

Journal of the
Orissa Society Of the Americas

ଆମରି ପିଲାମାନେ ଆମରି ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ

Our Children Our Future



**37th Annual Convention,
July 2006, Columbia, MD**



The Gracious walk of an Indian Village Woman
by Reena Patnaik



Journal
of
The Orissa Society of the Americas

2006 Souvenir Issue

The 37th Annual Convention, Columbia, Maryland



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ଏ କଥା ସୁମରି ହୃଦୟେ ତାହାଙ୍କୁ ପୂଜିବି ମୁଁ ନିରନ୍ତର

(ଭକ୍ତ କବି ମଧ୍ୟସୂଦନ ରାଓ)

୨୦୦୬ ଓସା ସ୍ଵରଣୀକା

୩୭ତମ ବାର୍ଷିକ ସମ୍ମିଳନୀ, କଲମ୍ପିଆ, ମେରିଲାଣ୍ଡ

About the Cover Page

Our Children Our Future

Once upon a time
I was a tiny toy on my moms' hands
The apple of her eyes
With her love and tears
I am what I am

With time
I moved away from home
Away from the festivals
Away from the palm and mango groves

Here in the midst of fast cars
Fast food and msn
High tech research and managed accounts
My childhood still resonates within me
I am still my mom's tiny toy
Like all of us
With an intense desire
To pass our culture and language
(Along with our genes)
To our kids
The pupils of our eyes

Through our children
The essence of our culture
And our convictions
Clash and coalesce with the cultures of the world
Our children get transformed
And they transform our vision
About
Us
Our culture
Our children
And
Our future.

Babru Samal

(photographs, courtesy of Babru Samal)



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Orissa Society of the Americas

The 37th Annual Convention, Columbia, Maryland

OSA Souvenir, 2006

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Babru Samal

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Message from the President, OSA

Dear Friends and Readers:

On behalf of the Orissa Society of the Americas, it is my privilege and pleasure to welcome each one of you to its 37th Annual Convention in Columbia, Maryland. Given the enormous pool of experience and talent in the North Atlantic belt, it is no coincidence that this region has played host to 16 previous OSA conventions, seven of which have been in the Maryland and DC area. So, you can rest assured that this year's convention is in good hands.

As many of you probably know, this year, we had a difficult time in finding a chapter to host the convention. The convention venue was declared not until mid-January of this year. We especially owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Joy Gopal Mohanty, Mr Nrusingha Mishra, Mrs. Bigyani Das, Mr. Naresh Das and the rest of the convention team, for not only coming to our rescue at the eleventh hour, but also for being able to successfully meet all the deliverables with less than six months to spare!

We like to thank those other North American Oriya communities who sincerely considered our request to host the OSA Convention 2006 but had to decline because of various practical considerations. During the search process, we did learn a few valuable lessons. We need to figure out and implement a formal method to share the convention hosting responsibilities across chapters, or groups of chapters. We also need to clearly define (or redefine) the shared roles between the hosting chapter(s) and OSA National office bearers. Most importantly, whatever we do must be mandated by OSA members. The General Body Meeting at this year's OSA Convention should be a good point to start this process. If you are not attending the convention, you can also participate in this process by forwarding your suggestions to <http://www.orissasociety.org/NEW/contactus.htm>, or to your respective chapter representatives. It will be easier for us to take firm steps in that direction, after hearing from you.

A community organization such as ours draws sustenance from its membership network. Presently, only about 650 households are registered life-members, patrons or benefactors of OSA. The membership roster of OSA has not kept pace with the demographic changes in the North American Oriya community, especially during the last ten or fifteen years. It is our earnest appeal to all persons, connected to

and interested in Orissa, to become life members of OSA. In addition to forging a bond with the largest network of Non-resident Oriyas and enabling it to become an effective organ for identifying and furthering our collective interest, OSA life-membership also provides the following tangible benefits:

- A one-time tax deduction for the amount of the fee
- A copy of our quarterly newsletter, *Utkarsa*
- An annual OSA souvenir
- Annually updated OSA directory
- Reduced registration fees for OSA conventions
- Participation in OSA elections

We invite you to become life members by completing the membership form available at the registration desk. You may also download this form via our website, www.orissasociety.org and send it to the treasurer's address along with check payable to OSA.

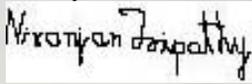
On December 25th, 2005, the NRO Cell of Government of Orissa joined with the Non-Resident Oriya Facilitation Centre (NROFC) to celebrate the Second Prabasi Utkaliya Divas followed by a one-day symposium on Orissa Development. Orissa's Chief Minister, Mr. Naveen Pattanaik inaugurated and addressed the symposium. Mr. Dharendra Kar, OSA Vice-President also attended and spoke at the symposium. On behalf of OSA, we are thankful to the NROFC and its organizers Mr. Sahadeva Sahoo and Dr. Dhananda Mishra for doing initial spade work. However, it is only with your continued use and support that this institution will become a major conduit for collaboration, on multiple fronts, between NROs and key resources based in Orissa.

Many of you may be familiar with, and perhaps even have been involved in opposing the reversal of Indian Central Government's proposal to locate one of the three proposed sites for the Indian Institute of Sciences in Bhubaneswar. Thanks to the unrelenting work by Mr. Chitta Baral, and several others following him, the issue has generated wide media attention and engaged many pro-Orissa intellectuals, administrators, legislators, powerbrokers, and activists from all walks of life. We are still long ways before all this can impact the legislative process and executive order in favor of Orissa. Please take the time to familiarize and update yourself with the issue through the blogsite: <http://iiser.blogspot.com>. You will find numerous ways in which you could contribute to this movement.

Please contact either Chitta Baral (chitta@gmail.com) or Dharendra Kar (dhendrakar@hotmail.com) to follow up.

I would like to conclude by thanking my associates and OSA office bearers, Mrs. Bigyani Das (Secretary), Mr. Dharendra Kar (Vice-president), and Mr. Prakash Patro (Treasurer), and all OSA volunteers including the convention team members, chapter presidents, sub-committee coordinators, and all well wishers for their continued support. I sincerely encourage everyone to get involved in OSA activities in whatever way you can.

