଭାଉଜ ସମସ୍ତେ ଅଛନ୍ତି । ତମେ ତ ଆରାମରେ ଚଳି ଯାଇ ପାରବ ?" ଇଆଡ଼େ ରଣ୍ଡୀ ସହତ ମୋର ଅନେକ ଦିନର ପ୍ରେମ । ଭାଇଭାଉଜଙ୍କ କଥାରେ ପଡ଼ି ବାଧ୍ୟ ହୋଇ ତୁମକୁ ବାହା ହୋଇଗଲି । ସେ ବି ମୋ ବିବାହ ଖବର ପାଇ ଚାକିରୀ ନେଇ ଚାଲି ଯାଇଥିଲା ଲୁପିଆନା । ବହୁତ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରୁଥିଲି ତାକୁ ଭୁଲିବା ପାଇଁ । ତାକୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ତୁମକୁ ନେଇ ସୁଖୀ ହୋଇ ପାରୁନି । ଏବେ ରଣ୍ଡୀ ଚାକିରୀ ଛାଡ଼ି ଫେରି ଆସିବ । ତାର ଖୁବ୍ ଅସହାୟ ଅବସ୍ଥା । ତାର ସବୁ ଦାମୀ ଜନଶ, ଟଙ୍କା, ପଇସା ଚୋର ହେଇଯାଇଛି । ଏ ଦୁନିଆଁରେ ରଣ୍ଡୀର କେନ୍ଦ୍ର ନାହାନ୍ତି । ମୁଁ ହିଁ ତାର ସବୁ କିଛି । ତମେ ମତେ କ୍ଷମା କର ସୁନୀତା, ତମେ ଫେରିଯାଅ ତମ ବାପ ଘରକୁ । ମୁଁ ତାକୁ ଆଣି ଏଠି ରଖିବି ।

ଅବାକ୍ ହୋଇ କିଛି ସମୟ ପାଇଁ ମଜ ହୋଇଗଲା ସୁନୀତା । କିଛି ସମୟ ପରେ କହିଲା, "ଆଉ ପିଲା ଦୁଇ ଜଣ..."
"ତମ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ନେଇଯାଅ । ଦୁଇଟି ତ ପୁଅ, ଝିଅ ଅଛି ଯେ, ତୁମର ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରା ହେବ ! ମୋ ମନରେ ଆଉ ତମ ପାଇଁ ଆଉ ଜାଗା ନାହିଁ ।"

"ସେମାନେ ଚଳିବେ କେମିତି ?"

"କାହିଁକି, ଟଙ୍କା ନେବ....."

"ନା, ତୁମକୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ଚଳି ପାରବନ । ତମେ ଏ କଥା କେମିତି ଭାବ ପାରୁଛ ?"

ରାଗିଯାଇ କହିଲା ପରେଶ, "ସିଧା କଥାରେ କୁହ, କେତେ ଟଙ୍କା ପାଇଲେ ମତେ ମୁକ୍ତି ଦେବ । କୁହ ଟଙ୍କା, ଘର, ଗାଡ଼ି ଯାହା ଦରକାର ନେଇଯାଅ । ମତେ ମୁକ୍ତି ଦିଅ । ରଣ୍ଡୀ ବଡ଼ ଅସୁବିଧାରେ ଅଛି । ତାକୁ ଆଣି ମୁଁ ଆସନ୍ତା ସପ୍ତାହରେ ଏଇଠି ରଖିବି, ତା ସହିତ ରହିବାଟା କଣ ତୁମକୁ ଭଲ ଲାଗିବ ? ଯା ଭିତରେ ରଣ୍ଡୀ ମା ହବାକୁ ବସିଲାଣି । ତାକୁ ଶୀଘ୍ର ବଦାହ ନ କଲେ, ତାର ସର୍ବନାଶ ହୋଇଯିବ । ତମେ ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ଝିଅର ଦୁଃଖ, ଅସହାୟତା ବୁଝୁନ କାହିଁକି ?"

ରାଗରେ, ଦୁଃଖରେ, ଅସମାନରେ ଫାଟିପଡ଼ି କହିଥିଲା ସୁନୀତା, "ବେଶ୍, ମୁଁ ଆଜି ଦୁଇଟି ପିଲାଙ୍କ ହାତଧର ଚାଲି ଯାଉଛି । ହେଲେ ତୁମ ପାପର ଫଳ ତୁମେ ନିଜେ ଭୋଗିବ । ମୋ ବାପଘର ବଶେଷ ବଡ଼ ଲୋକ ନୁହନ୍ତି । ତୁମର ଆଉ ରଣ୍ଡୀର ପିଲା ଗାଡ଼ିରେ ଘୁଲି ଗଲାବେଳେ ମୁଁ ମୋ ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ହୁଏତ ଚଲାଉ, ଚଲାଉ ନେଇ ଘୁଲିରେ ଛାଡ଼ୁଥିବି । ଦୁଃଖ ମୋର ଏତିକି, ରଣ୍ଡୀର ପୁଅ ଆଉ ମୋ ପୁଅଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ କେତେ ତଫାତ୍ ରହିଯିବ ! ହେଲେ ବି ମୁଁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଭଜିଶିତ କରାଇବି, ଆଉ ଦିନ ଆସିବ, ଯେତେବେଳେ ମୋ ପୁଅମାନେ ଗାଡ଼ି ଚଢ଼ି ବୁଲୁଥିବେ, ତମ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ରକ୍ଷାଟିଏ ପାଇଁବି ପଇସା ମିଳୁ ନଥିବ । ଏ ଇ ଅଭିଶାପ ମୁଁ ଦେଇ ଯାଉଛି ।"

ଅନ୍ଧ ଭଳି ଜିନିଷ ପତ୍ର ନେଇ ଦୁଇଟି ରକ୍ଷାରେ ଧରି ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ ବାହାର ଯାଇଥିଲା ସୁନୀତା । ଯେତେ ଦମ୍ଭରେ ସବୁ କଥା କହିଥିଲେ ବି, ଆଖିରୁ ଝରଝର ହୋଇ ଲୁହ ଝରି ପଡ଼ୁଥିଲା । ମନେ ହେଉଥିଲା, ଏହାଠାରୁ ଭଲ ଯଦି ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ଆସିଥାନ୍ତା, ବି ହାତ ବିଛାର କରି ତାକୁ ଗୋଟେଇ ନେବାକୁ.....

ଏକା ସହରରେ ବାପଘର । ବାପଘରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଲା ବେଳକୁ ସମସ୍ତେ ରାଗରେ ଅଗ୍ନିଶିମା ହୋଇ ଉଠିଲେ । ଭାର ବରଷ ହେଲେଯିବ ଛାଡ଼ି ଚାଲି ଆସିବାରୁ । ଫେରିଯିବା ପାଇଁ ବାରମ୍ବାର ଉପଦେଶ ଦେଇଥିଲେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଅଡ଼ି ବସିଥିଲା ସୁନୀତା । ପରେଶ ଠାରୁ କିଛି ପଇସା ବି ଚାହେଁନା ବୋଲି କହିଥିଲା ।

ଭାଇମାନେ କହିଲେ, ଟଙ୍କା ପଇସା ଆଣିବାଠୁ ସହରର ଗୋଟିଏ ଘର ଦାବା କରିବା ଭଲ । ତାପରେ ପଡ଼ି ନଜର ଅନନ୍ତା ସତ୍ତ୍ୱେ ତାଇଭୋର୍ସ ପେପରରେ ଦସ୍ତଖତ କରିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ମେନ ରୋଡ଼ରେ ଥିବା ବରାଟ ଦୋତାଲା କୋଠାଟି ଡିମାଣ୍ଡ କରିଥିଲା ସୁନୀତା । ଦୁଇଟି ବଡ଼ କୋଠାରୁ ଗୋଟାଏ ଦେଇଦେଲେ ମୁକ୍ତି ପାଇଯିବାକୁ ଠିକ୍ ଭାବିଥିଲା ପରେଶ ।

ଆଉ ସେଇ କୋଠାଘରେ ଉପର ତାଲାଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ପଟେ ରହି ଅନ୍ୟ ପଟଟି ଓ ତଳ ମହଲା ଭଡ଼ା ଦେଇ ଚଳିଥିଲେ । ସୁନୀତା ଘର ସହିତ ଫର୍ନିଚର୍ ଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ବି ପାଇଥିଲା । ବେଶ୍ ଦାମୀ ଫର୍ନିଚର୍ । ସୋଫା, ଡାଇନିଂ ଟେବୁଲ୍, ବମ୍ବେ ପାଟର୍ଣ୍ଣ ର ଖଟ, ଆଲମାରୀ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ବହୁତ କିଛି ।

ହେଲେ ଆଖିରୁ ତାର ଲୁହ ଘୁଣି ନ ଥିଲା । ବହୁତ କଷ୍ଟ କରି ଚାଇପ ଶିଖି ଗୋଟିଏ ଅଫିସରେ କରାନ୍ତି ଚାକିରୀ କରିଥିଲା । ବାପା, ମାଙ୍କୁ ଦୋଷ ଦେଇଥିଲା । ଏମ୍.ଏ. ପାଶ କରି ବାହା ହୋଇଥିଲେ ଅନ୍ତତଃ ଲେକ୍ଚରର୍ ଚାକିରିଟିଏ କରି ପାରିଥାନ୍ତା ।

କେତେଥର ସ୍କୁଲକୁ ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ନେଲାବେଳେ ଆଖି ଦିଟା ଝାପ୍‌ସା ହୋଇଯାଇଛି । ଆଗରେ ଆଗରେ ଗାଡ଼ର ଧୂଳି ଉଡ଼ାଇ ପରେଶ ଯାଉଛି ତାର କୁନି ପୁଅଟିକୁ ସେଇ ସ୍କୁଲରେ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦର କ୍ଲାସରେ ଛାଡ଼ିବାକୁ । ତାକୁ ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ଧରି ଚାଲିଚାଲି ଯାଉଥିବାର ଦେଖିଲେ ବି ନ ଚିହ୍ନିବାର ଅଭିନୟ କରିବା ପରେଶ ।

ଅଗ୍ନିବର୍ଷଣ ଚକ୍ଷୁରେ ପରେଶକୁ ଦେଖିନେଇ ସୁନୀତା ମନେମନେ ଭବିଷ୍ୟ, କେବେ ସେ ଦିନ ଆସିବ, ତା ପିଲାମାନେ ଗାଡ଼ରେ ଗଲାବେଳେ ରକ୍ଷାଦିଏ ଖୋଜୁଥିବ ପରେଶ ।

ଦୀର୍ଘ ନିଃଶ୍ଵାସଟିଏ ବାହାର ଆସିଲା ପିଞ୍ଜରା ଥରାଇ ।

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ସତର ବର୍ଷ ପରେ ।

ବଡ଼ ପୁଅ ଦୀପୁ ବାଇଶି ବର୍ଷର ହେଲାଣି । ସୁନୀତା ଚାକରୀ ଛାଡ଼ି ଔଷଧ ଦୋକାନ କରି ବଜିନେସ୍ କରୁଅଛି । ଏ ଇସ୍‌ଣି ଖୁବ୍ ସୁଚ୍ଛଳ ଅବସ୍ଥା ତାର । ରୂପା ତାରକସି କାମ, ଆଉ ସମ୍ବଲପୁରୀ ଶାଢ଼ୀର ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନୀ କରାଇ ବେଶ୍ ଟଙ୍କା ଅର୍ଜନ କରୁଅଛି । ତା ଛଡ଼ା ସେୟାର ମାର୍କେଟରେ ଟଙ୍କା ଖଟାଇଛି । ସବୁଆଡ଼ୁ ଟଙ୍କା ଆସି ବେଶ୍ ବ୍ୟାଙ୍କ ବାଲ୍ୟାନ୍ସ ହୋଇଗଲାଣି । ଦିଟା ରୁମ୍‌ରେ ଏଆର କଣ୍ଡିଶନର୍ ଲଗାଇଛି । ମାରୁଟି ଭ୍ୟାନଟିଏ କଣିଛି । ନଜେ ଡ୍ରାଇଭ୍ କରେ । ବଡ଼ ପୁଅ ଦୀପୁ ବି ଡ୍ରାଇଭ୍ କରେ ।

ବେଶ୍ ଆରାମରେ ଅଛି ସୁନୀତା ।

ଖବର ପାଇଥିଲା: ପରେଶର ଅବସ୍ଥା ଖୁବ୍ ଖରାପ । ଭାଇମାନେ ଅଲଗା ହୋଇଯାଇ ଆଉ ସଂପର୍କ ରଖିନାହାନ୍ତି । ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ରଣ୍ଡାରସବୁବେଳେ ଦେହ କରାପ, କିଡ୍‌ନ ଟ୍ରବଲ୍ ହୋଇ ବହୁତ ଟଙ୍କା ସବୁବେଳେ ତା ପିଛା ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚ ହେଉଅଛି । ଡିନିଟା ପିଲା ହେଲେଣି । ପୁଣି ବଜିନେସ୍ ସବୁ ଫେଲ୍ ହୋଇଯିବାରୁ ଘର, ଜମି, ଗାଡ଼ ନିଲାମ ହୋଇଯାଇଛି । ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ନିଃସ୍ ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ଷ୍ଟେସନ୍ ପାଖରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଛୋଟ ଖପରଲି ଘର ଭଡ଼ାନେଇ ରହୁଛନ୍ତି ସେମାନେ ।

ବେଳେବେଳେ ମନେମନେ ଭାବେ ସୁନୀତା, ଯାଇ ଦେଖି ଆସିବ କି ପରେଶର ପରିବାରକୁ ଦେଇଆସିବ କି କିଛି ଟଙ୍କା? ପରେଶର ଦୁଃଖ ଶୁଣିବା ପରେ ତାର ଖୁସି ହେବାର ଥିଲା, ହେଲେ ଦୁଃଖରେ ଭାଙ୍ଗିପଡ଼ୁଛି କାହିଁକି ମନଟା? ଅଗ୍ନିକୁ ସାକ୍ଷୀରଖି ଦିନେ ପରେଶକୁ ବବାହ କରିଥିଲା ବୋଲି? ଦୀପୁ, ପୁଅଙ୍କର ପରିଚୟ ପରେଶ ପାଖରେ ଅଛି ବୋଲି ?? ନା, ତା ର ଅନ୍ତରରେ ନିତୁତ କୋଣରେ ପରେଶକୁ ଭଲ ପାଇଥିବା ଅଲୁରଟିଏ ଏବେ ବି ଜୀବିତ ଅଛି କି?

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ସେଦିନ ଦୀପୁ ଆସି କହିଲା, ମା, ଅତୁଟ କଥାଟିଏ ଘଟିଛି । କଲେଜରୁ ପାଖରେ ଯେଉଁ ଦିଟା କଣି ଗାଡ଼ରେ ବସିଥିଲି, ଜଣେଲୋକ କହିଲେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଟିକେ ଷ୍ଟେସନ୍ ପାଖରେ ତାଙ୍କ ଘରେ ଛାଡ଼ିଦେବାକୁ । ଦେହରେ ତାଟି, ଖୁବ୍ କ୍ଷୁର, ତାଙ୍କ ରକ୍ଷାଦିଏ କରଘରକୁ ଯିବାପାଇଁ ପଇସା ନାହିଁ ।

ତାଙ୍କୁ ମୁଁ ଗାଡ଼ରେ ବସାଇ ତାଙ୍କ ଘର ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ନେଲି । ଗାଡ଼ରେ ତମ ଫଟ ଦେଖି ହଠାତ୍ କହିଲେ, "ଏକଣ ? ସୁନୀତାର ଫଟ ଏଠି ?"

ମୁଁ ଚମକି ପଡ଼ି ପଚାରିଲି, "ଆପଣ କଣ ମାଙ୍କୁ ଚହଟି ?"

"ହଁ । ତାଙ୍କର ବଡ଼ ଔଷଧ କମ୍ପାନୀ ଆଉ ଦୋକାନ ଅଛି ତ ? ବହୁତ ଲୋକ ଚହଟି ତାଙ୍କୁ ।"

"ଆପଣ କେମିତି ଚହଟିଲେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ?" ପଚାରିଲି ମୁଁ ।

"ମୁଁ ତାଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ଚାକିର କରିଥିଲି ଅନେକଦିନ ।"

ତାପରେ ଭଦ୍ର ଲୋକ ହଠାତ୍ ପଚାରିଲେ, "ତୁମେ କଣ ଦୀପୁ ? ଆଉ ପୁଅ କେତେ ବଡ଼ ହେଲାଣି ?"

ସୁନୀତା ପଚାରିଲା, "କିଏ ମ ସିଏ, ନାଁଟା ପଚାରିଛୁ ?"

ହଁ, କହିଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ନାଁ ପରେଣ...

"ଏଁ" ଚମକି ପଡିଲା ସୁନୀତା, ଗୋଟି ତଳର ମାଟି ସତେକ ଖସିଖସି ଯାଉଛି ।

"କୋଉ ପରେଣ, ଆଉ କିଛି ପରଚୟ ଦେଲେ ?"

"ହଁ । କହିଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ନାଁ ରଶ୍ମୀ, ରୁଗ୍‌ଶ ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ଖଟରେ ଶୋଇଛନ୍ତି । ତିନୋଟି ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ ବଡ଼ ଅଭାବରେ ଚଳୁଛନ୍ତି । ପ୍ରେମ ବଦାହ କରି ଅନ୍ୟ ଜାତିରେ ବାହା ହେଇଥିବାରୁ ଭାଇମାନେ କେହି ପଚାରି ନାହାନ୍ତି । ସତେ ମା ଦେଖିଲି, ଲୋକଟା ଖୁବ ଦୁଃଖୀ, ବଡ଼ ଗରୀବ । କେମିତି ଚଳୁଥିବେ ତାଙ୍କ ପିଲାମାନେ କେଜାଣି? ଦୁଇଶହ ଟଙ୍କା ତାଙ୍କ ପକେଟରେ ଜୋରକର ରଖି ଦେଇଛି ।"

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ସୁନୀତା ଏଇକଥା ସବୁ ଶୁଣିବ, ଦେଖିବ ବୋଲି ପରେଣ ଘରୁ ଆସିବା ପରଠୁ ଦିନରାତି ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରି ରହିଛି । ଦିନେ ତାର ପୁଅମାନେ ଗାଡ଼ ଚଢ଼ି ବୁଲୁଥିଲା ବେଳେ ରଶ୍ମୀର ପୁଅ ପାଇଁ ରକ୍ଷା ଖୋଜା ହଉଥିବ, ଏଇଭଳି ଅଭିଶାପ ଦେଇ ଆସିଥିଲା ସୁନୀତା ।

ଆଜି ତାର ଅଭିଶାପ ପୂରାପୂର ପଳିତ । ତାର ଖୁସି ହେବାକଥା । ମନ ଆନନ୍ଦରେ ନାଚିବା କଥା । ହେଲେ କାହିଁକି ଆଖିରେ ଲୁହ ଚାଲିଆସି ଝାମ୍ପା କରିଦେଉଛି ତାର ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ।

କାହିଁକି ମନେ ହେଉଛି ସେ ଜିତିନାହିଁ, ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ରୂପେ ହାର ଯାଇଛି ଜୀବନ ଯୁଦ୍ଧରେ... ଆଜି ତାର ଅନ୍ତର ଜଳିଯାଉଛି କାହିଁକି?

ଅଭିଶାପର ଅନଳଶିକ୍ଷା ତାକୁ ପୁରାପୁରି ଗ୍ରାସ କରିନେବ ବୋଲି ମାଡ଼ ଆସୁଛି ସତେକ!

ଏବେ କଣ କରିବ ସୁନୀତା ?!

Beena Mohapatra is a noted short story and fiction writer. She has authored many novels and collections of short stories, and is the Editor of 'Saurava.'

ରୂପା ଅପାର ବୋହୂ

ବିଜ୍ଞାନୀ ଦାସ

ରିକ୍ତାବାଲା ହାତରେ ଦଶ ଟଙ୍କା ଧରାଇ ଦେଇ ଦୁଇଟା ଆଟାଟି ଓ ହ୍ୟାଣ୍ଡବ୍ୟାଗ ଧରି ଗେଟ୍ ଖୋଲିବାକୁ ଆଗେଇ ଆସୁଥିଲା ଅମୀତା । କିନ୍ତୁ ତା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଗେଟ୍ ଭିତରପଟୁ ଅମୀତାକୁ କୁଣ୍ଡେଇ ପକାଇଲା ଚିନା, ଅମୀତାର ସାନ ଭଉଣୀ । “ଏ ଜଗା ଆସିବୁ, ଏ ଆଟାଟି ଦୁଇଟା ନେଇଯା ଟିକେ ।” ଚିନା ର ତାଙ୍କ ଶୁଣି ଜଗା ପହଞ୍ଚିଲା ଓ ଅମୀତା ହାତରୁ ଆଟାଟି ଦୁଇଟା ନେଇ ଉପରକୁ ଗୁଲିଗଲା ଜେଜେମା ଓ ମା’ଙ୍କୁ ଖବର ଦେବାକୁ ।

ଅମୀତାର ଆକସ୍ମିକ ଭାବେ ଘରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିବା ଦେଖି ସମସ୍ତେ ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହୋଇଗଲେ । ଯଦିଓ ତାର ଆଜି ଘରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିବାର ଥିଲା, କିନ୍ତୁ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାବେଳେ । ପୁଣି ତାର ସାଙ୍ଗ ସହିତ । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଅମୀତାର ମା ଘରଦ୍ୱାର ସବୁ ସଜାସଜି କରିବାରେ ଲାଗିଥିଲେ ଯାହା ହେଲେବି ଅମୀତା ଚିନା ତାଙ୍କ ଝିଅ, ହେଲେ ତାର ସାଙ୍ଗ ଯେ ସାତ ଆଠ ବର୍ଷ ହେଲାଣି ଆମେରିକା ରେ ରହିଲେଣି । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଚିନା କୁ ପଠାଇ ବଜାରରୁ ସବୁ କେତେ କେତେ ସାଜସଜାର ଜିନିଷ କିଣି ଆଣି ଥିଲେ ଅମୀତାର ମା । ଦୁଇବର୍ଷ ପରେ ଝିଅକୁ ଦେଖି ବହୁତ ଖୁସି ହେଲେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଝିଅର ମନରେ ସରସତା ନ ଦେଖି ମନକୁପାପ ଛୁଇଁଲା । ପଚାରିଲେ “ମୀଡ଼ୁ, ତୋ ମୁହଁ କାହିଁ କି ଶୁଖି ଯାଇଛି? ତୋ ସାଙ୍ଗକୁ କାହିଁ କି ଆଣିଲୁନି?”

ଅମୀତା ଉତ୍ତର ଦେବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଜେଜେମା ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଲେ, “ଆମେରିକାରୁ ଉଡ଼ାଜାହାଜରେ ବମ୍ବେ, ପୁଣି ଟ୍ରେନ ରେ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର ଖାଲି ଗାଡ଼ିରେ ବସି ବସି ଆସିଛି ତିନି ଗୁରୁ ଦିନ ହେଲା । ମୁହଁ ଶୁଖିବନି ଆଉ କେମିତି ଭଲ ରହିବ?” କିନ୍ତୁ ଜେଜେମା ଖର, ବି ସେଇ କୌତୂହଳ ଟି ରହିଥିଲା ମନରେ, ଅମୀତାର ସାଙ୍ଗ ବନ୍ଧୁ ନେଇ ।

ଅମୀତା କହିଲା, “ଜେଜେମା ମୋ ସାଙ୍ଗ ବଡ଼ କ୍ଲାନ୍ତ ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଥିଲେ, ମତେ କହୁଥିଲେ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ତାଙ୍କଘରେ ରହିବାକୁ, ତାହେଲେ ସେ ମତେ ଆଣି ଛାଡ଼ି ପାରୁ ଆଆନ୍ତେ କିନ୍ତୁ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଭେଟିବାକୁ ମୁଁ ଏତେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଲି ଯେ ବସ୍ ଧରି ଗୁଲି ଆସିଲି । ଅମୀତାର ଉତ୍ତର ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ମନକୁ ପାଇଲା । ତଥାପି ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ମୁହଁ କୁ ଗୁହଁ ଅମୀତା ସେମାନଙ୍କ ମନ ଭିତର ପ୍ରଶ୍ନଟି ଯେମିତି ବୁଝି ପାରୁଥିଲା, “ସେ ସାଙ୍ଗ ପୁଣି କେବେ ଆସିବେ ?”

ମା’ ଗୁଲିଗଲେ ଅମୀତା ପାଇଁ ଖାଇବାର ବନ୍ଦୋବସ୍ତ କରିବାକୁ । ଜଗା ଗାଧୁଆ ଘରେ ବାଲୁଟି, ମଗ୍, ସାବୁନ୍ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ରଖିଦେଇ ଆସିଲା । ଅମୀତାକୁ ଗାଧୋଇବାକୁ କହି ଚିନା ଗଲା ଅପାର ରୁମ୍‌ର ସଜାଇ ଦେବାକୁ ଯଦିଓ କିଛି ନ କରି ନିଜ ରୁମ୍ ଭିତରେ କିଛି ସମୟ ଏକାବସିବାକୁ ଅମୀତାର ଇଚ୍ଛା ହେଉଥିଲା, କିନ୍ତୁ ତା ଦ୍ୱାରା ଯେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ମନରେ ଆନ୍ତର ଦୁଇ ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହେବ, ସେକଥା ଭାବି ଅମୀତା ସ୍ୱାଭାବିକ ରୂପେଗାଧୋଇବା ଶେଷ କଲା ଓ ମାଛ ଭଜା ଓ ପୋଟଳ ତରକାରୀ ସହିତ ଗରମ ଭାତର ଏକ ବିଶେଷ ରାଜସିକ ଭୋଜନ ଶେଷକଲା ।

ଖାଇବା ସମୟରେ ଚିନା ବସି କେତେ କଥା ଗପିଲା । ଜଗା ବି ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ ଆମେରିକା ବନ୍ଧୁରେ ନାନା ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ପଚାରି ଯେମିତି ବରାଟ ତଥ୍ୟ ସବୁ ସଂଗ୍ରହ କରୁଥିଲା । ଖାଇସାରିବା ପରେ ଚିନା ପଚାରିଲା, “ଅପା, ମୋ ପାଇଁ ଓପାକମ୍ୟାନ ଆଣିଛୁତ? ଦେଖେଇଲୁ ଟିକେ, ଆଉ ମୋ କ୍ୟାମେରା କଥା ମନେ ରଖୁଥିଲୁ ନା ନାହିଁ? ଚିନା କୁ ଗାଳିଦେଲେ ଜେଜେମା, “ଅପା ତ ଏବେ ମାସେ ରହିବ, ତୋର କଣ ସାଙ୍ଗେ ସାଙ୍ଗେ ସବୁ ଜିନିଷ ଦରକାର? ଟିକେ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କର । ଅପା ଥକି ପଡ଼ିଥିବ । କିଛି ସମୟ ବଛଣା ରେ ଗଡ଼ିପଡୁ ।”

ସେଇଆ ତ ଗୁଡ଼ୁଥିଲା ଅମୀତା । ମନେ ମନେ ଜେଜେମାଙ୍କୁ ଧନ୍ୟବାଦ ଦେଲା । ତାପରେ ଚିନାକୁ କହିଲା, “ଚିନା ତୋ ପାଇଁ ଯାହା ଆଣିଛି ସବୁ ସେ ଛୋଟ ଆଗାତି ଅଛି । ତୁ ନିଜେ ଖୋଲିକରି ଦେଖ । ଏ ଗରମ ରେ ମୋ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଚିକେ ବଢ଼ୁଛି । ମୁଁ ଶୋଇ ସାରି ଉଠିଲେତୋ ସହିତ ଗପ କରିବି ।”

ଚିନାକୁ ଆଗାତି ର ଗୁଡ଼ ଦେଇ ବଛଣାରେ ପଡ଼ିଗଲା ଅମୀତା । ମୋ ମାସର ଗରମ । ଯଦିଓ ତାଙ୍କର ସବୁ ଘରେ ପଂଖା ଲାଗିଥିଲା, ମଧ୍ୟାହ୍ନ ପରଠାରୁ ସେ ପଂଖାମାନଙ୍କର କିଛି ଭୂମିକା ଅନୁଭବ କରିହୁଏ ନାହିଁ । ତେଣୁ ଝର୍କା ଚିକୁ ପୁରା ଖୋଲିଦେଲା ଅମୀତା । ଝର୍କା ପାଖରେ ଥିବା ଆମ୍ବ ଗଛ ଓ ନଡ଼ିଆ ଗଛର ପବନରୁ କିଛି ଶାନ୍ତି ହିଁ ମିଳୁଥିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ମନ ଭିତରେ ତାର ଏତେ ଦୁଃଖ ଥିଲା ଯେ ଆଖିକୁ ନିଦ ଆସୁନଥିଲା । ଏତେ ଦିନର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଯେ ତାର ଏମିତି ବବର୍ଷ ହୋଇଯିବ ବଶ୍ୱାସ ହେଉ ନଥିଲା ମନରେ । ମନୋଜ କୁ ରୂପା ଅପାର ପୁଅଭାବେ ଜାଣିବା ପରେ ହଠାତ୍ ଯେମିତି ଅମୀତା କୁ ସବୁକିଛି ଅଲଗା ଅଲଗା ଲାଗିଲା ।

ଅସମ୍ଭବ, ମନୋଜ କେବେ ରୂପା ଅପାର ହୋଇ ନପାରେ । ମନୋଜ ଭଳି ସୁନ୍ଦର, ସ୍ୱାର୍ଥ ପ୍ରି ଏବଂ ତି ଉପାଧି ପ୍ରାପ୍ତ ଇଞ୍ଜିନିୟର କାହିଁକି ରୂପା ଅପାର ପୁଅ ହେବ ? ଏଇ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ଅମୀତା ପଚାରୁଥିଲା କେଉଁ ଅଦୃଶ୍ୟ ର ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟରେ । ସେ ଅଦୃଶ୍ୟକୁ ଭଗବାନଙ୍କ ରୂପରେ ସଜାଇ ପୁଣି ଅଭିଯୋଗ କରୁଥିଲା, “ପ୍ରଭୁ, ଏମିତି କାହିଁକି କଲୁ? ମୁଁ କି ଦୋଷ କରିଥିଲି ଯେ ମତେ ଏମିତି ଭାବେ ଅପମାନିତ କରିବାକୁ ଗୁଣ୍ଠିଲ ତମେ ?”

ନାନା ପରକଳ୍ପନା ଓ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନରେ ବିଭୋର ହୋଇ ପ୍ରିୟ ମନୋଜଙ୍କ ସହିତ ମୀନାର୍ ଏକସପ୍ତେସ୍ବରୁ ଓହ୍ଲାଇଥିଲା ଅମୀତା । ମନୋଜ କହିଲେ, “ମୀତା, ଟ୍ରେନ୍ ଚିକେ ଶୀଘ୍ର ପହଞ୍ଚିଗଲା । ବୋଉ ତ ଏବେ ପହଞ୍ଚି ନଥିବ । ମୁଁ ଚିକେ ରିଟର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଚିକେଟ୍ଟା କନ୍‌ଫର୍ମ କରିଦିଏ, ତମେ ଏଇଠି ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରିଥାଅ ।” ମନୋଜ ଚିକେଟ୍ କାରଖାନା ପାଖରେ ଲାଇନ୍‌ରେ ଛିଡ଼ା ହୋଇଥିଲେ ଓ ମୀତା ଷ୍ଟେସନ୍ ଭିତରେ ବସିବା ସ୍ଥାନଟିଏ ଅଧିକାର କରି ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରୁଥିଲା । ଏହି ସମୟରେ ଦେଖିଲା ରୂପା ଅପା ଆସୁଛନ୍ତି । ରୂପା ଅପା ଅମୀତାର କଲେଜ ହଷ୍ଟେଲ୍‌ରେ କାମ କରୁଥିଲେ । ତେଣୁ ରୂପା ଅପାଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖି ଆଠ/ନଅ ବର୍ଷର ମୁରୁଣା କଲେଜ ଜୀବନର ହଜିଲା ଅତୀତକୁ ଖୋଜି ପାଇବା ଭଳି ମନେହୋଇଥିଲା ଅମୀତାର । ରୂପା ଅପା ଚିକେ ନିକଟରେ ହେବାରୁ ବଡ଼ ପାଟିରେ ଡାକିଲା ରୂପାଅପାଙ୍କୁ, “ରୂପାଅପା, ଏଇଠିକୁ ଆସ, ମତେ ଚିହ୍ନିପାରୁଛତ: ମୁଁ ଅମୀତା ।” ରୂପା ଅପା ବହୁତ ଖୁସି ହୋଇଗଲେ । କହିଲେ, “ଅମୀତା ମା, ତମେ ତ କେତେ ବଦଳି ଯାଇଛ ।” ରୂପା ଅପାଙ୍କ ସହତ ହଷ୍ଟେଲ୍‌ର ଅନେକ ସ୍ମୃତିକୁ ଗନ୍ଧକଲରେ ଆଲୋଚନା କରିବାପରେ ରୂପା ଅପା ପଚାରିଲେ “ଅମୀତା ମା, ତମେ କଣ ଏବେ ବମ୍ବେରେ ରହୁଛ?”

ଅମୀତା କହିଲା, “ନାହିଁ ରୂପା ଅପା, ଏବେ ମୁଁ ଆମେରକାରେ ରହୁଛି ।”

ବହୁତ ଖୁସି ହୋଇଗଲେ ରୂପା ଅପା । କହିଲେ, “ସତରେ ଅମୀତା ମା ! ମୋ ପୁଅ ବ ଆମେରକାରେ ରହୁଛି । ଯାହାହେଉ, ତମେ ତାହେଲେ ମୋ ପୁଅକୁ ଭେଟୁଥିବ ତ ମା ।”

“ସତରେ କି ରୂପା ଅପା ? ତାହାଲେ ତ ତମ ଦୁଃଖ ଗଲା । ପୁଅ ଆମେରକାରେ । ଯାହା ହେଉ ରୂପା ଅପା, ତମେ ତ ଏବେ ଆମେରକା ଆସିବ ।” ଏମିତି କହି ଆମେରକାର ପ୍ରାତୁର୍ଯ୍ୟ ବର୍ଷନା କରୁକରୁ ମନୋଜ କୁ ଆସୁଥିବାର ଦେଖି ଚୁପ୍‌ହେଲା ଅମୀତା ।

ରୂପାଅପା କହିଲେ, “ଅମୀତା ମା, ଏଇତ ମୋ ପୁଅ ମନ୍ତୁ ଆସୁଛି; ଆସ, ତମ ସହିତ ପରିଚୟ କରାଇ ଦେବ ?” “ହଁ, ମନୋଜ କଣ ରୂପା ଅପାର ପୁଅ?” ଏ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ମନକୁ ଆସୁଆସୁ ମନୋଜ ପାଖକୁ ଆସିସାରିଥିଲେ । ରୂପାଅପା କୁ କହିଲେ, “ବୋଉ, ଇଏ ମୀତା, ଏ ବିଷୟରେ ହିଁ ମୀନାଅପା ତତେ ଚିଠି ଲେଖୁଥିଲେ ।”

ମନୋଜଙ୍କର ସେହି ବାକ୍ୟଟି ଶୁଣି ମନୋଜ ଯେ ରୁପାଅପା ର ପୁଅ, ସେ ନିଷ୍ଠର ସତ୍ୟଟି ଆବଶ୍ୟକ କରସାରବା ପରେ ଅମୀତାର ପ୍ରଶ୍ନଟା ଯେମିତି ଗୋଳମାଳ ହୋଇଗଲା । “ରୁପାଅପା କହୁଥିଲେ, ‘ଏଇ ଅମୀତା ମା’ଙ୍କ କଥା ତାହେଲେ ମୀନା ଲେଖୁଥିଲେ; ତୁ ତ ଅମୀତା ମା’ଙ୍କୁ ହଠାତ୍ ଗାଣିଛି ।”

ମନୋଜ ଅମୀତାକୁ ତାଙ୍କ ଘରକୁ ଯିବାକୁ ଅନୁରୋଧ କଲେ । ରୁପାଅପା ବ ତାଙ୍କିଲେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ମନୋଜ ଯେ ରୁପାଅପା ତାଙ୍କ ହଠାତ୍ ମେସ୍‌ରେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟକାରୀ ଭାବେ କାମ କରୁଥିବା ଜଣେ ସାମାନ୍ୟ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଲୋକର ପୁଅ, ଏକଥା ଯେତେବେଳେ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ କଲା, ସେହି ପ୍ରହରରେ ସେଠାରୁ ପଳାଇଯାଇ ଚିତ୍କାର କରିବାକୁ ଅମୀତାର ଇଚ୍ଛା ହେଉଥିଲା ।

ହୃଦୟର ଭାବକୁ ଚପାଇ କହିଲା ଅମୀତା, “ରୁପାଅପା, ଜେଜେମା’ଙ୍କର ଦେହ ଭଲନଥିଲା, ତାଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ବହୁତ ଇଚ୍ଛା ହେଉଛି । ତେଣୁ ମୁଁ ଏବେ କଟକ ଫେରିଯବି, ତମ ସହିତ ପୁଣି କେବେ ଦେଖାହେବ ।” ଏମିତି କହି ରୁପାଅପାଙ୍କୁ ନମସ୍କାର କରି, ମନୋଜଙ୍କୁ ବଦାୟ କହି ଅମୀତା ହ୍ୟାଣ୍ଡବ୍ୟାଗ୍ କାନ୍ଧରେ ପକାଇ, ଦୁଇଟି ଆଗାତି ଡୁଇହାତରେ ଧରି ଛେସନ୍ ବାହାରକୁ ଆସିଲା । ଅମୀତାର ଏ ଆକସ୍ମିକ ବ୍ୟବହାରରେ ମନୋଜ ବିସ୍ମିତ ହେଲେ । ରୁପାଅପା ଅର୍ଥାତ୍ ମନୋଜଙ୍କର ମା’ ବୁଝାଇ କହିଲେ, “ସତରେ ତ ମନୁ, ଅମୀତା ମା ଦୁଇବର୍ଷ ପରେ ଘରକୁ ଫେରିଛନ୍ତି, ତାଙ୍କ ଘରଲୋକଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ମନ ବଳଳ ହେଉଥିବ ।” ମନୋଜକୁ ବୁଝାଇ ଅମୀତାକୁ ଫୋନ୍ କରିବାକୁ କହିଲେ ରୁପାଅପା । ତାପରେ ରିକ୍ଷାରେ ଲଗେଜ ସବୁ ଭର୍ତ୍ତିକରି ଅମୀତାକୁ ବସ୍‌ଷ୍ଟର ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବଦାୟ ଦେବାକୁ ଆସିଲେ ।

ସୌଭାଗ୍ୟବଶତଃ ବସ୍ ଭିତରେ ବସିବାକୁ ଗୋଟିଏ ସିଟ୍ ମିଳିଗଲା । ନହେଲେ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନଟା ଏମିତି ବିଚ୍ଛିନ୍ନ ଯେ ଛିଡ଼ା ହୋଇଥିଲେ ପଡ଼ିଆନ୍ତା ତଳେ । ନିଜ ଦେଶରୁ ଯାଇ ତାକୁ ସମ୍ପର୍କ ଗତିବାକୁ ଯେ ଶେଷରେ ରୁପାଅପାର ପୁଅ ମିଳିଲା, ଏକଥା ଭାବି ନିଜ ଉପରେ ଅନେକ ରାଗଆସ୍ତୁଥିଲା ଅମୀତାର, ଭଗବାନ ଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ମଧ୍ୟ । “ରୁପାଅପାର ବୋହୂ, ‘ରୁପାଅପାର ବୋହୂ, ।’ ସାଙ୍ଗମାନେ ରୀନା କୁ ଚିତେଇଲା ଭଳି ଏବେଚିତେଇବେ ଅମୀତାକୁ ।” ହେ ଭଗବାନ, ମ୍ୟାଡାମ୍ ମାନେ ସବୁ କଣ ଭାବିବେ? ଇଲା, ଝୁଟୁ ଏମାନେ ସବୁ ଶୁଣିଲେ କଣ ଭାବିବେ? ଅମୀତା ଯାଇ ଆମେରିକାରେ ଯାହା ସହିତ ପ୍ରେମ କଲା, ସିଏ ଆଉ କେହି ନୁହେଁ, ରୁପାଅପାର ପୁଅ ।” ଏସବୁ ଭାବନା ଅମୀତାକୁ ବ୍ୟତିବ୍ୟସ୍ତ କରାଦେଲା । ଘରେ ଏକଥା କେମିତି ଜଣାଇବ, ମା’ କଣ ଭାବବ, ବାପା କଣ ଭାବିବେ.....ଏସବୁ ଚିନ୍ତା କରୁକରୁ ନାନା ଆଶଙ୍କାରେ ଅମୀତାର ମନ ବହୁତ ହୋଇ ଉଠୁଥିଲା ।

ଚିନା କବାଟ ଖୋଲି ଭିତରକୁ ଆସିଲା । କହିଲା “ଅପା, ଶୋଇଛୁକି? ବାପା ଆସିଲେଣି ।” ମିଛରେ ଆଖିମଳି ଉଠିଲା ଅମୀତା । ବାପା ଙ୍କ ପାଖକୁ ଯିବାକୁ ସାହାସ ହେଉନଥିଲା । ଅଠେଇଶ ବର୍ଷର ଝିଅକୁ ବାହା କରାଇବାର ଯେଉଁ ପ୍ରଶମୟ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନଟି ବାପା ଦେଖୁଛନ୍ତି ମନୋଜକୁ ହଠାତ୍ ମେସ୍ କର୍ମରୁରଣୀ ରୁପା ଅପାର ପୁଅ ଭାବେ ଜାଣିବା ପରେ ସେ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନଟି ଯେ ଭାଙ୍ଗିଯିବ, ସେ ପରିକଳ୍ପନାରେ ତୁଃସ୍ତ ହେଉଥିଲା ଅମୀତା । ଚିନା କହିଲା, “ଅପା, ବାପା ପରୁଟୁଥିଲେ ତୋ ସାଙ୍ଗ କେବେ ଆସିବେବୋଲି ।”

“ତୁଁ ଫୋନ୍‌କରି ବୁଝି କହବ । ତାଙ୍କର ଗାଁକୁ ଯିବାର ଥିଲା । ତେଣୁ ଏବେତ ଆସିବାର ନାହିଁ ।” ଏତିକି ଚିନାକୁ କହି ବାପାଙ୍କୁ ପ୍ରଣାମ କରିବାକୁ ଗଲା ଅମୀତା ।

ବାପାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ବହୁତ ଆଲୋଚନା ହେଲା । ନିଜ ପି. ଏଚ୍. ଡି ଥେସିସ୍ ବିଷୟରେ, ଡିଜିଟାଲ୍ ଡ୍ରାଫ୍ଟିଂର ବଢ଼ିନୁ ରାଇଟ୍ ବିଷୟରେ ଓ ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ ରୁକିରୀ ଯୋଜନା ସମ୍ପର୍କରେ । ବାପା ଅମୀତାକୁ ସିଧା କିଛି ମନୋଜଙ୍କ ବିଷୟରେ ପଚାରି ନଥିଲେ । ହୁଏତ ଚିନା ଠାରୁ ସେ ଖବର ପାଇବାର ଆଶାରେ ଥିଲେ ।

ରାତିରେ ବ ସେମିତି ଅମୀତା ଶୋଇପାରୁନାହିଁ । ମନୋଜଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଡ୍ରାଖିଙ୍ଗନ୍‌ରୁ ବମ୍ବେରୁ ଟ୍ରେନରେ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର ଯାଆଁ ହୋଇ ଆସିଥିଲା । କେତେ ପ୍ରେମମୟ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତ ମାନ ଥିଲା ସେସବୁ । ସିଏ ଛାତ୍ରୀ ଥିବାରୁ ଅର୍ଥ ସମ୍ପର୍କ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ବମ୍ବେରୁ ଟ୍ରେନରେ ଆସିବାକୁ ଚାହିଁ ଥିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ମନୋଜ କେବଳ ଅମୀତା ପାଇଁ ବମ୍ବେରୁ ଛତିଶ ଘଣ୍ଟା ଟ୍ରେନରେ ଯାତ୍ରା କରିଥିଲେ । କେତେ ସ୍ତବ୍ଧ ଥିଲେ ସେମାନେ.....

ମନୋଜଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଅମୀତାର ପ୍ରଥମ ଦେଖା ଦୁଇବର୍ଷ ତଳେ; ମୀନାଅପା ପୁଅର ଜନ୍ମଦିନ ଭୋଜିରେ । ପ୍ରଥମ ଦେଖାରେ ସେମାନେ କେବଳ ପରଚିତ ହୋଇଥିଲେ । ନିଜ ପି. ଏଚ୍. ଡି ନ ସରୁଣ୍ଡା ଅନ୍ୟ ଚିନ୍ତାରେ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଭର୍ତ୍ତି କରିବନି ବୋଲି ଅମୀତା ନିଜ ବିବାହ ଚିନ୍ତାରୁ ଦୂରରେ ରହୁଥିଲା ; ଯଦିଓ ଘରୁ ସବୁ ଚିଠିରେ ଜେଜେମା ଚିନା ହାତରେ ଲେଖାଇ ଅମୀତାର ବାହାଘର ବ୍ୟୟ ନେଇ ଚିଠି ପଠାଉଥିଲେ । ମନୋଜଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ ଥର ଭେଟ ହୋଇଥିଲା ଗୋଟିଏ ଭାରତୀୟ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ସଙ୍ଗୀତ ପ୍ରୋଗ୍ରାମ ରେ । ସେତେବେଳେ ପରସ୍ପରର ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ସଙ୍ଗୀତ ପ୍ରତି ଚୁଚି ବ୍ୟୟରେ ସେମାନେ ଜାଣିବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ପାଇଥିଲେ । ତେଣୁ ତୃତୀୟ ଥର ପୁଣି ଯେତେବେଳେ ମୀନା ଅପା ର ପୁଅର ଜନ୍ମଦିନ ଭୋଜିରେ ସେମାନେ ପରସ୍ପରକୁ ଭେଟିଲେ, ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ସଙ୍ଗୀତ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ଆଲୋଚନା କରି ପରସ୍ପରର ଚିନ୍ତାଧାରାର ନିକଟତର ହୋଇଥିଲେ । ତାପରେ ଅମୀତା ଅନୁଭବ କଲାଯେ ସେ ମନୋଜଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ଆକର୍ଷିତ ହୋଇଛି । ଏମିତି ଥରେ ସାଙ୍ଗମାନେ କ୍ରିସ୍ମାସ୍ ଛୁଟିରେ ନିଜନିଜ ପରବାର ଓ ସମ୍ପର୍କୀୟ ମାନଙ୍କ ଘରକୁ ଯାଇଥିବା ସମୟରେ ଏକଲା ଲାଗିବାରୁ ଅମୀତା ଡ୍ରାଖିଙ୍ଗନ୍ ମଲ୍ ଟୁଲିବାକୁ ଯାଇଥିଲା । ସେଠି ଲିଙ୍ଗନ୍ ମେମୋରାଆଲ୍ ପାଖରେ ଏକା ଟୁଲୁ ଟୁଲୁ ଅତର୍ଜିତ ଭାବେ ମନୋଜଙ୍କ ଭେଟ ହୋଇଗଲା । ମନୋଜ ବି ଏକା ଆସିଥିଲେ । ତେଣୁ ମନୋଜଙ୍କ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବରେ ଏକା ଏକା ଟୁଲିବା ପରବର୍ତ୍ତେ ସାଙ୍ଗ ହୋଇ ସେ ମାନେ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ମୋଡୁମେଣ୍ଟ ସବୁ ଟୁଲି ଦେଖିଲେ । କିଛି ସମୟ ଟୁଲିସାର ମନୋଜ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ କଲେ ସାଙ୍ଗ ହୋଇ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ ଖାଇବାକୁ । ସେମାନେ ସାଙ୍ଗ ହୋଇ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ ଖାଇଲେ ଓ ଭାରତଠାରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରି ଆମେରିକାର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ବ୍ୟୟରେ ଆଲୋଚନା କଲେ । ସେଦିନ ଦୁହେଁ ଅନୁଭବ କଲେ ଯେ ସେମାନେ ପରସ୍ପର ପାଇଁ ଉଦ୍ଦିଷ୍ଟ । ଚିନ୍ତାଧାରାର ଏତେ ସାମଞ୍ଜସ୍ୟ, ଆଉ ଅଧିକ କଣ ଦରକାର ଦୃଢ଼ ସମ୍ପର୍କ ପାଇଁ ? କିନ୍ତୁ ମୁହଁ ଖୋଲି କେହି କାହାକୁ କହିଲେନି । ତାପରେ ପୁଣି ଧୂରେଧୂରେ ଫେନ୍ କଲ୍, ସାକ୍ଷାତ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ପରସ୍ପର ଯେବେ ନିକଟତର ହୋଇ ବିବାହ କରିବାକୁ ଛିର କଲେ ସେତେବେଳେ ମନୋଜ ନିଜ ପରବାର ବ୍ୟୟରେ ଅମୀତାକୁ ଜଣାଇଥିଲେ । କହିଥିଲେ ଯେ ତାଙ୍କର ବାପାଙ୍କର ଦେହାନ୍ତ ମନୋଜଙ୍କର କୈଶୋରାବସ୍ଥା ସମୟରେ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ମା' ଏକ ହଠାତ୍ରେ ଚାକିରି କରି ତାଙ୍କର ପାଳନପୋଷଣର ସମସ୍ତ ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ବହନ କରିଥିଲେ । ସେତେବେଳେ ମନୋଜଙ୍କର ମା'ଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି କୃତଜ୍ଞତା ଓ ଭକ୍ତିରେ ତାର ହୃଦୟ ପୂରି ଉଠିଥିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ଆଜି ସେଇ ମା'ଙ୍କୁ ରପାଅପା ଭାବେ ଜାଣିବା ପରେ ବକାର ଭାବ ଦେଖା ଦେଇଛି ତା ମନରେ । ସେତେବେଳେ ଏତେଟା ଭାବି ନଥିଲା ଅମୀତା । ମନୋଜ ଙ୍କ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱ ହିଁ ତାଙ୍କର ସର୍ବଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ ପରଚୟ ଥିଲା ଅମୀତା ପାଖରେ । ମୀନା ଅପା ବବାହ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଅମୀତାର ପରବାର ଓ ମନୋଜଙ୍କର ପରବାରଙ୍କୁ ଜଣାଇ ଦେଇଥିଲେ ଓ ଉଭୟ ପରବାର ସ୍ୱୀକୃତି ପ୍ରଦାନ କରିଥିଲେ । ଅମୀତା ଥେସିସ୍ ଲେଖିସାର ଛୁଟି ନେଇ ମନୋଜଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଆସିଥିଲା । ବିବାହ ହେବାର ଯୋଜନା ଥିଲା । "କିନ୍ତୁ ଅମୀତା କଣ ବାହାହେବ ରପାଅପାର ପୁଅ ମନୋଜକୁ?" ଏଇ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ଅମୀତାକୁ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ କରାଉଥିଲା । ଯାହାବି ହେଲେ ବାପା ତାର ସହରର ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ ଇଞ୍ଜିନିୟର ଓ ତାଙ୍କର ସମସ୍ତ ସମ୍ପର୍କୀୟ ମାନେବି ଉଚ୍ଚଶିକ୍ଷିତ ଓ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ । ହଠାତ୍ରେ ଏକ ମେସ୍ କର୍ମଗୁରଣୀର ପରବାର ସହିତ ସମ୍ପର୍କ ସ୍ଥାପନରେ ବାପାଙ୍କ ସମ୍ମାନ ପ୍ରତି ଯେ ଆଶ୍ଚ ଆସିବ ସେଥିରେ ସନ୍ଦେହ ନାହିଁ । ଯଦିଓ ସମୟେ ସମୟେ ତାର ବବେକ କହୁଥିଲା ଯେ ମନୋଜଙ୍କ ଭଳି ସର୍ବଗୁଣ ସମ୍ପନ୍ନ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଙ୍କୁ ସ୍ୱାମୀ ରୂପେ ପାଇଲେତାର ଜୀବନ ସାର୍ଥକ ହେବ, କିନ୍ତୁ ରୁପା ଅପାକୁ ଶାଶୁ ରୂପେ ସ୍ୱୀକାର କରିବାକୁ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ ନଥିଲା ଅମୀତା ।

ଏ ଭିତରେ ମନୋଜ ଟୁଲ/ଡିନି ଥର ଫେନ୍ କରିଥିଲେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏ ସାଙ୍ଗ ଘର, ସେ ସାଙ୍ଗ ଘର ଯିବାର ଆଳ ଦେଇ ନିଜ ଅନୁପସ୍ଥିତିରେ ମନୋଜର ଆସିବା ଠିକ୍ ଦୁହେଁ ବୋଲି ଅମୀତା ଜଣାଇଥିଲା ।

ଅମୀତା ପହଞ୍ଚିବାର ପ୍ରୟାସ ଯାତ ଦିନ ପରେ ବାପା ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ କଲେ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟା ବେଳକୁ ସମସ୍ତେ ମାମୁଁଙ୍କ ଘରକୁ ଯିବାକୁ । ସମସ୍ତ ପରବାରର ଲୋକ ସେଠି ଆଜି ଏକ ଭୋଜି କରିବାର ସ୍ଥିର କରନ୍ତି । ତେଣୁ ସମସ୍ତେ ଭଲଭଲ ପୋଷାକ ପିନ୍ଧି ବାହାରିବାର ଯୋଜନା ହେଲା । ଚିନା ଓ ଅନୁରୋଧରେ ଅମୀତା ବି ଗୋଟିଏ ବମକାଇ ଶାଢ଼ୀ ପିନ୍ଧି, କିଛି ତାରକସୀ ଗହଣା ଲଗାଇଲା । ସେଦିନ ଏତେ ଗରମ ବି ନଥିଲା । ମାମୁଁଙ୍କ ବୈଠକ ଘରଟି ବଡ଼ ସୁନ୍ଦର ଭାବେ ସଜା ହୋଇଥିଲା । ଚିନା ଓ ସେ ଯାଇ ସବୁଠାରୁ ଭଲଭାବେ ସଜା ହୋଇଥିବା ମଝି ଚେୟାରରେ ବସିଲେ । ମାମୁଁଙ୍କ ଝିଅ ଯାଇ ଗରମ ଗରମ ସିଙ୍ଗଡା ଓ ଚୁନି ନେଇ ଆସିଲା । ଅମୀତାର ଦୁଇଜଣ ସାଙ୍ଗ ବି ଉପସ୍ଥିତ ଥିଲେ । ଚିନା ଓ ଅମୀତା ଅନ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କ ସହ ବହୁତ ମଜା ଗପରେ ମାତିଗଲେ । ଚିନା ତା ନଆ କ୍ୟାମେରାରେ ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ ଫଟୋ ନେଉଥାଏ । ଏହି ସମୟରେ ବାହାରେ କାର୍ ରଖିବାର ଶବ୍ଦ ହେଲା । ବାପା ଓ ମା, ମାମୁଁ ମାଙ୍କୁଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଗେଟ୍ ପାଖକୁ ଗଲେ । କିଛି ସମୟ ପରେ ବୈଠକ ଘର ଦେଇ ଯାହାକୁ ଦେଖିଲା ଅମୀତା, କ୍ଷଣକ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ତାର ସବୁ ରକ୍ତ ଯେମିତି ବରଫ ପାଲଟି ଗଲା । ରୁପାଅପାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଥିଲେ ମନୋଜ । ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପଛେ ପଛେ ନିତି ଦିଦି, ଉଷା ଦିଦି ଓ ହଞ୍ଜେଲ୍ ମାଉସୀ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆସି ପହଞ୍ଚିଗଲେ । ମନୋଜ କୁ ଦେଖି ଝୁଟୁ କହିଲା, ”ଦେଖତ ଅମୀତା, ରୁପା ଅପାଙ୍କ ପୁଅ କେତେ ହ୍ୟାଣ୍ଡସମ୍, ଆଗରୁ ଜାଣିଥିଲେ ରୁପାଅପାଙ୍କୁ ହଞ୍ଜେଲ୍ ରେ ଲାଖ ଦେଇ ତାଙ୍କ ମନ ଭୁଲାଇ ଥାନ୍ତି ।”

ସମସ୍ତେ ଯେମିତି ମନୋଜଙ୍କୁ ସ୍ୱୀକାର କରିଦେଇଥିଲେ । ରୁପାଅପାଙ୍କୁ ଅମୀତା ଖାଲି ହାତ ଯୋଡ଼ି ନମସ୍କାର କଲା ଯଦିଓ ତାର ବାପା, ମା ଓ ଜେଜେମାଙ୍କୁ ମନୋଜ ପାଦଚୁଇଁ ନମସ୍କାର କଲା । ଏହି ସମୟରେ ବାପା ଘୋଷଣା କଲେ, ”ମନୋଜ ଓ ଅମୀତାଙ୍କ ବିବାହର ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶ କାମ କାଶୀ ପଣ୍ଡିତଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଆରମ୍ଭ ହେବ ଏବେ ।” ମାମୁଁଙ୍କ ଗାଁର କାଶୀ ପଣ୍ଡିତ ସଂସ୍କୃତ ଶ୍ଳୋକ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଦେଲେ ”ମଙ୍ଗଳମ୍ ଭଗବାନ ବିଷ୍ଣୁ ମଙ୍ଗଳମ୍ ଗରୁଡ଼ଧୃଜ....” ଯେଉଁ ବାପାଙ୍କର ପ୍ରତିକ୍ରିୟାକୁ ଚିହ୍ନିକରି ଅମୀତା ମୁଣ୍ଡମାଣ ଥିଲା, ସେହି ବାପା, ମାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ମିଶି ରୁପାଅପାଙ୍କୁ ସମ୍ବୁଦ୍ଧୀ ଡାକି ସମ୍ମାନିତ କରୁଥିଲେ । ରୁପାଅପାଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ଅମୀତା ମନରେ ଥିବା ହେୟ ଭାବନା ତଥାପି ଦୂର ହୋଇ ନଥିଲା ଓ ତା ମୁହଁରୁ ହସ ଲିଭି ଯାଇଥିଲା । ଏହି ସମୟରେ ଚିନା ଓ ଝୁଟୁ ମନୋଜଙ୍କ ହାତ ଧରି ପହଞ୍ଚିଗଲେ । ସିଲକ୍ ପଞ୍ଜି ପିନ୍ଧି, ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ଚନ୍ଦନ ଓ ସିନ୍ଦୂରର ଟୋପା ଲଗାଇ ମନୋଜ ଦିଶୁଥିଲେ ଅପୂର୍ବ ସୁନ୍ଦର । ଅମୀତାର ହୃଦୟରେ ଆନନ୍ଦ ଓ ପରତୁଷିତା ଭେଦ ଖେଳିଗଲା । ଅଙ୍ଗରେ ଶୀତ୍ରରଣ । କିଛି ଦୂରରେ ଠିଆ ହୋଇଥିଲେ ରୁପାଅପା । କ୍ଷଣକ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଅମୀତା ମନରେ ଥିବା ଅହଂ ଭାବନା ଦୂର ହୋଇଗଲା । ତାର ପ୍ରିୟ ପୁରୁଷ ମନୋଜଙ୍କୁ ତା ପାଇଁ ଯିଏ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରନ୍ତି, ସେ ପୁଣ୍ୟା, ନମସ୍ୟା । ମନୋଜଙ୍କ ସହିତ ମୁଦି ବିନିମୟର ଔପଚାରିକତା ସରବା ପରେ ରୁପାଅପା ପିନ୍ଧାଉଥିଲେ ଅମୀତାହାତରେ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶ ଦିହୁ ସ୍ୱରୂପ ଦୁଇଟି ସୁନାର ବଳା । ଆଉ ସମସ୍ତେ ଖୁସିରେ ତାଳି ମାରୁଥିଲେ । ଅମୀତା ଶେଷରେ ଆମ୍ବୁସ୍ୱୀକୃତି ଦେଲା ରୁପାଅପାର ବୋହୂଭାବେ, ରୁପା ଅପାର ପାଦ ଛୁଇଁ ।

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ଅରୁକ୍ଷତୀର ଦେଶ

ମନୋଜ ମଞ୍ଜରୀ ମିଶ୍ର

ବିମାନରେ ବସିବା ପରଠାରୁ ଅରୁକ୍ଷତୀ ତା' ଦେଶକୁ ଫେରିବାର ଯେଉଁ ସୁଖଦ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ସବୁ ଦେଖି ଦେଖି ଆସୁଥିଲା, ବିମାନରୁ ଓହ୍ଲାଇବା ପରେ ତାହା ଯେ ଧୁଳିଘାତ ହୋଇଯିବ ତା କଣ ସେ କଳ୍ପନା କରିଥିଲା ? ଦୀର୍ଘ ୧୨ ବର୍ଷ ପରେ ସେ ଭରତ ଫେରୁଛି, ଏଇ କଥା ଚିନ୍ତା କରିବା ବେଳକୁ ତା' ମନ ପ୍ରାଣ ଉଲ୍ଲସିତ ହେଇ ଉଠୁଥିଲା । ସେ ପୁଣି ତାର ପ୍ରିୟ ଦେଶକୁ ଫେରିବ, ତାର ଏକାନ୍ତ ଆପଣାର ସହରରେ ପାଦ ଦେବ, ଶେଷରେ ସେଇ ତାର ଜାଲି ଘେରା ତାର ପ୍ରିୟ ଘରଟିରେ ପହଞ୍ଚି ଯିବ । ଜେଜେ କେତେ ବୁଢ଼ା ହୋଇଯିବେଣି , ଜେଜେମାଙ୍କ ଆଖିକୁ ଆଉ ଭଲ ଦେଖା ଯାଉନି ବୋଲି ସେ ଚିଠିରେ ପଢ଼ିଛି । ତଥାପି ସେମାନେ ତାକୁ ଦେଖିବା ମାତ୍ରେ ନିଷ୍ଠୁର ସ୍ନେହରେ ବିଗଳିତ ହୋଇଯିବେ । ଆଦରରେ ପାଛୋଟି ନେବେ । ଘରେ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଲି ପଡ଼ିଯିବ । ବଡ଼ କକେଇ, ସାନ କକେଇ, ଓ ତାଙ୍କର ପିଲା ମାନେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଦଉଡ଼ି ଆସିବେ । ତାଙ୍କ ଘରର ଆଲସେସିଆନ୍ କୁକୁରଟି ଲାଞ୍ଜ ହଲାଇ ଆସି ତା ପାଦ ପାଖରେ ଘରିବୁଲିବ । ରାତି ସାରା ତ ସେ ଏଇ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଦେଖି ଦେଖି ଆସୁଥିଲା । ସକାଳ ହେଲା । ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଉଠିଲେ । କେତେବେଳେ ସେ ତାର ବିମାନ ଆସି ଏଆରପୋର୍ଟରେ ଅବତରଣ କରିଯାରିଲାଣି ସେ ଜାଣି ବି ପାରିଲା ନାହିଁ । ଯାତ୍ରୀ ମାନଙ୍କ ସହ ସେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଓହ୍ଲାଇଲା । ବାପା କହିଥିଲେ ଫୋନ୍ କରାଯାଇଛି, ତତେ ନେବାକୁ ଯେ କେହି ଏଆରପୋର୍ଟକୁ ଆସିଥିବେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଦୀର୍ଘ ସମୟ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କଲା ପରେ ସେ ହତାଶ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ତେବେ କଣ ସେ ଏକାକୀ ଗାଡ଼ି କରି ଘରକୁ ଯିବ ? କିନ୍ତୁ କେହି ନଆସିବାର କାରଣ କଣ ସେ ଖୋଜି ପାଉନଥାଏ । ହତାଶ ହୋଇ ସେ ତାର ବ୍ୟାଗ୍ ଧରି ବାହାରିବା ବେଳକୁ କିଏ ଜଣେ ତାକୁ ଅନୁସରଣ କଲା ଭଳି ମନେ ହେଲା । ପଛକୁ ଚାହିଁଲା । ଦୀର୍ଘକାୟ, ଦାଡ଼ି ନିଷରେ ଆବୃତ ମୁହଁଟିଏ ତାକୁ ଦେଖାଗଲା । ଅନେକ ବେଳ ଭବିଷ୍ୟ ପରେ ସେ କହି ଉଠିଲା "ଶିବୁ ଭାଇ, ତମେ ?"

"ଯା ହେଉ ଶେଷରେ ତୁ ମତେ ଚହ୍ନ ପାରିଲୁ ।" ଅରୁକ୍ଷତୀର ମନ କେତେ ବର୍ଷ ତଳକୁ ଓହ୍ଲାଇଗଲା ଘର ପାଖରେ ଘର । ଶିବୁ, ଶିବେନ୍ଦ୍ର । ସେତେବେଳେ ଅରୁକ୍ଷତୀର ବୟସ ବାର ବର୍ଷ । ଶିବୁର ପଇର । ଏକା ସ୍କୁଲର ଛାତ୍ର, ଛାତ୍ରୀ । ଏକା ବସ୍ରେ ଯିବା ଆସିବା କରନ୍ତି , ତଥାପି କେହି କାହା ଘରକୁ ଯାଆନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଶିବୁର ବାପାଙ୍କର ବଡ଼ ବିଜିନେସ୍ । ସହରରେ ତାଙ୍କର ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ପାଞ୍ଚଟା ଦୋକାନ । ବହୁତ ଆୟ । ଜଣେ ଖ୍ୟାତନାମା ବଡ଼ ଲୋକ ସେ । ମାତ୍ର ଅରୁକ୍ଷତୀର ଜେଜେଙ୍କର ଭତା ଘରେ ରହୁ ରହୁ ଘରଟିକୁ ମାତି ବସିଲେ । ଉଠିବାର ନାଁ ନେଲେ ନାହିଁ । କେସ୍ ଚାଲିଲା ମାତ୍ର ଟଙ୍କା ଜୋରରେ ଶିବୁର ବାପା ଜୟମୁକ୍ତ ହେଲେ । ଅଳ୍ପ କିଛି ଟଙ୍କା ଦେଇ ସେ ଘର ଅଭିଆର କରିନେଲେ ।

ଅରୁକ୍ଷତୀ ସେତେବେଳେ ବହୁତ ଛୋଟ । ଏ କଥା ସେ ଜେଜେମା'ଙ୍କ ଠାରୁ ଯାହା ଶୁଣିଛି । ତାଙ୍କର ସେ ପୁରୁଣା କାଳିଆ ଘରକୁ ଶିବୁର ବାପା ସଜାଡି ଦେଲେ । ଘର ଦୁଆର ଚଟାଣରେ ମାର୍ବଲ୍ ଫିଟ୍ ହେଲା । ତା' ଦେଖି ଅରୁକ୍ଷତୀ ର ଜେଜେ ସହି ପାରିଲେ ନାହିଁ । ସେଇ ଦିନୁ ଦୁଇ ପରିବାର ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଝଗଡ଼ା । ଯା' ଘର କୁକୁର ତା'ଘର ପିଣ୍ଡକୁ ଉଠିଛି କି ନାହିଁ ପାଟି ତୁଣ୍ଡ । ତା ଘରେ ଟେପ୍ରେକର୍ଡର୍ ଯୋରରେ ବାଜିଲେ ଏ ଘରେ ଗଣ୍ଡଗୋଳ । ତଥାପି ସବୁକିଛି ସମୟ ସାଥରେ ଚାଲିଲା । କେହି ଘର ଛାଡ଼ି କୁଆଡ଼େ ଅଲଗା ଜାଗାକୁ ଗଲେ ନାହିଁ ।

ସେଇଠି ଅରୁକ୍ଷତୀର ପିଲାଦିନ କଟିଛି । ତା ବାପା ଡାକ୍ତର ଥିଲେ । ବଡ଼ କକେଇ ଗୋଟିଏ ସମ୍ପାଦକ ପତ୍ରର ସାମ୍ବାଦିକ । ସାନ କକେଇ ଜଣେ ଅଧ୍ୟାପକ । ଜେଜେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେତେବେଳେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟସମ୍ପାଦକ ଥିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କର ବିରାଟ ପୋଷାକର ଗୋଦାମ୍ ଥିଲା । ହୋଇସେଲ୍ରେ କାରବାର ଚାଲୁଥିଲା । କକେଇ ମାନଙ୍କ ପିଲା ମାନଙ୍କ ସହ ସେ ହସି ଖେଳି ଦିନ କାଟୁଥିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କ ସାଥରେ ଶିବୁ ଓ ତାର ଭଉଣୀ ରିତୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ତାର ସମବୟସ୍କ ଥିଲେ ମାତ୍ର ବାପା ଓ ଜେଜେଙ୍କ ଡରରେ ସେମାନେ ତାଙ୍କ ସହଚ ମିଶ୍ର ନଥିଲେ । କେବେ କେବେ ଶିବୁ ସହଚ ସ୍କୁଲରେ ଦେଖା ହୁଏ ।

ଏ ହେଲା ଗତ ବାର ବର୍ଷ ତଳର କାହାଣୀ । ତା' ପରେ ଦିନେ ବାପା ବିଦେଶ ଯିବାକୁ ବାହାରିଲେ । ସେଇଠି ସେ ଗୋଟେ ବଡ଼ ହସ୍ପିଟାଲ୍‌ରେ ଡାକିରୀ ପାଇଥିଲେ । ଜେଜେ କିନ୍ତୁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଏକାକୀ ଯିବାକୁ ଛାଡ଼ିଲେ ନାହିଁ । ମା ଓ ତାକୁ ତାଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ଯିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିଲା । ଗଲା ଦିନ ସକାଳୁ ଶିବୁ ଛାତ ଉପରେ ଅରୁଣତୀକୁ ଏକୁଟିଆ ପାଇ କହିଥିଲା " ଅରୁ ତୁ ଚାଲିଯିବୁ, ତୋ କଥା ମୋର ବହୁତ ମନେ ପଡ଼ିବ ।" ଅରୁଣତୀ ହସିଦେଇ କହିଥିଲା " ମୋର ବି ମନେ ପଡ଼ିବ ,ତୁ ମତେ କେତେ ବାଦାମ୍, କାଜୁ, କିସମିସ୍ ଦେଉ, ସେ କଥା କଣ ଭୁଲିଯିବି ? ଏ କଥା ଶୁଣି ଶିବୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ହସିଥିଲା । ତା ବାପାଙ୍କ ଦୋକାନରୁ ଲୁଗା, ଲୁଗା ଯେ ଅନେକ ଥର ବାଦାମ୍, କାଜୁ ଅରୁଣତୀକୁ ସ୍କୁଲରେ ଦେଇଛ ମାତ୍ର ଅରୁଣତୀ ଯେ ସେଇ ସାମାନ୍ୟ କଥାଟା ମନେ ରଖିବ, ଅଉ କିଛି ନୁହେଁ, ଏ କଥା ଭାବି ତା ମନ ଦୁଃଖ ହୋଇ ଯାଇଥିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ, କିଛି ମନେ ରଖିବାର ବୟସ କଣ ଅରୁଣତୀର ହେଇଥିଲା ?

ଆଉ ଆଜି ବାର ବର୍ଷ ପରେ ସେ ଭାରତ ଫେରିଛି । ପୁଣି ମାସେ ଦୁଇ ମାସ ପାଇଁ ନୁହେଁ, ସବୁ ଦିନ ପାଇଁ । ଅଜି ସେ ପଚାଶ ବର୍ଷ ବୟସର ପଣ୍ଡା ଯୁବତୀ । ତାର ବିବାହ ଠିକଣା ହୋଇଛି । ସେ ବିବାହ ମରି ଏଇଠି ରହିବ ସ୍ଥିର କରି ସବୁ ଦିନ ପାଇଁ ଆମେରିକା ତ୍ୟାଗ କରି ଆସିଛି । ବିଦେଶରେ ରହିବା ପର ଠାରୁ ତାର ଏଇ ପ୍ରଥମ ଭାରତ ଆସିବା । ଏଇ ବାର ବର୍ଷ ଭିତରେ ତା ଦେଶରେ ଅନେକ କିଛି ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଘଟିଗଲାଣି ସେ ଶୁଣିଛି, ମାତ୍ର ଆଜି ଆଖିରେ ଦେଖୁଛ ସତରେ, ଅନେକ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଘଟିଯାଇଛି । ନହେଲେ ଘରର ବଡ଼ ନାତୁଣୀ ଅରୁଣତୀକୁ ପାଛୋଟି ନେବାକୁ କଣ କେହି ଜଣେ ଏଆର୍‌ପୋର୍ଟ ଆସିନଥାନ୍ତେ ?

" କଣ ଏତେ ଭବୁଛୁ ଅରୁ? ଚାଲେ ମୁଁ ତତେ ଘରେ ପହଞ୍ଚାଇ ଦେବି । "

ଶିବୁର କଥାରେ ଅରୁଣତୀ ଚମକି ପଡ଼ିଲା । " ନାଁ, କିଛି ନୁହେଁ! ତେବେ ବାବୁ, ସନ୍ନି, ଏମାନେ କଣ ଘରେ ନାହାଁନ୍ତି? ବିଧୁ କକେଇ କଣ ବେମାର ପଡ଼ିଛନ୍ତି? ଜେଜେ ସିନା ବୁଢ଼ା ଲୋକ, ଅନ୍ୟ କେହି ତ ମତେ ନେବାକୁ ଆସିଥାନ୍ତେ ?"

" କିଛି ଅସୁବିଧା ଥିବ । " ଶିବୁ ଧୂର ସ୍ଵରରେ କହିଲା ।

" ତମେ କେମିତି ଜାଣିଲ ମୁଁ ଆଜି ଆସୁଛ ବୋଲି, ଶିବୁ ଭାଇ?"

" ତୁ କଣ ଜାଣିନୁ, ତମ ଘରେ ଜୀରା ଫୁଟିଲେ ଆମ ଘରକୁ ବାସନା ଆସେ । ତୋ ଆସିବା ଖବର ମୁଁ ତୋ ଜେଜେଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଶୁଣିଲି । ଆଉ ସେ ତ ମତେ ପଠାଇଛନ୍ତି ତତେ ନେବାକୁ ।"

ଏଥର ଅରୁଣତୀ ଚମକି ଉଠିଲା, "କଣ କହୁଛ ଶିବୁ ଭାଇ? ଜେଜେ ପୁଣି ତମକୁ ପଠାଇଛନ୍ତି? ମୁଁ ତ କିଛି ବୁଝି ପାରୁନି । ତେବେ କଣ ଜେଜେ ଆଉ ପୂର୍ବର ଜେଜେ ହୋଇ ନାହାଁନ୍ତି । ସେ କଣ ତମ ଘର ସହିତ ଭଲ ସମ୍ପର୍କ ରଖିଲେନି ?"

" ନାହିଁଲେ ଅରୁ, ସେ କଥା ନୁହେଁ । ତେବେ ସେ ମତେ ଭଲ ପାଆନ୍ତି । ମୁଁ ମଧ୍ୟ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଭଲ ପାଏ । ଛାଡ଼ ସେ କଥା । ଦେଲୁ ସେ ଆଗାତ । ଏଥର ଚାଲେ ମୋ ଗାଡ଼ିରେ ସୁନା ଝିଅ ହେଇ ବସିପଡ଼ । "

ବାଟ ଯାକ ଅରୁଣତୀ ବୁଝି ହୋଇ ବସିଥାଏ । ଶିବୁ ଭାଇ କିଛି କହୁ ନାହିଁ ସିନା ମାତ୍ର ଯା ଭିତରେ କିଛି ଗୋଟିଏ ରହସ୍ୟ ଅଛି । ସେ ଅନୁମାନ କରୁଥାଏ । ତଥାପି ଘରକୁ ଫେରିବାର ଆନନ୍ଦ ତା ମୁହଁକୁ ଉଜଳ କରି ରଖିଥାଏ । ଅନେକ ବର୍ଷହେଲା ସେ ଯେ ତାର ପ୍ରିୟ ଲୋକ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖି ପାରିନାହିଁ । ଦିନେ କିଶୋରୀ ଅରୁଣତୀ କାନ୍ଦି କାନ୍ଦି ଜେଜେମା ଙ୍କୁ କୁଣ୍ଡୁଇ ଧରିଥିଲା "ମା ମୁଁ ଯିବିନି । ତମ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ଆମେରିକା ଯିବିନି । ତମେ ବାପାଙ୍କୁ ମନା କର ।" କିନ୍ତୁ ତା ମନା କେହି ମାନିନଥିଲେ । ବାପାଙ୍କ ନାଲି ଆଖି ଦେଖି ବୁଝି ରହିଥିବା ଅରୁଣତୀ ପୁଣି ଆଜି ସ୍କୋଲରେ ମୁକ୍ତ ବିହଙ୍ଗ ଭଳି ଉଡ଼ି ଆସିଛି ତାର ଦେଶକୁ ।

ଆମେରିକା ଧନ ପ୍ରାଚୁର୍ଯ୍ୟର ଦେଶ । ସେଇଠି ନାହିଁ କଣ? ଜୀବନକୁ ଉପଭୋଗ କରିବାକୁ ସବୁ ସାମଗ୍ରୀ ପାଇ ମଧ୍ୟ ଅରୁଣତୀର ଯୁବତୀ ମନ କାହିଁକି କେଜାଣି ତା ଜନ୍ମଭୂମିକୁ ଝୁରି ହେଉଥିଲା । ବାପାଙ୍କ ଇଚ୍ଛା ଥିଲା ତାଙ୍କର ଏକ ମାତ୍ର କନ୍ୟା ଅରୁଣତୀ ସେଇ ଆମେରିକାରେ ଘର ବାନ୍ଧୁ । କେତେ ସୁନ୍ଦର ଯୋଗ୍ୟ ବର ମଧ୍ୟ ତା ପାଇଁ ଆସୁଥିଲେ । ଚିରିଶି ଚାଲିଶି ବର୍ଷ ଧରି ଆମେରିକାରେ ବସତି ସ୍ଥାପନ କରିଥିବା ଇଞ୍ଜିନିୟର ଶର୍ମାଙ୍କ ପୁଅ ରାଜେଶ୍ ତା ' ପଛେ ପଛେ ଭ୍ରମର ପରି ଉଡ଼ି ବୁଲୁଥିଲା । ମାତ୍ର

ରାଜେଶକୁ କଣ ସେ ଚିହ୍ନି ନାହିଁ । ଛା ତା ପରି ଜଣେ ଅଧଃପତିତ ଲପଙ୍ଗ ଯୁବକକୁ ସେ ଜୀବନ ସଙ୍ଗ କରିଥାନ୍ତା ? ଯାହାର ଅଧା ଦିନ ମଦନିଶାରେ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଔଷଧ ମାନଙ୍କ ସହ ଘୁରି ବୁଲିବା ସେ ନିଜ ଆଖିରେ ଦେଖିଛି । ବାପା ଯୁକ୍ତି କରିଥିଲେ ଯେଉଁଠି ଯାହା ସଂସ୍କୃତି ତାକୁ ମାନିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ । ମାତ୍ର ଅରୁଣ୍ଡତା ତାକୁ ମାନି ପାରୁନଥିଲା । ସେ ଜାଣେ ତାର ବାପା ମଧ୍ୟ ମଦ୍ୟପାନ କରନ୍ତି । ଘରେ ଇଂରାଜୀରେ କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା କରନ୍ତି । ଏଥିପାଇଁ ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ସେ କ୍ଷୁବ୍ଧ ହୁଏ । ନିଜର ମାତୃ ଭାଷାରେ କଥା କହିଲେ କଣ ଶୁଣି ହୁଅନ୍ତା ? ମାତ୍ର ମା ମଧ୍ୟ ବାପାଙ୍କ ସହ ତାଳ ଦିଏ । ଯେଉଁ ଦିନ ମା ତି ସାର୍ତ୍ତ ଓ ପ୍ୟାଣ୍ଟ ପିନ୍ଧି ପାର୍ଟିରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେବାକୁ ବାହାରି ଥିଲା, ଅରୁଣ୍ଡତାର ମନ ବହୁତ ଖରାପ ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲା । ସେ କହିଥିଲା ମା ତମର ଏତେ ବନାରସୀ, ସମ୍ବଲପୁରୀ ପାଟ ଶାଢ଼ୀ ଅଛି ତାକୁ ପିନ୍ଧିନ । ଏ ଡ୍ରେସ୍ ତମକୁ ଭଲ ଦିଶୁନି । ମା କହିଥିଲେ ”ତୁ ମତେ ଉପଦେଶ ଦେବା କେବେଠୁ ଶିଖିଲୁଣି । ତୁମ୍ଭ ରହ, ତୋ ବାପା କହିଛନ୍ତି ମତେ ଏଇ ଡ୍ରେସ୍ ପିନ୍ଧିବାକୁ । ତୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ତୋ ଡ୍ରେସ୍ ପିନ୍ଧି ବାହାରି ପଡ଼ ।”

ଅରୁଣ୍ଡତା ସେଦିନ ପାର୍ଟି ଆଡ଼େଇ କରି ନଥିଲା । ବାପା ଓ ମାଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ତାର ଖୁବ୍ ବିରକ୍ତି ଆସିଥିଲା । ଏଇ ବାପା, ମା ତାର କେତେ ଭଲ ଥିଲେ, ମାତ୍ର ଏଠିକୁ ଆସିବା ପରେ କେତେ ବଦଳିଗଲେ । ଇଂରାଜୀ ସଭ୍ୟତାକୁ ଏପରି ଆଦରି ନେଲେ ଯେପରି କେଉଁ ସାତ ପୁରୁଷରୁ ତାଙ୍କର ଭିଜାମାଟି ଏଇଠି ଥିଲା । ତାଙ୍କର ଖାଦ୍ୟ, ପୋଷାକପତ୍ର, ଚଳଣୀ ସବୁ ସେଇ ପାଶ୍ଚାତ୍ୟ ଢାଞ୍ଚାରେ ପଡ଼ି ଗଲା । ମାତ୍ର ଅରୁଣ୍ଡତା ସେ ସବୁକୁ ସହଜରେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିପାରେନା । ବ୍ରେଡ୍, ବଟର୍ ଖାଉଥିବା ବେଳେ ସେ ତାର ଭାତ, ଡାଲି, ଘାଣ୍ଟ ଚରକାରୀ କୁ ଝୁରେ । ଡ୍ରେସ୍ ପିନ୍ଧିବା ବେଳେ ଜରି ବୁଟି ଦିଆ ଘାଗରା ଚୋଲି ଓ ସାଲଡ଼ାର କାମିଜକୁ ମନେ ପକାଏ । କିନ୍ତୁ ସେ ସବୁ ତାକୁ ଏଠି ମିଳେନା । କି ବାପା ମା ତାକୁ ସେସବୁ ପିନ୍ଧିବାକୁ ଦିଅନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ବାପାଯେ ପୁରା ପୁରି ସାହେବ ପାଲଟି ଯାଇଛନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କର ଜୀବନରେ ସେ ଏତେ ରୋଜଗାର କରନ୍ତି ଯେ ତାଙ୍କର ସବୁ ସୁଖ ଆନନ୍ଦ ସେଥିରେ ସେ କିଣି ପାରିଛନ୍ତି ବୋଲି ମନେ କରନ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ପାରିବାରିକ ସ୍ନେହ ସମ୍ପର୍କଟା କଣ ସେ କିଣି ପାରିଛନ୍ତି ? ତାଙ୍କର ଏକମାତ୍ର କନ୍ୟା ଅରୁଣ୍ଡତା ଯେ ଭିତରେ ଭିତରେ ତାଙ୍କର ବିରୋଧ ହୋଇ ଉଠିଛି ସେ କାହିଁ ଜାଣିବେ?