Sincerely,



Niranjana Tripathy
President, OSA



Secretary's Report

Dear Friends

Thank you all for believing in me to take charge as the Secretary of Orissa Society of the Americas (OSA). In the beginning I had planned to accomplish 3 major goals for OSA. All of these goals needed member input and member involvement.

The goals are:

- Establishing a guideline for the printing and the distribution of OSA Annual Souvenir
- Creating handbooks for the workings of OSA officers and OSA
- Improve OSA's public relations

During the first year of our term, we faced the obstacle as there were no takers for the annual convention. OSA National consulted with its Board of Governors and took a decision to host the convention using a novel approach. Accordingly Maryland and Virginia group of Oriyas volunteered to take up the task.

The second obstacle was the 2005 souvenir printing and distribution. California convention organizing committee members did not have enough souvenir prints and the CDs that they created at a later date did not reach many members. OSA National became involved and did its best to help in the process. However, the problem was not solved to our expectations as it was not directly under our control.

With the above challenges, I was not able to achieve 100% of my above goals as the secretary of OSA. Here are the status updates of the above goals.

Establishing a guideline for the printing and the distribution of OSA Annual Souvenir:

We had faced this problem when California groups were not able to publish and distribute the annual souvenir to the general membership. Everything involves money. Not only the California group but also the Maryland group, 2006 annual convention organizers faced this problem of getting enough funding for the souvenir printing and distribution. We have made several surveys and asked opinions of members on this issue. I summarize them as follows:

- CD or book?
- From where should the money come from?
- Who should distribute?
- How to select articles?
- What is the best method to distribute?

We plan to discuss the above in 2006 GBM.

Creating handbooks for the workings of OSA officers and OSA

I had planned to create handbooks for the workings of OSA officers and OSA. However, I did not receive any member input. Some veteran OSA members suggested that the present constitution and by-laws information may be enough. As many members do not read even the constitution and the by-laws, there is probably no need for making extra efforts which people may not read.

Although my attention shifted to manage the convention emergency, I do plan to pursue this effort after the convention is over.

Improve OSA's public relations:

I worked with the team to plan for ways to improve OSA public relations. OSA organized the 2nd Prabasi Utkal Dibas together with Non-Residence-Oriya-Facilitation Center. We invited the international Oriya community to attend the event.

OSA members were regularly informed and updated on OSA's activities. We designed welcome letter for OSA's new permanent members.

Because of the convention emergency some of our planned activities were affected. We hope to pick up on those activities after the convention and during our 2nd year (July 2006 - June 2007).

Welcome friends to the New Year in OSA calendar! May this New Year become a productive year in OSA's history!

Bigyani Das

Message from the Chief Minister, Orissa

NAVEEN PATNAIK
CHIEF MINISTER, ORISSA



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BHUBANESWAR

Dated 5-6-96

Dear Shri Kar,

I have received your request to attend the 37th annual convention of the Orissa Society of the Americas.

I regret that I am not able to attend the said convention due to other preoccupations.

I wish your convention a great success and hope that your association will continue to support the developmental activities of our State.

Once again I wish your convention all success.

(NAVEEN PATNAIK)

SHRI DHIRENDRA KUMAR KAR,
Vice President,
Orissa Society of Americas.

Message from the convener

Dear Attendees:

On behalf of the organizing committee, I welcome you all to Columbia, MD to attend the 37th OSA Annual Convention. Usually, every year for the past many years, a specific chapter of OSA hosts the Annual Convention. However this year it happened to be different. It was January 3, 2006. I got a surprise email from OSA Secretary Dr. Bigyani Das, with "An Urgent Request" on the subject line. So I carefully read it. I am copying a few lines here from her email.

"Dear Bhaina: Happy New Year 2006. I have the following request for you and I am sure you will help us. As you know we now have OSA 2006 convention emergency. We are still trying different methods. I hope something would work out. The time is running out. At this stage going through chapters and chapter formalities would not be possible. In the worst case scenario, if we don't get any volunteer within this week OSA National is planning to take the organization charge. If that happens, I request you to be the Convener selected by OSA National. We have many people here who can help you. We will have co-conveners and I will help you in making up the duty/responsibility chart so that we would avoid conflicts. Bhaina, please say "yes" to the above proposal. As I have explained, I will make sure that your burden is reduced and workload is distributed to OSA members throughout USA. You are the right person and this is an opportunity. Thanks and Regards, Bigyani"

I could feel the emergency while thinking her positive attitude towards me between her lines. I also agreed with Bigyani that this is an opportunity to do something for the OSA community. I knew Bigyani as a very dedicated, responsible, and trustworthy person, who can sing, write, and act in drama having a love for cultural program. With these talents, together with her assurance that she and OSA members throughout USA will be helping me, I thought I have nothing to lose if I accept the offer. Therefore, I wrote her back willing to accept the responsibility should no chapter comes forward. As some of you know, surprisingly no chapter came forward and executive members of OSA gave me the charge to be the Convener. That is how we started to plan this Convention. I take this opportunity to thank all the executive members of OSA for voting me to be the Convener.

Irrespective of the technical procedure, the Convention organizing committee and Oriya volunteers around here have put their tireless efforts to bring you three days of social and cultural activities. There were adversities along the way, but everyone has worked together to overcome them. Support for our efforts has come in different forms, I want to take this opportunity to thank all our supporters, and volunteers for helping us to make this a successful Convention.

In selecting the Convention theme “Our Children, Our Future !!” with exclamation marks, we are conscious of our second generation, and wonder if they will remain members of OSA and continue to take part in Oriya culture in North America after we the first generation are gone. We have made some effort to attract them and increase their participation in this Convention, yet there remains much to be accomplished in future in this matter.

We hope, you will have an enjoyable experience at this Convention at Columbia, MD. As the Convener of 37th OSA Convention, I have enjoyed working with many of you and more importantly getting to know many of you whom I did not know before. I am thankful to you all who have attended this Convention. If you are an OSA member and could not attend this Convention for some reason, we missed you and you missed us.