ଏଇ ‘ଅରୁଣ୍ଡତା’ ନାଁ ତାକୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ବାପାଙ୍କର ବଡ଼ ଘୃଣା ଥିଲା । ଛା କି ପୁରୁଣାକାଳିଆ ନାଁ । ଜେଜେଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ବିରକ୍ତ ହୋଇ ସେ କହନ୍ତି ଶେଷରେ ଏଇ ନାଁ ତା ମୋ ଔଅକୁ ବାପାଙ୍କର ଦେବାର ଥିଲା । ତାକୁ ବଦଳାଇ ଆଧୁନିକ ନାଁ ସେ ଦେବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଥିଲେ ମାତ୍ର ନିଜେ ଅରୁଣ୍ଡତା ମଙ୍ଗି ନଥିଲା । ଜେଜେ କେତେ ସ୍ନେହରେ ତାଙ୍କର ପ୍ରଥମ ନାତୁଣୀ ନାଁ ଅରୁଣ୍ଡତା ରଖିଛନ୍ତି, ତାକୁ ବଦଳାଇବା ଦରକାର କଣ? ମଣିଷ କଣ ଖାଲି ନାଁରେ ଚିହ୍ନି ପଡ଼େ ? ଚିହ୍ନି ପଡ଼େ ତାର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକଳାପରେ । ଅରୁଣ୍ଡତା ତାର ଜେଜେଙ୍କୁ ଭଲ ପାଏ, ଭଲ ପାଏ ତାର ଦେଶକୁ, ତା ସଂସ୍କୃତିକୁ । ନିଜ ନାଁକୁ ସେ ବଦଳାଇବ କାହିଁକି?

ଦୀର୍ଘ ବାର ବର୍ଷ ହେଲା ସେ ପାଶ୍ଚାତ୍ୟ ସଭ୍ୟତାରେ ବଡ଼ ହେଇଛି । ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ, ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଲାଭ କରିଛି । ପ୍ୟାଣ୍ଟ ସାର୍ତ୍ତ ପିନ୍ଧି ଗାଡି ଧରି ଘୁରିବୁଲିଛି, କେତେ ପାର୍ଟିରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେଇଛି, ମାତ୍ର ତାର କୋମଳ ନାରୀ ମନଟି ସେଇ ଭାରତୀୟ ନାରୀ ଭାବରେ ବଞ୍ଚିରହିଛି । ସେଇଠି ପାଶ୍ଚାତ୍ୟ ସଭ୍ୟତାର ଖୋଲପା ଲାଗିପାରିନି । ବାପା ଦିନେ ଦିନେ ବିରକ୍ତ ହୋଇ କହନ୍ତି ”ଏଇଟା ତା ମାମୁଁ ଘର ଆଡ଼ର ହେଇଛି,” ମା କହନ୍ତି ”ମୋ ବାପ ଘର ଏତେ କଞ୍ଚିତଭେଦିତ ନୁହଁନ୍ତି ମା? ଏଇଟା ତାର ଜେଜେମା ଭଳି ହେଇଛି ।” ବାପା ମା ଙ୍କର ଏଇ ମଧୁର ଗଳିକୁ ସେ ଉପଭୋଗ କରେ । ମାମୁଁ ଘର ବା ଜେଜେମା ଭଳି ହେବାର କିଛି ଲକ୍ଷଣ ତାର ନାହିଁ । ସେ ନିଜ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକଳାପରେ ଚିହ୍ନି ପଡୁଛି, ସେଥିରେ ଅନ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କୁ ପୁରାଇବା କଣ ଦରକାର?

ବାପାଙ୍କର ରୁଚି ମୁତାବକ ପୋଷାକ ବା ଖାଦ୍ୟକୁ ସେ ଅଗ୍ରାହ୍ୟ କରିନଥିଲା । ମାତ୍ର ଯେଉଁ ଦିନ ତାର ବିବାହ ତାଙ୍କ ରୁଚିରେ ହେବାର ଶ୍ରେୟ ହେଲା, ସେ ପ୍ରତିବାଦ କରିଥିଲା । ”ନାଁ ମୁଁ ଏଠି ବିବାହ କରିବି ନାହିଁ । ଏ ଦେଶର ସଂସ୍କୃତିକୁ ମୁଁ ଘୃଣା କରେ । ଯେଉଁଠି ବୁଢ଼ା ବାପା ମାଙ୍କୁ ଘୃଣା କରାଯାଏ, ଯେଉଁଠି ପିଲାଏ ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛାଚାରୀର ଜୀବନ ବିତାନ୍ତି, ସୁଖ ଆନନ୍ଦ ବୋଲି ଯେଉଁଠି ଧନକୁ ସର୍ବସ୍ୱ ମଣିଷ, ସେ ଦେଶରେ ମୁଁ ସାରା ଜୀବନ ରହି ନପାରେ । ମୁଁ ଭାରତ ଫେରିଯିବି । ମୋର ପାଠ ଶେଷ ହୋଇଛି, ଆଉ ଏଠି ରହିବାର ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ମୋର ନାହିଁ ।” ଏଇ କଥା ଶୁଣି ବାପା ବିରକ୍ତ ହୋଇଥିଲେ । ମା ଅନେକ ବୁଝାଇଥିଲେ । ମାତ୍ର ସବୁ

ଉପଦେଶ ସ୍ନେହ ଆଦରକୁ ସେ ପଦଦଳିତ କରି ଦିନେ ଝଙ୍କ କହିଥିଲା ” ମୁଁ ଭାରତ ଫେରିଯିବାକୁ ଚାହେଁ, ଏଇ ନେ ଜେଜେଙ୍କ ଚିଠି ପଢ଼ ।” ବାପା ଚିଠି ପଢ଼ିଥିଲେ । ଲେଖାଥିଲା- ଅରୁଣତୀ ପାଇଁ ଗୋଟିଏ ଭଲ ବର ଘର ଠିକଣା ହୋଇଛି । ତାର ବିବାହ ଦେବା ପାଇଁ ସମସ୍ତେ ଆସ । ବାପା ବିରକ୍ତ ହୋଇ ଚିଠି ପିଙ୍ଗି ଦେଇଥିଲେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ତାର ଜିଦ୍ ପାଇଁ ଶେଷରେ ତାକୁ ଭାରତ ଫେରିଯିବାକୁ ଅନୁମତି ଦିଆଯାଇଥିଲା ।

ଘର ଆଗରେ ଗାଡ଼ ଠିଆ ହେଲା, ତଥାପି କେହି ତାକୁ ପାଛୋଟି ନେବାକୁ ବାହାରି ଆସିଲେ ନାହିଁ । ଅରୁଣତୀ ତାର ବ୍ୟାଗ୍ ଆଗାତି ଧରି ଘରେ ପ୍ରବେଶ କଲା । ଘର ନିଶ୍ଚିନ୍ତ ଲାଗୁଥାଏ । ଏଇ ବାର ବର୍ଷ ଭିତରେ ତାଙ୍କ ଘରର କିଛି ମାତ୍ର ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ସେ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ କଲା ନାହିଁ । ଶୋଇବା ଘରେ ଜେଜେ ଶୋଇଥିଲେ । ସେ ଯାଇ ତାଙ୍କୁ ପ୍ରଣାମ କଲା । ଜେଜେ ତାକୁ ଦେଖି ଉଠି ବସିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କ ଚକ୍ଷୁ ବାଷ୍ପକୁଳ ହୋଇଗଲା । ଜେଜେମା ତାକୁ କୋଳେଇ ନେଇ ପାଖରେ ବସାଇଲେ । ଅରୁଣତୀ ଚତୁର୍ଦ୍ଦିଗକୁ ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ପକାଇଲା । ସବୁ ଘର ତାକୁ ଶୂନ୍ୟ ମନେ ହେଲା । ସେ ଉଠି ପଡ଼ି ସବୁ ଘର ବୁଲି ଆସିଲା । ବଡ଼ କକେଇ, ସାନ କକେଇ, ଖୁଡ଼ମାନେ ଓ ତାର ପାଞ୍ଚ ଭାଇ ଭଉଣୀ କେହି ତାର ଆଖିରେ ପଡ଼ିଲେ ନାହିଁ ।

” ମା ସମସ୍ତେ କୁଆଡ଼େ ଯାଇଛନ୍ତି?” ଅରୁଣ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନରେ ମା ତୁପ୍ ରହିଲେ । ଜେଜେ କହିଲେ ” ଯା ଆଗ ଗୋଡ଼ ହାତ ଯୋଇ ଲୁଗା ପଟା ବଦଳା, ଟିକିଏ ଖିଆ ପିଆ କର, ତାପରେ ସବୁ ଶୁଣିବୁ । ” ଅରୁଣତୀ କିନ୍ତୁ ଏତେ ସମୟ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କଲା ନାହିଁ । ଜେଜେମାଙ୍କୁ ହଲାଇ ଦେଇ ସେ କହିଲା ” କହନା ମା କଣ କୁଆଡ଼େ ବୁଲି ଯାଇଛନ୍ତି ?”

- ନାଁ ରେ ମା ଏଠି ଆଉ କେହି ରହୁ ନାହାଁନ୍ତି । ତମେ ସବୁ ଯିବାପରେ ସେମାନେ ଅଲଗା ଘରକୁ ଉଠିଯାଇଛନ୍ତି ।

- କିନ୍ତୁ କାହିଁକି? ଏଠି ତାଙ୍କର କଣ ଅସୁବିଧା ଥିଲା ? ତା ପ୍ରଶ୍ନର ଉତ୍ତର କେହି ଦେଲେ ନାହିଁ । ଅରୁଣତୀର ମନରେ ଉତ୍ସାହ ଯେପରି ଥଣ୍ଡା ପଡ଼ିଗଲା ।

ସଂଧ୍ୟା ବେଳେ ତା ଆସିବା ଖବର ପାଇ ପ୍ରଥମେ ସାନ କକେଇ ଓ ଖୁଡ଼ୀ ପହଞ୍ଚିଲେ । ଖୁଡ଼ୀଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖି ସେ ପ୍ରଥମେ ଅବାକ୍ ହୋଇଗଲା । ତାଙ୍କର ସେ ଲମ୍ବା ବାଳର ବିରାଟ ବେଣୀ କୁଆଡ଼େ ଗଲା ? ପୁଅ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ଭଳି ବାଳ, ସରୁ ଭୂଲତା, ଓଠରେ ଗାଡ଼ ଲିପ୍ଟିକ୍ ଲଗାଇ ସେ କିପରି ଅଲଗା ଦିଶୁଥିଲେ । ସେଥିରେ ପିନ୍ଧିଥିଲେ ଶାଢ଼ୀ ବଦଳରେ ଶାଲୁଝାଡ଼ ସୁଟ୍ । ତାଙ୍କର ମା’ସଳ ଦେହ ସେ ତ୍ରେସ୍ରେ ଆଦୌ ଭଲ ଦିଶୁନଥିଲା । ତାକୁ ଦେଖିବାକ୍ଷଣି ସେ କହି ଉଠିଲେ ” ହାଲୋ ଅରୁ? ସବୁ ଭଲ ତ?”

ସେ ଖୁଡ଼ୀଙ୍କୁ ପ୍ରଣାମ କଲା ମାତ୍ର ପଚାରି ପାରିଲା ନାହିଁ କାହିଁକି ସେ ତାଙ୍କର ଏତେ ବଡ଼ ଘର ଛାଡ଼ି, ଶାଶୁଶଶୁରଙ୍କୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ଫ୍ଲାଟ୍ ଘରେ ରହୁଛନ୍ତି?

ତା ପରଦିନ ବଡ଼ କକେଇଙ୍କ ପରିବାର ମଧ୍ୟ ଆସିଲେ । ସମସ୍ତେ ତାର କୁଶଳ ପଚାରି ଚାଲିଯାଇଥିଲେ । ସେ ନୀରବରେ ଅନୁଭବ କରୁଥାଏ କେହି ତ କାହିଁ ଜେଜେ ଓ ଜେଜେମାଙ୍କୁ ପଚାରି ନଥାନ୍ତି, ବାପା ତମେ କିପରି ଅଛ? ମା ତୁ ଭଲ ଅଛୁ ନାଁ ? ତାକର, ପୁଅରୀଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ ବସି ରହିଥିବା ତାର ୭୫ ବର୍ଷର ବୃଦ୍ଧ ଜେଜେ ଓ ୭୦ ବର୍ଷର ଜେଜେମା ପ୍ରତି ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧାରେ ତା ମନ ଭରି ଯାଇଥାଏ । ଆହା, ଦିନେ ତ ସେ ତାଙ୍କର ଏହି କଥା ଆମେରିକାକୁ ଲେଖି ପଠାଇ ନାହାନ୍ତି ।

ତା ପରେ ଦିନେ ତାକୁ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ତାର ଶ୍ଵଶୁର ଘର ଲୋକେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଗଲେ । ତା ଭଳି ସୁବର୍ଣ୍ଣବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ସୁଶ୍ରୀ କନ୍ୟାକୁ କିଏ ବା ଅପସନ୍ଦ କରିଥାନ୍ତା ? ପ୍ରଥମ ଦେଖାରେ ହିଁ ବିବାହ ଠିକଣା ହୋଇଗଲା । ଅରୁଣତୀ ତାର ଭାବିବରକୁ ଦେଖି ମଧ୍ୟ ପ୍ରସନ୍ନ ହୋଇଗଲା । ଜେଜେଙ୍କର ତା ପ୍ରତି ଥିବା ସ୍ନେହକୁ ସେ ଅନୁଭବ କରୁଥାଏ । କିନ୍ତୁ ନିଜ ଦେଶ ପାଇଁ ତାର ଯେଉଁ ଗର୍ବ ଅହଂକାର ଥିଲା ତାହା ଆସ୍ତେ ଆସ୍ତେ ମନରୁ ଦୂର ହେଇ ଆସିଲା । ଆମେରିକାରେ ସିନା ବୃଦ୍ଧ ବାପା ମାଙ୍କୁ ହତାଦର କରାଯାଏ ମାତ୍ର ଏଇଠି ତା ଦେଶରେ ତା ନିଜ ଜେଜେ ଓ ମାଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ସନ୍ତାନ ମାନଙ୍କ ହତାଦର ସେ ନିଜ ଆଖିରେ ଦେଖିଲା ।

୭୫ ବର୍ଷର ଜେଜେ ତାର ବଜାର ସଉଦା କରୁଥିବାର ଓ ବୃଦ୍ଧା ଜେଜେମା ଘର କାମ କରୁଥିବା ଦେଖି ସେ ମର୍ମାହତ ହେଉଥାଏ । ବାଳ ବୃଦ୍ଧ ସମାନ ବୋଲି ଯେଉଁ ଉଚ୍ଛି ଥିଲା ତାହା ମିଥ୍ୟା ବୋଲି ତାର ମନେ ହେଲା । ଛୋଟ ଛୁଆଙ୍କୁ ବାପା ମା

ଯେପରି ଆଦର ଯତ୍ନରେ ବଢ଼ାନ୍ତି, ବୃଦ୍ଧ ବାପା ମାଙ୍କୁ ସନ୍ତାନ ମାନେ ସେହିପରି ସ୍ନେହ ମମତା ଦେଇ ରଖିବା ଏ ଦେଶର ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଥିଲା, ତାହା କଣ ଆସ୍ତେ ଆସ୍ତେ ଲୋପ ପାଇଯାଇଛି ? ଯେଉଁ ଦେଶର ଐତିହ୍ୟ, ସଂସ୍କୃତି, ଆଚାର ବିଚାରରେ ମହାନତା, ସଦ୍‌ଗୁଣ ଓ ଚରିତ୍ରବତ୍ତାର ଗାଥା ମନେ ପକାଇ ପକାଇ ସେ ଆମେରିକାରେ ବଡ଼ ଅଶାନ୍ତିରେ କାଳ ଯାପନ କରୁଥିଲା ପୁଣି ଦିନେ ସେ ସବୁ ମିଥ୍ୟାର ଗାର ବୋଲି ତାର ମନେ ହେଲା ଯେଉଁ ଦିନ ତାର ଭାବି ସ୍ବାମୀର ସ୍ବେଚ୍ଛାଚାରୁର ଶିକାର ହେବାରୁ ସେ ଅଳ୍ପକେ ରକ୍ଷା ପାଇଗଲା । ସେ ଦିନ ତାର ମନ ଘୁଣା ରେ ଶତ ଖଣ୍ଡ ହୋଇଗଲା । ଛି ! ଏଇଥି ପାଇଁ କଣ ସେ ଭାରତକୁ ଧାଇଁ ଆସିଥିଲା ?

ସେ ଦିନ ପ୍ରଭାତରୁ ତାର ମନ ପ୍ରଫୁଲ୍ଲ ଥିଲା । ଆଜି ଦିନ ସାରା ବୁଲିବାର ପ୍ରୋଗ୍ରାମ୍ ଥିଲା । ତାର ଭାବି ସ୍ବାମୀ ସୌମ୍ୟକାନ୍ତ ଓ ସେ ଟାଙ୍କି କରି ଦିନ ସାରା ଖୁବ୍ ବୁଲିଲେ । ସୌମ୍ୟକାନ୍ତ ସହିତ ବୁଲି ଯିବାରେ ତାର ଟିକିଏ ବି ଦୃଷ୍ୟ ନଥିଲା । କାରଣ ସେ ଆଧୁନିକ ଯୁଗର ଶିକ୍ଷିତା ନାରୀ ପୁଣି ବିଦେଶରୁ ଶିକ୍ଷା ପାଇ ଆସିଛି । ମାତ୍ର ସଂଧ୍ୟାରେ ସେ ଘରକୁ ଫେରିଯିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁବାରୁ ସୌମ୍ୟକାନ୍ତ କହିଥିଲା - "ଏତେ ଶୀଘ୍ର ଫେରିଯିବାକୁ ତମର ମନ? ତାଲ ଟିକିଏ ହୋଟେଲ୍ କୁ ଯିବା । ମୁଁ ଗୋଟିଏ ରୁମ୍ ରିଜର୍ଭ୍ କରିଛି । ରାତିରେ ତମକୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ଦେଇ ଯିବି ।" ସବୁ ବୁଝି ମଧ୍ୟ ନ ବୁଝିବାର ଛଳନା କରି ଅରୁକ୍ଷତୀ କହିଥିଲା, "ହୋଟେଲ୍ କୁ ଆଉ ଯିବା କାହିଁକି? ଆଜି ତ ଦିନ ସାରା ଖୁବ୍ ବୁଲି ହେଲାଣି, ଖିଆପିଆ ବି ସରିଛି, ଏବେ ଘରକୁ ଯିବା । ଆଉ କିଛି ଖାଇବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା ହେଉନି ।"

ସୌମ୍ୟକାନ୍ତ ତାକୁ ଅନାଇ ଅଳ୍ପ ହସି କହିଥିଲା, "ପେଟର କ୍ଷୁଧା ସିନା ମରିଯାଇଛି, ହେଲେ ଦେହର ବି ତ କ୍ଷୁଧା ଅଛି ।"

"କଣ?" ଅରୁକ୍ଷତୀ କଠୋର ଭାବରେ କହିଥିଲା "କଣ କହିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଛନ୍ତି ଆପଣ?"

"ମୁଁ କଣ କହିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଛି ତମେ ଠିକ୍ ବୁଝିପାରୁଥିବ। ଆଉ ସେଥିରେ ବା ଦୋଷ କଣ? ତମେ ତ ମୋର ବାକ୍‌ଦତ୍ତ । ଆଉ କିଛି ଦିନ ପରେ ଆମର ବିବାହ ହେବ ।"

ଅରୁକ୍ଷତୀ କହିଥିଲା "ଆପଣ ଯାହା ଭାବୁଛନ୍ତି ମୁଁ ସେପରି ଝିଅ ନୁହେଁ । ଆଉ କିଛି ଦିନ ପରେ ଆମର ବିବାହ ସରିଯିବାପରେ ଆପଣ ଏ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଦେଇପାରନ୍ତି । ଆପଣଙ୍କୁ ଲଜ୍ଜା ଲାଗିବା କଥା । ଏତେ ନିର୍ଲଜ୍ଜ ଭାବେ ମୋ ସଙ୍ଗେ ଏପରି କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା କରୁଛନ୍ତି ? ଆମ ଦେଶର ସଭ୍ୟତା କଣ ଏତେ ନିମ୍ନମୂର୍ତ୍ତୀ ହୋଇଗଲାଣି ? ଯେଉଁ ପାଞ୍ଚତ୍ୟ ସଭ୍ୟତାକୁ ଘୃଣା କରି ମୁଁ ଭାରତ ଫେରି ଆସିଛି, ଆଜି ଏଇଠି ପୁଣି ତାର ପୁନରାବୃତ୍ତି ଦେଖୁଛୁ ?"

ସୌମ୍ୟକାନ୍ତ ମଧ୍ୟ ଦବି ଯାଇନଥିଲା । କହିଥିଲା, "ତମେ ନିଜକୁ ସତୀ ସାବିତ୍ରୀ ଭାବ ନାହିଁ । ସେଠି ଯେ କେତେ ରାତି କେତେ ପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ସାନିଧ୍ୟରେ କଟିଥିବ, ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ରାତି ମୋ ସହିତ....."

"କଣ କହିଲେ?" ଠୋ କରି ଚଟକଣି ଗୋଟିଏ ବସିଗଲା ସୌମ୍ୟକାନ୍ତ ଗାଲରେ, "ମତେ ଏତେ ଶୟ୍ୟ ପାଇଲେ? ଆପଣଙ୍କ ଭଳି ଏକ ଅଧଃପତିତ ଯୁବକଙ୍କୁ ମୁଁ ସ୍ବାମୀ ଭାବରେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରି ପାରେନା । ମୁଁ ଏ ନିର୍ବିକଳ ସ୍ବାକାର କରେନା । ଏହା କହି ଅରୁକ୍ଷତୀ ଅନ୍ୟ ଏକ ଗାଡ଼ କରି ଘରକୁ ଚାଲିଆସିଥିଲା ।

ଜେଜେ ତାର ଏ ଦୁଃଖାନ୍ତ ଦେଖି ହୁମାୟୁତ ହେଇ ଯାଇଥିଲେ । ବିବାହ ବନ୍ଦ ହେଇ ଯାଇଥିଲା । ବନ୍ଧୁ ବାନ୍ଧବ ମାନେ ତାକୁ ଅନେକ ଅପବାଦ ଦେଇଥିଲେ । ଅରୁକ୍ଷତୀ ଦୁଃଖ, ଶୋଭ, ଓ ଲଜ୍ଜାରେ ସଜ୍ଜି ଯାଇଥିଲା । ସବୁ ଦିନ ବାପା ମାଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ତାର ନିଜ ଦେଶକୁ ଫେରିଯିବା ପାଇଁ ଯେଉଁ ଝଗଡ଼ା ହେଉଥିଲା, ସେ କଥା ଭାବି ତାର ମନ ଅଶାନ୍ତିରେ ଜଳି ଯାଉଥିଲା । ସେ ତ ନିଜ ଇଚ୍ଛାରେ ଏଠିକି ଆସିଛି । ଏଇଠି ବିବାହ କରିବ, ଘର ବସାଇବ, ତା ଦେସର ସଂସ୍କୃତିକୁ ଆଦରି ନେବ ବୋଲି ମାତ୍ର ଆଜି ସେ ପୁଣି କଣ ରିକ୍ତ ମନ ଓ ଏକାକୀ ଜୀବନ ନେଇ ପୁଣି ଆମେରିକା ଫେରିଯିବ? ଅବଶ୍ୟ ଏ ଦେଶର ସମସ୍ତ ଯୁବକ ସୌମ୍ୟକାନ୍ତ ହେଇ ନପାରନ୍ତି, ମାତ୍ର ତାର ଆହତ ମନ ଆଉ ବିବାହ କରିବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା କରି ପାରୁନାଏ ।

ଏତିକିବେଳେ ତାର ଶିବେନ୍ଦ୍ର କଥା ମନେ ପଡ଼ିଗଲା । ଶିବୁ ତାର ପିଲା ଦିନର ସାଙ୍ଗ, ଧଳି ଖେଳର ସାଥୀ, ମାତ୍ର କେତେ ଭଦ୍ର, କେତେ ସଂଯତ, କେତେ ଆତ୍ମୀୟତାରେ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ତାର ହୃଦୟ । ନହେଲେ ଜେଜେଙ୍କ ସହିତ ତାର ଚିର ଶତ୍ରୁ ତାର ପିତା ମାତାଙ୍କୁ ଅବଜ୍ଞା କରି ସେ କଣ ଜେଜେଙ୍କ କଥା ବୁଝୁଥାନ୍ତା , ନା ତାକୁ ଆଶିବାକୁ ଏଆରପୋର୍ଟ ଯାଇଥାନ୍ତା ?

ତାର ବିବାହ ଠିକ୍ ହେବାପରେ ଦିନେ ହେଲେ ସେ ଆଉ ଅରୁଣ୍ଡତା କୁ ଦେଖା କରିନାହିଁ କି ଫିଲ୍ମ୍ ଖାଇଲ୍ରେ କହିନାହିଁ ଯେ ମୁଁ ତୁମକୁ ଭଲ ପାଏ ବୋଲି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଅରୁଣ୍ଡତା ଏବେ ବୁଝି ପାରୁଛି ଯେ ପିଲା ଦିନରୁ ଶିବୁ ତାକୁ ବହୁତ ଭଲ ପାଇ ଆସୁଛି । ତେବେ କଣ ଏ ଦେଶରେ ସୌମ୍ୟକାନ୍ତ ଭଳି ଇତର ଯୁବକ ଥିବା ବେଳେ ଶିବେନ୍ଦ୍ର ଭଳି ଭଦ୍ର, ସଭ୍ୟ, ଗାଳାନ, ବିବେକୀ ଯୁବକ ମଧ୍ୟ ଅଛନ୍ତି । ତେବେ ଶିବେନ୍ଦ୍ରକୁ ବିବାହ କଲେ କ୍ଷତି କଣ? ତା ବାପା ଜେଜେଙ୍କର ଶତ୍ରୁତା ଥିଲେ କଣ ହେଲା , ସେ କଣ ଶିବେନ୍ଦ୍ରକୁ ବିବାହ କରି ତାହା ବନ୍ଦ କରିଦେଇପାରିବନି? ଶିବେନ୍ଦ୍ର ଗୋଟିଏ ବ୍ୟାଙ୍କରେ ଚିଫ୍ ଏକାଉଣ୍ଟେଣ୍ଟ ଅଛି । ତାଙ୍କୁ ମନେ ମନେ ପସନ୍ଦ କରିନେଇଛି ଅରୁଣ୍ଡତା । ଏଇ ନିଷ୍ଠି ନେଇ ଜେଜେଙ୍କୁ କହିଥିଲା ଅରୁଣ୍ଡତା ” ଜେଜେ ମୁଁ ଭାରତ ଆସିଥିଲି ଏଇଠି ଚିର ଦିନ ରହିବାକୁ, ଆଉ ଥରେ ଫେରି ଯିବାକୁ ନୁହେଁ । ସୌମ୍ୟକାନ୍ତ ନ ହେଲେ ଶିବେନ୍ଦ୍ରକୁ ମୁଁ ବିବାହ କରିବି । ଆପଣ କଥା ପଚାନ୍ତୁ । ସେମାନେ ଯଦି ରାଜି ହେବେ ଆପଣ ମଧ୍ୟ ରାଜି ହେଇ ଯାଆନ୍ତୁ । କେତେ ବର୍ଷ ତଳେ ଆପଣଙ୍କର ଓ ତାଙ୍କ ବାପାଙ୍କର ଶତ୍ରୁତା ଥିଲା , ତାକୁ ମୁଁ ବନ୍ଧୁତାରେ ବଦଳାଇଦେବାକୁ ଚାହେଁ । ”

ଅରୁଣ୍ଡତାର ଏ କଥାରେ ଜେଜେ ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହେଇଗଲେ । ହୁଏତ ଅରୁଣ୍ଡତା ଭଳି ଉଚ୍ଚଶିକ୍ଷିତା ପୁଣ୍ୟ ସୁନ୍ଦରୀ ଯୁବତୀ ପାଇଁ ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ ଉପାର୍ଜନକ୍ଷମ ଶିବେନ୍ଦ୍ର ଠିକ୍ ହେଇ ପାରେନା, ମାତ୍ର ଆଉ ସବୁ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ସେ ଅରୁଣ୍ଡତାର ଉପଯୁକ୍ତ ବର ହେଇପାରିବ । ସେଇ ଦିନ ଜେଜେ ନିଜେ ଯାଇ ଶିବୁର ବାପାଙ୍କୁ ଭେଟିଥିଲେ । ଏ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବରେ ଶିବେନ୍ଦ୍ରର ବାପା ମଧ୍ୟ ଅଭିଭୂତ ହେଇ ଯାଇଥିଲେ । ଅରୁଣ୍ଡତା ତାଙ୍କର ବୋହୂ ହେବ ସେ କଣ କାନ୍ଦିନା କରିଥିଲେ ?

ଯେଉଁ ଦିନ ଅରୁଣ୍ଡତା ବୋହୂ ବେଶରେ ଶିବେନ୍ଦ୍ର ଘର ପାହାଚରେ ପାଦ ଦେଲା , ଜେଜେ ଖୁସିରେ ଗଦ ଗଦ ହେଇ କହିଲେ, ” କିଏ କହେ ଏ ଦେଶର ସଭ୍ୟତା , ସଂସ୍କୃତି ସବୁ ନଷ୍ଟ ହେଇଗଲାଣି ? ହେଇ ତ, ମୋ ଅରୁ ସେ ସବୁ ଜାବୁଡ଼ି ଧରିଛି । ଶତ୍ରୁ କୁ ମିତ୍ର କରି ସେ ତ ମୋ ଆଖି ଖୋଲି ଦେଇଛି । ଏମିତି କେତେ ଅରୁଣ୍ଡତା, ସୀତା, ସାବିତ୍ରୀ ତଥାପି ଏ ଦେଶରେ ଅଛନ୍ତି ଯେଉଁ ମାନଙ୍କ ଯୋଗୁଁ ଏ ଦେଶର ସଭ୍ୟତା, ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଚିର ଦିନ ଜାଗୁଲ୍ୟମାନ ହେଉଥିବ । ”

Manoj Manjari Mishra is a famous Oriya fiction writer. In the last 15 years, she has collated two books of short stories, and written nine books for children. She is also a regular speaker on women's forums in All India Radio, Cuttack.

ବ୍ୟର୍ଥ ରାଗିଣୀ

ଝୀନୁ ଛୋଟରାଏ

”ବରଷ ରେ ଘୋର ମେଘ ବରଷ ରେ
ପ୍ରିୟ ମୋର ଆସିବକି ବାରେ

ଅତୀତ ପ୍ରିୟାର ଚକ୍ଷୁ ନୀରକୁ
ପୋଛି ଦେଇ ଯିବ ଥରେ”

କିଏ ସେଇ କଳାକାର?

ଆଷାଢ଼ୀ ମେଘର ତାଳେତାଳେ ମେଘ ମହୁର ରାଗିଣୀରେ ତାର ସ୍ଵର ସାଧନା । କି ହୃଦୟଞ୍ଚରୀ,
ମର୍ମଞ୍ଚରୀ ସ୍ଵର ଝଙ୍କାର !! ସତେକି ଅନେକ ଦିନର ଲୁକାୟିତ ବେଦନାକୁ ସଂଗୀତ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ରୂପ ଦେବା
ପାଇଁ ଶିଳ୍ପୀ ଆଜି ଶତ ଚେଷ୍ଟିତା ।

ଆଷାଢ଼ର କେଉଁଏକ ବର୍ଷଣ ମୁଖ ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧ ରାତ୍ରୀରେ ଦୁରରୁ ଭାସି ଆସୁଥିବା ଏକ ତରୁଣୀର କଣ୍ଠ ସ୍ଵର ସହ
ବୀଣାର ଝଙ୍କାରରେ ଅତିଶୟ ଆମ୍ବୁରା ହୋଇ ଉଠିଥିଲେ ତୁଳୀତନ୍ତ୍ର ଶଯ୍ୟା ଉପରେ ଶୟନରତ ଚିରନ୍ତନ । ସଂଗୀତର
ପ୍ରତିଟି ଶବ୍ଦକୁ ତନ୍ମୁ ତନ୍ମୁ ବିଶ୍ଳେଷଣ କରୁଥିଲେ ସିଏ । ଗାୟିକାର କଣ୍ଠସ୍ଵର କେତେ ମାଧୁର୍ଯ୍ୟପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ, ଲୟ କେବେ ତୀକ୍ଷ୍ଣ,
ସଂଗୀତର ଅର୍ଥ କେତେ ପ୍ରଣୟଞ୍ଚରୀ, ପ୍ରାଞ୍ଜଳ ।

”ଧନ୍ୟ ଧନ୍ୟ ଶିଳ୍ପୀ, ଧନ୍ୟ ତୁମର କଳା ସାଧନା । କଣ୍ଠରେ ତୁମର କେଉଁଏକ ଯାଦୁକର କାଉଁରୀ ଞ୍ଚରୀ ।
ପୁରାଣ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣିତ ଶ୍ରୀ ରାମଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କର ପଦ କମଳ ଞ୍ଚରୀରେ ନିର୍ଜୀବ ପାଷାଣ ଜୀବନ୍ତ ନାରୀ ରୂପ ଧାରଣ କଲାପରି ହେ ଶିଳ୍ପୀ,
ତୁମରି ସ୍ଵର ଲହରୀରେ ନିର୍ଜୀବ ଆଜି ସଜୀବ । କଣ୍ଠରେ ତୁମ ଶତ କୋକିଳର ରାଗିଣୀ । ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ ତୁମର ଆହୁରି ଉଜ୍ଜ୍ଵଳମୟ
ହେଉ । ତୁମେ ହିଁ ବିଶ୍ଵର ସର୍ବ ଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ ଗାୟିକାର ଆସନ ଅଳଙ୍କୃତ କର ।” ଗାୟିକା ଜ୍ଞ ପ୍ରତି ଅଶେଷ କୃତଜ୍ଞ ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଥିଲେ
ଚିରନ୍ତନ ଏବଂ ତାଳି ଦେଇଥିଲେ ଅଜସ୍ର ଅଜସ୍ର ଆଶୀର୍ବାଦ । ସତେ ଯେପରି ତାଙ୍କର ଅପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ପାତ୍ରର ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣତା ଆଶିବାରେ
ଗାୟିକାଟି ହିଁ ଥିଲା ସର୍ବ ପ୍ରଥମ ।

ହଠାତ୍ ଅଦିନ ବିଜୁଳୀ ପରି ତୁମ୍ବୁଳୀ ତାଙ୍କ ମନରେ ଚମକ୍ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିଥିଲା । ତୁହାଇ ତୁହାଇ ମନେ ପଡ଼ିଥିଲା

ତାରି କଥା । ଆହା ! ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କ ଆଜି ମୋର କେତେ ଲୋକପ୍ରିୟ ହେବଣି । ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ସଂଗ୍ରାହଣୀ ର ଝରଣରେ ମୃତ ପିଣ୍ଡ ପୁନରାୟ ଜୀବନ ଧାରଣ କଲାପରି ମାଧୁର୍ଯ୍ୟଭରା ଶିଳ୍ପୀର କଣ୍ଠସ୍ୱର ଚିରନ୍ତନଙ୍କ ହୃଦିଲା ମୃତ ଦିନ ଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ପୁଣି ଥରେ ଜୀବନ୍ତ କରେଇଥିଲା ।

ଦଶ ବର୍ଷ ତଳର ଛିନ୍ନ ଭିନ୍ନ ତାଏରି ପୃଷ୍ଠ ସବୁକୁ ମନ ଭିତରେ ସାଉଁଟିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲେ ଚିରନ୍ତନ । ବାଲ୍ୟ କାଳରୁ ତାଙ୍କର ଖୁବ୍ ଦୁର୍ବଳତା ଥିଲା ସଂଗୀତ ପ୍ରତି । ଆଉ ଏଇ ସଂଗୀତ ହୁଏତ ପ୍ରତିନିଧିତ୍ୱ କରିଥିଲା ତାଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ ପ୍ରେମ ବ୍ୟାଧିର ମାଧୁମ୍ୟ ହୋଇ । ଭଲ ପାଇଥିଲେ ତାଙ୍କର ଛାତ୍ରୀ ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କୁ ।

ମଧ୍ୟ ରାତ୍ରୀରେ ରାଷ୍ଟ୍ରର କ୍ଷୀଣ ଆଲୋକରେ ଆଲୋକିତ କୋଠରୀଟିର ଏକ ପଲଙ୍କରେ ଶୋଇ ରହି ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଉପରେ ବୁଲୁଥିବା ଶିଳ୍ପି ଫାନ୍ ଉପରେ ଲୟ ରଖି ମଛି ଯାଉଥିଲେ ଚିରନ୍ତନ ତାଙ୍କର ଦୂର ଅତୀତକୁ ମନର ମଛନ ଦଣ୍ଡ ଦ୍ୱାରା ।

ହଁ, ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କ ତାଙ୍କର କେତେ ସୁନ୍ଦରୀ ଥିଲା ସତେ !! ଲାଳିତ୍ୟଭରା ସ୍ୱରକୁ ମାଦକଭରା ଚେହେରା । ଖୁବ୍ ଖାସ ଖାଉଥିଲା ଯେମିତି । ଗୋରା ପାନ ପତ୍ର ପରି ମୁହଁରେ ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ଆଖି, ସରୁ ଗୋଲାପି ଓଠ । ସର୍ବାଙ୍ଗ ସୁନ୍ଦରୀ ଥିଲା ଝିଅଟି । ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କ ବୀଣା ଧରି ଯେବେ କଣ ସାଧନା ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଦିଏ, ମନେହୁଏ ସତେକି କୃଷ୍ଣଭକ୍ତ ମୀରାବାଇ ମର୍ତ୍ତ୍ୟରେ ପୁନରାୟ ଆସିଛନ୍ତି । ଅନେକ ସମୟରେ ଚିରନ୍ତନ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ କରନ୍ତି "ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କଲୋ ! ତୋ କଣ୍ଠରେ ଏତେଟା ମାଧୁର୍ଯ୍ୟ, ମୋର ବିଶ୍ୱାସ, ଭବିଷ୍ୟତରେ ତୋର ଖୁବ୍ ସୁନାମ ହେବ । ସେତେବେଳେ ତୁ ତୋର ଚିନ୍ତା ଭାଇକୁ ମନ ଭିତରୁ ତୋର ଦୂରେଇ ଦେବୁନିତ? ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କର ଆଖିରେ ଲୁହ ଜମି ଆସେ । ସେ ସେଇ ଛଳ ଛଳ ଆଖିରେ କହିଉଠେ, "କଣ କହୁଛ ଚିନ୍ତା ଭାଇ, ତୁମକୁ ମୁଁ ଭୁଲିଯିବି ? ତୁମେ ଯେ ମୋ କଳାର ପ୍ରେରଣା, ସାଧନାର ଉତ୍ସ, ଆଉ ମୋ ସଂଗୀତର ମାଧ୍ୟମ । ତୁମ ବ୍ୟତିରେକ ମୋ ଉନ୍ନତି ଅସମ୍ଭବ । ଏମିତି ଅପଟଣ କଥା ମନରେ ସ୍ଥାନ ଦିଅନ୍ତି ଚିନ୍ତାଭାଇ । ବରଂ ଇଶ୍ୱରଙ୍କୁ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା କର ଆଜୀବନ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ସଂଗୀତ ସାଧନା ବେଳେ ତୁମେହିଁ ରହିବ ମୋ ସମ୍ମୁଖ ଶ୍ରୋତା ହୋଇ । ତୁମେହିଁ ହେବ ମୋର ପଥ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶକ ।

ଗତାୟୁ ଅତୀତକୁ ରୋମଛନ କରୁକରୁ କେତେବେଳେ ଯେ ଚିରନ୍ତନଙ୍କ ଚକ୍ଷୁ ଯୁଗଳ ମୁଦି ହେଇ ଯାଇଛି ଜାଣନ୍ତିନି ସିଏ ।

ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧରାତ୍ରୀରେ ଶାନ୍ତିଙ୍କର ସୁଲଳିତ କଣ୍ଠସ୍ୱର ଶୁଣିବା ପାଇଁ ଜାଗ୍ରତ ଥାଆନ୍ତି ଚିରନ୍ତନ । ଏଇ କେତେଦିନ ହେବ, ସେଇ ଟିକକ ସମୟ ପାଇଁ ସେ ଖୁବ୍ ପାଗଳ ହୋଇ ଉଠନ୍ତି । ଆଜି ରବିବାର । ମନଟା କେମିତି ଭାରାକ୍ରାନ୍ତ ଲାଗୁଥାଏ । କୁଆଡ଼େ ଯିବାପାଇଁ ଇଚ୍ଛା ହେଲାଣି ଚିରନ୍ତନଙ୍କର । ନିଃସଙ୍ଗତା ଦୂର କରିବା ପାଇଁ ବହି ଖଣ୍ଡିତ ଧରି ବସି ପଡ଼ିଲେ ।

- Good morning, uncle.