Cordially,
Joy Gopal Mohanty
Convener



Message from the Co-convener

It is gratifying to note that we are having the 37th Annual Convention of the Orissa Society of the Americas (OSA) organized by the national organization with active cooperation from its neighboring chapters of DC, MD, VA, PA, NY-NJ, and New England. The theme of this convention has a particular significance. We (first-generation Oriyas) are really wondering if our children (second-generation Oriyas) will be part of OSA after we are gone!

The convention organizing committee looked hard from the second generation Oriyas (above college level) in North America but could not find a suitable person for a youth convener, who can lead the youth activities and create a second-generation Oriya network. We wanted them to contribute in every aspect of the convention activities. We do not want merely to impose upon them any topic or activity. It is up to their free will what they feel could write or suggest. They need to come and connect among themselves, to not only participate in youth programs, but also take time to observe different programs in the convention. We want them to share with us their honest evaluation, comments and suggestions for improvements. They need to start thinking about putting convention events in such a manner to broaden commitment and membership of OSA organization. Their involvement, comments and feedback are one of the important processes for this convention. We would like to see the second-generation youths to step up to be part of this annual retreat tradition of OSA every year with enough planning and support from all of us.

The leadership of OSA has been truly visionary to connect with the youth community to keep them involved. The convention committee does recognize and wishes to keep that momentum with attempts to design programs differently. We are hopeful that we will have cooperation from our children. We are very proud of our children being brought up in two distinct cultures, where there are hardly any similarities. We must have to recognize and appreciate how hard it has been on our children. Let us pause a moment to take a look at their accomplishments, their love and respect of their parents, of Oriya culture, heritage and tradition. Nothing will be impossible as long as they nurture that love and care. They have not abandoned us because of that love and care; will not do so in our lifetime. They will continue to prosper in their personal and professional lives without forgetting their roots. So, let us hope, our children will come forward to take the lead, remain part of this organization OSA and keep it while making it stronger each successive year by bringing more and more second generation Oriyas connected under its vast umbrella.

Nrusingha Mishra,
Co-convener

Editors' Note

This souvenir is an origami – an expression of emotion(s) of our past glories, present frustrations and promises for the future. The writings span from the eternal questions like old age, Nature of Consciousness, the dilemma of living in two worlds simultaneously to the essence of being an Oriya especially an Oriya woman (“Contradictions”).

From the writings of the distinguished authors such as Kabi Mishra, and the artist Sushree Mishra (Kar) we get a glimpse of Jagannath cult and the work of celebrated poet Jayadev. Snehalata Mohanty and Pradyot Patnaik and others lead us to the glorious past of Orissa and to a virtual tour of beautiful temples, golden beaches and ever green mountains.

The world we came from is an integral part of us and we remain Oriya at heart. Stories by Prasanna Pati, Nandita Behera, Sanjiv Mohanty and Julie Acharya Ray as well as the reflections of Sarandindu Misra and Gagan Panigrahi speaks for the essence within all of us. The spiritual dimensions of existence can give us solace but the loss of a loved one is still heart wrecking. Who can put the sadness better than Jhinu Chhotray and Shashadhar Mohapatra?

To us the best writings are those of the newer generation. They represent the ever lasting dilemma of an immigrant child, the ecstasy and pain of submitting to two seemingly contradictory systems simultaneously. The following stanza from Ankita Mohanty's poem says it all.

“And slowly I come to realize
I have two homes
Two paths that join in harmony
Where both charges,
Negative and positive
Dwell
A rain cloud
These charges
Clash and lightning flashes “

Then there is the urge to speed up the progress in the mother land. A number of people are dedicated to do just that, to uplift the masses in Orissa by means of different organizations, such as Kalinga hospital, SEEDS, Orissa Foundation, IAFF etc. and with individual enterprise, such as Behera Family Charitable Fund and Mishra Charity Inc. Let us salute all these Oriyas for their dedication and courage.

The OSA convention gives us a platform for affirmation of our faith in our culture and to assess our value system in the twenty first century. We thank you for giving us the opportunity to catalyze this wonderful synthesis. Special thanks are due to Julie Acharya Ray and Goutam Satpathy for proof reading the manuscript.

Babru Samal

Jayashree Samal

Binod Nayak

Abhijit Ray



Organizing Committees The 37th Annual Convention, Columbia, Maryland

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Bimal Mishra

Audiovisual

Abhijit Ray
Amar Senapati

Cultural

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Julie Acharya-Ray
Debaki Nandan Chowdhury
Deepa Parija
Sikha Sen
Leena Mishra
Manaswini Sahoo
Bijoylaxmi Dash

Directory

Pratap Dash
Goutam Satpathy

Facility Management & Hospitality

Indu Mishra
Sandip Patnaik
Debanand Das

Food

Pradyot Behera
Bandita Mishra
Arun Ojha
Ajaya Mohanty
Neeta Mohanty
Chitaranjan Das
Namita Das
Sushama Panda
Sulochana Pattanayak
Meera Mohapatra
Urmila Sahu
Indu Mishra
Sanghamitra Patnaik

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Laxmi Narayan Bhuyan
Hari Arjun Patro
Prakash Patro
Tapan Padhi
Naresh Das

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Julie Acharya Ray
Jayashree Samal
Meera Mohapatra
Sangeeta Dey

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Maushumi Patnaik
Kalpana Panigrahi
Leene Dhal
Alok Praharaj
Anjana Chowdhury
Priti Rautray
Pradip Tripathy
Pradip Behera
Jibesh Das

Seminars/Symposium/Workshop

Naresh Das
Hemant Biswal
Bidyut Das
Akhileswar Patel
Binod Nayak
Jyotsna Mishra
Devi Mishra
Bhagabat Sahu

Souvenir

Babru Samal
Abhijit Ray
Jayashree Samal
Binod Nayak
Julie Acharya Ray
Pradyot Patnaik
Jhinu Chhotray
Bigyani Das

Young Adult & Children Activities

Padmanabha Pradhan
Alpana Das
Sunanda Holmes
Bagmi Das

Youth Sports

Brahmapriya Sen
Deepak Dhal
Satish Mishra
Alok Mohanty
Siddharth Mohapatra

Web/ Graphics

Santanu Das

OSA Souvenir 2006

Contents



1

Quest for Meaning

The “Frolicking Pigeon” and the “Inverted Tree”	Binod B. Nayak	3
Love and Bhakti	Panchanan Satpathy	12
Consciousness in Plants	Arun Misra	15

17

Glories, Problems and Promises

Jagannath and His Festival at Puri	Dr Kabi P Misra	19
Kalinga in Ancient India	Pradyot Patnaik	25
An Orissa Heritage Primer	Sneha Prava Mohanty	29
Future of Science and Technology in Orissa	Priyadarsan Patra	35
Globalization, Women in Orissa:		
Some Personal reflections	Annapurna Devi Pandey	40
Energy Needs of India	Baidehish Dwibedy	46
Juggernaut	Hemanta Ranja Panda	52
I Will do Something for Mo Odisha	Jatish Chandra Mohanty	54
Chala Ame Odiya Sikhiba	Sudam Sahoo and Manoj Joshi	61



63

Personal Reflections and Views

Odissi – my Odyssey	Sri Gopal Mohanty	65
Bhubaneswar – My Reminiscence of the Capital City	Saradindu Misra	70
My Uncle Ralph, Dr. Ralph Gerd Victor	Lalu Mansinha	74
A Case of Mistaken Identity	Sangita Misra	77
Reflections	Priyanka Patnaik	79
Rishikrishi, Farming of the Saints	Amulya Garabadu	86
Wanted Entrepreneurs	Laxman Mohanty	89
Letter to a Child: Reflections on India	Srikanta Mishra	91
My Family	Snigdha Das	94
The History of REC Rourkela		
Alumni - Association in North America	Debendra Kumar Das	96
Save Retreats For Yourself	Nrusingha Mishra	101
Ten tips to raise a bright kid in Twenty-first century	Gopal Mohapatra	103

OSA Souvenir 2006

Contents



105

Stories of the Heart

No Return From Hardwar	Dr. Prasanna K. Pati	107
Life is Given to Many, but Only a Few Live It	Anukta Jena Philip	113
The In-between Woman	Joyshree Mansingh	115

119

Symphony of the Souls

To Fall with Love	Arjun Purohit	121
Contradictions	Malabika Nayak	122
Epitome of a Heart	Anwasha Panda	123
Stones and Emotions	Anuranjita Nayak	125



127

Between the Worlds

Vinayak	Sanjiv Behera	129
Shaping Myself	Bagmi Das	133
What would Mithu do?	Smita Das	136
A Note on Hydrogen Fuel Cells	Sambit Misra	141
Cultural Diversity	Sonia Chakrabarty	143
Family, Faith, and Freedom	Prerana Pradhan	145
It's Up to us	Rajashree Mishra	147
Dreamland	Arpita Mohanty	148
My Recent Trip to Orissa	Ayesha Kar	149
This Is My Orissa	Ayesha Misra	152
My visit to India	Susan Patnaik Sen	154
Pondering the Progress in India	Soman Panigrahi	156
Waiting for Mamu	Pallavi Raut Sodhi	159
My train trip in India	Tara Kanungo	164
Rapunzel and the Giant	Anshuman Mishra	165

OSA Souvenir 2006

Contents



167

Voices of the youth

Lucky	Ankita Mohanty	169
Memories	Mrunali Das	173
Father Sun and Mother Moon	Anya Rath	175
Here am I waiting	Nayna Rath	176
Halloween	Satwick G. Misra	176
I Wonder Why	Ankita Ray	177
Out of the Sky	Pratik Pradhan	180
She	Shashwati Das	181
Sorrow Unleashed	Sikha Das	182
The Mermaid's Lament	Ananya Mishra	183
Morning	Rutuparna Sarangi	184
Touch of Freedom	Ina Dash	185
Worship Of The Mother Divine	Satish Mishra	187



୧୮୯

ହୃଦୟର ଭାଷା

ନାତାଲିଆର ଓଁକାର	ଡଃ ଶାନ୍ତନୁ ଜୁମାର ଆଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ	୧୯୧
ଅଭିଶପ୍ତ ଅଭିମନ୍ୟୁ	ଡଃ ଜୀବନ କୃଷ୍ଣ ମହାପାତ୍ର	୧୯୭
ଶାଶୁ ବୋହୂ ଉପାଖ୍ୟାନ	ନନ୍ଦିତା ବେହେରା	୧୯୮
ଦେବଦୂତମାନେ ଯଦି ହ୍ୟାପି ପ୍ରିନ୍ସ୍‌ର		
ହୃଦୟ ତଥାପି ଖୋଜୁଥାନ୍ତି	ତୁଲି ଆଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ରାୟ	୨୦୦
କାନପୁଲ	ବିଜ୍ଞାନୀ ଦାସ	୨୦୫
ଦୋଳ ଯାତ୍ରା	ସୁଲକ୍ଷଣା ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ	୨୦୯
ନଦିଆ ଗଛ	ବରୁଣ ପାଣି	୨୧୫
ତନୟା	କଳ୍ପନାମୟୀ ଦାଶ	୨୧୬
ଶ୍ରୀ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ଦେବଦାସୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଓ ମହାକବି		
ଜୟଦେବଙ୍କ ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦ	ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ସୁଶ୍ରୀ ମିଶ୍ର (କର)	୨୨୧
ପୁଲ	ଅଞ୍ଜନା ଚୌଧୁରୀ	୨୨୬

୨୨୯

କବିତା ମଞ୍ଚରୀ

ଦୀଗ ଭୃଷ୍ଟ	ଝୀନୁ ଛୋଟରାୟ	୨୩୧
ବୋଉଲୋ ମୋର ବୋଉ	ସାରଳା ତ୍ରିପାଠୀ	୨୩୨
ଜଣାଣ	ଶ୍ରୀମତି ପ୍ରମିଳା ମହାପାତ୍ର	୨୩୩
ସେଇଠି ମୋର ଘର	ଶାନ୍ତି ଲତା ମିଶ୍ର	୨୩୪
ଶେଷ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତ	ଶଶଧର ମହାପାତ୍ର	୨୩୫
ଅଭୁଲ ଗାଁ	ଗଗନ ପାଣିଗ୍ରାହୀ	୨୩୬