ନରମ ଗଳାର କଅଁଳିଆ ସ୍ୱର ଶୁଣି ସଂବିତ୍ ଫେରି ପାଇଲେ ଚିରନ୍ତନ ।

- Good morning.

ଭିତରକୁ ଆସ । (ପ୍ରାୟ ଛଅ ସାତ ବର୍ଷର ଗୁଲୁଗୁଲିଆ ଝିଅଟି । ବେଶଭୂଷାରୁ ଜଣାପଡ଼େ କେଉଁ ଏକ ଆଭିଜାତ୍ୟ ସଂପନ୍ନ ପରିବାରର ।) ଝିଅଟି ହସହସ ମୁହଁରେ ଆଗେଇ ଆସିଥିଲା ଚିରନ୍ତନଙ୍କ ନିକଟକୁ । ତାକୁ କୋଳରେ ଧରି ପଚାରିଥିଲେ -

- ତୁମ ନାଁ ?
- ଝୁଲରେ ତାକଡ଼ି ରୁପାଲୀ, ତାତି ତାକଡ଼ି ରୁପା ଆଉ ମାମିଙ୍କର ମୁଁ କୁନ୍ମୁନ୍ ।
- ଆରେ ଏତେ ଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ନାଁ ତୁମର, ବେଶ୍ ସୁନ୍ଦର ନାଁ ଗୁଡ଼ିଏତ !
- ତୁମେ କେଉଁ କ୍ଲାସରେ ପାଠ ପଢ଼ ?
- Joseph convent ରେ standard two ରେ ପଢ଼େ ।
- ଆଜ୍ଞା ରୁପା, ତୁମେ କେଉଁ ଠାରେ ରୁହ ?
- ଆସ uncle, terrace କୁ ଆସ । (ହାତ ଧରି ଟାଣିନେଇଥିଲା ରୁପା) ଏଇ ସେ ଯେଉଁ tall ଘରଟା ଦିଶୁନି, ଆଗରେ ଦେବଦାରୁ ଗଛ । ସେଇ ଘରଟା ଆମର । Daddy plant ରେ ନୂଆ join କରିଛନ୍ତି ।
- ତୁମେ କେତେ ଭାଇ ଭଉଣୀ ରୁପା ?
- ମୁଁ ଘରେ ଏକା uncle, ଖୁବ୍ bore ଲାଗିଛି । ମୋ ସାଙ୍ଗ ରୋଜା, ଲଭଲୀ, ଦିବ୍ୟା, ସୋମା, ଶ୍ରୀୟା ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର କେତେ କେତେ ଭାଇ ଭଉଣୀ । They have lots of fun all the time.
- ତମର ଗୋଟିଏ friend ଦରକାର ନାଁ ? ଆଜ୍ଞା ରୁପା, ମୁଁ କଣ ତମର friend ନୁହେଁ ?
- ତମେ କାହିଁକି ମୋ friend ହେବ ନାଁ ? ତମେତ ଏତେ tall । ମୁଁ ତମ waist ବି ହେବିନି ।
- ଓଃ, ତମର ତେବେ ତମରି height ର friend ଟିଏ ଦରକାର ନାଁ ।
- ହଁ । Exactly.
- ଆଜ୍ଞା ରୁପା, ତମେ ଗୀତ ଜାଣ ?
- ହଁ ମାମି ମତେ ବାଣୀରେ ଗୀତ ଶିଖାନ୍ତି ।
- ମାମି ତମର ଗୀତ ଜାଣନ୍ତି ?
- ଇସ୍ ମାମି ତ expert । ଆସିବନାଁ uncle ଆମ ଘରକୁ । ମାମି ଠାରୁ ଗୀତ ଶୁଣି ଆସିବ । ହସି ହସି ଦୌଡ଼ି ଚାଲି ଯାଇଥିଲା ରୁପାଲୀ ।
- ଶୁଣ, ଶୁଣ ରୁପା, ଟିକିଏ ଶୁଣିଯାଅ ।
- କାଲି ଆସିବ uncle, ଆଜି ତେରି ହୋଇ ଗଲାଣି । ମାମି ରାଗିବେ ।

ଝିଅଟିର ଯିବାର ବାଟକୁ ଅପଲକ ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ଦେଇ ଚାହିଁ ରହିଥିଲେ ଚିରନ୍ତନ । କେତେ cute ତାଙ୍କର ଯଦି ଏମିତି ପିଲାଟେ ଥାଆନ୍ତାନ୍ତା ସାରାଦିନ ତାକୁ ଛାତିରେ ଯାକି ଜୀବନର ସବୁତକ ଦୁଃଖ ଭୁଲି ଯାଇଥାଆନ୍ତେ । କାହାର ଝିଅ ସେ ? କେତେ ଭାଗ୍ୟବାନ୍ ସେମାନେ ସତରେ । ସବୁଦିନ ପାଇଁ ତାକୁ ରଖି ଦେବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା ହେଉଥିଲା ଚିରନ୍ତନଙ୍କର ।

ରୂପାର ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ଯିବା ଆସିବାରେ ଚିରନ୍ତନଙ୍କର ମମତା କ୍ରମେ ବଢିବାକୁ ଲାଗୁଥିଲା । ଗୋଟିଏ ଦିନର ବ୍ୟବଧାନରେ ରୁପାକୁ ନଦେଖି ସେ ପାଗଳ ହୋଇ ଉଠନ୍ତି । ନିଃସଙ୍ଗତାର ଭୂତ ଯେମିତି ତାଙ୍କୁ ଗ୍ରାସ କଲାପରି ମନେ ହୁଏ । ଏଇ କେତେଦିନ ହେବ ରୁପା ସତେକି ତାଙ୍କୁ ଯେଗେଇଛି ବଂଚି ରହିବାର ପାଥେୟ । ପୂର୍ବବତ୍ ଜୀବନଟା ଏତେ ଦୁର୍ଦ୍ଦିପ୍ତ ଜଣା ପଡୁନି ।

ଦୁଇଦିନ ହେବ ରୂପାର ଦେଖା ନାହିଁ । ଚିରନ୍ତନଙ୍କୁ ଖୁବ୍ ଖାଲି ଖାଲି ଲାଗୁଛି । କଣ ହେଲା ରୂପାର ? କାହିଁକି

ଆସୁନି ସିଏ ? ମାତ୍ର ଦୁଇଟି ଦିନର ବ୍ୟବଧାନ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଦୁଇଟା ଯୁଗ ପରି ମନେ ହେଲାଣି । ଯିବେକି ତାଙ୍କ ଘରକୁ । ବୁଝି ଆସିବେ । ନାଁ, ଆଜି ଦିନଟା ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରାଯାଉ । ତା ପରଦିନ ଚିରନ୍ତନଙ୍କର ସେଇ ଅପେକ୍ଷା । ସାମାନ୍ୟ ବିଳମ୍ବରେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ହୋଇ ପଡୁଛନ୍ତି । ବ୍ୟର୍ଥ ଆଶଙ୍କା ଗୁଡିଏ ମନକୁ ଘର୍ଷ କରି ଯାଉଛି । ଆରେ, ଏ ଯେ ରୂପା ଆସୁଛି । ଦୌଡ଼ି ଯାଇଥିଲେ ତାକୁ କୋଳେଇ ଆଣିବା ପାଇଁ ।

- ତୋ ଦେହ ଭଲ ଅଛିତ ରୂପା ? କାହିଁକି ଆସୁ ନଥିଲୁ ? ତୋ uncle ଉପରେ ରାଗିଛୁ ?
- ମୁଁ ମୋ uncle ଉପରେ କାହିଁକି ରାଗନ୍ତିମି । ଜାଣିଛୁ uncle, day before yesterday ତାତି ମାମିଙ୍କୁ କେତେ ମାରିଲେ ? ମୁଁ ତ ବାବା ଡରି ଯାଇଥିଲି । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଆସୁ ନଥିଲି । କାଲେ ତାତି ମତେ ମାରିବେ ବୋଲି ।
- ତାତି ତୋ ମାମିକୁ ମାରନ୍ତି ?
- ହଁ uncle, ମୋ ତାତି ଖୁବ୍ naughty । ମାମିଙ୍କର କିଛି ଦୋଷ ନଥିଲେବି ରାତିରେ drink କରି ଆସି ମାମିକୁ ମାରନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କ girl friend ମଲ୍ଲିକା auntie ପରା ଖୁବ୍ ଭଲ, ଆଉ ମାମି bad । ସବୁବେଳେ ତାଙ୍କର ସେଇ ମଲ୍ଲିକା auntie କଥା ।

ଇସ୍ ! ଏକ କୋମଳ ମତି ଶିଶୁର ପିତା ବିରୁଦ୍ଧରେ ଅଭିଯୋଗ । ଚାହୁଁକର ପ୍ରହାର ଅନୁଭବ କରିଥିଲେ ଚିରନ୍ତନ । ମଞ୍ଜିତ ତାଙ୍କର ଘୂରେଇ ଯାଉଥିଲା । ଏଯେ ଏକ ପ୍ରଗଳ୍ଭା ଚପଳମତୀ ଶିଶୁର ଗୁଲୁରୁ ଗୁଲୁରୁ କଥା ନୁହେଁ । ଏ ଏକ ଦୈତ୍ୟ ଜୀବନର ବ୍ୟଥାଭରା କାହାଣୀ ।

- ଚିରନ୍ତନଙ୍କର ଚକ୍ଷୁ ଯୁଗଳ ଲୋତକ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ହୋଇ ଯାଇଥିଲା । ଝରି ପଡ଼ିଥିଲା କେଇ ବିନ୍ଦୁ ଅଶ୍ରୁ ।
- ତମେ କାନ୍ଦନା uncle । ହିଃ ହିଃ .. uncle କାନ୍ଦୁଛନ୍ତି କହି ତାଳି ମାରି ହସି ହସି ଗଡ଼ି ଯାଇଥିଲା ରୂପାଲୀ । Baby ମାନେ ସିନା କାନ୍ଦନ୍ତି ।
 - ନାଁ, ମୁଁ ତ କାନ୍ଦୁନି । ଦେଖୁଲୁ ରୂପା ମୋ ଆଖିରେ କଣ ପଡ଼ିଗଲା ପରା ।
 - I'm sorry. ଦିଅ ମୁଁ ପୁଞ୍ଜି ଦେଉଛି । ଆଜ୍ଞା Uncle, ଆଜିତ ମତେ chocolate ଦେଇନ ?
 - ଆରେ ସତେତ ! ହେଇ ନେ ।
- ଅତି ଖୁସିରେ ଖାଇ ଚାଲିଥିଲା ରୂପାଲୀ ।
- ମୁଁ ଯାଉଛି uncle । ଡେରି ହେଲାଣି ତାତି ପୁଣି ମାରିବେ ମତେ । Bye, କାଲି ଆସିବି ।

ଅସହ୍ୟ ମାନସିକ ଯନ୍ତ୍ରଣାରେ ଭାରାକ୍ରାନ୍ତ ଚିରନ୍ତନଙ୍କ ମନ । ଆହା ! କେତେ ହତଭାଗିନୀ ରୂପାର ଜନ୍ମଦାତ୍ରୀ । କେତେ ଅଭିଶପ୍ତ ଜୀବନ ତାଙ୍କର ।

ତେବେ.....ତେବେ କଣ ସିଏ ସେଇ ନିଝୁମ୍ ରାତିର ନୀରବ ସାଧୁକା, ଯାହାର କଣ୍ଠରୁ ଝରିପଡ଼େ ଯୁଗଯୁଗର ପୁଞ୍ଜୀଭୂତ କରୁଣ ବେଦନାସଂଗୀତର ରୂପ ନେଇ । ଯାହାର ସଂଗୀତ କାନେ କାନେ କହିବୁଲେ ଏକ ଦରଦି ହୃଦୟର ବ୍ୟଥାଭରା କାହାଣୀ ।

କିନ୍ତୁ.....କିନ୍ତୁ କିଏ ସେଇ ମଣିଷ ରୂପୀ ବ୍ୟାଘ୍ର?? ଛିଃ, ଛିଃ, ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ହୋଇ ଏତେଟା ହିଂସ୍ରତା । ଏଇ ମଦ୍ୟପ ଙ୍ଗ ଠାରୁ ଜାତ ସଦ୍ୟ ଦରପୁଟା କଢ଼ି ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଜୀବନ ପ୍ରଭାତରୁ କି ଆଲୋକ ପାଇବେ ? କାହାର ଆଦର୍ଶରେ

ଅନୁପ୍ରାଣିତ ହେବେ ? ଚୈତନ୍ୟ, ବୁଦ୍ଧି, ମହାବୀର, ଗାନ୍ଧୀ, ଅରବିନ୍ଦ, ମଦର ଟେରେସା??? ମନେ ମନେ ପ୍ରତିହିଁସ ପରାୟଣ ହେଇ ଉଠିଥିଲେ ସମାଜସ୍ଥିତ ଏଇ କୀର୍ତ୍ତୀଶ୍ରୀ ମାନଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି । ଆଉ ଅଶେଷ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ବାଣରେ ଜର୍ଜରିତ କରି ପକେଇଥିଲେ ଚିରନ୍ତନ ନିଜକୁ ।

ରୂପାର ନାଲି ଟୁକୁ ଟୁକୁ ଓଠରେ ଆଜି ଗାମ୍ଭୀର୍ଯ୍ୟର ପ୍ରଲେପ ।

- କଣ ହେଇଛି ରୂପା ? ମୋ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ କଥା ହେବୁନି ?

- ନାଁ । ଆମ ଘରକୁ ନଗଲା ଯାଏ ତମ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ କଟି ।

- ଓଃ, ଏଇଥିପାଇଁ ତୋ ମୁହଁ ଫୁଲ ।

- ଚାଲ , ଏବେ ଚାଲ uncle । ମାମି ଆଜି ତମ ପାଇଁ dinner arrange କରିଛନ୍ତି ।

ହାତଧରି ଟାଣି ଟାଣି ନେଇ ଯାଉଥିଲା ରୂପାଲୀ । ବାଧ୍ୟ ଶିଶୁଟି ପରି ଧୂରେ ଧୂରେ ଅନୁସରଣ କରୁଥିଲେ ଚିରନ୍ତନ ।

-ମାମି, ମାମି uncle କୁ ଆଜି ମୁଁ ଧରି ଆଣିଛି । ତମେ ବସିଥାଅ uncle । ମୁଁ ମାମିକୁ ଡାକିଆଣେ ।

ତଡ଼ିତ୍ ବେଗରେ ଘର ଭିତରକୁ ଚାଲି ଯାଇଥିଲା ରୂପା ।

ଏକାକି ବସିରହି drawing room ର ସାଜ ସଜକୁ ନିରୀକ୍ଷଣ କରିଯାଉଥିଲେ ଚିରନ୍ତନ । ସାଜ ସଜ ଖୁବ୍ ଆଡ଼ମ୍ବର ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ, ରୁଚି ସଂପନ୍ନ । ରୂମ୍‌ର ଗୋଟିଏ side ବିଜେତାଙ୍କ କପ୍, ସିଲ୍‌ତ ରେ ଅଧିକୃତ । ବୋଧହୁଏ ରୂପାର ମାମିଙ୍କର ଏ ଗୌରବ । ଚିରନ୍ତନ ମନେ ମନେ ବିଶ୍ଳେଷଣ କରି ଯାଉଥିଲେ ।

- ଚାଲ ମାମି, drawing room ରେ uncle ଏକା ବସିଛନ୍ତି । ଭିତରେ ରୂପାର ଅଭିଯୋଗ ।

- ତୁ ଏତେ ବେଳଯାଏଁ କଣ କରୁଥିଲୁ ଜୁନୁନ ? Tuition sir ଯେ study room ରେ । ଆଜ୍ଞା ମୁଁ ଟିକିଏ ପରେ ଯାଉଛି । uncle ଙ୍କ ପାଖେ ଥା । ନାରୀ କଣ ସହ ଫ୍ଲେଟ ଚାମଚର ରୁଣୁଝୁଣୁ ଶବ୍ଦ ।

- ହଁ । ମାମି ଙ୍କର ତ ସବୁବେଳେ ଖାଲି କାମ । ଅଭିମାନରେ ଫୁଲି ଫୁଲି room ରେ ପଶିଗଲା ରୂପା ।

- ଆଜ୍ଞା ରୂପା, ଏ କପ୍, ସିଲ୍‌ତ ସବୁ କାହାର ?

- ସବୁ ଗୁଡ଼ା ମାମି vocal music ରେ ପାଇଛନ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ uncle , ଯେଉଁଟା ସବୁଠାରୁ small , ମଝିରେ ଅଛି, ମୁଁ ପାଇଛି । Race ରେ ଆମ ସ୍କୁଲରେ first ହେଇଥିଲି ।

- ଆରେ ବାଃ, ତୁ ଏତେ ଭଲ ଖେଳୁ, ମତେ କହିନୁତ ?

- ହଁ uncle, ଏ ଯେଉଁ oil paint, ଏଇଟା ମଲ୍ଲୀକା auntie ତାଡ଼ିଲୁ present କରିଛନ୍ତି ତାଙ୍କ birthday ରେ । Isn't it beautiful?

-ହେଉତ ମାମି ଆସିଲେଣି । ମାମି, ମାମି ଇୟେ ମୋ uncle, uncle, ଇଏ ମୋ ମାମି ।

ଆନନ୍ଦରେ ଉଡ଼ୁଥିଲା ହୋଇ ଏକା ନିଶ୍ବାସ ରେ ଉଭୟଙ୍କୁ ଉଭୟଙ୍କର ପରିଚୟ ଦେବାରେ ପ୍ରତିନିଧିତ୍ୱ କରିଥିଲା ରୂପାଲୀ । ଆଉ ଅନିଚ୍ଛା ସତ୍ତ୍ୱେ ଚାଲି ଯାଇଥିଲା ନିଜ study room କୁ ।

ଉଭୟେ ନୀରବ । କଣ ବାଖୁରୁଛ । ଲୋଚକ ଭରା ଚକ୍ଷୁ ନେଇ ପରସ୍ପର ଚାହିଁ ରହିଛନ୍ତି ପରସ୍ପରକୁ ।

- ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କୁ ତୁ ? ତୁ ତେବେ ରୂପାର ଗର୍ଭଧାରିଣୀ ?

- ଚିନ୍ତୁଭାଇ ତୁମେ ??

ଉଭୟଙ୍କର କଣ୍ଠରେ କୋହ । ଥରଥର କଣ୍ଠରେ ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କୁ କହିଥିଲା, "ହଁ ଚିନ୍ତୁଭାଇ, ଅତୀତର ତୁମ୍ଭର ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କୁ ଆଜି ତୁମ ସମ୍ମୁଖରେ ଦେଖାଯାମାନ । ଏ ହତଭାଗିନୀ କେବେ ବି ଆଶା କରି ନଥିଲା ଏମିତି ଆକସ୍ମିକ ଭାବେ ତୁମର ଦର୍ଶନ ପାଇବ ବୋଲି । କେଉଁଠାରେ ଏତେଦିନ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ନିଜକୁ ଛପେଇ ରଖୁଥିଲା ଚିନ୍ତୁଭାଇ ? ତମର କଣ ମୋ କଥା କେବେବି ମନେ ପଡ଼େନା ? ଆମର ଅତୀତ ସ୍ମୃତି ମନରେ ତମର କେବେ କଣ ଆଲୋଚନା ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରେନା ? ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କର ଚକ୍ଷୁରେ ଶ୍ରାବଣର ବନ୍ୟା ।

- ହୃଦୟରେ ତୋ ପ୍ରତି ଅତୀତର ସେଇ ଆକର୍ଷଣ ଆଜି ଯଏ ଅକ୍ଷୟ ରହିଛି ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କୁ । ସେଇଥି ପାଇଁତ

ହଠାତ୍ ଆଜି ଆକସ୍ମିକ ଭାବେ ତୋ ସହ ସାକ୍ଷାତ୍ ।

- ତୁମେ ମତେ ମନେ ରଖୁଛ ଚିନ୍ତୁଭାଇ ? ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କର ଆବେଗଭରା ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ।

- ଜୀବନର ପ୍ରଥମ ପ୍ରଣୟକୁ ଭୁଲିଯିବା ଏତେ ସହଜ ନୁହେଁ ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କୁ । ଅଗ୍ନିକୁ ସାକ୍ଷୀରଖି ବେଦୀସ୍ଥ ବ୍ରାହ୍ମଣର

ମନ୍ତ୍ର ପାଠ ଦ୍ଵାରା ଆମ ହସ୍ତ ଗଣ୍ଠର ସିନା ସମ୍ଭବ ହେଲାଣି । କିନ୍ତୁ ମନର ଗଣ୍ଠିଯେ ଖୁବ୍ ଦୃଢ଼ । ଛାଡ଼ ସେ

ଅତୀତ ଇତିହାସ । ତୋ ସଂଗୀତ ସାଧନା ପୂର୍ବବତ୍ ଅବ୍ୟାହତ ରହିଛି ତେବେ । Drawing room

ରେ ତୋ ଗୌରବର ଚିହ୍ନ ସବୁକୁ ଦେଖିଲେ ମନ ମୋର କୁରୁଳି ଉଠୁଛି ।

- ହଁ ଚିନ୍ତୁଭାଇ, ଏକଲବ୍ୟର ଅସ୍ତ୍ର ସାଧନା ପରି ତୁମ୍ଭର ସ୍ମୃତିକୁ ସମ୍ମାନ କରି ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କୁ ତୁମର ଆଗେଇ ଚାଲିଛି । ଏତେଟା ଲୋ କପ୍ରିୟତା ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତ ପାଇଁ ହେଲେ ଭୁଲି ପାରିନି ତମକୁ । ସହସ୍ର ସହସ୍ର କରତାଳିରେ ଗଗନ ପବନ

ଯେବେ ମୁଖରିତ, ପେଣ୍ଠାଲୁଣ୍ଡିତ ତୁମ୍ଭର ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କୁ ଖୋଜିଲା ଖୋଜିଲା ଆଖିରେ

ଖୋଜିବୁଲେ ତାରି ଅତୀତ ପ୍ରିୟକୁ । ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ସମୟରେ ତୁମେ ମୋ ହୃଦୟରେ ଝଙ୍କାର ସୃଷ୍ଟିକର ଚିନ୍ତୁଭାଇ । ଆଉ ତୁମର

ଏ ଅଭିଶପ୍ତ ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କୁ ନିଷ୍ଠୁର୍ ରାତିରେ ମେଲେଇଦିଏ ତାର ସଂଗୀତ ଆସର କେବଳ ତୁମ୍ଭର ଅନୁସନ୍ଧାନରେ ।

- ତେବେ ତୋରି କଣ୍ଠରେ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧରାତ୍ରୀରେ ସେଇ ମୁର୍ଚ୍ଛନା..... । ହଁ ଚିନ୍ତୁଭାଇ, ଦ୍ଵାରିକାନାଥ ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣ

ଙ୍କ ବଂଶୀ ସ୍ଵର ପ୍ରେୟସୀ ରାଧିକାଙ୍କୁ ପାଗଳ କଲାପରି ମୋର ବିଶ୍ଵାସଥିଲା, ଦିନେ ମୋର ଏ ସ୍ଵର ଆକର୍ଷଣ କରି

ଆଣିବ ମୋ ପ୍ରାଣର ଚିନ୍ତୁ ଭାଇକୁ । ମୋ ବର୍ଷ ବର୍ଷର ସାଧନା ତେବେ ବ୍ୟର୍ଥ ଯାଇନି । ତୁମେ ଆଜି ଆସିଛ.....ତୁମେ

ଆସିଛ ତୁମ ଅଭାଗ୍ୟ ପ୍ରେୟସୀର ଚକ୍ଷୁନୀରକୁ ପୋଛି ଦେବାପାଇଁ । ସବୁ କିଛିର ପରି ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣତା ମଧ୍ୟରେ ମୁଁ ଆଜି ଖୁବ୍

ନିଃସ୍ଵ ଚିନ୍ତୁଭାଇ । ତୁମ୍ଭର ସେଦିନର ଚପଳଛନ୍ଦା ନାୟିକା ଆଜି ଅନ୍ୟର ଚକ୍ଷୁଶୂଳା ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧାଙ୍ଗିନୀ । ତୁମ ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କୁ ପାଇଛି

ମାତୃତ୍ଵର ଗୌରବ । ପାଇଛି ଏକ ସମ୍ପାନ୍ତ ବଂଶର କୁଳବଧୂ ହେବାର ସମ୍ମାନ । ଏକ ପଦସ୍ଥ କର୍ମକର୍ତ୍ତା ଙ୍କ ଧର୍ମପତ୍ନୀ

ହେବାର ସୁଯୋଗ । କିନ୍ତୁ ପାଇନି ସ୍ଵାମୀର ସାମାନ୍ୟ ସୋହାଗ । ସ୍ଵାମୀ ଯେ ଅନ୍ୟ ନାରୀ ପ୍ରତି ଆଶକ୍ତ ।

- ତୁମେ ବିବାହ କରିଛ ଚିନ୍ତୁଭାଇ ? ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କର ଆବେଗଭରା ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ।

- ନାଁ । ଅତୀତର ସେଇ ମଧୁର ସ୍ମୃତିକୁ ପାଥେୟ କରି ତ ଏ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ହେଲା ବଂଚି ରହିଛି । କଣ ମିଳିବ ସେ

ବନ୍ଧନରୁ ।

- ତୁମେ ଏବେ ସୁଦ୍ଧା ଅବିବାହତ ? (ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କର ମୁଖ ଆଶାର ପ୍ରଥମ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟାଲୋକରେ ସାମାନ୍ୟ ଉଜଳି

ଉଠିଥିଲା ।) କିନ୍ତୁ କାହିଁକି ଚିନ୍ତୁଭାଇ ? ଜୀବନ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାରେ କିଏ ଦେବ ତୁମକୁ ସାହଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ । ସାଧୁହୀନ

ଜୀବନ ଯେ ଖୁବ୍ ଦୁର୍ବିସହ ।

ତେବେ.....ତେବେ ଅବଶିଷ୍ଟ ଜୀବନ ମୋର, ତୁମରି ସେବାରେ ନିୟୋଜିତ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଦେଇ ପାରିବି
ଏ ଅଧମାକୁ ସାମାନ୍ୟ ସୁଯୋଗ ? ଚରଣ ତଳର ଦାସୀ ହେବାର ଚିକିତ୍ସା ଅଧିକାର ?? ମୁଁ ତୁମର ଆଶ୍ରୟ
ଚାହେଁ ଚିନ୍ତୁଛି । ଚାହେଁ ତୁମର ସାନିଧ୍ୟ । ମଦ୍ୟପ ସ୍ବାମୀଙ୍କ ଲାଞ୍ଜନା ସହବା ପାଇଁ ମୁଁ ଆଜି
ଅକ୍ଷମ । ମୋତେ କୁଳରେ ଲଗାଅ ଚିନ୍ତୁଛି । ହେଇ ଦେଖ, ଅତୀତ ପ୍ରିୟ ତମ ଆଜି କେମିତି ଉତ୍ତର
ବୈତରଣୀରେ ପୋଡ଼ିଜଳି ନିଃଶେଷ ହେଇ ଯାଇଛି ।

- ଥାଉ, ଥାଉ ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କ । ଜଳି ଯାଇଥିବା ପାଉଁଶରେ ଅଗ୍ନି ସଂଯୋଗ କଲେ ତାହା ଜଳିଉଠେନା । ତୋ ଚିନ୍ତା
ଭାଇର ସରାଗ ଅନେକ ଦିନୁ ମରି ଯାଇଛି । ପୁଣି କାହିଁକି ସେ ଆକର୍ଷଣ ।
- ତେବେ ଜୀବନ ଗଙ୍ଗୋତ୍ରୀକୁ ପାରି ହେବା ପାଇଁ ଦେଇ ପାରିବନି ସାମାନ୍ୟ ସାହଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ ? ତୁମେ ଏତେ ଭାରୁ
ଚିନ୍ତୁଛ । ତୁମେ ଏତେ ସ୍ୱାର୍ଥପର । ସାମାନ୍ୟ ଆତ୍ମୋତ୍ସର୍ଗ ପାଇଁ ଏତେଟା କୁଣ୍ଡିତ ନିଜ ପ୍ରିୟତମାର ଦୁର୍ଦ୍ଦଶା
ତମ ମନରେ ସାମାନ୍ୟ କ୍ଷତ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରୁନି ? ଦୁଃଖିନୀ ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ତମ ମନରେ ଚିକିତ୍ସା ହେଲେ ଦୟାର
ଉଦ୍ବେଗ ହେଉନି ??
- ଏକ ବିବାହିତା ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ପକ୍ଷରେ ଅନ୍ୟ ପୁରୁଷର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନସେ ମହାପାପ । ଏକ ସାମାନ୍ୟ ନାରୀ ପାଇଁ ନିଜର
ସ୍ବାମୀ, ସନ୍ତାନ ଦ୍ୱାରା ସୁସଜିତ ଘରଟାକୁ ଉଜାଡ଼ି ଦେବାର ବ୍ୟର୍ଥ ପ୍ରୟାସ କରୁନି ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କ । ତୋରି
ଚେଷ୍ଟାରେ ଏ ଭଗ୍ନ କୁଟିର ଖଣ୍ଡିତ ଦିନେନା ଦିନେ ଏକ ବିରାଟ ଅଜ୍ଞାନିକା ରେ ପରିଣତ ହେବ । ପତିପ୍ରାଣୀ
ସତୀ ସାବିତ୍ରୀ ତ ପୁଣି ନିଜର ପତିବ୍ରତା ବଳରେ ସ୍ୱର୍ଗ ସମରାଜଙ୍କ ନିକଟରୁ ନିଜ ମୃତ ସ୍ବାମୀଙ୍କୁ ଫେରାଇ
ଆଣିଥିଲେ । ତେବେ ତୁ କାହିଁକି ତୋର ମଦ୍ୟପ ପଥକ୍ରୁଷ୍ଟ ସ୍ବାମୀଙ୍କୁ ଆଲୋକ ଦେଖାଇବାରେ ଅକ୍ଷମ
ହେବୁ? ତୁ ସେଇ ନାରୀ ମନ୍ଦିରେ ଦୀକ୍ଷିତା । ତୁ ପାରିବୁ ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କ.....ତୁ ନିଷ୍ଠୁର ପାରିବୁ, ମୋର ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ
ବିଶ୍ୱାସ । ଏଇଥି ପାଇଁ ତୋର ଯୈର୍ଯ୍ୟ, ଦୃଢ଼ତା, ମନର ବଳ ଓ ଆତ୍ମ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ଦରକାର ।
- ଆଃ, ବନ୍ଦକର ତମର ବକ୍ତବ୍ୟ । ବଧୂରା ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କର ଶ୍ରବଣେନ୍ଦ୍ରିୟକୁ ଏହା ଯେ ଘର୍ଷ କରୁନି । ତମେ ଏତେ
ନିଷ୍ଠୁର । ନିଜ ପ୍ରିୟତମାର ବିପର୍ଯ୍ୟୟ ସମୟରେ ସହାନୁଭୂତି ବଦଳରେ ଦେଇ ଚାଲିଛ ରାଶି ରାଶି
ଉପଦେଶ । ତୁମେଇ ନାଁ ସେଇ ଚିନ୍ତୁଛ ଯିଏକି ଦିନେ ଯୌବନ ଭରା ରୂପସୀ ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କର ସଙ୍ଗଲାଇ
କରିବା ପାଇଁ ପାଗଳ ହେଇ ଉଠିଥିଲ । ତୁମେ ଇ ନାଁ ସେଇ, ଯିଏ ନିଜ ପ୍ରିୟର ବିପର୍ଯ୍ୟୟ ବେଳେ
ଚିରସାଥୀ ହେବାର ସଂକଳ୍ପ ନେଇଥିଲ । କିନ୍ତୁ.....କିନ୍ତୁ କାହିଁକି ଆଜି ଏତେଟା ବିତନ୍ତୁହ । ଅତୀତ
ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କ ପରି ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କର ନାହିଁ ସେଇ ଭରା ଯୌବନ କି ନାହିଁ ସେଇ ତମକପ୍ରଦ ଚେହେରା ।
ଆଜି ସେ ଅସୁନ୍ଦରୀ । ଏଇୟ ନା ???
- ଥାଉ - - ଥାଉ ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କ ତୋ ଚିନ୍ତୁଛ ତୋର ସଦା ହିତାକାଂକ୍ଷୀ । ତତେ ପଥକ୍ରୁଷ୍ଟ କରେଇ ମୁହଁରେ
ତୋ କାଳିମାର ପ୍ରଲେପକୁ ଆଦୌ ସଯ୍ୟ କରି ପାରିବନି ।
- ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟମୁଖର ମନ ନେଇ ବର୍ଷ ବର୍ଷର ରାଗିଣୀ ମୋର ବ୍ୟର୍ଥ ଯାଇଛି ତେବେ । ମୋ ଚକ୍ଷୁ ଯୁଗକୁ ଏ
ଲୋତକ ଧାରା ତାହାହେଲେ ଚିରସ୍ରୋତା । ଭାବିଥିଲି ଚିନ୍ତୁଛ, ତୁମେଇ ବାନ୍ଧିବ ଏ ଲୋତକ ଧାରାର
ସେତୁବନ୍ଧ । ତୁମେଇ ଘୋଷଣା କରିବ ମୋର ଏ ବିନିଦ୍ର ରଜନୀର ପରିସମାପ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ - - କିନ୍ତୁ ଏ କଣ
ହେଲା । ଦୁଃଖିନୀ ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କର ଦୁଃଖ ତେବେ ଚିରସାଥୀ । ବିଦାୟ ଚିନ୍ତୁଛ - - ବିଦାୟ ।

* * * * *

ତୁମ୍ଭଙ୍କର କଣ ବାଞ୍ଛାରୁ ହେଇ ଆସୁଥିଲା । ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ ଅତିଥିର ସମ୍ମାନ ରକ୍ଷା କରିବା ପାଇଁ ସେ ଯେ ଆଜି
ଶକ୍ତିହୀନ ।

A regular contributor to the OSA Journal, Jhinu Chhotray lives with her husband Santanu in Cleveland, Ohio.

TANGO IN TORONTO

DR. PRASANNA K. PATI

"Dr. Sonjee, I am Dr. Verghese. You are not seriously injured. You are lucky, The bullet glanced through skin just over your left shoulder. There are no vascular or nerve injuries. There will be no functional limitations. I notice you were born in India, and that you are a Hindu. I also note that you have a private practice in psychiatry in Oakland, California.

You are here in Toronto to attend the annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association. I am originally from Cochin in the state of Kerala in India."

I opened my eyes and made eye contact with this strikingly handsome doctor, probably in his late thirties. I knew that I was in the Emergency room of the Toronto General Hospital, but I was still in a daze. I remembered that earlier in the evening, I was walking alone on the twenty-first avenue to the Four Seasons Toronto Hotel, where I was staying. Earlier in the evening, I had attended a symposium on "Mental Disorders and Violence."

I responded in a weak voice, "I am glad to meet you Dr. Verghese. Do you have the details of what happened to me? My memory is blurred. I was walking along this street. It was dark but there were people around. I walked by a Pizza Restaurant. Just after, there was a dark alley to my right. Then, I saw some shadowy movements in the alley. I had no fear or suspicion. I suppose I was engrossed in my fantasies. Then, I heard distinctly something like, 'Bash that Paki, Bash that Hindu'. Just as I got on the sidewalk right across the alley, I heard a shot, and then felt a sharp, stabbing pain in my left shoulder. The pain was so sharp and intense that I staggered and fell on the sidewalk. I felt warm blood. It was then that I fell unconscious, I believe."

Dr. Verghese responded, "You seem to recall virtually all the details except for what followed. According to Police, who interviewed witnesses, there were two men walking just behind you, perhaps twenty feet. They heard a shot and saw you stagger and fall. They ran to assist you. At that moment, there appeared two white males, in neo-Nazi outfits. One of these youths was about to kick you with his boot, but that kick landed on one of the men who had come to assist you. There was a scuffle and these two young men were subdued by your helpers and by others who rushed to the scene. They have been arrested."

"But Dr. Verghese, how do you know all these details and that these young men were neo-Nazis?"

"Dr. Sonjee, they have interviewed the criminals. They belong to a neo-Nazi gang in Toronto. They have been previously implicated in vandalizing South Asian businesses in Little India. You know, Little India along Gerrard Street has a number of Indian restaurants and businesses. They have regularly indulged in what is referred to as 'Paki bashing', that is, attacks on people of South Asian origin in Toronto.

I was getting angry. I had escaped death, but my anger had no limits. I could not console myself. I was attending a professional meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in 1977 and I had fallen victim to racial paranoia.

"Dr, Sonjee, you will be discharged from the hospital. It is about ten now. I will accompany you to the Four Seasons Hotel."

"That would be very nice of you, Dr. Verghese. I am quite capable of getting there by taxi, but I am apprehensive. I will take you up on your offer. Who were the men who might have saved my life?"

"Dr. Sonjee, I have their names from the Police and the hotel they are staying in. Mr. Kruger and Mr. Simpson are in the Hilton. They too are attending a conference in Toronto. They are from Dayton, Ohio. You will be interested to know that they are African-American."

For a moment, this fact didn't quite register with me. Then, in a flash, I could visualize a confrontation between two African Americans and two neo-Nazis in this beautiful city of Toronto.

Dr. Verghese continued, "Dr. Sonjee, these two gentlemen are teachers in the Dayton, Ohio school district, and they were attending a teachers' convention. It was reported by the Police and witnesses that the skin-heads, during the scuffle, used the most vile and unspeakable language."

It was time to leave the hospital. Dr. Verghese and I walked to his car. He insisted on accompanying me to the lobby of the hotel. He gave me his home address and phone number and said, "Call me if you need any help."

I had a restless night. My plans for attending the psychiatric meetings were shattered and my enjoying the

City of Toronto as a tourist was also destroyed on that sidewalk. During the next day, I was interviewed extensively by the R.C.M.P. detectives, who were very kind and considerate. At the conclusion of the depositions, I was warned by these officers that I would most definitely be subpoenaed for the upcoming trial of these assailants. I decided to return home. I called a friend of mine, a psychiatrist in Oakland, California who was also attending the psychiatric convention. He came over right away. Despite my anger and inner turmoil, I tried to reassure him that I was not seriously injured. My friend had a volatile personality and it was difficult to calm him down. He insisted that he accompany me to the airport for my flight to San Francisco. During the taxi ride to the airport, he was constantly talking about how difficult it had been to achieve justice and equality in human history. He referred to mass eviction of the Jewish citizens from Spain in the early 16th century, systematic assaults on and plunder of the Native Americans in the New World, virtual annihilation of the aborigines in Australia, slavery in the Americas and the holocaust.

I made an attempt to add a hopeful note by stating that both Canada and India belonged to the British Commonwealth of Nations and both were vibrant democracies. We were approaching the Lester B. Pearson International Airport. He responded, "Perhaps, we will talk more about this later on. But Dr. Sonjee, do not forget the sign on the entrance to the English Club in Bombay of pre-independence India which read, 'Dogs and Indians not Allowed'."

I resumed my normal activities. I received a letter from Dr. Verghese inquiring as to how I was doing. He had talked with officials and organizations in the City of Toronto and the Province of Ontario, who were actively engaged in combating racial discrimination and abuses of human rights. According to Dr. Verghese, the Province of Ontario was very keen on combating racism and discrimination on the basis of religion and ethnicity. I knew that incidents continue to happen in all large and small North American cities.

Only after returning to Oakland and slowly getting over the hurt, pain and anger, I decided to call both the African-American teachers in Dayton, Ohio one evening. "Mr. Kruger, this is Dr. Sonjee in Oakland. I am the man you helped in Toronto early last week."

"Yes, Dr. Sonjee, how are you doing?"

"I am doing fairly well. How about you?"

"Dr. Sonjee, my friend Jim Simpson and I were really enjoying our visit to Toronto until that incident. It was a shock."

"Mr. Kruger, you and your friend put yourselves in the line of fire to protect me and then subdued those neo-Nazis, altogether an act of extraordinary courage and compassion. You saved me from an undignified death, an execution-style death and from being a victim of neo-Nazism on a sidewalk in Toronto. I thank you and wish you the best."