OSA Souvenir 2006

Contents



241

In Memorium

Basiapa

ପ୍ରଫୁଲ୍ଲ ଦାଦାଙ୍କ ବିୟୋଗାର୍ଥେ

Bijoy Mishra

ପ୍ରମୋଦିନୀ ମିଶ୍ର

243

୨୪୫

247

NRO Activities

Kaling Hospital Marches On

Dhiraj Panda

249

SEEDS

Priyadarshan Patra

250

Micro Finance Institution in Orissa

Joyasree (Ranu) Mahanti

253

The ORISSA FOUNDATION

Devi Misra

254

IAFF

Subhas C. Mohapatra

257

IASF

Prasant Behera

259

JOGA Science Center

Bigyani Das

261

Our Village Trust

Sudip Patnaik

262

Nava Prabhat Charitable Trust

Sudhansu S. Misra

263

Lifecare Biotech

Amiya R. Nayak

265

Keonjhar Drinking Water

Kirtan Behera

267

Well Project well for Tribal School Children

Indu Mishra

267

Mishra Charity Inc

Orissa's First Privately Funded Professorship

by Sradhananda Mishra

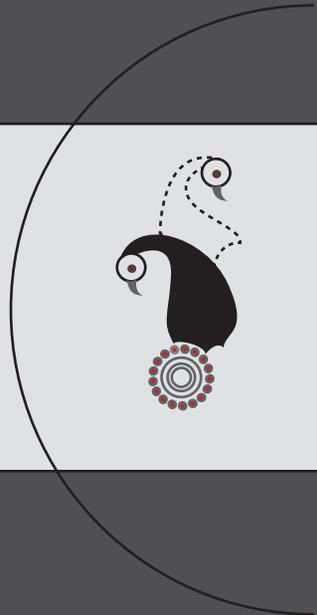
Lalu Mansingh

268

Fund Raising & Selecting Organizations Needing Help

Mihira K. Rath

270



272

Acknowledgment of Excellence

Subrina Biswal Memorial Awards	272
Kalashree Awards	272
Distinguished Oriya awards	272

OSA Past and present

Presidents of OSA	273
Conventions	273
Editors	274
Sponsors	275

Quest for Meaning



THE “FROLICKING PIGEON” AND THE “INVERTED TREE”

Ruminations on the Nature of Consciousness and the Mind in the Light of a Metaphysical and Mystical Poetry of Radhu Dasa

Binod B. Nayak*

On Exploring the External and the Inner Worlds

Mysticism at the one extreme and logic (and more broadly the powers of reasoning) at the other, have been the tools of the finite man to comprehend the Infinite(1). While the infinite has remained infinitely mysterious, the arts and sciences that we have created in search of the infinite have given meaning to our finite existence on earth. The myths, religions, philosophy and of course the sciences that are the byproducts of this quest have become the instruments in our hands to search for the “ultimate reality” underlying our existence.

But is there such a thing as ultimate reality? Can we prove its existence? And assuming it does exist, can we prove that it is invariant? Above all, assuming that it exists and is invariant, is it knowable? Perhaps the most perplexing question of all that we face is the following, i.e., why is that, we want to know? No doubt such questions are more easily posed than answered. Such questions have tasked the minds of the best and the brightest over the millennia and some of the answers that have come our way in the process have enriched our existence on earth. The history of our civilization owes a great deal to our incessant quest to answer such questions.

Such existential questions have had been the exclusive domain of philosophy. But the emergence of mathematics and the natural sciences, with powerful “soft” and “hard” tools at their disposal has been amazingly successful in exploring the world of the infinitesimally small and infinitely large. Empowered by logic and mathematics, reductionism has largely triumphed. It has, however, encountered some roadblocks. At a fundamental level, the complexities, uncertainties, “incompleteness,” and “undecidability,” spun by the world of the logical and the rational has put a bound on what is knowable. And, when it comes to the inner world of the mind, success of reductionism has been less than spectacular.

It maybe that the lack of success in using reductionism to comprehend the realms of the mind can be attributed to the dominance of Cartesian viewpoint in Western Philosophy, i.e., the mind is mind and the matter is matter and never the twain shall meet (my paraphrasing in the style of Rudyard Kipling). The mind-body duality, i.e., the duality of the world of the mental and the world of the material, has reigned over Western Philosophy since the days of Rene Descartes, the seventeenth century French mathematician-philosopher who declared mind as the “thinking thing” (*res cogitans*) and the body as



the “extended thing” (*res extensa*). His observation, “*Cogito ergo sum*” meaning “I think therefore I am,” which first appeared in his treatise “Discourse on the Method,” (1637) did put mind at the center of our being and de-emphasized the role of the body, its anchor and harbor.

But that may not be the only reason why reductionism has not been able to fathom the realms of the mind. The real bottleneck in understanding the mind revolves around answering the following seminal question. How does the mind emerge from an assemblage of objects such as the neurons, synapses, ganglions that are individually mindless ?(2) Is mind finite, potentially infinite or infinite? Can the “complexity” of brain organization and the attendant neurobiological processes explain the emergence of the consciousness from matter? In more concrete terms how do the “neurobiological processes” in the brain give rise to our “subjective states of awareness” – such as the “self,” and the “soul?”

When one talks about the “self,” and the “soul,” one has to remember that, over the millennia, one of the major preoccupations of Vedantic philosophy of India has been to understand the nature of the self. In fact, the Odia lyrical poetry of Radhu Dasa, which I will introduce and comment on later, dwells on such philosophy. Such lyrics in Odia language are called *bhajans*. The lyrics of a *bhajans* are usually based on a combination of metaphysical, mystical, spiritual and devotional (*bhakti*) themes. The purpose of all *bhajans* is to elevate – to transport the listener to a world of spirituality – a world of detachment where grief and sorrow cannot reach. When such lyrical poetry evokes the mystical, the singer and the listener sometimes can experience an expansive mood such as “timelessness” or an “infinite embrace” where the division between the self as the center and the rest of the universe is suspended. There are similar musical forms and traditions in India such as the *kirtans*, that can also evoke the mystical in the mind of the singers and the listeners. The *bhajans* and *kirtans* form a part of devotional (*bhakti*) music that has been traditionally associated with the *Vaishnavites*, a religious sect in India, who worship Lord Vishnu. The Sufi poetry and music is also born out of mystical experiences. *Khayal* singing, the predominant style of Hindustani Classical music, has the power to evoke the mystical in the mind of the singer (the vocalist) and the listener.