"Don't mention it Doc. We happened to be at the right place at the right time. Take care".

"Yes, thank you again, Mr. Kruger".

Then I called Mr. Simpson. However, it was a different type of conversation. He was the one who took the brunt of the kick from the neo-Nazi boot and he had not yet returned to work.

"Mr. Simpson, this is Dr. Sonjee the victim in Toronto early last week. How are you doing?"

"Hey, Dr. Sonjee, I am glad you called. I was thinking about you. I am not badly hurt, but the trauma to my psyche is almost unbelievable. I am obsessed with that incident and that vile language of a racist punk directed against tax-paying, law-abiding citizens."

We talked some more. I thought Mr. Simpson was developing a post-traumatic stress disorder in as much as he indicated that he had insomnia, nightmares and much anxiety. I gently suggested to him that he might need professional help and he agreed to consider it. "Mr. Simpson, I really feel bad. I hope you will heal soon. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."

I was not looking forward to going to Toronto to testify in the upcoming trial of these two neo-Nazis. It was not the court appearance as such but just being in Toronto that made me anxious. I have been a workaholic in America. During periods of great personal stress and even despair, I continued to work fairly effectively and without getting into substance abuse or even clinical depression. However, that incident in downtown Toronto haunted me.

In late August 1977, I received a call from the Public Prosecutor's office in Toronto informing me that the trial was scheduled in mid-September and that I would be served a subpoena. I was expected to testify. I called up Dr. Verghese the same evening and he invited me to stay with his family. He also indicated that he had been in constant touch with the Public Prosecutor's office and that both Mr. Kruger and Mr. Simpson were coming to testify. He and his wife were to meet me at the Lester B. Pearson International Airport on arrival. I felt immensely relieved that I was staying in their home rather than a hotel in Toronto.

The day of the departure for Toronto came too quickly. I was met at the airport by not only Dr. and Mrs. Verghese, but at least a dozen prominent members of the South Asian community of Toronto. I was not expecting this kind of a reception. Obviously, subsequent to that incident in May, there were a number of meetings of prominent South Asians among themselves and their meetings with human rights organizations in Toronto. That much I understood in that airport reception. On our way to the Verghese home, I was informed that the group at the airport had representatives from India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. For the next couple of days, I was interviewed by more attorneys prosecuting the case on behalf of the Province of Ontario and by R.C.M.P. detectives. My story remained the same.

The trial itself lasted two days. Besides myself, Mr. Kruger, Mr. Simpson and R.C.M.P. detectives, there were other witnesses who were involved in subduing the assailants. The Public Defender argued for mercy. The defendants came from disturbed family backgrounds. Both were high school drop-outs; they had no family or community support. During my long career as a psychiatrist in America, I had seen literally hundreds of such youths. Many of them were mentally disturbed, but here in this Court of Law, I was there as a victim and not as a psychiatrist. I made frequent eye contact with the defendants: blond, boyish looking, pathetic, flat and awkward. I wondered if the Hitler Youth in the waning days of World War II looked like these two young people. They were found guilty and the sentencing date was set for October by the Judge. I had heard that they would be sentenced to twenty years in prison on being found guilty of attempted murder. Justice had been done but my anger for being violated on that evening in Toronto had not really subsided.

Dr. and Mrs. Verghese had told me that there would be a get-together in their home of prominent members of the South Asian community of Toronto, some members of the Provincial Human Rights Commission and the Member of the Canadian Parliament representing Toronto. It was going to be a celebration of victory for justice. I insisted that both Mr. Kruger and Mr. Simpson be invited to this gathering.

It was a typical South Asian get-together; lots of food, talk about home countries, talking at the same time and children running around. There was going to be a formal meeting and according to the hosts, anyone could make brief remarks. During this gathering, I visited with both Mr. Kruger and Mr. Simpson, who seemed to be enjoying themselves.

Finally, Dr. Verghese called for attention and announced that the meeting would start. Dr. Hussain, a Pakistani in origin, and now a prominent orthopedist in Toronto, made the following remarks: "Ladies and Gentlemen, today is a small victory. We love Canada. However, our fight for equality and justice for all will continue. We have to be on the alert as members of the South Asian community. 'Paki

bashing' must stop totally. We are relieved that Dr. Sonjee escaped a major injury or death. If something like this could happen to him, it could happen to us, citizens of Toronto. I am thankful to Allah that his life was spared."

Mr. Joshi, originally from Allahabad in India, made the following remarks: "I would like to express our sincere thanks to Mr. Kruger and Mr. Simpson for saving Dr. Sonjee's life. That kick by the skin-head was not only meant to hurt Dr. Sonjee but also to hurt the entire South Asian community of Toronto." At this point, every one stood up and gave a warm applause to Mr. Simpson.

Mr. Joshi was followed by one Miss Khalida, who introduced herself as a senior in the University of Toronto. Her family had come from Bangladesh. She said, "I have had sleepless nights since the attack on Dr. Sonjee took place. There are many many victims of this attack besides Dr. Sonjee. This is not an isolated incident. 'Paki bashing', harassment and racial slurs have been occurring for years. This is not unique to Toronto. It has been happening in all major North American cities. We have to be alert and vigilant."

A few more made brief remarks on similar lines, on maintaining unity among South Asian community groups and fighting against 'Paki bashing' through non-violent, legal and constitutional means.

Mrs. Verghese suggested that I speak for a few minutes. I was reluctant but as she was the gracious hostess, I couldn't refuse.

"Ladies and Gentlemen, I appreciate your coming here and providing each other emotional support. It is kind of you to give me the same support. Yes, the South Asian community in Toronto and in fact, all of Canada and USA have made immense contributions to the fields of science, medicine, engineering and all other major professions. It has added to the cultural mosaic of North America. The South Asians should be proud of their achievements in Canada. Let us not forget that Canadians and Americans have provided us with the milieu and educational opportunities for such outstanding achievements. Also, let us not forget that as citizens of Canada or USA, we have to give something back. It must not be, 'all take and no give'. It is not enough for me to be just a doctor. I have to give something more to my community in Oakland, California. It is not enough for the South Asian community of Toronto to be concerned only with their rights and be involved in only their ethnic activities. It has to be more, much more."

At this point, I asked Mr. Kruger and Mr. Simpson to come forward and sit by me on the sofa. They were not very thrilled about it, but I was in charge.

I resumed my speech, "You are rightly and understandably concerned with attacks on members of the South Asian community in Toronto. However, did these two gentlemen ever think of race when they came to my rescue? Some of you know the history of slavery in various countries of the Americas. How would you feel if a child of Indian, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan or Pakistani origin is teased, taunted, shoved and kicked in the school playgrounds just because of his or her brown skin? You would feel enraged. Do you feel the same rage when an African-Canadian child is subjected to similar abuse? How would you feel if you were called a 'Nigger' and given a dirty look in some places in Toronto? You must not forget that not too many years back, the English in India used to call us 'Niggers, Blackies or Coolies'. By a sweeping judgment based solely on skin color, they made themselves superior. Some of you may not know that at the entrance of an English club in pre-independence Bombay, it was prominently written, 'Dogs and Indians Not Allowed'."

At this point, I suggested to Mrs. Verghese that there should be a break for a few minutes. During the break, we had samosas and tea. I noticed that many people had congregated around Mr. Kruger and Mr. Simpson and were animatedly talking to them.

The group reassembled. Again, I asked Mr. Kruger and Mr. Simpson to sit by me on the sofa. I put my arms around them and resumed, "These two men are my brothers." At that point, my voice rose sharply and I pointed an accusing finger at the group, and almost screamed, "Do not forget the South Asian experience in Uganda when Idi Amin kicked them out. In that country, the South Asians remained an elite community, keeping the native Africans at arms' length. Right or wrong, they were considered foreigners and exploiters. There was a racial divide. That racial divide must be broken down in North America. If these two men are 'Niggers', I too am a 'Nigger'. As long as any citizen of Canada or America is considered inferior simply on the basis of skin color, then, our fight is not over. Let me give this message to the South Asian community of Toronto: open your hearts and doors to

citizens of Toronto who are of African origin. Make a special effort to invite them to your functions. Let this process start now. They need us and we need them. You will find that people of African origin are no different from us and they are a wonderful people. We, South Asians, must not hide behind our professional and financial achievements in North America and stay away from such burning issues such as racism, domestic violence and religious bigotry. All our countries in South Asia are tainted with gross human rights violations: virtual elimination of Hindus and Sikhs in Pakistan, continuing discrimination against the lower castes and tribals in India, ongoing flight of Hindu citizens from Bangladesh, the horrors of the ethnic war in Sri Lanka, the history of mass rape of the women of Bangladesh and the genocide by the Pakistani Army just prior to independence of that country. We must not repeat those mistakes in our new homelands. We must go out and extend our friendship to all. Once you open the doors to your heart to an African-Canadian, or a Native Canadian or anyone else, you will experience a kind of joy that you might not have experienced before."

There was silence after I concluded. There was no applause but there were many tearful eyes. Someone started singing "We Shall Overcome" and the group joyfully started singing this bitter-sweet song, holding hands.

I returned to Oakland the next day. Within a matter of days, I joined the Oakland Chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. The first meeting I attended was on an emergency basis. It was related to several incidents of racism against African-Americans but there were some white Americans. I was the only person of Asian origin. At least it was a beginning, I consoled myself.

Not too many months after that, there appeared a story on the front page of the San Francisco newspaper that many Asian owned businesses were vandalized and graffitied with Hitler's Swastika signs. Here was a message, virtually the same message that fell me on a street in Toronto.

Editorial disclaimer: "Toronto is actually a very safe city with the highest multicultural population in the world".

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ଦିବା ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ

ସ୍ୱାତୀ ମହାପାତ୍ର

ଦୀର୍ଘ ୪୦ ବର୍ଷ ପୂର୍ବରୁ, ମିଶ୍ରବାବୁ ତାଙ୍କର ଜନ୍ମମାଟି ଛାଡ଼ିଲେଣି । କେବେ ବି ସେ ଫେରି ଚାହୁଁ ନାହାନ୍ତି । ୪୦ ବର୍ଷ ଯେପରି ତାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ କିଛି ନୁହେଁ । ଏ ଭିତରେ, ସେ ତାଙ୍କ ଜୀବନର ଚାଲିଚଳନ, ଏପରିକି ଖାଦ୍ୟ, ପାନୀୟ ଓ ବାସଗୃହର ସମସ୍ତ ତଳ ବଦଳେଇ ସାରିଛନ୍ତି । ସେ ଆଜି ମନେ ମନେ ଗର୍ବୀତ ଯେ, ସେ ଏକ କମ୍ପାନୀର ମାଲିକ । ତାଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ଶହ ଶହ ଲୋକ କାମ କରନ୍ତି । ସେ ଆଜି ନିଜ କମ୍ପାନୀର ପ୍ରେସିଡେଣ୍ଟ । ବହୁତ କଷ୍ଟ ସହିଛନ୍ତି ସେ ଆଜି ଏହି ଉଚ୍ଚ ସ୍ତରରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିବା ପାଇଁ । ସବୁ ସୁଖକୁ ଜଳାଖଳି ଦେଇ ସେ ନିଜ କର୍ମ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ଏକ ଅଭିମାନୀ କର୍ମଜୀବି ଭାବେ ଅହରହ କର୍ମ କରି ଚାଲିଛନ୍ତି । ସେଥିରେ ତାଙ୍କର ଆତ୍ମାକୁ ଶାନ୍ତି ମିଳୁଛି । ପରଦେଶରେ ଆସି ସେ ଯେପରି ନିଜକୁ ରଙ୍ଗେଇ ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି ସେମାନଙ୍କ ରଙ୍ଗରେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏତେ ବିଭବ, ଏତେ ପ୍ରଶଂସା କାହାପାଇଁ? କାହାପାଇଁ ଏତେ କଷ୍ଟ? ଆଜି କିଏ ଅଛି ତାଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ? କେହିବି ତ ନୁହେଁ ! ସେ ଆଜି ପୁରାପୁରି ଏକା

ପାଞ୍ଚ ପ୍ରାଣୀର ସଂସାର ତାଙ୍କର । ୨ଟି ପୁଅ ଓ ଗୋଟିଏ ଝିଅ । ବହୁତ ଆଶା, ଆକାଂକ୍ଷା ନେଇ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ବଢ଼ାଇଛନ୍ତି । ନିଜ ଜନ୍ମଭୂମିର ଐତିହ୍ୟ, ଗାରିମା ବଜାୟ ରଖିବା ପାଇଁ ସେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଅକ୍ଷର ବି ଶିଖେଇଛନ୍ତି । ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ କଥା ହେବାଠାରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରି, ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭଜନ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ସଙ୍ଗୀତ ଅଭ୍ୟାସ କରିବା ଜୀବନର ଏକ ଅଂଶ ରୂପେ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି । ପ୍ରତି ସପ୍ତାହରେ ସତ୍ୟନାରାୟଣ ବ୍ରତ ରଖନ୍ତି ସାତ୍ତ୍ୱିକ ଆହାର ସହିତ । ସକାଳ ଓ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାରେ ଭଜନ କରିବେ, ନିଜର ଆରାଧ୍ୟ ଦେବତା ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ । ନିଜ ଜନ୍ମଦିନରେ ପାର୍ତି ହେବ, କିନ୍ତୁ କେକ୍ କଟା ହୋଇ ନୁହେଁ, ବରଂ ବନ୍ଦାପନା ହୋଇ । ଏସବୁ ସେ ମାନନ୍ତି, କାରଣ ସେ ଭାବନ୍ତି ପିଲାମାନେ ଯାହା ନିଜ ଅଭିଭାବକଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଶିଖିବେ, ସେମାନେ ସାରା ଜୀବନ ସେହି ସଭ୍ୟତା କୁ ବଜାୟ ରଖିବେ । ପିଲାମାନେବି ବାପାଙ୍କ ସମ୍ମାନ ରଖିବା ନିମନ୍ତେ, ବାପାଙ୍କ ମନ ରଖିବା ନିମନ୍ତେ ସବୁ କାମ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଇଚ୍ଛା ନଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ବାପା ମାଙ୍କ ଆଦେଶ ଓ ଉପଦେଶକୁ ଅବମାନନା କରିନାହାନ୍ତି । ନିଜରପିଲାମାନଙ୍କ ଏହି ସବୁ ପ୍ରତିଭା ରେ ମିଶ୍ରବାବୁ ଚାରିଆଡେ ପ୍ରସନ୍ନ । ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ମନରେସେହି ଗୋଟିଏ କଥା, ” ବାଃ ବାଃ କି ଶିକ୍ଷା ମିଶ୍ରବାବୁଙ୍କର ! ସତରେ ତାଙ୍କ ପିଲାମାନେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ନା’ ରଖିବେ ! ବିଦେଶରେ ରହିବି ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଟିକିଏବି ଗର୍ବ ନାହିଁ । ବାଃ ବାଃ ଏମିତି ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ପାଇଁ ସତେ ଯେପରି ଆମ ଜନ୍ମମାଟି ସାର୍ଥକ ହୋଇଛି!” ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ..

କିନ୍ତୁ...

ପରିବେଶ ଓ ପାରିପାର୍ଶ୍ୱର ବାତାବରଣହିଁ ଏକ ମଣିଷ ଜୀବନର ମୂଳଦୁଆ ଭାବେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରିଥାଏ ।

ସମୟ ତ ସବୁ ଦିନ ସମାନ ରହେ ନାହିଁ ! ପିଲାମାନେ ଧିରେ ଧିରେ ବଢ଼ି ଚାଲିଛନ୍ତି । ବଡ଼ ପୁଅକୁ ଆସ୍ତେ ଆସ୍ତେ କିଛି ଭଲ ଲାଗୁନି ଏହି ସବୁ କଠୋର ନୀତି ନିୟମ । ମନର କଥା ମନରେ ଚାପି, ବାପା ମାଙ୍କ କଥାକୁ ଅବମାନନା ନକରି ସେ ସବୁକଥା ମାନି ଚାଲିଛି । ସମୟାନୁକ୍ରମେ ସେ ଘରକୁ ଆସିଲେ ଅନୁଭବ କରୁଛି, ଯେପରି ତାକୁ କେହି ଜଣେ ଏକ ଦଉଡ଼ିରେ ବାନ୍ଧିରଖିଛି । ଶାନ୍ତିରେ ଟିକିଏ ନିଃଶ୍ୱାସ ନେବାବି ଅସମ୍ଭବ ହୋଇପଡ଼ିଛି ତାହା ପକ୍ଷେ । ସମୟର ଗତି ଅନୁସାରେ ସେ ନିଜକୁ ଘରଠାରୁ ଦୂରେଇ ରଖିବାପାଇଁ ଯେପରି ବ୍ୟତିବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ହୋଇପଡ଼ୁଛି, ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଯାହାବି କାରିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ୁନା କାହିଁକି । ମିଛ କାହିଁବାକୁ ଟିକିଏବି ପଛଘୁଞ୍ଚା ଦେଇନାହିଁ । ନିଜ ବାପାମାଙ୍କର ଶତତେଜ୍ଜ ସତ୍ତ୍ୱେ ସେ ନିଜକୁ ବଦଳେଇ ପାରିନି । ସେ ତାର ସମସ୍ତ ପୂର୍ବ କଥା ଭୁଲିଯାଇଛି । ଆଜି ସେ କହି ପାରୁଛି ”ବାପା, ମା ଜନ୍ମ ଦେଲେ ତ କେଉଁ ବଡ଼ କଥା କଲେ, ପାଳନ କରି ବଢ଼ାଇବା ତ ସେମାନଙ୍କ କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ ।” ସେଥିପାଇଁ ସେ କାହିଁକି ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପାଖେ ନମ୍ର ହେବ?

ବଡ଼ ଭାଇର ଏପରି ବ୍ୟବହାର ଓ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକଳାପ ଦେଖି ସାନ ଭାଇ ଓ ଭଉଣୀ ବେଶ୍ କିଛି ଶିଖିଛନ୍ତି । ସେମାନେ ବଡ଼ ଭାଇର ସ୍ୱରରେ ନିଜ ସ୍ୱର ମିଳାଇବାକୁ ପଛଘୁଞ୍ଚା ଦେଇ ନାହାନ୍ତି ।

ବହୁତ ଭାଙ୍ଗିପଡ଼ିଛନ୍ତି ମିଶ୍ର ବାବୁ । ସବୁ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଭାଙ୍ଗି ଯାଇଛି । ଯେଉଁ ଦୁଇ ପୁଅଙ୍କୁ ନିଜର ଦୁଇ ହାତ ଓ ଝିଅକୁ ଘରର ଶୋଭା ବୋଲି ମନେ କରୁଥିଲେ, ସେମାନେ ସବୁ ଶିକ୍ଷା, ସବୁ ସ୍ନେହ ଓ ମମତା ପାଶୋରି ଦେଲେ? ବହୁତ ଦୁର୍ବଳ ହୋଇ ଯାଇଛନ୍ତି ସେ । ସବୁ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଯେପରି ଦିବାସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ରେ ପରିଣତ ହୋଇଛି । ସେ ଫେରି ଚାହିଁଛନ୍ତି ଅତୀତକୁ ।

ଦୀର୍ଘ ୪୦ ବର୍ଷର ଅତୀତ । ଯେଉଁ ଦିନ ସେ ଇମିଗ୍ରାଣ୍ଟ ଭାବେ ପାଦ ଦେଲେ ଏକ ଅତିହୀନ ଦେଶରେ, ସେ ନିଜକୁ ନିଃସହାୟ ବୋଲି ମନେ କରିଥିଲେ । ସେତେବେଳେ କେହି ନିଜର ନଥିଲେ ଏହି ଅଜଣା ରାଜ୍ୟରେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ମନରେ ତିଳେ ମାତୁ ଅବଶୋଷ ନଥିଲା । ମନରେ ଥିଲା ଅସଂଖ୍ୟ ଆଶା ଓ ଉନ୍ମାଦନା । ସେ ଆଜି ଏକ ମଣିଷ ଭିତରେ ମଣିଷ ହୋଇ ଶାନ୍ତିରେ ଜୀବନ ଯାପନ କରି ପାରିବେ । ଏକ ନିର୍ମଳ ବାତାବରଣ ଓ ନିର୍ମଳ ପରିବେଶରେ ନିଜ ଜୀବନକୁ ଗଢ଼ି ପାରିବେ । ଯେଉଁଠି ବାଦବିବାଦ ଓ ଅନ୍ୟାୟ ର କରାଳ ଛାୟା ରୁ ଦୂରେଇ ରଖିବେ ନିଜର ଛୋଟ ସଂସାରକୁ । ଯେଉଁଠି ସେ ଏକାଧାର ରେ ଜଣେ ଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ ସ୍ୱାମୀ, ଉପଯୁକ୍ତ ପିତା ଓ ନିର୍ଭୀକ କର୍ମଜୀବି ହୋଇପାରିବେ ।

କିନ୍ତୁ...

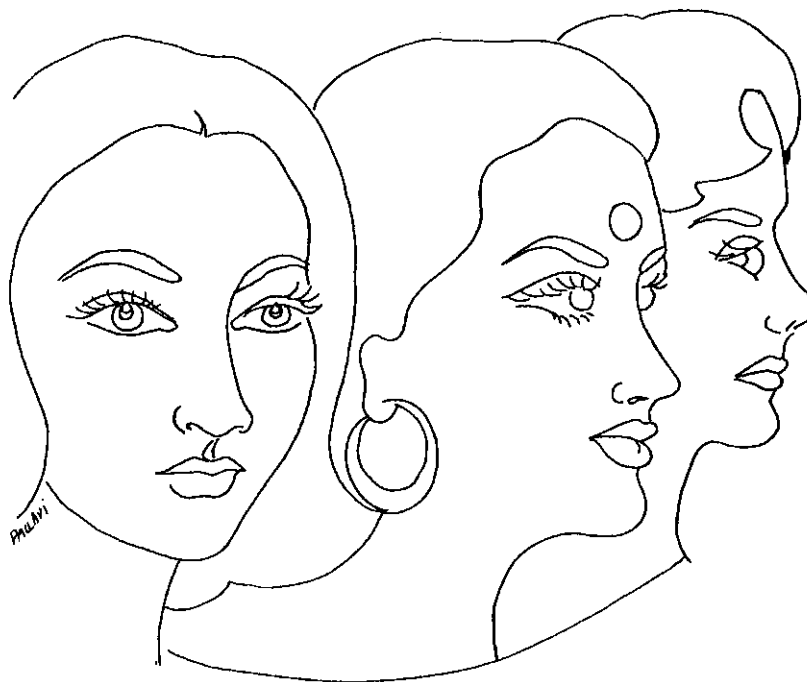
ସମୟର ଗତି କ୍ରମେ ସବୁ କିଛି ବଦଳିଛି । ଆଜି ସେ ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଭାବେ ନିଃସହାୟ । ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଆଜି ସେ ହାତଛଡ଼ା କରିଦେଇଛନ୍ତି । ସମସ୍ତେ ଯେପରି ଦୂରରୁ ଦେଖି "ବିଚରା" କହି ଖିଲିଖିଲି ହୋଇ ହସୁଛନ୍ତି ।

ଏମିତି ବହୁତ ଦିନ ବିତିଯାଇଛି । ମିଶ୍ର ବାବୁ ନିର୍ଣ୍ଣୟ କରିଛନ୍ତି, ସେ ନିଜର ସମସ୍ତ ସମ୍ପତ୍ତି ଅନାଥ ଆଶ୍ରମକୁ ଦାନ କରିବେ ଏବଂ ସେ ନିଜର ମା କୋଳରେ ମଥା ରଖି, ସବୁ କଷ୍ଟ ଭୁଲି ବିଶ୍ରାମ ନେବେ । ଯେତେ ଖରାପ ହେଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ନିଜ ମା'ର କୋଳରେ ଯେଉଁ ଶାନ୍ତି, ଆଉ କେଉଁଠାରେ ନାହିଁ । ମାତୁଭୂମି ହିଁ ସ୍ୱର୍ଗ । ସେଥିପାଇଁ କଥା ରେ ଅଛି "ଜନନୀ ଜନ୍ମ ଭୂମିକୁ ସ୍ୱର୍ଗାଦପି ଗରିୟସି" ।

ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ସେ ବହୁତ ଖୁସି । ସେ ନିଜ ମା'ର ସେବା କରି ପାରୁଛନ୍ତି, ତାର ଲୁହ ପୋଛି ତାର ମୁଖରେ ହସର କିରଣ ଜାଳିଦେଇପାରିଛନ୍ତି । ଆଜି ନିଜ ମା ତାର ପଥ ହୁଡ଼ା ସନ୍ତାନ କୁ ପାଇ ଖୁସିରେ ଉତ୍ସୁକ ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଛି । ମିଶ୍ର ବାବୁ, ଅନ୍ତିମ ଜୀବନକୁ ନିଃସ୍ୱାର୍ଥପର ଭାବେ ମାତୁଭୂମିର ସେବାରେ ଉତ୍ସର୍ଗ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଧନ୍ୟ ତାଙ୍କ ଜୀବନ !!!

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women's corner



The Changing Role of the Oriya Women: Problems and Prospects

JOSNA MISRA

One can notice several noteworthy changes in the status and role of women all over the world. Although the feminist movement is closely linked to these discernable trends and the movement against discrimination and violence against women, it is possible to analyze them independently from a holistic perspective.

Although the magnitude of change in the role and status of women varies according to political, economic, and social advancement of various countries, one thing is certain; there seems to be a genuine and growing interest and need for examining and recognizing the progress in the role and status of women from time to time.

The recent Beijing Conference on women is an example of the growing awareness of women's issues throughout the world. Today, if a woman under 30 is asked if she is a feminist, chances are that she will shoot back a decisive 'no'. But in the next breath the same young woman will reject the "Feminine Mystique," which delimits a woman's role as a wife and a mother.

It is no surprise that Betty Freidan, the pioneer of feminist movement and the writer of the sensational book Feminine Mystique modified her views on the appropriate role of women in the book Second Stage about two decades later. Even today, as we are approaching the 21st Century, it is ironic that the "feminism" as a concept is negatively perceived, whereas the issue of women's advancement is championed all around.

In the patriarchal societies, both in the orient and the occident, women have been accorded a subordinate status and are deprived of the formal education that has been available from time to time. Even in modern times, several countries, including the advanced ones like the United States, have overlooked innumerable instances of gender-based abuses and discrimination in work places. In fact, in the early 60s, a survey of 13,000 female college graduates indicated that the two most common measures of success were being mother of accomplished children and being the wives of prominent men. Ironically, the primary identification of women with the family and home contributes to their secondary status.

Literature indicates that in advanced countries, educational, political, economic and social changes have elevated women to a higher status. In general, women have made a lot of progress all over the world. However, Third World countries like India, and in particular the economically backward Indian states like Orissa continue

to struggle with the changes listed above. The focus at this point is on issues concerning the changing role of women in India, with specific emphasis on Orissa.

First, the area of education and employment seems to play a major role in bringing about changes in Oriya women. Progress for these women came only when it appeared that their education could advance the goals of society such as promoting moral order, religious spirit, and education of children at home. Of course women's education and work are more acceptable when they are perceived as an extension of the mother role - one of nurturing and caring or providing help and support.

Although the profile of women in India, particularly Orissa, is changing and many women of the middle class are gainfully employed, in the educational landscape of India, however, the women of Orissa are still much below the national average. It is also worth mentioning here that education is still limited to a small and elite group of the population. Statistically, women are very much under-represented in professional jobs. They are mostly encouraged to select careers which don't conflict with the traditional norms of feminine grace.

Although there seems to be a rise in the number of families with a double income in Orissa, a high percentage of working wives remain at the lower end of labor market and are expected to sacrifice work for home. As a result, women's participation in professional, academic conferences, seminars and forums are limited. This limitation causes less awareness on women's issues and their reduced role as productive members of society. Consequently, the process of victimization of women continues to haunt the Oriya society.

The process of socialization for girls and boys is strikingly different in Orissa because of slow change in the attitude of parents, family members and members of other social institutions. However, Oriya girls and boys who are raised in the U. S. and are given opportunities for high quality education and modern comforts, seem to exhibit more progressive views of women and hold new expectations about one another.

Educated and professional women who have the potential to break new grounds of opportunities are socialized in such a way that the primary value of being a wife and a mother is often appreciated at the expense of personal achievements in other spheres of life. Of course, economic conditions contribute to the dependency of

women on men in many parts of the world, particularly in Third World countries. Thus a large number of Oriya women who are mostly dependent on their husbands for material support, also depend on them as sources of self-esteem and continuity. In addition, the patriarchal ordering of society assigns a secondary status to them.

As Betty Freidan mentions in *The Second Stage*, a balance must be struck between the professional women's new economic role and their traditional role as tender-hearted mothers. To achieve a harmonious balance in society with an enhanced status of women, there have been changes and progress in varying degrees all over the world. These perceptible changes can also be seen in Third World countries like China and India. An increasing awareness of the empowerment of women

has been highlighted in leadership forums and in the media, thereby fostering a climate of change for the better. However, these changing perceptions have not substantially altered gender inequality in economically backward and change resistant states like Orissa.

It is the need of the hour for the Oriya women to break from the shackles of their traditional roles (as wives and mothers) and play more progressive roles as equal partners in a changing society. It is high time for them to take the challenges of a new millennium and break grounds for a new social order based on gender equality and fairness. The immigrant Oriya women in the United States, Canada, and other European countries must unite and provide collaborative leadership in that regard.

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Violence-Free Society: A Vision for the New Millennium ***Understanding Invisible Violence***

MAMATA MISRA

While we are saddened by violence that dominates our daily news and afraid for our children's safety in streets and even in schools, we may not be fully aware of where and how violence begins. Often, it begins in our homes. Until 1993, when I started volunteering for Saheli and SafePlace, organizations that work toward helping victims of domestic violence, I knew little about family violence. The term is shrouded in myths. I shall point out a few of these myths.

Some people believe that family violence does not happen in educated families. Unfortunately, most of the victims I have worked with came from educated families. They were either professionals themselves or were married to professionals. Formal education so far has neither raised awareness of domestic violence nor prevented it. In fact, my experience has shown that perpetrators of violence often use their education and knowledge to hurt the victim more.

Another myth is that family violence occurs when men are drunk. Drunks do beat their family members often and recent women's movements in India for prohibition have shown a reduction in number of incidents of family violence when a village is alcohol-free. However, this is not enough to establish a cause-effect relationship between intoxication and family violence. Plenty of domestic violence occurs without the use of alcohol or drugs. Alcohol use may make it easier for a man to beat

his wife and may provide him an excuse to do so, but it is not the primary reason.

Another myth is that the victim is partly responsible for the violence because the victim might have provoked anger. This argument does not hold because often abuse occurs in cold blood and in a pre-meditated manner. Even when it seems like a reaction of anger, what it is blamed on is not an intended provocation but a normal human action or error. An abuser may use his personal dislike of something, anything, as an excuse to strike. At one time it may be for food being too hot and the next day it might be for food being too cold. Anger that is expressed through the abuse is often unreasonable. An abuse victim becomes confused and lives in fear because no matter how hard she tries to avoid things that might be triggers, there is never an end to it. It is usually impossible to please an abuser because often he is displeased with himself and just projects it on to someone who is an easy target.

Family violence arises from a strong desire to feel powerful and important by keeping another family member in a position of less power and under one's control. Family violence may be physical, verbal, or emotional. When someone uses his size, strength, or presence to hurt or control someone, it is physical abuse. Examples are pushing, slapping, forced sex, throwing things, breaking personal items, use of weapons, chasing, blocking, taking away money etc. Use of words or voice to control or hurt

someone is called verbal abuse. Accusations, threats, yelling and shouting, calling names, saying mean things putting down, writing nasty letters are examples of verbal abuse. Physical and verbal abuse hurt emotionally. But abuse can also happen without using physical force or words. Actions or lack of actions meant to control or demean someone are emotional abuse. Controlling access to money, intense jealousy, criticisms, unusual demands, isolation from family and friends, manipulation with lies, threatening divorce, extra-marital affairs, using children, taking away children, ignoring, threatening suicide, making fun of, preventing access to money or other things in the house, taking away freedom are examples of emotional abuse.

Family violence is similar to other forms of oppression: political oppression where a dictator enjoys his power by stealing freedom from his subjects, oppression in the work force where the employer or a manager uses his power to obstruct growth of another employee, social oppression where a rich moneylender uses his power of wealth to swindle the poor. Out of all these forms of oppression, family violence is the worst kind for the following reasons: it is often hidden. A person who abuses his wife in private may be an extremely friendly and nice person in public. If the abuse is noticed, it is misunderstood and is viewed as a personal problem and not as a problem that affects society. Therefore, the problem is often ignored. If you see a stranger hitting another stranger in public you are more likely to intervene than if you witness a man hitting his wife. The same crime somehow is tolerated in a family context because people believe that it is none of their business.

But it is really our business because domestic violence affects our community in a big way. Violence during pregnancy is the number 1 cause of birth defects. Thus violence begins when we begin, in the mother's womb. Every 15 seconds, a woman is assaulted by her husband or partner. Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women ages 15-44, more common than automobile accidents and muggings combined. About 22-35% of emergency room visits by women are due to injuries from family violence. Approximately 75% of men who batter grew up in homes where they were beaten, neglected, or witnessed battering. There are at least 4 million reported (many more unreported) incidents of domestic violence against women each year. Thus the nation's police and the judiciary system spends a lot of money and time on crimes related to domestic violence. According to FBI statistics, at least 30% of all female homicide victims are killed by their husbands, ex-husbands, or partners. US companies lose up to \$5 billion each year because of abuse related absences from work and another \$100 million in medical bills.

Thus domestic violence takes a toll not just on the family where it occurs, but on society and the future. This is one reason why we as a community must care about this problem. But there is another deeper reason. Although in some cases a woman may abuse a man or another woman, in most cases of family violence it is a husband abusing his wife.

Men who abuse their partners and men and women who support this behavior see nothing wrong with it. Women who accept abuse do so because they see no other choice. Where do men and women get such ideas? The society in which we live and grow gives us messages about sex roles that boys and girls receive and internalize. One can just look at the different adjectives cited for the meanings of the words "masculine" and "feminine" in dictionaries and books, including scriptures. The socialization process for boys often demands "masculinity" in terms of being aggressive, stout-hearted, determined, bold, daring, fearless, rough-natured, intellectual, authoritarian, powerful, in control, and independent. The socialization process of girls often defines "femininity" as being passive, gentle, delicate, submissive, timid, self sacrificing, maternal, dependent, home-loving, and emotional.

Historically, in most cultures, the family structure has been patriarchal. The man of the house is the head of the house and his wife and children are subordinate to him. Also, ancient stories in most cultures have examples of "masculinity" being rewarded with "femininity", establishing man's ownership over his woman. In India and other Asian countries, a false analogy of the reproduction process may have contributed to this property ownership notion. In this analogy, woman's body was viewed as land where man plants seeds to get children. Thus, according to this analogy, man, the seed producer, must acquire "fertile" land, and must be well-fed to produce good seeds. Even the word "barren" is used to mean a woman unable to conceive. Marriage, according to this analogy, would be similar to land acquisition which can be received as a gift, purchased, or grabbed by force. Wife would become the property of husband. Marital rape would become legitimate.

It does not take much brain power to see how silly this analogy is. But unfortunately scientific understanding has failed to remove this deep-rooted notion. In Vedic marriage rituals, during "saptapadi" (seven steps) the mantra calls for "friendship" not "ownership." However, most Hindus practice the rituals without any understanding of their symbolism or significance. The "importance of seed over soil" concept still persists. The family and social structure and norms designed centuries ago based on invalid principles have been internalized by both men and women. While we adapt to modern fashions

and modern technology easily, we act old-fashioned in our attitudes and behavior. Society, through ancient traditions, has taught men to value power and control over their wives. Unfortunately, in many families "masculinity" turns into cruelty towards women and children and is passed on from generation to generation. A man may beat his wife to prove his masculinity to himself when his low self-esteem bothers him. This has been tolerated by society for ages. In the USA, only within the last twenty years or so, domestic violence and marital rape have been seen as crimes by the law.

It is also sad to see that women who have been lucky to have some power, often use it in the so-called masculine way. Instead of using it constructively, they become aggressive and try to grab more of it at the expense of someone else, often another female in the family. Often, a direct way of voicing concerns and solving problems is not available to young married women because they may not be taken seriously. So they misdirect their creativity and learn to manipulate others to get what they want. Thus, instead of asserting themselves they become aggressive in a passive way. When women are not allowed or taught to become self-reliant, they compete with other female members in the family who rely on the same male member they rely on. Our families have plenty of abusing mothers-in-law, uncaring daughters-in-law, and jealous sisters-in-law. Oppression of women by women keeps women divided and sustains patriarchy.

Family violence has grown out of ancient, time-honored, and cultivated traditions condoned by society. Hence, for it to stop, society must reform itself to nurture human values (not masculine and feminine values) such as not hurting another human being irrespective of gender, class, race and other such factors. The family unit must establish more equitable human relations within itself. Since we are the building blocks of society, it is up to each of us to build such a society, to create better norms for marriage and family. Each of us is a role model for our children. Through our actions, we need to give our children the message that men, women, and children are emotionally equal, that each human being deserves respect, that respect is the foundation upon which healthy relationships are built, and that power and control tactics are unhealthy and destructive.

What Can We Do?

Victims of domestic violence often suffer in silence when they have no other choice. Their batterer who inflicts the injustice, the extended family that supports it, and society that ignores it, create a prison for the victim that seems inescapable. Therefore, support organizations need to provide a system of support to the victim through which she can escape her prison and be free. The support comes

through emergency shelters where the victim can safely stay away from danger, counseling services that listen to her pain without finding fault and help her make difficult choices, a law-enforcement system that protects the victim and holds the perpetrator of violence accountable, intervention programs where abusers can learn healthy alternatives to their destructive behavior, job-training, low rent housing, and child care for the victim while she is on her long journey to recovery and independence.

However, this only repairs the damage after it is done. The vision should be to prevent the problem so that the need for such helping organizations disappears. Like any social change, this change has to come slowly with awareness and education through grassroots efforts led by support organizations.

Children must be taught what respect is and how one expresses it. But they cannot learn it when adults do not demonstrate it. Children must be taught by example.

Psychologists and social workers need to facilitate sessions where young men and women can explore what a healthy relationship calls for before they enter into marriage. People must be taught effective communication skills so that they can resolve conflicts without hurting others. Families must explore how a family can work together as a team. In other words, democracy, equality and such concepts must enter into our homes so our children can taste and feel them not just spit them out in examinations after cramming from text books.

Family violence and gender roles must be understood and applied by people of different professions. Teachers need to emphasize the importance of respect in the classroom by being respectful to the students and expecting students to respect one another. Religious authorities need to understand and explain the significance of various religious practices. They need to take a critical look at the practices that hurt society and try to dissuade people from using them. They need to emphasize the parts in the scriptures that promote healthy relationships and gender and race equalities. Law-makers must pass laws that help victims and punish perpetrators. Law enforcement units and people with power must not abuse their power. Doctors and hospitals must take domestic violence seriously as a major health problem. Writers and artists need to express the devastating effects of family violence in their work. The media needs to make the public aware of domestic violence. The support organizations need to work with different sectors of our community to make this vision come true.

Some effort needs to come from each of us. Each of us needs to support the support organizations with understanding, expertise, time, money, or just moral

support. Each of us can start by trying to make our own home violence free. Peace begins at home. With our vedic rituals, we have been chanting "peace, peace, peace" with

our mantras for at least three millenniums. But would we see it in the next millennium? Peace at home, peace in the streets, and peace in the world!

Mamata Misra lives in Austin, Texas, USA. She is a community volunteer. Her work includes peer counseling, legal advocacy, teen dating violence prevention, and community education. She is the president of Saheli, an organization that helps Asian victims of family violence. Saheli has a web page at <http://www.main.org/saheli> and an e-mail account at saheli@usa.net. You can call Saheli at (512) 345-9490, or write to Saheli, P. O. Box 3665, Austin, Texas 78764-3665. USA.

For more food for thought on the topic of gender and violence watch the movie "Father, Son, and Holy War" by Anand Patwardhan.



The changing status of women in Orissa: an eye witness account

ANNAPURNA DEVI PANDEY

The OSA convention is in the first week of July, and it is already May. I have promised Ashok to write something on the changing status of women in Orissa for the journal. I am wondering what exactly would we like to know about our lot in our home state! As a social scientist and an Oriya, I will try to provide an outsider's as well as an insider's perspective on women's situation in the state. As Oriyas in the diaspora we constitute about five thousand in number in the North Americas. Oriya women in the diaspora are predominantly middle class, educated and mostly professionals. Because of our economic situation we live a protected life; also being so far away from home state we tend to have a tainted outlook about the actual situation of women in the state. When we go to Orissa visible changes in our social circles catch our attention. That, however, should not elude us from the reality experienced by the majority in the state.

Recently an Oriya friend from the Bay area who visited Orissa sent this e-mail about the changing life styles in cities like Bhubaneswar and Berhampur.