My intention in dwelling on the lyrical poetry of Radhu Dasa is as follows: (a) to share with you, the reader, a beautiful piece of lyrical poetry written for the common man in Orissa whose meaning has the power to put us face to face with one of the most important existential questions of our life, (b) to show to the reader, the complexity and the richness of the mystical and the spiritual emotions and experiences such lyrical poetry and singing can evoke which has to be accounted for by the world of science as it explores the brain-mind connection and the nature of the self and the soul (3) (consciousness) and (c)



to reflect on the theme of Radhu Dasa's poetry that repeats itself time and time again in the writings of philosophers and poets in various times and in various forms and to question if such themes or conjectures have any rational validity or if these are just figments of our imagination.

On the Nature of the Mystical: A Short Introduction

Mystical experiences are normally holistic in nature and not easily amenable to reasoning. That may be one of the reasons why mysticism has been treated with some degree of disparagement. But that has been changing. Bertrand Russell, mathematician-philosopher-pacifist, and a Nobel Prize winner in literature, was perhaps the first major thinker of the twentieth century to focus and popularize the subject of mysticism. He even claimed to have gone through a mystical illumination(4) . In his classic essay "Mysticism and Logic (5), " that first appeared in Hibbert Journal in July 1914, he explored the nature of mysticism and logic in his inimitable style. According to Russell, mysticism is characterized by (a) revelations that are beyond the reach of reasoning, (b) an infinite embrace, where the subject appears to have a feeling of expansiveness due to the suspension of the self as the center, (c) a sense of timelessness - - where the subject cannot feel the passage of time and (4) an awareness that transcends division brought about by the analytical power of the mind. To illustrate the power of mysticism, the following often-quoted stanza from "Auguries of Innocence", written by William Blake, illustrates rather forcefully the mystical experience the poet must have gone through in writing the poem.

"To see the World in a Grain of Sand,
The Heaven in a wild flower,
To hold Infinity in the palm of your hand,
And eternity in an hour."

The mind's uncanny ability to experience the mystical and the spiritual has not gone unnoticed by neuroscience probing the nature of the brain-mind connection. "Brain Science and the Biology of Belief(6) "is slowly but surely emerging as a fertile area of research, which is trying to understand the nature of brain-mind connection in the context of the unique characteristics of the mystical and spiritual experiences.



The Metaphysical and Mystical Poetry of Radhu Dasa

Many of us who grew up in Orissa in the fifties and sixties, were exposed to the world of the mystical and the spiritual through mythological stories, prayers, participation in religious festivities and occasional trips to temples. The presence of the divine in Odia art, music, literature and mythology was rather ubiquitous and influenced one's being slowly but surely. My grandfather who was not particularly religious or ritualistic read the *Bhaagabata* of *Ati Badi* (supremely great) Jagannath Das every day and encouraged me to do so. *Bhaagabata*, a mythological, religious, spiritual and philosophical text in Odia, was composed in the sixteenth century. *Bhaagabata*'s popularity in Orissa in the past was widespread because of the simplicity, precision, economy and ease with which Jagannath Das expressed his ideas. At the height of its popularity, many *Bhaagabata Tungis* (*Bhaagabata* houses) were established in the villages of Orissa where farmers after a day's hard work gathered each evening to bathe in spirituality by listening to recitations from the *Bhaagabata*. It became the most important religious text in Orissa and profoundly influenced the Odia psyche.

As we are going to dwell on the nature of the self and the soul in the poetry of Radhu Dasa, it would be appropriate to explore – what did poet-philosopher Ati Badi Jagannath Das had to say about such concepts? The following stanza beautifully captures one of his commentaries on the nature of the self and the soul that carry his inimitable stamp.

ଶତକ ଜଳଘଟ ଥୋଇ ଚାହିଁଲେ ଆକାଶ ଦିଶଇ
ପୁଣିହିଁ କଲେ ଏକ ଗୋଟି, ତହିଁ ଆକାଶ ଥାଏ ଘୋଟି
ଆକାଶ ନ ହୁଅଇ ଭିନ୍ନ, ନାଶ ହୁଅନ୍ତି ଘଟମାନ ।

Behold, the hundred earthen pots filled with water reflect the Sky.
And when they are merged into one, the Sky is also reflected in the one.
While the Sky remains all pervasive and invariant, the earthen pots perish.

No doubt, the theme of the above stanza is grounded in Vedantic philosophy. The analogy of the *jalaghata* in the above stanza signifies the perishable human body, where as the "Sky" signifies the *paramaatmaa*, the supra-consciousness – the imperishable and the infinite. The reflection of the Sky (supra-consciousness) in the water (symbolizing the mind) contained in each *jalaghata* represents *jivaatmaa* (consciousness, self, soul), a part and parcel of the *paramaatmaa*. When the earthen pots



perish, i.e., when our bodies perish, the *jivaatmaa* unites with the *paramaatmaa*. What this signifies is the following: the *paramaatmaa* is indivisible and each *jivaatmaa* is a manifestation of the *paramaatmaa*. The question is, why does Ati Badi Jagannath Das belabor the point, i.e., each *jivaatmaa* is a part and parcel of *paramaatmaa* – the cosmic brahman? This is because, the Hindu philosophy believes that we mortals are immersed in *maayaa* (illusion) and we experience our *jivaatmaa* as an integrated whole which is separate and different from others and from *paramaatmaa* – the cosmic reality. The message of the stanza for the reader is that, we need to pierce the veil of *maayaa* (illusion) in order to be in touch with *paramaatmaa*.