"Hi, I was in India for two weeks to attend some family functions. I went to India after 3 years. I was amazed at what I found. My experience is based on my trips to Berhampur (my hometown), BBSR (my wife's big town) and Calcutta (city of joy). These facts are based on my experience. Eastern India is poor and less developed. Developments in the east should work as barometer for whole India. Here is the list. Every other new car has AC; you can get luxury cars and compact cars: you name it. You buy a plain Maruti car for \$4500; earn upto Rs 40,000/month at BBSR and Rs 60,000/month at Calcutta being a senior tech lead; join Satyam, Infosys etc. at BBSR, the city of choice, get connection to Internet at BBSR/Calcutta with least pain; get any book on computers at 1/3rd US price. Imagine this: You have an AC room in your home, you go to your office/client in an AC car and come back home in the same. Where is pollution? There are private money exchange companies at BBSR, Calcutta. You can learn any course (Oracle, SAP, HTML, Java, Visual C++/Basic with labs, projects); get Microsoft, Oracle and sun-certified in India; get latest electronic items (TV, VCR) below Rs 15000; buy computer packages from HP, IBM etc., below Rs 45,000; plug in to CNN, BBC, CNBC, FOX, ESPN etc, at cheap rates. Kids in India can watch cartoon network 24 hours a day (could be harmful for kids!); Indian youth can watch MTV 24 hours a day (not a good sign from my point of view!). People are crazy about cricket and this I can not understand. They are very emotional about the game. Above all, what India lacks is the

infrastructure for roads, drainage and compatible living standards of the West. It has been a chronic problem, anyway. The modern amenities and computer knowledge warehouse of the Indian youth are amazing and offset the infrastructure issue. Bribe and corruption are problems. But, if you are assertive and determined, you will get your things done. I am very pleased with the advancement. I hope more of these in future." A rosy picture, indeed. This holds true, unfortunately, for a selected few only. I was wondering what percentage of the population could afford this life style? And what about the rest?

This sort of outlook may also apply to some middle class Oriyas in the state. I was talking to a friend, a Lecturer in Psychology at a government college in Cuttack. According to her, 80% people in the state are middle class (leading a comfortable life style), 10% are upper class and rest 10% are poor. A look at the statistics and the actual life condition of the majority of the people give us a different picture. Just to have a glimpse of reality, the average per capita income per year in Orissa is \$896 where as it is \$1,230 for India.¹

According to 1991 census, women in Orissa constitute 49.3 percent of the total 31.7 million population compared to 48.1 percent of the 970 million people at the national level. The sex ratio is 971 females per 1000 males in our state whereas it is 927 per 1000 males in India.² According to 1990-92 data, the life expectancy of women at birth is 54.8 years as against 55.9 years for men compared to 59.4 years for women and 59.0 for men at the national level.³ As per adult literacy rate in Orissa, women's literacy is 29.0 percent as against 62.5 percent for men compared to 33.9 percent for women and 62.4 percent for men in India.⁴ In terms of economic role, 27.3 percent women are gainfully employed as against 72.7 percent men compared to 28.6 percent women and 71.4 men in India.⁵

As the statistics suggest, numerically the gap between women's population in proportion to men's is less (971 to 1000) compared to the sex ratio (927 to 1000) in India. Still this is a painful fact. This discrepancy in female and male ratio reveals a terrible story of inequality and neglect leading to the excess mortality of women.⁶ In terms of life expectancy of women at birth, women's literacy rate and their economic role the situation of women in Orissa is comparable to their counterparts in the country. Even though women constitute nearly half of the population in Orissa and the life expectancy rate is almost the same as men in terms of years (54.8/55.9), it does not correspond

to their literacy rate, economic participation and overall visibility in the public sphere. On the basis of my participant observation and personal research I will make some generalizations which may apply to the overall situation of women in India.

I went to Orissa just a few days after the OSA convention at Monterey, CA in July 1998. I had the honor and privilege of organizing the women's forum seminar at the convention. Because we were discussing the changing roles and life experiences of women in the Americas, I was interested in looking into the women's position in our home state, Orissa, back in India.

I left Cuttack, Orissa in 1988; despite many visits back to Orissa, I hadn't had a chance to look closely at the issues affecting women. My previous trips had been confined to visits with family, friends and relatives. This time I traveled extensively in Orissa. I attended several workshops on various topics, for example: the changing status of women; a daylong workshop on "women against alcohol" drive; and rural and tribal women's participation in a micro-credit system organized for their economic empowerment.

I went to Phulbani to spend some time with the women's groups who are fighting against their exploitation at the hands of the state government, bureaucrats, and businessmen in the area. I also spent some time at Basundhara, one of the few organizations (that I know of) that takes care of unwanted children and provides a home to the deserted women in Cuttack.

My first hand experience made me realize that at the surface level, women have done very well. More and more women are getting higher education (Bachelors and Masters degrees are very commonplace), are employed both in government and non-government sectors, and are getting married at a later age. It is encouraging to see young women riding a bicycle or scooter to go to school, college and to their work. Also, I observed that women in urban areas are motivated to do well in their studies. In cities like Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Berhampur and Rourkela, women are opting for lucrative careers, previously confined to men. For example, women are more often studying engineering, accountancy, computer-related subjects, and management. On the whole, women in the cities are determined to be economically independent; they contribute significantly to the household income and are more mobile compared to the older generation.

Still 75% people live in the villages of Orissa. Women do constitute almost half of that population. Schools and colleges are opening up even in interior rural areas. Girls are more exposed to schools; they are taking advantage of elementary education offered through schools, and various state welfare programs introducing

mid-day and evening schools exclusively for women and older children. In terms of social infrastructure, women's situation has improved considerably. They are offered a fair share of education and economic opportunities available for all.

In terms of legal and political reality, many progressive laws have been implemented to improve the status of women in the state. Dowry prohibition (Amendment) bill in 1986⁷ addresses injustice caused to women in the name of dowry and emphasizes on stringent laws against the dowry offenders both for giving as well as taking dowry. Recently Orissa has implemented 73rd constitution Amendment Act, 1992 (effected from April 24, 1993) that guarantees reservation of not less than 1/3 of seats for women in both memberships and posts of chairpersons in every tier of Panchayati Raj.⁸ The newly introduced 33% reservation of seats for women in local self-governing bodies e.g., village panchayats and urban municipalities emphasize on eradicating the social ills concerning women as well as increasing participation of women at the grassroots politics. Thus women are bestowed with legal and political privileges to make substantial contributions in the political life and fight against physical, moral and financial abuse in the name of dowry. Women's literacy, their participation in the decision making process at the village panchayat and district municipality level and increasing role in economy are definite markers of equal distribution of power and authority among men and women.

These changes are subterfused by various developments in the state that have global and local significance. Firstly, the growing negative imagery of women in the media (reconstruction of the image of women as portrayed in Hindu tradition as suffering mother, daughter and dependent wife in the state run television serials and cinemas) is all pervasive. With the availability of satellite television, western soap operas have intruded the innermost space of the household. All kinds of advertisements use women as part of the consumerist culture; this has become the norm of the popular culture that she is readily available as any other commodity in the market. Also she can be used as a medium to satisfy the consumerist greed of the expanding middle class, hence the rising significance of dowry. Secondly, there are many instances of increasing political vandalism abusing women's sexuality (families are scared to allow free movement of their women).⁹ Thirdly, there is growing repression of emotional feelings and desires among the boys and girls in the public that lead to unwanted pregnancies and growing rate of ostracized unwed mothers and deserted women filling up women's destitute homes in the city.

Looking at women and their situation on a deeper level, I realized that dowry has become a major problem

in Oriya society. Ten years ago, the giving of dowry made by the bride's family rather than a demand made by the groom's family was the norm. Today, even a daily laborer wouldn't marry without a dowry. Local daily Oriya newspapers, namely, Samaj, Pragatibadi, Sambad, Prajatantra, and Dharitri are full of dowry-related cases of abuse, torture and even death of women both in rural and urban areas. Not even a single day goes by without a few new cases of dowry-related torture which the media bring to the public limelight. Suicide among young women and men is on the increase. This increase is due, in part to a growing lack of trust and faith in their parents and family as well as a growing sense of insecurity among the youth.

In Orissa, despite there being 971 females to 1,000 males, finding a husband for young women has proven to be very difficult due to excessive dowry demands. In August 1998, some statistics I collected from the office of the State Women's commission in Bhubaneswar is quite revealing. The number of dowry cases reported since 1993 has been constantly rising, 115 in 1993 to 182 in 1997. Dowry torture cases have gone up from 226 in 1993 to 906 in 1997. Non-dowry torture has increased from 101 in 1993 to 322 in 1997. Cheating and false promises experienced by women has had a meteoric rise, from 38 cases in 1993 to 90 cases in 1997. Suspected deaths (dowry related) have gone up 68 in number in 1993 to 87 in 1997. As we know the state report is always evasive regarding the actual cases of victimization. In spite of the evasiveness of the actual accounts the data confirms the deteriorating condition of women in our state. Although women show progress in education and economic achievement, the bottom line is that women are not valued in Oriya society.

One of my respondents described today's ideal woman. The ideal woman (perfect wife and daughter-in-law) must be multi-dimensional. She must be convent-educated, soft spoken, capable of serving cocktails at dinner parties and dance with people her husband would like her to. Also she must know how to cook on the conventional chullhi when necessary, cover her head in front of elders in the husband's family and contribute to the family income. If the marriage does not work she must take the blame. Her husband will likely marry again easily with another dowry. She becomes a social pariah, blemished and unwanted.

Consider the case of Anjana Mishra, with whom I spent a few days and came to know of so many things regarding her plight that it will not be an understatement to suggest that a similar fate threatens many middle class Oriya women. For many, divorce is not a serious option. Women grow up with the social conditioning that marriage is the ultimate identity for a woman. Their education, professional achievements, and social standing are secondary. Social stigma is attached to a divorced woman.

Society doesn't gladly accept single women let alone divorced women. The same rule doesn't apply to the divorced man. Divorced men are still the much sought after candidates for marriage in Oriya society. If there is a divorce, normally the woman is questioned. Everybody raises a finger at her, it is believed that she must have done something to break the marriage, something must be lacking in her. She wasn't able to adjust and compromise under the circumstances (that is supposed to be her training and necessary qualification to become a wife).

As a daughter, a woman's identity is tied to her parents' and after marriage, her status is tied to that of her husband. She knows that she would lose her social standing, prestige, as well as an upper class comfortable lifestyle if she divorces her husband.

Anjana's case is not an exception. There are several Anjanas dying slow deaths with no options. I have talked with many educated and professional women who applaud Anjana for her courage and mental strength. I feel Anjana's case will set an example in our society that women are not just weak and vulnerable, that they can also fight for justice and their rights. They will ultimately get justice with the support of society but mostly with the support of other like-minded people.

Having discussed the stereotyped images of women in our society and the innumerable disadvantages they experience, I would like to emphasize on a growing awareness of women's life experiences. The women's groups and other non-profit organizations along with the educated media are working hard to bring in a positive change in women's situation in our state. I fully agree that the emergence of women's groups has been the most significant development in the present times. In my short stay in Orissa, I could see that there have been active discussions, forums, and workshops on various issues affecting women and children in the family and society.

About two hundred tribal and rural women came to participate in the alcohol free drive from the interior most corners of Orissa. One elderly lady (in her seventies) stood up to narrate how her group has smashed the alcohol booths and taverns ("Mada Bhatris") in her village and took the person responsible to task. These women tied up the culprits and took them to the police station. They demanded justice from the police and warned the police authority not to allow these men any further space in their village either for cooking or selling alcohol. Even the police are scared to take any action against these women.

In the exciting discussion on women's place in the 20th century, many resolutions were made to improve the legal and social frameworks affecting women today. For example, unwed mothers and deserted women must

get economic benefits and social recognition as citizen of the state. They should not be socially ostracized and abandoned by the law. Necessary laws must be implemented to protect the interests of the weak and disadvantaged woman in our society. On my visit to Phulbani, I observed that at the grassroots level village and tribal women are very vocal about their oppression. They have innovative ideas to improve the living condition in the village. They are working very hard as earning members of the family combining with the roles of mothers, wives and daughters. They are working collectively as women's groups to protect their men's folks from being degenerate through alcohol and other evil forces. Also they want to keep their self-esteem high and their family interest intact for the sake of their children and their own happiness.

The new women's groups have provided a forum for women's voices and have helped them work towards a positive change in their existing conditions in the legal, political and social order. However I noticed that there is not much networking among these women's groups fighting against a common cause, that is, devalued position of women in the society. Even though each of these groups is trying to make a difference in the lives of women in localized areas, there is tremendous difference in terms of class, professional and educational status of the members. The upper and upper middle class women don't have much to share with those of lower class. They are not ready to listen to the enriching experiences of the tribal and rural women. As a result, there is no general consensus regarding changes in the lives of the majority. I strongly feel unless the women in decision-making roles take in to account the specific experiences of these women and relate themselves to the overall oppressed women's situation I find it hard to perceive a significant change in our society

¹ The statewide estimates of real GDP per capita (PPP\$) have been arrived at by calculating the ratio of the state's per capita domestic product to per capita national income; and applying this proportion to India's real GDP per capita estimated to be PPP\$1,230 according to UNDP (1995). Source: A K Shiva Kumar, "UNDP's Gender- Related Development Index : A computation for Indian States", Economic and Political Weekly, April 6, 1996.

² Census of India 1991 quoted in Registrar General and Census Commissioner(1992)

³ The figures are unpublished estimates based on sample Registration System data, supplied by the office of the Registrar General and quoted in Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen, *India: Economic Development and Social Opportunity*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1995.

⁴ Census of India, 1991 are presented in Census Commissioner

and Registrar General (1992).

⁵ Figures from Census of India 1991 quoted in Registrar General and Census Commissioner (1992).

⁶ Amartya Sen argues that a mere cultural explanation as sexist east Vs unbiased west or an economic explanation (poverty as the sole cause of women's higher mortality rate) is not adequate to explain the devalued status of women in India. He argues that this deteriorated women's position results largely from their unequal sharing in the advantages of medical and social progress. Refer, Amartya Sen, " More than one Hundred million women are missing", The New York Review, Dec. 20, 1990.

⁷ The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 marks the first attempt by the Government of India to recognize dowry as a social evil and to curb its practice. The act was modified with the Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Act of 1984, which has again been modified with Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Bill 1986. The 1961 Act defines dowry and makes the practice of dowry, both giving and taking, a punishable offense. Any agreement on dowry is void. If it is given at all, it will be the woman's property. The Dowry prohibition (Amendment) Act of 1984 introduced changes in definition of dowry and provisions for getting the dowry back. In the recent development of increasing dowry tortures and dowry deaths among women, and, as a result, the growing activism of women's organizations, the Dowry Prohibition (Amendment) Bill 1986 was implemented. The Bill provides that if a woman dies within seven years of her marriage due to causes other than natural, her property would be transferred to her children and if she has no children to her parents. The burden of proving that no dowry demand was made will be on those who took or abetted in the taking of the dowry, the aggrieved person will not be subjected to prosecution. This amendment bill has made the offense non-bailable and raised the minimum punishment to five years and fine up to Rs.15, 000 (\$350). Also this act emphasizes on the appointment of dowry prohibition officers and their advisory board with two women members. Source: Rehana Ghadially and Promod Kumar, " Bride-Burning: The psychosocial dynamics of dowry deaths", in Rehana Ghadially, ed. *Women in Indian Society*, pp. 176-177, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 1988.

⁸ The constitution (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 (effected from April 24, 1993) is a landmark in the history of democratic decentralization in India. The Act, in essence, provides constitutional status to the Panchayats as a third stratum of Government at/ below the district level administration in addition to the hitherto existing two layered government system- the Union and the State. The salient feature of the Act is reservation of not less than 1/3rd of the seats for women in both membership and posts of chairpersons at all levels.

⁹ Recently in early 1998, several women college students at Kendrapara committed suicide. It has been alleged that these women were used as sex objects with the false promise of marriage and true love. Their sexual acts were secretly videotaped and some social criminals blackmailed them. As a result, there were reported cases of mass suicide of these women. It was found out that local politicians were behind the whole scenario; the political machinery protected the criminals. None of the criminals has been taken to task for the said crime.

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Sarala Devi: The 'Biplabi' of Orissa

SACHIDANANDA MOHANTY

During the early decades of the 20th century, several factors — including the movement for the preservation of the Oriya language, the rise of Oriya regional consciousness, the advent of the Brahmo Samaj, the campaign for widow remarriage, the legal abolition of untouchability and the struggle for national independence — brought women writers in Orissa into the hitherto closed public domain. Although the literary histories of Orissa have ignored them, prominent Oriya women writers such as Kokila Devi, Reba Ray, Narmada Kar, Pratibha Devi, Kuntala Kumari Sabat, Sita Devi Khadanga, Sarala Devi and Bidyut Prabha carved out an alternative literary tradition in Orissa.¹ Their writings interface with many progressive events in the state, such as the rise of female education, trade union movements and women's participation in various aspects of civic and political life.

Documenting the life and works of Sarala Devi is one way of acknowledging other women authors. The achievements of Sarala Devi are amazing considering her modest educational background. Few women in modern Orissa can rival her as a writer, feminist and social activist, Sarala had humble schooling in a village pathasala (primary school) and made her mark in public life against great odds. By the time she died, she had carved out a place for herself in all the major literary and social movements in the Orissa of her time.

Early Years

Born into a conservative "Karan" (Kayastha) family on August 9, 1904, Sarala was raised by her father's elder brother, Balamukunda Kanungo, who was a deputy collector. She evinced from the beginning a keen interest in education and right from her childhood, she rebelled against restrictions. The womenfolk in her *zamindar* (landed) family were conservative and predictably regarded Sarala's defiant nature as a social aberration. She refused to cover her head with her sari and reacted vehemently against many of the prevailing social taboos. Though spiritual by temperament, she developed strong reservations against religion when she came across this scriptural indictment: "Woman is the veritable gateway to hell."² In an autobiographical essay entitled *The Story of My Revolutionary Life*, she recorded some of the memories of her early childhood. "The God who doesn't belong to woman," she wrote, "and is only a property of man, the sin

in whose committing only woman becomes fallen and a man remains untouched, that religion and that custom gradually became bereft of meaning for me."³

With the help of a tutor, Sarala studied up to class VI. Through her own effort, she read many Bengali books and became acquainted with the works of Bankim Chandra, Rabindranath Tagore and Sarat Chandra. She was also inspired by the writings of Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Kesav Chandra Sen, Dayananda Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Gopal Krishna Gokhale. An early marriage, however, put a stop to her formal education. She was married to Bhagirathi Mahapatra, the son of a *zamindar* at Jagatsingpur in Cuttack district. The marriage proved to be a blessing as Bhagirathi, patriotic and liberal-minded, stood by Sarala in all her pursuits.

Political Activism

The 35th session of the Indian National Congress at Nagpur, which the couple attended along with 14,000 delegates, marked a turning point in her life. Sarala returned from the session filled with zeal for the liberation of the country. One of the immediate consequences of their participation at the Nagpur session was the formation of the Utkal Pradesh Congress Committee. Soon after this, during Gandhiji's visit to Orissa, Sarala attended a special meeting organised at Binod Bihari, Cuttack, exclusively for about 40 women. She then went on to take a leading part in the non-cooperation movement in Orissa. Sarala travelled extensively, collecting contributions for the Tilak Swaraj Fund. In this mission, she found worthy companions in several Oriya women writer-activists such as Sailabala Das, Kuntala Kumari Sabat and Rama Devi.

Through campaigns and meetings, an effort was made in Orissa to mobilise women into the national movement. At the initiative of Lavanyavati Devi, daughter of the distinguished writer Gopal Chandra Praharaj, a women's association was formed. It came to be known as Mahila Bandhu Samiti.

Sarala's participation in the struggle for independence⁴ was marked by a rare sense of commitment. She took part in the Salt Satyagraha at a place called Inchudi in Balasore.⁵ Later, she toured many districts of Orissa. It was an unusual sight to observe a woman from what was then considered an aristocratic background, fending for

herself on all her journeys. At Ganjam, the British imprisoned her at the Chhatrapur jail. She was subsequently transferred to the Vellore jail and released after six months. On December 8, 1930, she returned to Cuttack and was given a triumphant public reception organised by fellow activist Binapani Devi.

After participating in the Salt Satyagraha, Sarala joined hands with Kuntala Kumari, Basanta Kumari Devi, Sarojini Choudhury, Kokila Devi and Jahnavi Devi to form the Nikhil Utkal Nari Parishad, which consisted of 30 active members and included representatives from Puri, Ganjam, Cuttack, and Balasore. Sarala wrote plays, exhorting women to come out into the public domain. The *Utkal Deepika*, a local daily reported on November 7, 1931. "She desires to involve Oriya women in her plays. She believes that Oriya women are remaining in the background. They feel shy to come out. If they can be involved in acting in plays, they will no longer feel different. That is why Sarala is going to many Oriya houses on her mission."⁶

Similarly, Sarala also involved herself in the activities of the Utkal Congress Samyavadi Karmi Sangha⁷, a Marxist organisation committed to the welfare of the peasantry. Activists such as Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi, Nabakrishna Choudhury, Bhubananda Das, Manmohan Choudhury, Surendranath Dwivedy and Malati Choudhury led it. Sarala took part in many meetings. Despite hailing from a *Zamindari* background, she raised her voice against the tyranny of the *zamindars*. Similarly, she played a leading part in the prohibition and *swadeshi* movements, and also in the campaign against untouchability. Overjoyed by the success of the Mahila Bandhu Samiti, Sarala said: "I feel gratified that my cherished dream of the past has been finally realised. It was truly beyond my expectation that the women of Utkal would one day find recognition. This is a new chapter in the history of Orissa. Which lover of the nation would not be filled with joy in seeing the rise of the women's voice? There was a ray of hope in the depressed heart, it is worth knowing that the effort might be negligible but that the soul of an institution always remains alive."⁸

When the separate province of Orissa was formed on April 1, 1936, Sarala Devi was elected to the Assembly as the first women member from Orissa. As a member of the legislature, she took an active part in piloting bills related to women's education⁹ and welfare. She also fought against practices such as child marriage. As a result, the bill amending the Child Marriage Restraint Act was passed. To combat the menace of dowry, she introduced a bill against this evil in 1939. She remained an activist till the very end.

Sarala the Writer

Though many women produced significant writing in Orissa prior to her, Sarala Devi was one of the first women authors to show political awareness. Most of her predecessors wrote religious and spiritual poetry, which eschewed political and women's concerns. For instance, Sulakshana Devi of Tigrira (born in 1829) composed a collection of poems entitled, *Parijatamala*. Similarly, Suchitra Devi (born in 1881) of Puri district published an anthology called *Kavita Lahiri* in 1901 and Annapurna Devi (born in 1883) of Chikiti, Ganjam district, wrote devotional songs. There were also women authors like Pitambari Devi, a companion of Gopal Chandra Praharaj — the first lexicographer of Orissa — who illustrated the status of contemporary women in her autobiographical writings.

Sarala thus inherited a female literary tradition. She tried her hand at many genres including poetry, drama and fiction. However, it is mostly as an essayist and letter writer that she excelled and put to effective use her fiery spirit as a rebel, social activist and reformer. Some of her articles were published in such Bengali journals as *Debjani*. Among her published works in Oriya¹⁰ are *Utkalaa Nari Samasya* (The Problems of the Women of Orissa) 1934, *Narira Dabi* (The Rights of Women) 1934, *Bharatiya Mahila Prasanga*, (About the women of India) 1935, *Rabindra Puja* (A Homage to Rabindranath), *Beera Ramani* (The Women of Valour) 1949 and *Bishwa Biplabani* (The Great Female Revolutionaries of the World) 1930. As a close associate of Ananda Shankar Ray, who wrote both in Oriya and Bengali, Sarala was a leading member of the Oriya Romantic Movement. She was one of the six authors who jointly wrote the novel *Basanti*.

In all her varied writings, Sarala displayed a maturity of vision, a sharp perception and an extraordinary range of interests. A constantly questioning mind led to a defiance of the accepted forms of received wisdom, especially with regard to the position of women in society. At Vellore jail in 1936, Sarala lived with fellow — prisoners like Durgabai Deshmukh, who she describes admiringly as a "clever, pretty, active, young Andhra lady, a dictator of the Satyagraha movement in Madras."¹¹

In a letter to "Dear Bhagu babu", her husband, Sarala suggests how her life behind bars was a productive period in her political schooling. Prison life provided useful time for music, spinning and instruction in languages — all of which she would put to effective use in her career as a leader and an activist. From far away Vellore, she urges her husband to honour the pact they had made before they plunged together into the freedom struggle, that their little son Tikun should be well taken care of, and that both father and son ought to stay in Alaknanda Ashram until she returned from jail. For, she maintained, "It would be

better if you could also reside in the Ashram along with the child so that he might not feel lonely."

Sarala's profile of women of valour and distinction, presented in *Beera Ramani*, compares favourably with the best of this genre anywhere and reminds us of Ellen Moers' critical work *Literary Women*. Prescribed at one time as a high-school textbook in Orissa, Sarala's 90-page book has inspiring biographies of Lakshmi Bai, Bundi Mahishi, Karma Devi, Krishna Kumari and Panna Devi. Through such narratives, Sarala wished Oriya women to emulate the examples of contemporary women leaders like Kamala Devi Chattopadhyaya, Sarala Devi Choudhurani, Mridu Lakshmi Reddy and others active on the national scene.

Similarly, in *Bishwa Biplabani*, Sarala brings to bear her wide reading and offers the narratives of several women of world stature, such as Kalpana Dutta of former East Bengal, an associate of Surya Sen of the famous Chittagong Armoury Case. There are other accounts, like that of Sophia Bardina who fought the oppressive Russian Tsar, and that of Hazalipij of Romania. She also chronicles the legacy of the Oriya princess, Suka Devi of Banki, and other women such as Lakshmi Bai, Ahalyabai and Janabai at the national level. As Sarala explains in the preface to the book: "It is to provide worthy role models for the revolutionary-minded young women in Orissa that I have published this book."

Similarly, in the foreword to her book, *The Problems of Women in Orissa*, Sarala's views are marked by a deep sympathy and concern for women's plight: "As I throw my gaze everywhere about the progress of women in Orissa, my vision gets blocked again and again by a dense darkness from the new moon. Nowhere can I see a faint ray of soothing moonlight. Compared to the status of women in India and the world, where lies that of Orissa? And how far has it expanded? The right answer to such questions surely belongs to those who share an intimate knowledge of the world of women."¹²

In her book, *Narira Dabi*, Sarala outlines a manifesto for women's empowerment. Comparable to Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Women*, what impresses us is the breadth of her extraordinary knowledge of contemporary history, law and social life both in India and abroad. In voicing her anger against the subordination of women and marital rape, Sarala distinctly emerges as a revolutionary woman. Far ahead of her times, her life and career deserve the attention of an all-India audience.

Sarala begins her essay in a matter-of-fact manner: "There is much agitation in today's world over the question of women's independence. Both in the West as well as in the East, one hears, in one voice, the demand that women should become free. The campaign has made

headway in the western countries. In the East, however, it is still at the stage of inception. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that the agitation would fructify in the near future."¹³

After outlining the status of women from historical times, she asks indignantly: "Who is it that doesn't know the plight of women? A woman's place, after all, is in the recesses of her house, in the darkness of the *Antahapur*. She has no relationship with the outside world. This world evokes little interest in her. She has no way of knowing the ongoing conflicts in the world and the struggle for existence everywhere. Virtually blind, her sole business is to serve and nurse the menfolk in the family. Of course, no one is saying that nursing and serving have no value. Isn't it, however, unbecoming of civilised society to turn out coolie-like females, made to work under duress? To learn and acquire knowledge, to have pleasure in the place of work, all these are unfortunately beyond the scope of women today. Her whole world is confined within the four walls of her household. Her life revolves around food and toil. Women today are presiding deities of their kitchens. Little wonder, therefore, that whenever we are reminded of women, our attention is naturally drawn into the dark corners of houses."

She quotes favourably some extracts from a judgement given by a court in Britain, to "satisfy" she says, "the curiosity of readers". Justice Meccard's judgement seems to represent Sarala's avant-garde thinking on matters like marital rape and the right of a woman over her own biological and reproductive self: "I maintain that the wife's body can never be owned by her husband. It's her own property and not her husband's. She can leave her husband at her will; she can select her business or join the political party of her choice. She has full rights to decide whether or not she is going to have a child and at what point of time. No man can keep a woman under control on the basis of the fact that he is married to her. The woman of this country has won independence; she is a citizen and not a slave. She can turn her wish into action. One doesn't get the pleasures of married life from the codes of rules and regulations. The success of marriage depends on mutual compassion, mutual consideration, mutual forgiveness, mutual sacrifice, and above all, a mutually shared morality."

Quoting favourably from the writings of women like Annie Besant and others, Sarala exposes the pernicious hold of patriarchy, the duplicity prevailing in society, and concludes: "The main cause of the downfall of India is the attitude of disrespect shown towards women by our countrymen. Because of this regressive attitude, women of our country are deprived of education today. An illiterate woman can never give birth to a developed child. How can the nation hope to grow with children who are undeveloped, weak and ill? Even till today, the

condition of women has not improved adequately: their life is still a burden. As long as this doesn't undergo a suitable change, and women do not receive enough time and scope to contribute to their physical and mental strength, so long would the rise and growth of India be a dream. What more could we say beyond this?"

Sarala's interest in the gender question continues in her novel as well. In her portion of this jointly written novel, *Basanti*, she continues to regard literature primarily as a means to female emancipation and social transformation.¹⁴ Apart from Sarala, the other five authors of the novel were Harihar Mahapatra, Kalindi Charan Panigrahi, Annanda Shankar Ray, Baikunthanath Patnaik and Sarat Chandra Mukherjee, all men. These men had formed a literary association called *The Nonsense Club* that paved the way for the formation of the *Sabua Sahitya Samiti*, which heralded the advent of romanticism in Oriya literature. In *Basanti*, the chapter written by Sarala employs the mode of dialogue between Braja and his sister-in-law, Basanti. Much of the discussion here is polemical in nature and centres on the question of the role of women within and outside the institution of marriage, the need for female education and her participation in civic and political life. The following conversation between Braja and Basanti is representative.¹⁵

Braja: To accomplish all this, surely we need to change female education everywhere!

Basanti: Of course, without education, a woman can never enjoy complete independence!

Braja: Well, when you are advocating total independence for women, you might say that she ought to abjure motherhood because that goes counter to her desire for freedom!

Basanti: You have brought in a difficult issue, Braja. Who says motherhood is contradictory to independence? A woman has never spurned motherhood! On the contrary, she has been gloried in this experience! But wherever motherhood is not a voluntary act, there the woman treats it as a burden and a prison house. And, therefore, it becomes a source of aberration. If motherhood leads to the growth of the female self, how can it be bondage? Society has downgraded individuality for the sake of procreation. That is why there is no greatness in motherhood today. Otherwise, there is no opposition between motherhood and independence.

Braja: It seems to me that whatever you wish womankind to achieve, basically seems to be a product of your own aspirations and longings.

Basanti: Let it be! I don't wish to quarrel with your judgement.

Braja: Then do you say that to attain full emancipation is the aim of your life?

Basanti said in a firm voice: Yes!

In Search of Emancipation

Like Basanti, Sarala's life as a writer, reformer and activist was a pioneering search for emancipation for herself and for the women of Orissa.¹⁶ In 1936, she was the sole woman member in the senate of Utkal University. She was the only woman representative from Orissa in Dr. Radhakrishnan's Education Commission. She was the first Oriya member in the All India Congress Committee, and she served as secretary of the Utkal Sahitya Samaj. She was elected twice to the All India Women's Conference's standing committee. The Orissa Sahitya Academy twice awarded her a literary prize. Nevertheless, Sarala never received her full due, either at the state or the national level. Even today in Orissa, her works are hard to come by and many of her books are out of print. She died on October 4, 1986.

Despite the relative lack of public recognition for her many accomplishments, Sarala Devi remains one of the most inspiring examples of early literary feminism in Orissa. In her strength of character, her understanding of women's position in a patriarchal order, and her deployment of literature as the primary means to female emancipation and social change, she stands next to Kuntala Kumari Sabat. Though Kuntala excelled over her in creative literature, Sarala had a more active involvement in the society and polity of contemporary Orissa. Like Basanti, the female protagonist in the novel, Sarala remained committed till the end to both literature and women's emancipation.

Notes

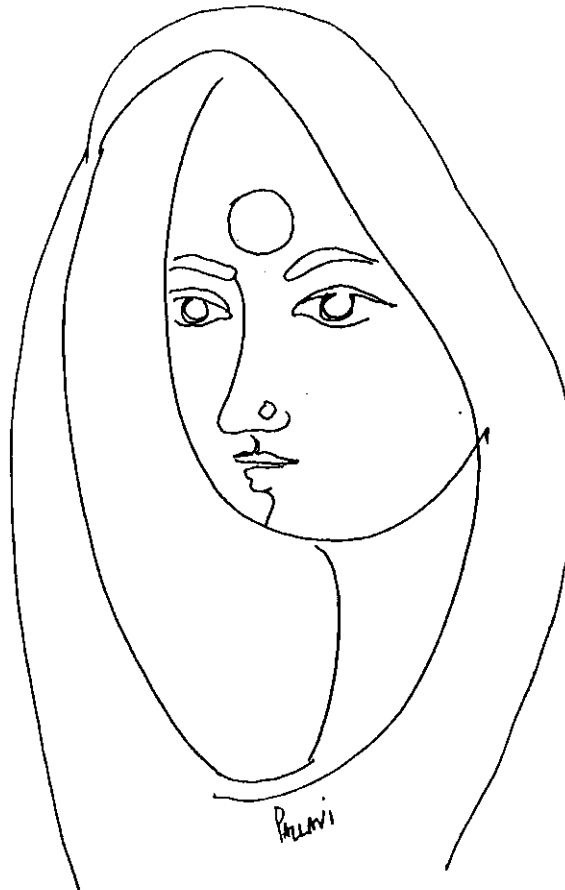
1. Most literary histories mention the names of women writers in passing. Quite clearly, they suffer from negligence within Orissa and elsewhere, Susie Tharu's book marks a beginning but more needs to be done.
2. Quoted in Rajendra Raju, *Mahiyasi Mahila Sarala* (Oriya), Berhampur, 1995 p.14. Op. Cit. All translations are by me.
3. Ibid, pp. 14-15.
4. Sarala was the first Oriya woman leader who took part in the Satyagraha movement in Orissa. At times, this distinction is incorrectly accorded to Rama Devi who herself was an eminent female activist.
5. Gandhiji's visit to Balasore and Bhadrak had made a substantial impact. Its effect is felt even today in the form of a surviving Gandhi Ahsram there.
6. Quoted in Raju, *Mahiyasi: Mahila Sarala* p.31.

7. Ibid.
8. Raju, p. 22.
9. See "Educational Uplift of Women in the 19th Century Orissa" in *Our Documentary Heritage*, Vol. 1. Orissa State Archives, Bhubaneswar, 1988. Also see Bikram Das, "Adi Biplabini Sarala Devi" (in Oriya), *The Samaj*, Annual Issue, 1997, pp.67-70.
10. Most of these books by Sarala Devi are not readily available now.
11. From the original manuscript of the letter. All subsequent references are from this source.
12. Raju, p. 76.
13. From *Narira Dabi*, Cuttack, Hindustan Publishers, and "Narira Arthika Swadhinata" (The Economic Independence of Women) in *Sahakara*, 1934. Pp. 16-28 "Naritwara Pratistha" (The Establishment of Womanhood) in *Utkala Sahitya*, No.25/8.1329, pp.268-280. All references to *Narira Dabi* are from this source.
14. See Rabindra Prasad Panda, "Ushara Udaya Samia Anabagthita", *Sambada*, July 9, 1997.
15. Quoted in Panda Op. Cit.
16. There were others such as Bidyut Prabha Devi, who excelled in lending a powerful woman's voice in poetry and followed in Sarala's footsteps.

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Editor's Note: This article was published in Manushi before and is being reprinted with Manushi's permission.

Manushi is a journal about women and society, devoted to human rights, women's rights, and social justice issues. Manushi is being published by a non-profit trust based in New Delhi. It can be reached at: C-174, Lajpat Nagar-I, New Delhi-110024 Phone: 6839158, 6833022 e-mail: manushi@nda.vsnl.net.in



Martha Priya Burek - Coming Home

SUSAN BUREK

Martha Priya's story started a long time ago. For many years, I knew I would adopt a child, but I didn't know who or when or how. I talked to many adoption workers, but they always left me feeling discouraged. But still I persisted. When I completed my Master's degree in 1991, I knew it was time to start my adoption journey in earnest. After exploring many options, it was clear that international adoption was the right choice for me, and my friends from India strongly encouraged me to adopt from their country. Several adoption agencies told me they could help, but somehow things were not quite right. Then in 1996, when I had almost lost hope, the kind staff at Maine Adoption Placement Service assured me they could help. I sent my application to them in August and my dossier in October. In November, right before Thanksgiving, they called me and told me about Martha, a little girl at Shishu Gruha Orphanage in Orissa, India. They didn't have to say much. I knew in my heart that Martha was meant to be my daughter.

I spent the next six months preparing my home and my heart for Martha - making things right for a little girl. My whole life changed during this time. While waiting, my friends from India helped me learn a lot about her country, culture, and customs. I also learned enough words in Oriya, Martha's language, to make this our common language during our first few months together. Finally, by summer 1997, I was ready to go to India, right on schedule. I waited and waited for the phone call that the adoption papers were ready in India. But there was always some new delay in India, and the weeks stretched into months. I spent Christmas 1997 alone, still waiting. Finally, the joyous call came in January 1998 and in February I got on a plane headed for India.

Martha Priya and I became a family on February 21, 1998, in Bhubaneswar, Orissa, India. I spent two days at Shishu Gruha, where I saw Martha in her own environment, how she related to other kids and adults, and learned a lot about her world. Shishu Gruha was like a big family, and Martha has fond memories of her friends and caretakers (ayas). From the start, Martha was a happy, healthy, emotionally stable, and playful child, and the ayas prepared her for the change from orphanage to family (I sent pictures of myself and her new home to her in 1997). She recognized me when I arrived, and we started our life together as a family!!!

Shishu Gruha was a small rural orphanage on 15 acres, with cows, chickens, large vegetable gardens, and a beautiful flower garden (Martha loves flowers). The orphanage was fairly self-sufficient and grew its own rice and food. By U.S. standards, it was very poor, but it was rich in comparison with other housing in the area. I felt Shishu Gruha was a wonderful place, with a high staff-to-child ratio, lots of attention to the kids, lots of touching and holding, and lots of love. Martha is a very happy child - she was loved by the ayas and director (Mr. Mohanty), and all the kids seemed happy and healthy. There were about 20 kids, but the orphanage was surprisingly

quiet (almost no crying). The kids played quietly and interacted quietly with the ayas (lots of nonverbal communication). It seems that the ayas were strict but loving, and the kids knew what the rules were and thrived. Since there were few toys, the ayas taught the kids to sing and dance. Martha was amazingly independent when I met her and knew how to bathe, shampoo her hair, brush her teeth, and count. She also knew her body parts, colors, animal names, and lots of things. She was one of the older kids at Shishu Gruha and learned to share her toys and food and help the little ones. I was amazed to watch Martha share her food with the other children several times before we left (she still enjoys sharing her food with me). There wasn't a lot of food, and all the kids were tiny. Martha looked like a tiny two year old in Feb. (25 lbs and 35 inches tall). She has grown a lot and now looks like a petite 4 year old (32 lbs. and 40 inches tall).

During our first two weeks together, Martha was fairly quiet but communicated well nonverbally. She was fluent in the international language of all children and was very imaginative. During our travels, she had no problem communicating with others, regardless of language. She smiled all the time (and still does), and total strangers still come up and say they've never seen a child who smiles so much. Martha is a joyful child - she's happy from the moment she wakes up in the morning to the moment she goes to bed, and she spreads her joy to everyone she meets. In India, she was often the initiator and leader of group games. This is still true at home, at school, and with children of all ages (little kids, big kids, and adults).

When we came home, I spoke to her in Oriya and English, and she understood much more in both languages than I expected. I followed a simple, predictable schedule and diet while she adjusted. Before we came home, I took most of the toys out of her room and introduced them to her slowly so she wouldn't be overwhelmed by too many new things (culture shock). I put two twin beds in her room so I could sleep with her whenever needed. At first, we slept together in her bed. A couple of weeks later, I moved to the other bed. About a month later, I moved back to my room. Months later, I still lay down and snuggle with her until she goes to sleep, and she often comes to snuggle with me in my room if she wakes up before I do. These snuggle times are a precious gift and an important part of our bonding.

Martha is learning English quickly. She seems to have an intuitive sense about language in general. I also think she was exposed to some English in India (when I was there, Mr. Mohanty spoke to her in English as if she understood every word he said). For a number of reasons, I think she got lots of love from him and his family, and I know that Lina, her favorite aya, truly loved her. Even in our first month together, Martha was easily able to understand and follow complex instructions in English (i.e., go to your room and get your book). With the help of friends, I hope to keep Martha connected with her Indian language, culture, and customs.

Since I'm a single parent, I had to go back to work (stay-at-home moms are really lucky). Martha was used to being around kids, so she started preschool a month after we came home, first 1-2 hours a day, then more as she was ready. I spent a lot of time at her school to see how she was doing. She enjoyed the school, teacher, and kids right away and has done very well socially and functionally in school. The preschool is more multicultural than most - a mix of black, brown, and white kids. This was hard to find but very important. Martha has had a lot to learn. In India, young kids rarely see common things like crayons, markers, paper, scissors, paint, etc. Martha has a wonderful teacher who has helped her learn these new skills. Her English has also grown rapidly, and now most people understand her most of the time. My limited Oriya has helped Martha transfer her knowledge from Oriya to English. She learns quickly when I explain that "English word" and "Oriya word" are the same. I expect that she will catch up quickly and be ready for kindergarten in 1999.

At Shishu Gruha, Martha learned to bathe herself from head to foot and to shampoo and rinse her own hair. Once home, I was amazed (and amused) to watch as she scrubbed herself "squeaky clean". Every night for months, she started scrubbing at the top and, when her face was white with soap, she turned to me and said, "MOOOO", long and low, just like a cow. This is one of my fondest memories of our early days together, and I thank God for this wonderful little girl who shares her joy with me, and for Lina, who taught her to love and trust the people in her life. Sometimes Martha lets me help her wash her feet, but she insists that she should wash the "big" one and I should wash the "little one". We've had great fun counting fingers and toes and saying body parts in English and Oriya. Bath time is lots of fun and good bonding time for both of us.

Martha had to learn how to use western "chair" toilets instead of Indian "squatting" toilets. This was scary for her - I would hold her with both hands for security, and she would cling to me for dear life (fear of falling backwards into the water). At home, I used stepstools to help her reach the toilet and sink and put a potty ring over the commode so she wouldn't fall in. I was impressed to find that she knew how to wash her hands after using the potty and before meals. In the first few weeks after coming home, she used the potty 20-30 times a day as her diet changed and she developed new muscles. We played games while she was on the potty to pass the time. This was also good bonding time - like changing diapers.

I resisted the strong urge to have a great big party when we got home to introduce her to everyone right away. Instead, I kept her circle small and intimate for a few months until she had met all close family members and friends, including the out-of-towners. This helped her learn the difference between close ties and casual friends and helped her form strong bonds with her new family.

Bad behavior is VERY infrequent (about once every two weeks - NO tantrums). Time out usually works. Actually, she behaves better when I'm strict and set clear limits and consequences. In India, clear limits mean love and security. She gets and gives me lots of hugs and kisses. I know I'm very lucky.

Martha Priya was affectionate from the start, and our bond has grown much stronger over time. We play together

and spend lots of time together. We have our special kiss (cheek, cheek, forehead) and special games. I love her very much. The wait to bring her home was long and hard, with lots of tears and fears, but now that I have her it's hard to remember life without her. She's been home for 10 months and the time has passed so quickly. We finalized the adoption on Oct. 13, 1998, making us a forever family at last!!! GOD HAS GIVEN ME A GREAT BLESSING THAT GOES BEYOND WORDS, AND I AM VERY THANKFUL.

Martha Priya Burek - Stories in the Spirit of the Season: December 1998

When I told Martha Priya on Saturday night that we were going to the airport on Sunday to meet a new India baby, she got so excited. When I told her the baby's name was Sarita Neha, she said, "Beautiful" and practiced saying Sarita's name several times. When she asked about the name later and I repeated "Sarita Neha", she told me I was wrong - she wanted to know Sarita's Mommy's name (Ms. Karen). On Sunday morning, we rushed to get ready and get to the airport on time. When we were ready to leave, she ran to her room and filled her new backpack with all her photo books of India, her arrival in the U.S., her new family, and her adoption day (five photo books in all). She also tried to stuff her yellow ducky into the bag. I tried to tell her to leave the photo books at home, but she was convinced that Sarita needed to see all these photos. Since it was clear that I was losing this argument, I helped her stuff everything into the bag and we left.

While waiting for the plane to arrive, she was delighted to see all the other India babies (all under one year old) and their new families also waiting to welcome Sarita home. She immediately got busy showing them her photo books, page by page, and then she patiently showed them how to play with the yellow ducky. Later, she stood at the window with Sarita's new sister, Megan, watching the plane pull into the arrival gate. Then she and Megan stood together at the front of the line, watching people walk off the plane and searching every passenger for Sarita. When Sarita arrived, she couldn't wait to touch and kiss the new baby. Martha was very happy.

In India, she learned that a family is made up of the people who love you and the people you love. She found several didis (big sisters) at Shishu Gruha, whom she still loves today. She tells me proudly that she is a didi to her favorite dolls and shows me often how a didi is supposed to hold and care for a baby. Since her arrival, Martha has found several new didis in her life (new cousins and new friends from India). Martha was happy to meet Megan because she knows that Megan is Sarita's didi, and Martha wants to be Sarita's didi, too.

Martha Priya has a big heart and shares her love with everyone around her. I sometimes look at her and wonder who taught her to be so loving. I'm so glad that I met Lina, Martha's favorite aya, at Shishu Gruha. Lina called herself Martha's "India Mother", and it was clear to me that Lina loved Martha very much. And still I wonder about all the gifts that Martha Priya gives so freely, things that I never taught her . . .

Susan Burek lives in Austin, Texas with Martha Priya Burek.

ସଂସ୍କୃ ନାନୀ

ନନ୍ଦିତା ବେହେରା

ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ନୃତ୍ୟକଳା ଯେତେବେଳେ ଅବହେଳିତ ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ଲୋକଲୋଚନର ଅନ୍ତରାଳରେ ପଡ଼ିରହିଥିଲା ସେତେବେଳେ ତାର ପୁନରୁଦ୍ଧାର ନିମିତ୍ତ ପ୍ରଥମ କରି ସ୍ୱର ଉଦ୍ଧୋଳନ କରିଥିଲେ ତଃ ଚାର୍ଲସ୍ ଫାନ୍ସୀ । ଏହି ଅପୂର୍ବ ଲାସ୍ୟମୟ ନୃତ୍ୟର ଭୂୟସୀ ପ୍ରଶଂସା କରି ସେ ଆହ୍ୱାନ କରିଥିଲେ ତାଙ୍କର ଅନେକ ପ୍ରବନ୍ଧ ମାନଙ୍କରେ । ତାଙ୍କର ଆଦର୍ଶରେ ଅନୁପ୍ରାଣିତ ହୋଇ ଆଗେଇ ଅସିଥିଲେ ସେ ସମୟର ସୁପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧା ନୃତ୍ୟାଙ୍ଗନା ମାନେ ଇକ୍ଷାଣୀ ରତ୍ନମନ୍, ଯାମିନୀ କୃଷ୍ଣମୂର୍ତ୍ତି, ରାଗିଣୀ ଦେବୀ, ମିନତୀ ଦାସ ପ୍ରମୁଖ । ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସର୍ବ ଭାରତୀୟ ସ୍ତରରେ ସମସ୍ଥାନ ଲାଭ କଲା ।

ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟର ଏହିଭଳି ଏକ ଦୋହଲ୍ୟମାନ ଅବସ୍ଥା ସମୟରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଇତିହାସ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଆସିଥିଲେ ସଂଯୁକ୍ତା । ପ୍ରଥମ ଓଡ଼ିଆ କୁଳୀନ ବ୍ରାହ୍ମଣ କନ୍ୟା ଯିଏକି ସେତେବେଳର ସମସ୍ତ ସାମାଜିକ ବାଧା ବନ୍ଧନକୁ ନମାନି ପ୍ରଥମ କରି ନୃତ୍ୟକୁ ନିଜ ଜୀବନର ପେଶା ଭାବେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିନେଇଥିଲେ । ଶେଷରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଜଗତର ଚରମ ସ୍ତରକୁ ଉଠି ଆସିଥିଲେ ସେହି ସୋପାନରେ ଗର୍ବର ସହିତ ରହି ଶେଷରେ ଶେଷ ନିଶ୍ୱାସ ତ୍ୟାଗ କରିଥିଲେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଜଗତର ସାମ୍ରାଜ୍ଞୀ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ସଂଯୁକ୍ତା ପାଣିଗ୍ରାହୀ ।

ଗୁରୁ ଶ୍ରୀ କେଳୁଚରଣ ମହାପାତ୍ରଙ୍କର ପଞ୍ଚଶିଷ୍ୟୀ ସଂଯୁକ୍ତାଙ୍କର ନୃତ୍ୟାରମ୍ଭ ତିନିବର୍ଷ ବୟସରୁ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ମାତାଙ୍କର ପ୍ରଗାଢ଼ ଭବ୍ୟମରେ ସେ ନୃତ୍ୟଶିକ୍ଷା ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଥିଲେ । ଗୁରୁ କେଳୁଚରଣଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ ପରେପରେ ମାତ୍ରାସର ରୁକ୍ମିଣୀ ଅରୁଣେଲଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଖ୍ୟାତ କଳାକ୍ଷେତ୍ର ନୃତ୍ୟ କେନ୍ଦ୍ରରେ ଆଠ ବର୍ଷ ବୟସରେ ଯୋଗଦାନ କରିଥିଲେ । ସେଠାକାର କଠିନ ଶିକ୍ଷା ପଦ୍ଧତି ଓ ଖୁଞ୍ଚିତ ନିୟମାବଳୀ ତାଙ୍କ ଉଦ୍ଦିଷ୍ଟତା ଶିଳ୍ପୀ ଜୀବନର ପ୍ରଥମ ସୋପାନ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିଥିଲା । ସଂଯୁକ୍ତାଙ୍କ ନୃତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା ଦିଗରେ ଯେଉଁ ଅଖଣ୍ଡ ନିଷ୍ଠାର ପ୍ରମାଣ ମିଳେ ତାହା ସେ କଳାକ୍ଷେତ୍ରରୁ ଶିକ୍ଷା କରିଥିଲେ ବୋଲି ସ୍ୱୀକାର କରନ୍ତି । ମାତ୍ର ୧୪ ବର୍ଷ ବୟସରେ ସେ କଳାକ୍ଷେତ୍ରରୁ ଶିକ୍ଷା ସାରି ନୃତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନୀ ତ ଶ୍ରୀ ହାସଲ କରି ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଫେରି ଆସିଥିଲେ । ଭଗବାନଙ୍କର ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟ ଥିଲା ଭିନ୍ନ ପ୍ରକାରର । ହଠାତ୍ ଷୋଳ ବର୍ଷ ବୟସରେ ତାଙ୍କର ବିବାହ ହୋଇଥିଲା କୃଷ୍ଣଶିଳ୍ପୀ ଶ୍ରୀ ରଘୁନାଥ ପାଣିଗ୍ରାହୀଙ୍କ ସହିତ । ସେହିଦିନଠାରୁ ତାଙ୍କ ଜୀବନର ଗତି ଧରିଥିଲା ଏକ ଭିନ୍ନ ରୂପ । ନିଜକୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟର ପ୍ରତିନିଧି ଭାବେ ପ୍ରଚାର ଓ ପ୍ରସାର କରିବାର ସିଦ୍ଧାନ୍ତ ସେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିଥିଲେ । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ସାହାକିଛି ତ୍ୟାଗ କରିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିଥିଲା । ତାଙ୍କର ଦିଧା ନଥିଲା ଏହି ଅପୂର୍ବ ଉତ୍ସାହ ଓ ଅପୂର୍ବ ନିଷ୍ଠାର ପ୍ରତିଫଳନରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ଆଜି ପୃଥିବୀର କୋଣେ କୋଣେ ପରିଚିତ । ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଭଳି ଏକ ଅବହେଳିତ ଜାତି ଲାଗି ଏହା ଥିଲା ଏକ ଆଶୀର୍ବାଦ ସ୍ୱରୂପ । ପୃଥିବୀର କୌଣସି ଦେଶରେ ଯେ ସେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନ କରି ନାହାନ୍ତି ସେକଥା ସନ୍ଦେହଜନକ । ପୃଥିବୀର ସମସ୍ତ ପତ୍ରପତ୍ରିକା ତାଙ୍କର ନୃତ୍ୟକଳାର ପ୍ରଶଂସାରେ ଶତମୁଖ ହୋଇଉଠନ୍ତି । ଏ ସମସ୍ତ ଦେଶମାନଙ୍କରେ ହେଉଥିବା ନୃତ୍ୟ ସମାରୋହରେ ଭାରତର ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ନୃତ୍ୟ ସହିତ ସମତାଳ ପ୍ରଦାନ କରି ସେ ନୃତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଖାଲି ନୃତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନ କହିଲେ ବୋଧେ ଠିକ୍ ହେବନାହିଁ ନିଜର ଅପୂର୍ବ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନ ଶୈଳୀରେ ଦର୍ଶକଙ୍କ ନୟନ ମନ ହରଣ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ଯେ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ନୃତ୍ୟ ତୁଳନାରେ କେଉଁ ଗୁଣରେ କମ୍ ନୁହେଁ ତାହା ନିଜର ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନ । Workshop ଓ demonstration ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ କରିଛନ୍ତି ।

ମୋର ଶିଳ୍ପୀ ଜୀବନ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଅନେକ ଦିନ ଧରି ତାଙ୍କର ସାହଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ ପାଇବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ଲାଭ କରିଥିଲି । ଅତି ନିକଟରୁ ତାଙ୍କ ଅନୁଶୀଳନ କରିବାର ସୌଭାଗ୍ୟ ପାଇଥିଲି । ମୋ ଶିଳ୍ପୀ ପ୍ରାଣର ସେ ଥିଲେ ପ୍ରେରଣାର ଉତ୍ସ । ଯେତିକି ମୁଁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଅନୁଧ୍ୟାନ କରିଛି ଜାଣିଛି ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ପ୍ରତି ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତି ପ୍ରତି ତାଙ୍କର ଥିଲା ପ୍ରଗାଢ଼ ଅନୁରକ୍ତି । ନିଜକୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାବେ ପରିଚୟ ଦେଲାବେଳେ ସେ ଗର୍ବ ଅନୁଭବ କରନ୍ତି । ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରତି ବା ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପ୍ରତି କୌଣସି ଅବମାନନା ସେ ସହଜେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ପ୍ରକୃତରେ ସେ ଥିଲେ ଗମ୍ଭୀର କଥାରେ ନ କହି କାମରେ ଦେଖାଇବା ଥିଲା ତାଙ୍କର ମୂଳନୀତି । ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟର ପ୍ରତିନିଧି ଭାବେ ଏକ ଗୁରୁ ଭାର ସେ ଯେପରି ବହନ କରିଥିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କର ମନର ବଳ ଥିଲା ଅତି କଠିନ ତା ନହୋଇଥିଲେ ଏକମାତ୍ର ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ଶିଳ୍ପୀ ଭାବେ ଏତେଦିନ ଧରି ଟିକି ପାରି ନଥାନ୍ତେ । ମଞ୍ଚ ଉପରକୁ ସଂଯୁକ୍ତା ଉଠିଆସିଲେ ମନେ ହୁଏ ସତେଯେପରି ସୁଯାଙ୍କର ସହସ୍ର ଶିଖା ନେଇ ସେ ଉଦ୍‌ଭାସିତ । ବିଶେଷକରି ତାଙ୍କ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନର ଶୈଳୀ ଥିଲା ଅପୂର୍ବ । ଆଗ୍ନେୟଗିରିର ଜୁଳନ୍ତ ଲାଭାସମ ସଞ୍ଚରି ଯାଆନ୍ତି ସେ ସମଗ୍ର ମଞ୍ଚ ଉପରେ । ତାଙ୍କର ସେ ଅପୂର୍ବ ଶକ୍ତିର ପ୍ରତିଫଳ ଦର୍ଶକ ମନକୁ ଦୋହଲାଇ ଦିଏ । ତାଙ୍କର କୁରୁସଭାର ପଶାଖେଳଠାରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରି ରାବଣର ସୀତାହରଣ , ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧନାରୀ ସ୍ୱରର ଶିବପାର୍ବତୀଙ୍କ ଅପୂର୍ବ ସମନ୍ୱୟ ଚର ସୁରଶାୟ । ଏ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସେ ସମସ୍ତ ରୂପ ଜୀବନ୍ତ ପ୍ରତିମା ଭଳି ଆଖି ଆଗରେ ଝଲୁଥି ଉଠେ । ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟର ଡ୍ରାଇଙ୍ଗ ଠାଣୀ କୋଣାର୍କର ମନ୍ଦିର ଗାତ୍ରକୁ ସୁରଣ କରାଏ । ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ଭଳି ଲାସ୍ୟମୟୀ ନୃତ୍ୟର ଏଭଳି ଅପୂର୍ବ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନ ମୋ ଶିଳ୍ପୀ ପ୍ରାଣକୁ ସଦା ପୁଲକିତ କରିଥାଏ । ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ତାଙ୍କ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନ ଶୈଳୀରେ ତିଳେମାତ୍ର ବୟସର ଛାପ ବା କ୍ଳାନ୍ତିର ଛାୟା ଦେଖିବାକୁ ମିଳି ନ ଥିଲା । ଏଥିପାଇଁ ଯେଉଁ ଅଖଣ୍ଡ ମନୋବଳ ଦରକାର ତାହା ତାଙ୍କର ଥିଲା । ତାଙ୍କର ଏହି କଠିନ ମନୋବଳର କେତୋଟି ଦୃଷ୍ଟାନ୍ତ ମୋ ମନ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ବରପଂ ଭଳି ଜମାଟ ବାନ୍ଧି ରହିଯାଇଛି ।

କିଛିବର୍ଷ ପୂର୍ବେ ହଠାତ୍ ତାଙ୍କର ଅନେକ ଆଗ୍ରହ ହେଲା ପୁରୀ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ସମ୍ମୁଖରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନ କରିବେ । ସେ କହନ୍ତି ଯାହାଙ୍କ ପ୍ରେରଣାରେ ସେ ଏ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ନୃତ୍ୟ କରିଆସୁଛନ୍ତି ତାଙ୍କୁ ଥରେ ମନଭରି ନୃତ୍ୟ ଦେଖାନ୍ତେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ଦେବଦାସୀ ନୃତ୍ୟପ୍ରଥା ଅନେକ ଦିନରୁ ବନ୍ଦିଥିବା ହେତୁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଅନୁମତି ମିଳିଲା ନାହିଁ । ସଂଯୁକ୍ତା କିନ୍ତୁ ତାଙ୍କ ସିଦ୍ଧାନ୍ତରେ ଅଟଳ । ମନ୍ଦିର ନିୟମ ଅନୁସାରେ ଥରେ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ସମ୍ମୁଖରେ ନୃତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନ କଲେ ତାପରେ ଆଉ ଜନସାଧାରଣଙ୍କ ମନୋରଞ୍ଜନ ନିମନ୍ତେ ନୃତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନ କରିପାରିବେ ନାହିଁ । ଦେବଦାସୀ ଭାବେ ଜୀବନ ଯାପନ କରିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ । ଶେଷରେ ସଂଯୁକ୍ତା ହଠାତ୍ ଦିନେ ମଙ୍ଗଳ ଆଳତୀ ସମୟରେ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ପ୍ରବେଶକରି ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ସମ୍ମୁଖରେ 'ପ୍ରଳୟପୟୋଧି ଜଳେ' ସନ୍ନିତ ଦଶାବତାର ନୃତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନ କଲେ । ସମସ୍ତେ ଉତ୍ତୁଷ୍ଟ ହୋଇ ଦେଖିବା ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଶେଷ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ଶେଷରେ ସଂଯୁକ୍ତା କହିଥିଲେ "ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କୁ କିଏ କେତେ ପ୍ରକାରରେ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା କରନ୍ତି ମୁଁ ମୋର ନୃତ୍ୟ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଆରାଧନା କରୁଥିଲି" । ଏ ବିଷୟରେ କାହାର କିଛି ପ୍ରତିବାଦ କରିବାର ନଥିଲା ।

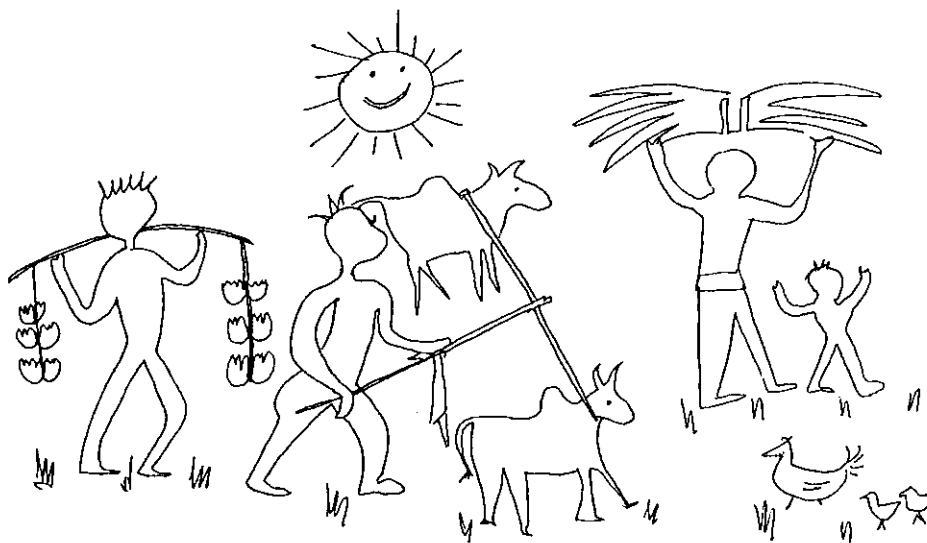
ଏ ହେଲେ ସଂଯୁକ୍ତା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତିର ପ୍ରକୃତ ଦାୟାଦ । ଭାଙ୍ଗିଯିବେ ପଛେ ନଇଁବେ ନାହିଁ । ଆଜିର ଏଇ ପବିତ୍ର ଦିବସରେ ତାଙ୍କର ଅମର ଆତ୍ମା ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟରେ ମୋର ଗଭୀର ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧାଞ୍ଜଳୀ ଜଣାଇ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା କରୁଛି, ହେ ମହିୟସୀ ! ତୁମେ ଥିଲ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଗୌରବ, ତୁମେ ଥିଲ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସୌରଭ, ତୁମେ ଥିଲ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସମ୍ମାନ, ଆମ ଭଳି ଅନେକ ଶିଶୁଙ୍କ ଜୀବନରେ ତୁମେ ଏକ ପ୍ରେରଣାର ଉତ୍ସ । ସେହି ମହାନ ଆତ୍ମା ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟରେ ପ୍ରଣତି ଜଣାଇ ବିଦାୟ ନେଉଛି ।

Nandita Behera is a well-known Odissi dancer; she lives in Cerritos, California.





for orissa



ପ୍ରାଣୀଙ୍କ ଆରତ ଦୁଃଖ ଅପ୍ରମିତ ଦେଖୁ ଅବା କିଏ ସହ,
ମୋ ଜୀବନ ପଛେ ନକେଁ ପଡ଼ିଥାଉ ଜଗତ ଭଙ୍ଗାର ହେଉ ।
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Biotechnology in Orissa

AMIYA R. NAYAK

The main idea behind this article is to bring together people, organizations, non-resident Oriyas (NROs), resident Oriyas and others to support biotech development processes in Orissa and to develop a collaborative consortium by bringing in people from the academia, business, and government to help in the growth opportunities in Orissa. We see infrastructural development in infotech, industrial engineering, construction, power, finance, metallurgy, education and socioeconomic sectors, but nothing much is happening in biotech areas in Orissa. There are two important questions: Can we help? And how can we help?

Biotech in Orissa is new and at an early stage of development. Under the Orissa Government plan to support the emerging technology-based industries, biotech is listed as a priority sector. Recently, there have been some new activities in biotechnology education, training, and exploration of investment opportunity and bioentrepreneurship. While there has been basic research activity in local academic institutions, there is no private sector presence in industrial biotech arena. Though Orissa is bio-resourceful, the applications of industrial biology have not happened in the state. The promotion of a biotech industry base in Orissa can play an important role in development in many sectors including healthcare, agriculture, employment, education and research.

Biotechnology broadly deals with developing novel products for use in medical (human/animal healthcare), agriculture, food, nutrition, environment and consumer sectors. The commercial biotech is a fast-developing industrial sector. Biotechnology is based on multiple scientific disciplines such as molecular biology, immunology, biochemistry, genetics, biomedical sciences, plant sciences and animal sciences, interfacing with other technical areas such as chemistry, biophysics, medicine, engineering and information sciences. The applied biotechnology is a combination of all sciences involving biological, physical, chemical, engineering, technology, regulatory, information and social sciences. The health biotech products are biopharmaceuticals, diagnostics, designer vaccines and gene drugs. The AgBiotech products are: transgenic crop plants, recombinant seeds, plant-derived biotech food and nutritionals. The four most important areas with maximum activities are health biotech, plant biotech, microbial biotech and animal biotech.

Biotech in India

The Government of India established the Department of Biotechnology (DBT) in 1986 under the Ministry of Science and Technology. The DBT's current yearly budget for biotechnology is \$US 30 million. The main biotech programs of DBT are health biotech, plant and agricultural biotech, education and research, regulatory affairs and promotion of bioindustries. The Indian government is planning to spend up to US \$50 million in biotechnology per year by 2000. Orissa should try to obtain a fair share of biotech funding through soft money grants. The biotech business (diagnostics) was first started by Ranbaxy, India's largest drug company. The domestic or multinationals started setting up biotech divisions in mid 1980s. Over the last 12 years, the Indian private sector has invested heavily in commercial biotechnology, but has not considered Orissa as a potential region to build their R&D, product manufacturing and marketing facilities. There are about 500 firms in India with some type of biotech-related activities. The Indian biotech business is about \$US 1.5 billion with a growth rate of 15% per year. Most of the biotech products are imported by domestic or foreign companies, repackaged and sold in the country and only a few products developed locally have been successful in the market. The industry employs about 10,000 people (including academic and industry, R&D 50%, technical/services 35%, management 15%). In India, biotech-based health products accounts for 60%, agri-biotech and veterinary biotech together account for 20% and the rest is from research products, instruments and ancillary sectors. By the year 2001, the biotech market in India will be about \$US 2.5 billion per year with high potential for growth. In comparison to the Indian pharmaceutical industry, the biotech industry is small. The Indian drugs/pharmaceutical industries will have a turnover of around \$US 30 billion (17000 small/medium/large drug firms) by the turn of the century. Many multinational corporations have evaluated the potential future business opportunities in India and are setting up Indian subsidiaries in India. Bangalore is dubbed as the biotech capital, New Delhi-the biomedical capital, Bombay-the pharmaceutical of India.

There are two major international biotech institutions established in India are: International Center

for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB), established by UNIDO and International Crop Research Institute Semi Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) supported by the CGIAR/UN-System. There are several healthcare and agricultural biotech projects in India funded by international agencies such as: WHO, UN-system, World Bank, USAID, PATH, Rockefeller and other private foundations.

The private industries involved in biotech in India are: Ranbaxy, Wockhardt, Lupin, Cadilla, Dr. Reddy's Labs, Hindusthan Lever, Glaxo Wellcome, SmithKline Beecham, Monsanto, DuPont, SPIC, Torrent. Very few biotech firms have been set up by the scientist-turned entrepreneur. Biotech Consortium India Limited, India's first public sector based biotech-venture capital company was incorporated in 1990 helping in tech transfer and promotion of biotechnologies. India has recently signed the World Trade Organization agreement and will provide the product patent protection by 2005 following the international guidelines, and changing its process patent system. The Indian patent office in 1998 received over 1500 new patent applications in pharmaceuticals and agricultural fields. Despite the challenges modern India is facing for the reconstruction of its socioeconomic and hi-tech infrastructure, the country has considerably invested in biotech areas, hoping that India's growing population can immensely benefit from the use of biotech in health and agriculture sectors.

Orissa Government Support

The Orissa government is developing a Non-Resident Indian (NRI) scheme under the Indian government framework, to attract NRO/NRI-based technology business ventures to do business in and with Orissa. During the 1997 visit to the USA of the former chief minister Mr. J. B. Pattnaik and the state industrial delegation including teams from IPICOL, IDCO, the team helped promote the state to attract foreign and NRI/NRO investors in hi-tech fields including info-tech and bio-tech areas. The state delegation at the "Invest Orissa Symposium" held on June 30, 1997 at Houston, Texas, USA, had participated in a panel discussion on biotech and other technology/business opportunities and opened a dialogue on how to attract such industries to Orissa. While several projects were proposed in various areas, some NROs/NRIs had submitted biotech and other projects to IPICOL.

It is hoped that the new government under the leadership of the Chief Minister Mr. Giridhar Gomang will continue to foster the technology plan for Orissa. The new government commits itself to use the available resources to invest in science and technology infrastructure, and biotechnology will be a priority area to focus in education, training, research and promotion of bio-industry.

It is amazing to see that the state of the competition for investments is changing. Orissa, once an unlikely destination for investment, has topped the investment list and has attracted upto Rs. 130,000 crores worth of projected investments, about Rs. 3000 crore more than the investment proposed for the most industrialized state, Maharashtra. The investments have been in diverse sectors excluding pharmaceutical/biotech-industries.

New Developments in Biotech Education and Research

The government of India during the last 15 years through its biotech funding has spent over \$US 300 million in infrastructural facility building, education, and R&D. The Orissa-based centers have not been able to get substantial funding in biotech from government agencies such as DBT, DST, CSIR, ICMR and ICAR.

A recent development in the biotechnology-related field in Orissa was the establishment of the brand new International Center for Applied Biotechnology and Policy Studies, based in Vani Vihar, Utkal University Campus. The center is being supported by the government, local area institutions and the University Coordinator is Professor GBN Chainy, a molecular biochemistry faculty from the Post Graduate Department of Zoology, Vani Vihar. The biotech center offers diploma programs in medical laboratory technology and clinical biochemistry. The center recently got modest funding (research and instrument purchase grant) from the DBT and is trying to raise new funds from national and international sources. The state also has recently helped in setting up two academic research laboratories; the Institute of Life Science and the Regional Plant Sciences Resources Center in Bhubaneswar, both involved in modern biological research. The NCERT, Bhubaneswar, Sambalpur U and Berhampur U offer academic degrees in life science and bio science related disciplines. Another academic enterprise will be the new Center for Molecular Medicine, Biotechnology, Pharmaceutical Research and Training (CMBP), being established by the founder Dr. Bhanu Jena (of Orissa), a faculty member of Biomedical Engineering Surgery and Director, Drug Delivery Program at Yale University School of Medicine, Connecticut, USA. It will be devoted to basic and applied research and plans to collaborate with local and international institutions and offer degree programs through Utkal University. The state is establishing infrastructural facilities such as technology parks in Bhubaneswar and other regions, that can help in the formation of bio-industries. IPICOL and IDCO are drawing up industrialization plans including biotech in the state to provide basic infrastructural facilities to future ventures. IPICOL is the single point contact and the nodal agency to provide facilities to prospective NRI investors. The biotech incubator is planned to be developed in the technology park.

Under discussion is the formation of a Biotech Society in Orissa to establish satellite offices in Bhubaneswar and USA and people are most welcome to join and participate in the BSO program. BSO plans to develop links with various biotech agencies, will interact with OSA and OSA-Vani Vihar chapter and will support knowledge activities, bio-technology transfer to and from Orissa, program development and networking.

Education and academic research activity in traditional biological sciences is not new in Orissa, but biotech as an academic subject, discovery R&D avenue and industry activity has not been developed. The local institutions such as the Utkal University-based Zoology/Botany Departments, RMRC, RRL, CRRI, Inst of Life Sciences, Plant Sciences Center, those are involved in biomedical and bioagricultural research. The students, researchers and faculties from the above centers in Orissa have been publishing quality papers in national and international journals and have collaborative activities with various laboratories. Many former students from Orissa are currently associated with major national and international biotech related organizations, including academia and industry and major corporations and some after their foreign training have also returned to regional centers. But for some reason the biotech scientists of Orissa origin have isolated themselves, not promoted any professional interactions among themselves, nor collaborated and not been involved in biotechnological development activities in their home state. I think the state will benefit if they collaborate and pool their resources.

Strategy Development

The development of a bio-strategy for Orissa can help to attract bio-industries to the region. Orissa can thus try to attract foreign and domestic biotech firms by providing infrastructural facilities. Orissa state should develop a biotech plan by bringing together the government, academe (university and institutions), private sector industry and investors (NRO and local).

The government should consider establishing a new unit or division of biotechnology within the Department of Science and Technology. It may also consider establishing exploratory biotech projects within the state-owned units such as Orissa Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Ltd, Orissa Biologicals Products Ltd and other agro-based corporations. It may also consider spinning off a state government or joint sector biotech corporation to focus in medical and agriculture areas

A new approach would be to establish research collaborations among the existing institutes such as: University laboratories, RMRC, RRL, CRRI, CIFA (Central Institute for Fishery and Aquaculture), OUAT and state's

medical, agricultural institutions. CIFA has set up a Bioinformatics Center on Aquaculture in 1992 under the National Biotechnology Information System of DBT. Using the existing infrastructure in the area through the development of a new strategic planning can help develop Bhubaneswar region as a new center for biotechnology. A new healthcare services venture is the private Kalinga Hospital and Research Center, which is also establishing Kalinga Health, Education and Research Foundation Inc. and the Kalinga Medical College. KHRC/KHERF should consider to incorporate healthcare biotechnology and clinical research and medical biotechnology in its modern healthcare practice and research. The new Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology, Bhubaneswar (KIIT, not related to the Kalinga Hospital Group) is also considering to start biotech/biomedical engineering programs. The National Institute of Science and Technology, Berhampur (NIST) has been established by a team of US-based NRI professionals which offers engineering, science, technology, electronics degrees. Such institutes have developed technology infrastructural facilities and may consider starting programs such as bioelectronics and bioengineering. The university should consider to create an interdisciplinary biotechnology department with support from other science and technology related departments. As the biotech has a strong presence in the industrial world, students should be exposed to business aspects of the bio-technology. I know many people (and many I don't know) of Orissa origin working in Orissa, elsewhere in India or overseas (with many in the US, Europe and Canada), associated with biotech laboratories in academe and industry, but have not shown much interest in promoting biotech development in Orissa. We hope the new biotech initiatives will provide a technology and business platform in support of biotech activities in the state.

Biotechnology, as a key commercial technology will fit well into the ongoing technology planning in Orissa in infotech, software, computers and other tech areas. It may not be possible to establish US-based biotech firms like Amgen, Chiron and Genentech-but it is possible to create future companies such as Omgen, Orion and Oritech in Orissa.

Ancillary Industry Sectors

The other ancillary sectors in Orissa that can benefit from biotech applications are: brewery, bakery, dairy, fishery, forestry and environment. The aquaculture sector has earlier got state and foreign support. APICOL (Agricultural Promotion and Investment Corporation of Orissa Limited) can also develop bio-agro projects. Agriculture is the important activity in Orissa. The Eastern India does not have a pharma/biotech industry base. Orissa being an agricultural economy, can initially help to attract agri-business industries. Products in the agriculture

and animal-agriculture are: plant tissue culture, floriculture, animal biologics, animal growth hormone, protein feed and genetically engineered plants with disease and pest resistant property. The appropriate technologies those could be easily introduced are earthworm biotech for vermicomposting, bio-fertilizers, bio-insecticides, environmental management, forest biotechnology, mushroom biotech, seed biotech and seri-biotech. With a sound agricultural base, if Orissa can help attract agro-based industries it will not only benefit the state but also the eastern region and the country. In Orissa the traditional practices in healthcare and agriculture are popular and if biotechnology can be integrated into the system it would enhance medical care and agro productivity.

Economic Development

The local biotech infrastructure can meet the future requirements of the state in human resources training, research and product development, manufacturing and marketing contributing to overall economic development. The most strategic approach will be to introduce low-tech, affordable, easy to use, easily available products for use in healthcare and agriculture. Some of the products can be diagnostics, vaccines, home kits, biofertilizers and bio-agro products. Bio-village concept that does not degrade the environment, can be promoted to develop and use sustainable systems with low-tech, affordable, appropriate bio-technologies and

sustainable agriculture systems. Some areas of the traditional medical systems such as ayurveda, unani, sidha and homeopathy can be linked to the modern biotechnology principles for better medical care. Education and public awareness on biotech should be a focus area.

Formation of a regional biotech-network can provide long-term economic benefits to Orissa through support of biotech education, research, product development and commercialization. The biotech network to be based on the multi-institutional consortium can work toward the following goals: collaborate with DBT and other central government agencies, interact with international agencies, assist biotech business development, strengthen biotech capabilities of the state's universities, educate the public about biotechnology, encourage collaborations among the state's universities, institutes, industry and government, and help strengthen the state leadership in biotechnology. New career avenues in biotech fields are: research and product development, manufacturing, academics, industry, intellectual property law, marketing, technology transfer, healthcare, agriculture, government and policy and entrepreneurship. Though it will not be easy for Orissa to move into a hi-tech sector like biotech because of many challenges, but opportunities are there and a foundation has to be created. And development of biotech in Orissa can improve public health, agricultural practices, food supply and can help in alleviate poverty through technology.

Dr. Amiya R. Nayak is involved in biotechnology business and technology development consultancy. He has previously worked at Utkal University, RMRC-ICMR, ILRAD-CGIAR, Ranbaxy, ICGEB-UNIDO, Washington University and Wyeth-Lederle Vaccines and Pediatrics. He is planning to establish a NRO-based biotech venture and society in Orissa.

My Stay at Basundhara

JOYASREE (RANU) MAHANTI

Basundhara is a shelter and a rehabilitation center for destitute children, women, and the elderly. It is a non-profit organization, established in December 1985, in Bidanasi of Cuttack District, in the state of Orissa. It is located about 32 kilometers from Bhubaneswar, Orissa's capital. During the last 13 years, Basundhara has allowed for adoption of 140 children to Indian parents, about 90 children to foreign parents, and has given shelter to more than 300 unwed mothers, 200 distressed women and 150 distressed elderly people. It has also given vocational training to more than

700 divorced and distressed women. As a non-profit organization, it tries to do many things for the society with its limited resources and constraints. It finds safe homes for many innocent children who don't have parents and sends many children to schools with the hope that one day they will lead a normal life in the society. It trains destitute women to be self-sufficient, and provides shelter for the elders when they don't have anywhere else to go.

In 1998, I had an opportunity to spend a total of almost 12 weeks at Basundhara at different times

of the year. I lived in the institution, worked closely with the people and the office staff, and got involved in several activities.

When I was at Basundhara, an unwed pregnant girl was brought there by her parents. Their relatives and the villagers were ready to make the family an outcast unless the family abandoned the girl and promised never to bring their daughter back to the village. The girl delivered a beautiful baby girl. The baby went up for adoption. I found out that her family had to perform her death rites in order to stay in the village. The same girl got married legally with Basundhara's help in December 1998, during my stay. I hear she is very happy with her husband and they are expecting their first baby.

During my stay, a deaf and homeless girl was brought to the institution. Later, it was found that the young girl (about 11-12 years old) had been raped several times and suffered from venereal disease. She had been fortunate enough to come to Basundhara and get help. Now she lives in another institution which suits her needs. Most of the cases like this are either unknown or deliberately ignored.

The following is one of the best moments I experienced when I was at Basundhara. I have to share it with you. One evening, I found all the children and housemothers very excited and standing around a young girl who had just arrived with her husband and a newborn baby boy. They were all calling me "Apa, Ma, come see, Pinky (apa) has come home after one year". I found out, Pinky was one of the girls who had been living at Basundhara. All the young girls who were supposed to be the Mausis of this newborn baby were anxiously waiting for their turns to hold the baby. For a moment, I was lost in my own memories of the first time I visited my parent's home with my two children. I held the baby like my own grandson. I was thinking how one develops Maya and Bandhan. Basundhara provides enough love and security for these children who don't have parents and a home. What more can it do?

I attended three seminars when I was at Basundhara. One of them was in Baripada, conducted in collaboration with UNICEF and other volunteer organizations. The focus was on female children. The comments and openness of the young girls and women from villages touched me. They

were aware and concerned about different problems and issues surrounding girls. They were also eager to work, but they needed leaders who could come to their villages and work with them, not just discuss issues in seminars and give direction from a distance.

Basundhara organizes health and family planning camps in villages and at Basundhara at different times of the year. I was present at a health camp and at the family planning camps. Between 130-150 villagers came to the health camp and obtained free medicine. My concern was that just distributing medicine occasionally would only cure the problems temporarily. Most of the people were underweight and malnourished. They needed to be shown how to live a better life within their resources, to live cleanly so that they did not develop skin disease, to have explained to them the importance of family planning, to be taught to grow and eat healthy food, and to be given an education which would enable them to read and write. The family planning concept was accepted and understood by the lower income group of our society, however they need to be reminded again and again. Such camps are needed to be organized more often with the Government's help.

The biggest problem which caught my attention and concerned me the most was the issue of premature babies of the unwed mothers, mostly from the villages and lower income families. In many of such cases, both of the parents performed manual jobs, and all of the daily chores were in the hands of the oldest daughter, who herself was very young. A few comforting words and false promises from a man to this young girl would give enough hope for her future. In the end, the innocent girl would fall into the trap and become pregnant. In some cases, the girl couldn't get married in the traditional way due to a lack of money or dowry. Often, she gets involved with a married man and they marry in the temple with the assurance that her husband will leave his family soon. They secretly lead a married life and the trouble starts when the girl gets pregnant. In other cases, a very young girl gets pregnant by one of her own relatives or a person who she knows well. This girl may not have any idea about the connection between a physical relationship and pregnancy. Some of these girls are brought to Basundhara by their parents or relatives to stay until the delivery to escape from the society. After the delivery, the

mother and the child can go back home. Most of the time, the child is given up for adoption and the mother stays at Basundhara as a housemother. In other cases, girls are brought to private nursing homes to have an early delivery to get rid of the babies. Most of the babies are unwanted and delivered before reaching full term by inducing labor. As a result, they are born extremely weak, are terribly underweight, and have minor or in some cases major handicaps such as mental retardation. Basundhara's involvement starts from here. At any time of the day, a call may come from a private nursing home informing the institution that a baby is available, if Basundhara is interested.