Let me now turn to the main theme of this essay, i.e., the lyrical poetry of Radhu Dasa. Not much is known about Radhu Dasa. He might well be a minor poet like Saaria Bhika who became famous for a single lyrical poetry(7), *Thakaa mana chaala jibaa chakaa nayana dekhibaa*, that any devotee of Lord Jagannath would readily recognize. As far as I know, the translation of the poem that I am about to introduce is perhaps the only poem that Radhu Dasa ever wrote. The lyrical poem in Oriya is given below:

ଓଲଟ ବୃକ୍ଷେ ଖେଳୁଛି ଲୋଟଣି ପାରା,
ଅଠା କାଠି ପଞ୍ଜୁରିରେ ନପଡେ ଧରା ।
ସେ ପାରାର ତେଣା ନାହିଁ, ଲକ୍ଷ ଯୋଜନ ଉଡ଼ଇ
ଜଳ ଫଳ ନ ଭୁଞ୍ଜଇ ଅଟେ ଅମରା ।
ପାରା ଅଛି ଯେଉଁଠାରେ, କେହିଟ ଦେଖି ନ ପାରେ
ଶୀତଳ ଛାୟା କ୍ରୋଟରେ ନ ପଡେ ଖରା ।
ପାରା ଯଦି ଯିବ ଉଡ଼ି, ବୁକ୍ଷ ପଡ଼ିବ ଉପୁଡ଼ି
ଦାସ ରାଧୁ ବୋଲେ ଭଜ ବୁଝା ପାଶୋରା ।

The ideas contained in the poem are not novel – they are again grounded in Vedantic philosophy and similar to the theme of the quoted stanza from Ati Badi Jagannath Das. However, the simplicity, clarity, economy and the directness with which it has been conveyed in the words of Radhu Dasa captivates ones imagination rather readily. I believe the elegance and the beauty of the lyrics can truly be appreciated in Odia only, particularly when sung as a bhajan. A translation of the lyrics follows (8) .

The frolicking pigeon (9) is swirling on the inverted tree(10).

The trappings of the bodily cage can't hold it back.

The pigeon is wingless, but can fly millions of miles.



It doesn't eat or drink. It is immortal.
No one can see where the pigeon resides.
Perhaps, it hides in the gentle shadow in the hollow of the tree,
Where even the sun rays can't reach.
When the pigeon will fly away the tree will be uprooted.
Says Dasa Radhu, chant (meditate). You will forget all your sorrows.

The lyrics talk of an “inverted tree,” i.e., the human body that includes the head – consisting of the brain as the hub of the entire nervous system and the seat of consciousness – as the root, and the main body as the trunk. What is more, the hands, the legs, the ears, the eyes and all other sense organs that protrude downwards are considered the branches of the inverted tree. The frolicking pigeon, which represents the human soul, or more appropriately the human consciousness hides somewhere in the brain, which Radhu Dasa describes as the hollow of the tree where even the sunrays cannot reach. Moreover, poet Radhu Dasa reminds us that when the right time arrives, the pigeon will fly away and the tree (the human body) will be uprooted. The frolicking pigeon (the soul, the self) cannot be entrapped in the bodily cage. In the signature line of the lyrics, poet Radhu Dasa admonishes us to meditate (chant) in order to forget all our sorrows.

The poem written in lucid Odia, summarizes effortlessly the fifteenth chapter of Bhagavad Gita. I consider the poem to be a rare gem, not because it propounds any new theory of philosophy, but because it communicates so forcefully the ancient and esoteric Vedantic philosophy without any pretensions. Simply put, it is a bhajan written by a common man for the common man with uncommon clarity. But what does all this mean? The simple but poignant lyrics bare open perhaps the most bizarre paradox of our lives, that is, how our body – “the inverted tree” – made of gross matter, finite and perishable, harbors the infinite and the eternal – the “frolicking pigeon,” i.e., the soul or the consciousness. Radhu Dasa urges us to meditate (chant) in order to go beyond the perishable body to be one with the infinite, the imperishable supra-consciousness, the paramaatmaa. In other words, Radhu Dasa tells us to cut the bondage of maayaa, i.e., the identification of the self (jivaatmaa, the pigeon) with the body (the inverted tree) as opposed to its true identification with paramaatmaa, the cosmic brahman.

The theme of the poem has a long history in Indian philosophy. The *Katha Upanisad* (written somewhere between 800 to 300 BCE) declares, “With root above and branches below, this world tree is eternal.” (11) In the *Mahaabhaarata* the cosmic process has been compared to a tree. And because the origin of the cosmic process can be traced to the Gods in the heaven, the tree has its roots pointing



upwards and the branches pointing downwards. The *Taittiriya Upanisad* also proclaims the God as the “originator of the world tree.” The *Bhagavad Gita* (written around 500 BCE) devotes the entire fifteenth chapter to “The Cosmic Tree” and the “Tree of Life.” In many philosophies the world over, it is the belief that the soul comes from the heavens and the body from the earth. Outside of India, among many other philosophies, Persian Sufism was greatly influenced by mystical themes of the *Upanisads*.

It is interesting to note that, in Indian mythology, Brahma, the Hindu God of creation is shown with *hansa* (swan) as his mount. The Hindu philosophy believes that our soul (consciousness) is caged in the human body, and what is more, the ultimate aim of the soul is to seek release from the bodily cage. And the release of the soul from earthly human body has been symbolized as the release of a *hansa* (swan). That is the reason perhaps the metaphor of a “frolicking pigeon,” a golden parrot, or a swan (*hansa*) appears time and time again in Indian poetry. Odia poet Baikunthanath Patnaik’s famous line, “*Maanasa hansa mun maanase jibi udi ...*,” i.e., “The swan of the mind will fly off to Mansarovar lake in the Himalayas (the abode of the Gods) ...,” is not only beautifully composed, but has the power to evoke a sense of sublimity in the mind of the listener. And Saal Beg’s famous lines, “*Maati ghata panjurire paalu sunaa suaa’re, Athaa kaathi lagaichhi bhaaba binodiaa’re*” – “You are rearing a golden parrot in an earthly cage, the Almighty has set-up a trap to catch the parrot,” – warns the listener of the fragility of the earthly life. These lines have the power to evoke a sense of spirituality in the mind of the listener. Similarly, medieval poet Kabir’s “*Ud jaayegaa, hansa akelaa ...*,” i.e., “The lonely swan will fly away ...” sung by Kumar Gandharva can immerse a listener in the surreal world of the divine.