Once, I personally got involved in bringing a baby to Basundhara. It was almost 10:30 pm when the local nurse of Basundhara and I went to a nursing home to get the baby. The mother was 14 years old and got pregnant by her own uncle. The newborn, a premature baby, was left without any covers under a table for almost ten hours. It did not bother the doctor, the nurse, the hospital staff, or people who were responsible for bringing this baby into the world. This encounter made me sick. Later, I got accustomed to these types of situations. Apparently, from what I hear, the doctors don't mind delivering these premature babies by inducing labor, so long as they can collect their fees. Basundhara has an on-site infant clinic for these babies but the expenses of neo-natal care put a heavy toll on its budget.

I am not an expert on the solutions to these problems and don't know how to prevent these pregnancies. One can't eliminate the normal physical desire of human beings. Neither can one preach moral values of life to the families where it is a daily struggle to fulfill the minimal requirements of a household. It may help if the girls in the villages could be told about the consequences of getting pregnant without getting married legally, taught about birth

control options, explained the benefits of legal abortion as opposed to having babies prematurely, provided with the telephone numbers and addresses of where they can get help if they become pregnant, and given some basic education. Another thing that would help is if the doctors refuse to deliver premature babies by inducing labor.

In 13 years, Basundhara has achieved many goals. When an organization grows, the expenses grow. Currently, Basundhara is trying to focus on projects where it will draw revenues for regular expenses. In a few years, some of the school-going children will be 18 and only a few of them will be successful academically. For the rest of them, one has to find ways to prepare them to be self-sufficient.

There are many heart-wrenching stories to which I was witness during my short stay there. The problems of India are overwhelming and one can get desperate and feel hopeless. I admire people who are genuinely working hard for the defenseless sections of the population. I am not a social worker and I do not hold a degree in this area. It is just my personal interest, and I strongly believe that each of us can make a difference in our own small way and the result will be worthwhile.

If you are interested in working at Basundhara, especially in areas like physical therapy, speech therapy or in other areas, please contact me (517-337-9570) or write a letter to the Secretary, Ms Saila Behera (Basundhara, Basundhara Nagar, Bidanasi, Cuttack-753014) about your interest in working at Basundhara. It is a wonderful place to work with extremely dedicated staff. Comfortable and safe living facilities are available. Within a short period of time, I have developed an intimate relationship with Basundhara and it's people. From such a distance, I hear their voices and anxiously await the time I will go back there.

Joyasree (Ranu) Mahanti lives in East Lansing, Michigan. She is an active campaigner for 'Basundhara'.

HOW CAN WE HELP?

DEVI P. MISRA

Every year, 50 000 Americans become blind, particularly those of ages 65 and greater. The 1987 WHO (World Health Organization) statistical data revealed that there are 27 to 35 million blind people in the world - blindness being defined as having vision less than 10/200 (3/60) with the best correction available.

The developed countries apply 20/200 (6/60) vision as criteria for legal blindness - using this stipulation there would be 41 to 52 million blind people. Eighty- five percent of the blind lives in Asia and Africa. More than 50% could be helped by a simple cataract extraction and 25% of the blindness is preventable.

The increase in the number of blind people is multifactorial: population growth, increase in longevity, and inadequacy of services in the rural areas.

PREVALENCE AND CAUSES OF BLINDNESS & VISUAL IMPAIRMENT

| | USA | INDIA |
|--|-------|-------|
| A. Blindness criteria | <6/60 | <3/60 |
| B. Prevalence (%) | 0.6 | 0.7 |
| C. Causes & Incidence (%) | | |
| 1. Cataract | 12 | 55 |
| 2. Glaucoma | 11 | 2 |
| 3. Age Related Macular Degeneration (ARMD) | 13 | - |
| 4. Diabetic Retinopathy | 11 | - |
| 5. Others (including retinal diseases) | 53 | 29 |
| 6. Refractive Errors (Myopia) | - | 7 |
| 7. Trachoma | - | 5 |
| 8. Corneal Disease | - | 2 |

EYE CARE SERVICES IN ORISSA

Pertaining to the existing situation in Orissa, the Government of Orissa provides diagnostic and treatment facilities in all three of the medical colleges. The facilities and the extent of care available in the district Headquarter Hospitals are less than optimal because of lack of governmental support and financial planning. Whether it is the medical colleges or the Headquarter Hospitals, since they depend on the governmental finances, there is no outreaching of ophthalmological facilities into rural areas. Hence, only the blessed urbanites get the advantage of proper eye care. The rural area residents are not so fortunate.

FACTS / FACETS ON JOHN M. PEARSE MEMORIAL ROTARY EYE HOSPITAL, CUTTACK (ORISSA) INDIA

With the help of the Royal Commonwealth Society for Blind (U.K.), the Rotary club of Cuttack has established this charitable, non-profit, eye hospital in the memory of John M. Pearse in Cuttack (Orissa), India.

In the state of Orissa alone, only 19,000 cases of curable blindness, out of 270,000 are attended to yearly.

JPM eye hospital has 40 paying beds, 60 nonpaying beds, and 10 cabins. The hospital operates or conducts eye camps in rural areas in a 100-mile radius. In 1992, it conducted 13 onsite eye camps. The number increased to 74 in 1997, and to 92 in 1998. By conducting eye camps and mobile units, the hospital conducts surveys for early detection of visual defects as well as education of the population. They provide treatment when needed, and also rehabilitate blind persons in their own environment. The patients screened in the camps are operated on at the main campus in JPM eye hospital in Cuttack.

The hospital is staffed by very dedicated eye surgeons and medical staff. Even after providing free care to 60% of the patients (mostly from rural areas), the eye hospital has been able to meet its own expenditures. The hospital has plans of providing services in different parts of Orissa.

FUTURE PROJECTS AND PLANS OF JPM EYE HOSPITAL

1. Satellite hospitals for total eye care
 - At Dhenkanal
 - At Jagatasinghpur or Bhadrak
2. Camp sites within a 150-mile radius (based on funding availability)
3. Squint clinic Synaptophore \$1,200 (Funded in 1998 by the Orissa Foundation, USA)
4. Glaucoma clinic Autoperimeter \$12,000
5. Contact Lens clinic \$3,000
6. Retina clinic (includes Argon laser) \$20,000
7. Operating microscope with illumination \$32,000
8. Computers \$4,000
9. Eye bank and Keratoplasty \$10,000

In the long run, satellite hospitals for eye care would be established in different parts of Orissa. Similarly, eye camps will be held within 100 miles of the main and satellite hospitals to serve the eye care needs of the rural population of Orissa.

HOW CAN WE HELP?

It has many a time been reiterated in this journal that immigrants from Orissa, the majority of whom came between 1970 and 1990, have excelled in their respective careers. After achieving your goals, now is the time to think about others who are not your relatives or friends. There is always some time to think about how you can touch another life or soul in person.

It is always stressed that if each of the established 1,200 families of OSA contributes only \$100 a year for a different benevolent causes in Orissa, each of the participants can instill a distinct change.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

1. This year I am requesting that we help with the establishment of the glaucoma clinic in the JPM eye hospital. In doing so, I request only 25 willing persons or families to donate \$500 (without coercion) in 1999 through OSA (to get the charitable tax benefit). I can coordinate the establishment of the clinic with JPM eye hospital. Your donation will be acknowledged in the corridors of the institution.
2. Once we establish a glaucoma clinic in 1999, next year we can help other needy services as outlined in the project planning of JPM eye hospital.
3. Each person or family who donates of their own free will to have an eye camp in their village or town.
4. Since this is a hospital organized by the Rotary club of Cuttack - if you are a member of Rotary International and you donate \$250 or \$500 to any Rotary Institution, Rotary International, upon request, can contribute or match a similar amount to your specified institution.

Please consider your role in preventing and eradicating blindness in Orissa by joining in an honest and sincere cooperation with a dedicated eye hospital and its well-organized, hard-working staff.

Donations can be sent through OSA, or Rotary International, or directly to:

*The chairman, Rotary club of Cuttack Charitable Trust
C/o JPM Rotary Eye Hospital
Bidanasi Sector VI Cuttack 753002, Orissa India*

Devi Misra lives in Huntsville, Alabama. He is a committed, conscientious social worker, working incessantly toward bettering the lives of the underprivileged in Orissa.

"...we are distressed in our minds to see the people suffering from various tribulations and injuries on account of diseases of somatic, psychic and traumatic origin, behaving helplessly and crying in agony . . . In order to cure these people who desire to be relieved of diseases as well as to keep up normal health. . ."

Susruta, Physician and Surgeon, circa 500 BC, Varanasi, India

The Healing Arts of the World, in Orissa

Two Years in the Life of a Hospital Just Born

The Kalinga Hospital and Research Center, Bhubaneswar

**Madhab C. Dash
Dr. Sarada C. Patnaik
Dr. Bhabani S. Das**

**Netiti P. Bohidar
Mana R. Pattanayak
Lalu Mansinha**

The words of Susruta still ring true, 2500 years later. We are also distressed by the pain and suffering of the sick and injured and we also wish to "cure these people who desire to be relieved of diseases as well as to keep up normal health". This indeed could as well be the mission statement for the Kalinga Hospital and Research Center.

This has been an eventful two years – two year in the life of a hospital just born. On February 17, 1997 Kalinga Hospital started functioning in the limited areas of Pathology, Radiology, Nephrology (Dialysis) and Out Patient Department. We are happy to report that Kalinga Hospital is now a full-fledged hospital. From August 1998 we have 175 beds including ICU beds for postoperative care. After a slow start, minor and major milestones and achievements have marked the previous 24 months.

The First Open Heart Surgery

The first open heart surgery in Orissa took place on September 9, 1998. The following message was flashed on ORNET:

"In every endeavour, particularly the seemingly impossible ones, there comes a moment when you rise up and cheer. Regardless of all those opinions that said that it cannot be done, and regardless of what the future brings, this is a moment when you know that all the sacrifices have been worth it. This is such a moment, such a day, for the team that has brought the Kalinga Hospital from bare ground to a functioning institution of healthcare.

Today (September 9, 1998) is a first for Orissa, and a first at Kalinga Hospital: Open Heart Surgery. The patient, a 32 year old male from near Bhubaneswar, was operated on for a congenital heart problem with the help of a heart-lung machine. A team of doctors conducted the operation:

*Dr. R. Raichoudhury,
Cardio Thoracic surgeon,
Dr. Sharada Patnaik,*

*Cardio Thoracic surgeon,
Dr. Bipin Mohanty,
Cardio Thoracic surgeon,
Dr. Mahendra Prasad Tripathy,
Cardiologist
Dr. Sarat Nayak,
Anesthetist
Dr. Rajendra Roy,
Anesthetist*

*The patient is now recovering in the Intensive Care Ward under the care of Dr. Samir Sahoo.
Congratulations to Kalinga Hospital!"*

This was a moment for the history books, though the world took no notice. For Orissa State, in India, this was a historic first – the first open heart surgery in this state of 32 million people, in the newly constructed Kalinga Hospital. From September 1998 to May 1999 the Hospital has operated on 21 patients by Open Heart/ By Pass Surgery.

Operating facilities are now available for General Surgery, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Plastic Surgery, Cardiology, Cardiothoracic Surgery, Vascular Surgery, Neurology, Neuro-Surgery. The Nephrology with dialysis facilities are now fully booked, with an average of 40 dialysis per month. Other facilities include Urology, Gastroenterology, Laparoscopic Surgery, Cystoscopy and TURP.

The Catheter Lab at Kalinga Hospital is one of the best in the country. More than 60 patients have been treated with Coronary, Cerebral and Renal Angiography/Angioplasty, pacemaker implantation, Balloon Vavuloplasty.

There are three Operating Rooms with very modern equipment, including operating microscope for Neuro-surgery, the first such facility in Orissa.

Diagnostic services are provided from a central air-conditioned laboratory which undertakes work in Clinical Pathology, Biochemistry, HistoPathology. Immunological tests, tissue typing, exchange transfusions and bone marrow grafting are also carried out.

The Radiology Dept. has X-Ray, UltraSound and CT Scan machines. On the average around 150 to 175 CT Scans are undertaken per month.

Future Plans include Casualty and Emergency Services (April, 99), Kidney Transplant Program (September, 99), MRI Machine (July 2000).

The Long Journey

It has been a long journey. The Kalinga Hospital started as an idea at a gathering in 1989 at the home of Dr. Ramesh Raichoudhury in Glen Cove, New York. Subsequently two companies were founded, Hospital Corporation of Orissa Inc. (HCO) in New York and the Kalinga Hospital Private Limited (KHPL) in Orissa were formed, with Dr. Ram Patnaik as the first CEO. Dr. Kailash Pani served as Vice-President, Dr. Radhakanta Mishra as Secretary. Other active members at that time included Dr. Uma Mishra, Dr. Bhagabat Sahu and Dr. Panchanan Sathapathy. Mr. Madhab Dash moved back to India to supervise construction.

After an initial period of planning, financing, land acquisition and design finalisation, construction started in 1991. In 1994 a new executive slate was elected, with Ramesh Raichoudhury, MD taking over as President and CEO. Current officers are: Hara Mishra, MD, Vice President; Manaranjan Pattanayak, Executive Vice-President, responsible for the construction phase of the project; Uma Mishra, MD, Secretary Treasurer; Braja Mishra, MD, Chair, Personnel Committee; Braja Swain, MD, Chair, Equipment Committee; Dhiraj Panda, MD, Finance Committee. All are residents of the United States.

Conferences and Seminars

A seminar was organised in Cuttack, on April 23, 1998, on the 'Role of the Kalinga Hospital in the Health Services of the State'. Dr. B.K. Nanda, former Principal of Srirama Chandra Bhanja Medical College presided over the seminar. Many eminent persons of Orissa, such as Girija Bhusan Patnaik, Prof. Rekha Mohanty, Gourhari Das, Dr. Basudev Kar, Dr. Krupasindhu Panda, Sri Shyam Sundar Padhi and Dr. R.N. Das attended the seminar.

On May 8th and 9th 1998 the Orissa State Association of Surgeons held its Annual Conference in the Kalinga Hospital campus in Bhubaneswar. Approximately 300 delegates from throughout Orissa attended the two-day conference. Prominent guests were Dr. K. Ravindranath of the Apollo Hospital, Hyderabad and Dr. Nageswar Reddy

of Medinova, Hyderabad. The keynote address was by Dr. S. Vittal, President of the Association of Surgeons India.

By itself an annual meeting of a group of medical specialists can be considered just another professional gathering. But for the Kalinga Hospital there was special significance in that within months of opening the Hospital has been accepted and recognised by the medical and surgical fraternity in Orissa and India.

Movies

Another measure of recognition by the public, somewhat of a lighter import, is that two commercial movies have been shot on location on the campus and within the Kalinga Hospital Building. The print and electronic media coverage of the above events provided wide publicity for the hospital.

In the Plans

Target, January 1, 2000: A complete modern health care center.

350 Beds Emergency Room and Trauma Center 6 Operating Theaters Laser Ophthalmic Surgery Joint Replacement and Arthroscopic surgery Linear Accelerator MRI Scans Rehabilitation Microsurgery Teaching Hospital Research Center Burn Unit Other Specialist Services

Health Insurance Plan: In association with a health insurance provider, we are negotiating for issuance of insurance plans for travellers in the Bhubaneswar area, parents of residents of United States and Canada, as well as for local residents.

Kalinga Medical College: Being a large well-equipped hospital brings with it the responsibility for teaching the next generation of physicians. We are in the process of drawing up plans to establish a medical college. The college will be affiliated with Utkal University.

Continued Support by NROs

To construct a hospital of this scale requires capital. Therefore an infusion of capital will obviously help. In return for major donations, we are prepared to provide permanent and significant recognition in the form of bronze plaques. Beneficence will allow us to name room(s), major facility(ies) and operating theatre(s) after the benefactor. Please make your donations to the Kalinga Health, Education and Research Foundation Inc. (KHERF). US tax receipts will be issued. We offer the following suggestions for donations: \$2,500 for a room with 2 beds; \$5,000 for room with 6 beds; \$15,000 for Dialysis Unit; \$30,000 for Operating Theatre etc.

We are happy to announce and recognise the donation of Dr. Uma Mishra for the Cardiac Catheter Laboratory (\$30,000) and Dr. Pradip K. Swain (\$30,000) for the Out Patient Department. In the same humanitarian spirit please consider an appropriate donation.

Equipment Donations

Expansion from the current 175 beds to a planned 350 beds, from the current 1 Operating Theatre to a planned 6 means that there is an immediate need for all types of medical, surgical and hospital equipment. A partial list is given below. If you know of any hospital that is disposing of usable equipment in working condition and of recent vintage, please suggest the Kalinga Hospital as a recipient of donated equipment. We are also prepared to purchase needed equipment if the price is right.

For donations of money and equipment, for volunteer service etc. please contact

ManaRanjan Pattanayak
573 Kings Road
Yardley PA 19607
United States

215-493-8770 (voice)
215-493-0207 (fax)
mana_pattanayak@msn.com

Volunteers

Happy as we are with our progress so far, much remains to be done. If you are a student, social worker, nurse, doctor or a surgeon, and you would like to spend a few months to a year to help those who really need help, please let us know. A stint at the hospital can be combined with tourism and sightseeing.

Lecture- Seminar During a Visit to Orissa

With three medical colleges, Orissa has a large body of doctors who are interested in the latest developments in medicine and surgery. Kalinga Hospital is always willing to host seminars and demonstrations by visiting specialists..

Prof. Lalu Mansinha
Dept. Of Earth Sciences
University of Western Ontario
London, ON N6A 5B7
Canada

519-661-3145 (voice)
519-661-3198 (fax)
lalu@uwo.ca

The authors are associated with Kalinga Hospital.

Madhab C. Dash *Director, Finance*
Dr. Sarada C. Patnaik *Managing Director*
Dr. Bhabani S. Das *Medical Director*

Netiti P. Bohidar *Advisor-Director*
Mana R. Pattanayak *Executive Vice-President*
Lalu Mansinha *Chair, Kalinga Hospital Trust*

Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology

A catalyst for academic excellence & social transformation

PRASHANTA K. MISHRA

Three of us, Achyuta, Prashanta and Chitta, together with Shri P.K. Bal perceived a need for a technical institution in Orissa of the highest calibre. Thus was born Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), registered under Societies Regd. Act XXI of 1860 in June, 1992. In honor of the great Oriya engineers, architect and designers of the past who built the merchant ships for South Asia two thousand years ago, the temples of Bhubaneswar, Puri and Konarka, the centuries old embankment of Cuttack we took the historical name *Kalinga*. From the beginning the goals have been for promoting excellence in technical education and supporting the ecological, social and cultural development of weaker sections of society, especially scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Conveniently located in the Institutional area of capital city of Bhubaneswar, KIIT is surrounded with a number of major Government of India technical Institutions and organisations like CIPET, CTTC, Regional Research Laboratory, Institute of Physics, etc.. and Chandaka Industrial Complex. The campus is spread over thirty acres of land, which provides ample opportunity for expansion and development. The institute is currently housed in a 2,30,000-sq. ft. building with well equipped laboratories, work shops, class-rooms, office, computer labs etc.

Computer Laboratory

With the vision of the 21st century, KIIT has designed a computer laboratory which is the best in the state and certainly on par with national standards. The lab has been visited and appreciated by academicians from Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur; IIT, Kharagpur, University of Hyderabad; University of Texas; Ohio State University, Texas A&M University and Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE, Australia. (Table 1)

Faculty

The success of the Institution primarily depends on the 'human engineers' i.e. the faculty. On the faculty of KIIT are luminaries like:

- Prof. Dr. Somnath Misra, Sc.D.(MIT) **Director KIIT**
Former Principal, Regional Engineering College, Rourkela & Tata Chair Professor, Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur.
- Prof. Dr. A. K. Paul, Ph.D.(IIT Kharagpur) **Principal KITS**
Former Prof. & Head, Mechanical Engg., Regional Engineering College, Rourkela.
- Prof. Dr. D. Dutta Majumdar, FNASc., FNA - **Director, Computer Education**
Emeritus Professor, Indian Statistical Institute, Calcutta.
- Prof. S. P. Misra, Ph.D.(Utkal) **Director, Research & Development**
Ex-Professor, Institute of Physics, Bhubaneswar.

Technical Education Programme

KIIT imparts quality technical education through several constituent units:

- ❑ **ITI (Industrial Training Institute)**
Started 1992. Certificate courses in different trades
Fitter, Electrician, Electronics;
Student Strength-200 Per Annum; Duration-2 years
- ❑ **Kalinga Polytechnic**
Started 1995. Diploma in Engineering
Civil, Mechanical, Electrical, Electronics, Metallurgy
Student Strength-260 Per Annum; Duration-3 years
Approved by AICTE, Govt. of India
- ❑ **KITS (Kalinga Institute of Technology & Science)**
Started 1997. Degree in Engineering
Civil, Mechanical, Electrical, Electronics, Computer
Student Strength-240 Per Annum; Duration-4 years
Approved by AICTE, Govt. of India & affiliated to Utkal University
- ❑ **Post Graduate Program**
MCA (Master in Computer Application).
Started 1997; Student Strength-60 Per Annum; Duration-3 years
Approved by AICTE, Govt. of India & affiliated to Utkal University

Awareness And Development Programmes

The educational programmes of KIIT are not restricted to enrolled students only, but also serve the needs of academicians and professionals in institutions through seminars, symposia and workshops (Table 2).

Institutional Collaborations

- KIIT has signed an MOU with Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE; Australia to have collaboration programmes in Engineering & Technical Education.
- KIIT has established the EL-NET-3L Computer Centre designed and developed by Technology Foundation IIT Kharagpur.
- KIIT is in the process of establishing the Authorised Training Centre of C-DAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing), Pune.

Centre For Social Development

"An enriched environment can ignite the concealed human potentials of weaker sections to prove their worth with unimaginable velocity". From this stand point of social transformation KIIT undertakes multi-dimensional activities for the socio-economic development of weaker sections of the society especially Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes by providing appropriate avenues like:

- **TRYSEM Centre (Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment).**
Imparting free - stipendary skilled training in Fitter, Electrician & Electronic trades for self-employment to nearly 100 educated unemployed youths. TRYSEM programmes have been accorded with Grade 'A' status by State Level Co-ordination Committee (SLCC), Govt. of Orissa, on the basis and efficiency & quality training.
- **Computer Centre**
Imparting free-stipendary computer training to unemployed youth of SCs/ STs/Economically Weaker Sections. Support by Ministry of Welfare, Govt. of India provides the strength to go ahead in this field.
- **Vocational Training Centre**
For the need-based vocational training to SC slum youths of Bhubaneswar. 60 SC youths were imparted free stipendary training in fabrication, spray painting, repair of household electrical appliances and electronic trades. Sanctioned by Department of Science and Technology, Government of India.
- **Residential Primary School**
To provide free elementary education to Scheduled Tribes slum children of Bhubaneswar a school at Patia , Bhubaneswar. Current strength 125. Sponsored by Ministry of Welfare, Govt. of India. The School was recently visited by Mrs. Maneka Gandhi, Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment, Govt. of India and recommended for upgrading to Higher School level.

Recognition

KIIT is a kid of 7 years only, but by deeds has attained its youth. Here are some excerpts from the letters, verbal comments and notes in the Visitor's Book.

- I am happy to see KIIT. When I was taken around this Institution, I was overwhelmed. I am tremendously impressed about what I have seen. ... Institutions cannot grow overnight because of lots of limitations, constraints come the way, particularly with regard to quality of staff. I am happy to see in KIIT that there has been a sincere effort in this direction. There is nothing in this world which cannot be conquered with determination.
Prof. S.Ramegowda, Chairman, AICTE on his first visit to Orissa.
- The 'magic' of what you have accomplished is that it was done primarily with local resources
Ed. Stoessel, Executive Director, Eastern Iowa Community College, USA.
- .. a dynamic organisation which has seen much development in its short life.... Computer Centre has higher potential.
Roger Jackman. Northern Melbourne Institute of Tafe, Australia).
- Sri Achyutananda Samanta, Secretary, KIIT honoured with the prestigious award *sandhana sammanna* by Chira Sandhana - a major Oriya fortnightly.

Achievement Targets

Starting from a barren, bare land, we have built an unique, though still young, institution to impart technical education and serve the community in economic and social development of the poor. At this point we can rest on our laurels, or go on to greater achievements. We invite collaboration.

To attain this laudable height we need support in the areas like:

- Sponsorship to students for Higher Studies/Educational Exchange programmes in different countries.
- Scholarship to meritorious students
- Technical Education collaboration with Experts & Experts bodies
- Infrastructural Dev. in the form of Advanced Laboratories, Buildings (in memoriam), Library facilities , R& D cells
- Hostels for Backwards students
- More no. of Residential schools to groom the students from the beginning.
- Support of Tech. & Finance to be a software giant in the country
- Building a Hostel for International Students.
- Need based R&D activities.

LAST WORDS:

We believe in applying acid tests from time to time and take appropriate measures to maintain our quality. If we get the support to overcome our bottlenecks (mainly in Finance) we cannot only prove ourselves competent but also we can create a pool of useful competent HR in the next century.

TABLE-I Communication and Networking Infrastructure

Novel Netware – IBM Netfinity → *Fortran, Pascal, Oracle, Autocad, Cobol*
SCO UNIX – IBM Netfinity → *C++, Java, HTML, Power Builder*
Windows NT – IBM Netfinity → *Visual C++, J++, Visual Foxpro, Visual Basic*
AS/400e – IBM → *OS/400 DB2, ILE, RPC, COBOL/400, RDBMS, C, ADTS*
LINUX – IBM Netfinity → *X-Windows, GUI Applications*

CONNECTED TO 60 INTELLIGENT TERMINALS

TABLE-II Seminar/Symposia/Workshop

Organized a 7 day *Advanced Technological Awareness Programme* in December 1995 involving participation of acclaimed academicians of the state and country as well.

Organised *National Seminar on Information Technology in Technical Education* on 14th November 1998. The seminar was inaugurated by Prof. Dr. S. Ramegowda, Chairman, All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), the apex body according approval to all technical institutes. KIIT is the only organisation in the state of Orissa to have been visited by Chairman, AICTE.

Co-organised and co-sponsored *CIT 97, CIT 98*, the International Conference on Information Technology held every year at Bhubaneswar. We are now organising and co-sponsoring *CIT 99*.

Organising *National Workshop on Ubiquitous Computing* from October 20-22, 1999. With the co-operation from speakers from IIT, Kanpur, University of Hyderabad, TIFR, Bombay, IISc. Bangalore, IIT, Bombay, IIT, Guwahati and Utkal University, Bhubaneswar.

Organising *United Nations University Workshop* in August 1999.

Prashant Mishra is one of the founding members of the Kalinga Institute Of Industrial Technology
He can be reached: Phone: 91-674-443271, 441998, 442998, 441689(R) Fax: 91-674-554464
Email: pkm@stpbh.soft.net

ORISSA Related Internet Sites

Compiled: Biswa Patnaik

Web Page

Web Address

- | | | |
|----|---|---|
| 1 | Orissa Society of Americas | http://www.orissasociety.org/ |
| 2 | ORNET - Internet Oriya Networking Mailing List | http://www.cs.columbia.edu/~deba/ornet/ornmain.shtml |
| 3 | Oriya Home Page Orissa | http://www.cs.columbia.edu/~deba/ |
| 4 | Orissa Tourism | http://www.orissa-tourism.com/ |
| 5 | Government of Orissa | http://www.orissa.org/ |
| 6 | Regional Research Laboratory, Bhubaneswar | http://www.stpbh.soft.net/rrl/ |
| 7 | Central Institute of Freshwater
Aquaculture, Bhubaneswar | http://www.stpbh.soft.net/cifa/ |
| 8 | Orissa State Financial Corporation | http://www.stpbh.soft.net/osfc/ |
| 9 | Software Technology Parks of India,
Bhubaneswar | http://www.stpbh.soft.net/ |
| 10 | News - OrissaTV | http://www.orissatv.com/ |
| 11 | News - Orissa News | http://www.orissa.net/ |
| 12 | News - TajaNews | http://www.tajanews.com/state.htm |
| 13 | News - OrissaIndia | http://www.orissaindia.com/ |
| 14 | Newspaper - SAMBAD | http://www.orissasambad.com/ |
| 15 | Newspaper - Dharitri | http://www.orissakhabar.com/ |
| 16 | Sambit - Online Oriya Magazine | http://www.sambit.com/ |

OSA FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Oct. 1997 to June 1st, 1999

Prepared: Babru Samal, Secretary-Treasurer, OSA

BEGINNING FUNDS

| | |
|-------------------|------------|
| CD at Harris Bank | \$4500.00 |
| CD at NBD | \$35544.84 |
| Checking account | \$2520.20 |

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Total beginning funds | \$42565.04 |
|------------------------------|-------------------|

INCOME

Interest incomes:

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Harris Bank | \$371.25 |
| Charles Schwab | \$2466.62 |
| Cal Fed | \$52.53 |

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| Total interest incomes | \$2890.40 |
|-------------------------------|------------------|

Convention incomes

| | |
|---------------|-----------|
| Houston 97 | \$5676.60 |
| California 98 | \$6961.00 |

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| Total convention incomes | \$12637.60 |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|

| | |
|-----------------|-----------|
| Membership fees | \$6685.00 |
| Donation misc. | \$152.82 |

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------|
| Total incomes | \$22365.82 |
|----------------------|-------------------|

| | |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| Pass through donation | \$35,355.62 |
|-----------------------|-------------|

| | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| GRAND TOTAL | \$100,286.48 |
|--------------------|---------------------|

EXPENSES

| | |
|--|-----------|
| OSA Journal | \$3573.49 |
| Convention 98 related Expenses | |
| Guest expenses (travel and lodging etc.) | \$2902.42 |
| Souvenir mailing | \$874.47 |
| Awards and plaques | \$1713.31 |
| Entertainment/DJ | \$400.00 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| Total convention 98 expenses | \$5890.20 |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| Donation (Basundhara) | \$200.00 |
| Misc. expenses | \$282.81 |
| Loan to Canada Convention | \$2000.00 |
| Pass through donation | \$35,218.45 |

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Total expenses | \$47,164.95 |
|-----------------------|--------------------|

ENDING FUNDS

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Checking acct Cal Fed | \$95579.40 |
| CD at Cal Fed | \$1052.53 |
| CD at Harris Bank | \$4500.00 |
| Money Market at Charles Schwab | \$38011.46 |
| Total fund in hand | \$53,121.93 |

Details**Pass through Donations**

| | Money in | Money out |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Odissi, Aruna Mohanty | \$487.00 | \$487.00 |
| EXXON, IAA Hpuston (Odissi) | \$1000.00 | \$1000.00 |
| FM university donation | \$10007.62 | \$10005.45 |
| SEEDS | \$7747.00 | \$7747.00 |
| Basundhara | \$3210.00 | \$3210.00 |
| Dandapani High School | \$2054.00 | \$2054.00 |
| Puri High Schools | \$9550.00 | \$9500.00 |
| Rotary Club | \$1300.00 | \$1215.00 |
| Total money in and money out | \$35,355.62 | \$35,218.45 |

Convention related incomes**Convention 97, Houston**

| | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| Loan refund | \$2000 |
| Membership | \$2230 |
| Profit sharing (50%) | \$1446.6 |
| Total | \$5676.60 |

Convention 98, Monterey

| | |
|----------------------------|------------------|
| Donations for awards | \$1500 |
| OSA fee | \$2220 |
| Donations for guest travel | \$1000 |
| Membership fees | \$1515 |
| Profit sharing (50%) | \$726 |
| Total | \$6961.00 |

Miscellaneous expenses

| | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Check return | \$4 |
| Domain name | \$70 |
| OSA books BBSR | \$196 |
| Stamps | \$12.81 |
| Total | \$282.81 |

I have examined the OSA financial statement for the above mentioned period and found, to my satisfaction, that all transactions have been recorded according to the generally accepted accounting procedures.
Kirtan Behera, June 4th, 1999, Los Angeles California.

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- 3. Kalinga Hospital in Bhubaneswar**
- 4. Fakirmohan University in Balasore**
- 5. Ravenshaw College Development Project in Cuttack**
- 6. Basundhara— Home for orphans in Cuttack**
- 7. Orissa Dance Academy in Bhubaneswar**
- 8. Sponsoring eminent speakers & scholars like Dr. Manoj Das, Ms. Manorama Mohapatra, Dr. Prativa Ray, Dr. Kanhu Charan Mishra, Dr. Nrusingha Panda, Mr. Lalatendu Mansinha, Dr. Gouri Das, and others.**
- 9. Sponsoring artists like Padmashree Sanjukta Panigrahi, Padmabhusan Kelucharan Mohapatra, Mr. Pranav Patnaik, Mr. Akshaya Mohanty, Mr. Prafulla Kar, Mr. Mahaprasad Kar, Ms. Suchitra Mohapatra, Ms. Sangita Mohapatra, Mr. Manoranjan Pradhan, Ms. Kavita Dwivedi, Ms. Aruna Mohanty, Ms. Sangita Kar, Ms. Chitralekha Patnaik, and others**
- 10. Sponsoring and assisting students for higher education in the USA and Canada**
- 11. SEEDS/Rural Development Projects in Orissa**
- 12. Computer Technology in Orissa**

Dr. and Mrs. S. K. Dash of Minneapolis, Minnesota feel proud of being part of the Orissa Society of Americas and its projects in the United States and India.

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ବୈଦେଃ ସାଙ୍ଗପଦତ୍ରମୋପନିଷଦୈର୍ଗାୟତି ଯଂ ସାମଗାଃ ।
ଧ୍ୟାନାବସ୍ଥିତଦ୍ଗତେନ ମନସା ପଶ୍ୟତି ଯଂ ଯୋଗିନୋ
ଯସ୍ୟାକ୍ତଂ ନ ବଦୁଃ ସୁରାସୁରଗଣା ଦେବାୟ ତସ୍ମୈ ନମଃ ॥

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ଯାତ୍ରା ଜୁଲାଇ ୨୫, ୧୯୯୯, (ରବିବାର) ଦିନ ନାୟଭିଲ୍
ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ପାଳିତ ହେବ । ଅଧ୍ୟାପକ ଶ୍ରୀ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଶେଖର
ରଥ ଉକ୍ତ ଉତ୍ସବରେ ବଶିଷ୍ଠ ଅତିଥି ରୂପେ ଯୋଗଦାନ
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ବିନୀତ ଅନୁରୋଧ ।

Ratha Yatra will be celebrated on July 17,
1999 (Saturday) & Bahuda Yatra will be
celebrated on July 25, 1999 (Sunday). Pro-
fessor Sri Chandra Sekhar Rath will be
the chief guest. We request all of you to
participate and make this auspicious event
a grand success.

ପ୍ରଭୁ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଆପଣଙ୍କର ମଙ୍ଗଳ କରନ୍ତୁ

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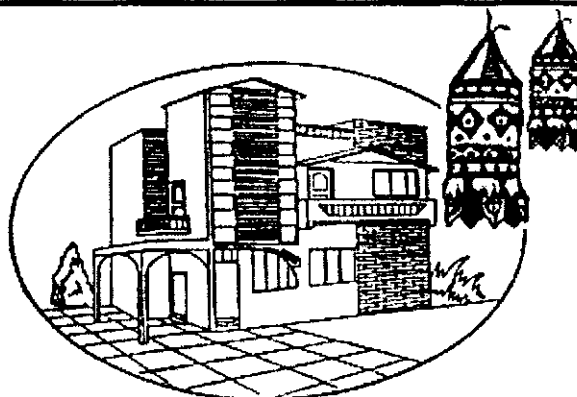
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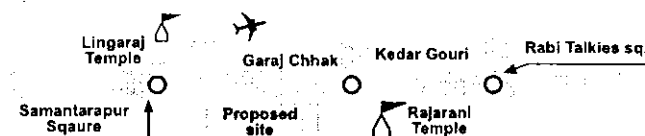
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SANGEETAYAN

Sangeetayan Institute of Dance & Music of India was primarily formed in Michigan for the preservation and propagation of the dance and music forms of India. *Sangeetayan* is the only Institute in Michigan and surrounding areas specializing in the Odissi style of classical dance, the oldest classical dance of India. *Sangeetayan* has trained over 100 students in several branches and they have performed successfully in several recitals and concerts in USA, Canada, and India. *Sangeetayan* has also offered several workshops, lecture-demonstrations and dance dramas for different cultural groups, universities, museums, libraries, etc. Apart from the innately graceful and sculptural Odissi dance, *Sangeetayan* also imparts training in classical and light vocal music, primarily in the North Indian style.

Sangeetayan has produced 4 highly successful dance dramas, namely "Karna", "Shakuntala", "Ramayan", and "Krishna Leela", which have been performed a multitude of times and have been televised.

Sangeeta Kar, founder-instructor of *Sangeetayan*, has received laurels for both dance and music. She is a rare and unique talent: with Masters degrees in English literature, Classical Music, and Dance, she is also the only artist in India to have been honoured by the prestigious "Sura-Mani" and "Shingaar-Mani" titles from Sur-Shingar-Samsad, Bombay. She is also an "A" grade singer on the All India Radio and TV. Her songs have been recorded for several solo records, cassettes, CDs, and movies.

Sangeeta is trained in Odissi dance style by the renowned Padmabhusan Guru Kelucharan Mahapatra. Along with teaching Indian dance and music, *Sangeeta* also choreographs classical and folk dance numbers and dance dramas and composes music for several musical numbers.

"*Sangeeta* possesses the rare but difficult quality of fusing the vibrancy of her intricate foot movements with the liquidity of her delicate body movements which speaks volumes about her dedication and training in Odissi dance..." The Times of India.





Chilika Lake





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Alex Trotman
Chairman and CEO

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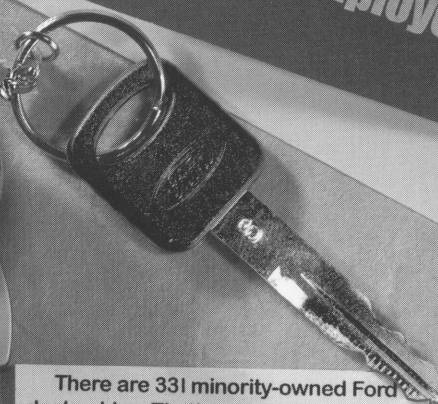
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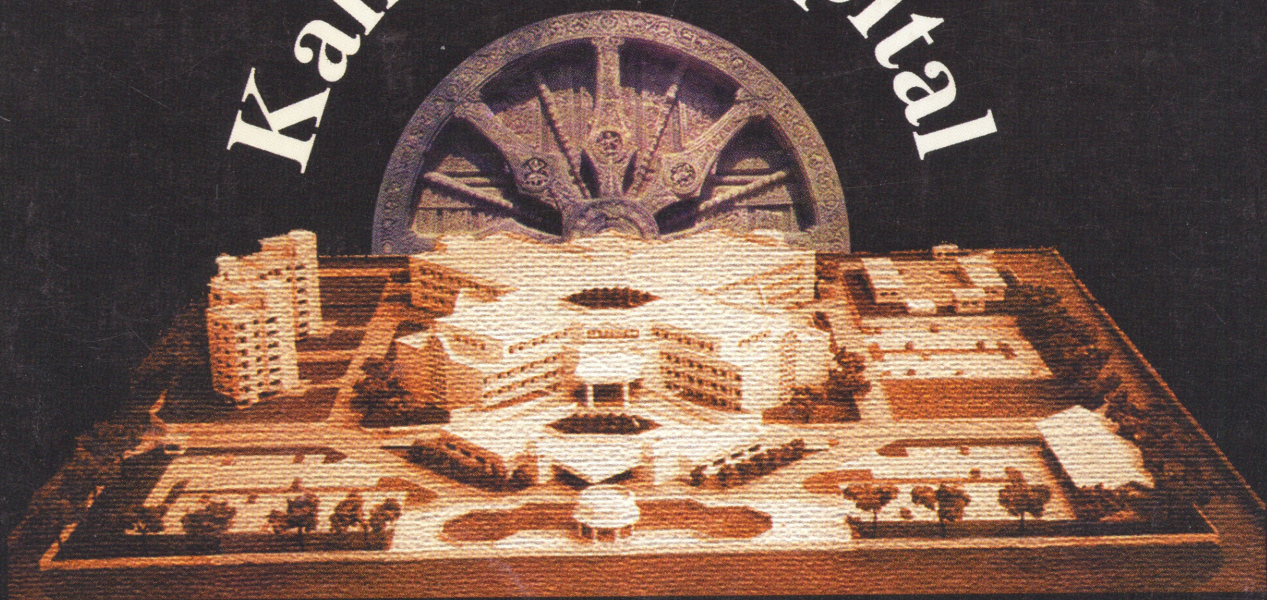
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