But such metaphors are not common to just Orissa or India. The great Persian Sufi poet Rumi (13th century), famous for his mystical and metaphysical poetry, has written eloquently using such metaphors and I quote from “The Essential Rumi(12) ,” beautifully translated to English by Coleman Barks and John Moyne et. al.

“The drunkenness began in some other tavern.
When I get back around to that place,
I will be completely sober. Meanwhile,
I am like a bird from another continent, sitting in this aviary.
The day is coming when I fly off,
But who is it now in my ear who hears my voice?
Who says words with my mouth?”



Epilogue

The inner world of the mind, particularly the nature of the conscious self has eluded mankind over the millennia. However, of late, neuroscience, along with many innovative explorations into the realms of the mind, has been exploring the unique nature of mystical and spiritual experiences. In the process it has been trying to answer such questions as: How different faiths perceive God? What is the biological basis of faith? How mystical sensibilities arise in individuals? Answers to such questions have already enriched our understanding of the brain-mind connection.

What I have tried to show in this essay is that the mystical sensibilities that gave rise to the poem of Radhu Dasa are not unique. It manifests itself time and time again over different generations, in the guise of different forms and also in different parts of the world. The universal nature of such sensibilities begs the question, how such sensibilities arise and get anchored in the human mind. For example, the theme of Radhu Dasa's poem and Ati Badi Jagannath Das's quoted stanza is *maayaa*, one of the dominant themes in Hindu philosophy. Simply put, *maayaa* posits that while the distinction between the "self" and the rest of the universe may appear real, the reality is otherwise. What is more we are all immersed in this veil of *maayaa* and it is difficult to escape this without proper training of the mind. Conceptualization of *maayaa* in Hindu philosophy must have taken hundreds of years to crystallize. Because the theme of *maayaa* repeats itself time and time again in various forms in Hindu philosophy, it raises the question, whether such mystical concepts have a rational validity? In this context the following quote(13) from V.S. Ramachandran, one of the preeminent neuroscientists of the world is rather appropriate.

"As someone who was born in India and raised in the Hindu tradition, I was taught that the concept of the self—the "I" within me that is aloof from the universe and engages in lofty inspection of the world around me—is an illusion, a veil called *maya*. The search for enlightenment, I was told, consists of lifting this veil and realizing that you are really "One with the cosmos." Ironically, after extensive training in Western medicine and more than fifteen years of research on neurological patients and visual illusions, I have come to realize that there is much truth to this view—that the notion of a single unified self "inhabiting" the brain may indeed be an illusion."

And this raises the question, if reductionism triumphs, and when such research in neuroscience would be able to reduce the mind to simply a complex organization of matter, nothing more nothing less, what implications would this discovery have with regards to our beliefs systems, our very personal and subjective mystical and spiritual experiences, and above all, the nature of the unified and indivisible "self"? As I conclude this article, the following quote from "Chance and Necessity(14)" by Jacques



Monod, a Nobel Prize winner in Physiology or Medicine, is rather fitting.

"There lies the frontier, still almost as impassable for us as it was for Descartes. Until it has been crossed, dualism would be an operative force and truth. Brain and spirit are ideas no more synonymous today than in the eighteenth century. Objective analysis obliges us to see that this seeming duality within us is an illusion; but an illusion so deeply rooted in our being, that it would be vain to hope ever to dissipate it in the immediate awareness of subjectivity, or to learn to live emotionally or morally without it. And, besides, why should one have to? What doubt can there be of the presence of the spirit within us? To give up the illusion that sees in it an immaterial "substance" is not to deny the existence of the soul, but on the contrary to begin to recognize the complexity, the richness, the unfathomable depth of the genetic and cultural heritage and of the personal experience, conscious or not, which together make up this being of ours, unique and irrefutable witness to itself."

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(1) The word "infinite" has been used in this context in a much broader sense. Obviously it includes mathematical infinities – countable and uncountable, and also transfinite cardinals. It also includes the world of the infinitesimally small and infinitely large. Moreover, it includes all infinities both actual and potential in arts, literature, philosophy and religion.

(2) "The Mystery of Consciousness," John R. Searle, A New York Review Book, 1997.

(3) The classical philosophy of India makes a distinction among various terminology relating to the mind and the soul, such as manas (mind), atman (soul), cit (consciousness) and jnana (consciousness, cognition and also knowledge). In this essay for convenience sake we treat the soul and the consciousness as synonymous.

(4) See the Chapter on "Autobiography: Mystic Illumination," in "Russell on Religion – Selections from the Writings of Bertrand Russell," Edited by Louis Greenspan and Stefan Anderson, Routledge, London, 1999.

(5) "Mysticism and Logic And Other Essays," by Bertrand Russell, Unwin Books, London, 1970.

(6) "Why God Won't Go Away – Brain Science and the Biology of Belief," by Andrew Newberg, Eugene D'Aquili and Vince Rause, Ballantine Books, New York, 2002.

(7) "Pakhshi'e Jaara Byaakarana" edited by Dr. Sitakanta Mohapatra, National Book Trust, India, 2004.

(8) In translating Radhu Dasa's poetry to English I have greatly benefited from discussions with Dharitri Mishra, Prafulla K. Mohanty, Dilip Ratha and Bandita Nayak.

(9) The frolicking pigeon symbolizes the human soul (more appropriately the human consciousness) that represents the very essence of life.

(10) The inverted tree symbolizes the entire human body. According to this metaphor, the head, i.e., the brain as the hub of the entire nervous system and as the seat of consciousness is considered the root, and the main body is considered the trunk, and the hands, the legs, the ears and all the sense organs are considered the branches that protrude downwards.

(11) "The Bhagavadgita" by S. Radhakrishnan, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1960.

(12) "The Essential Rumi," translated by Coleman Barks with John Moyne, A.J. Arberry and Reynold Nicholson, HarperSanFrancisco – A Division of HarperCollinsPublishers, 1995.

(13) "Phantoms in the Brain: Probing the Mysteries of the Human Mind," V.S. Ramachandran and Sandra Blakeslee, HarperCollins Publishers, 1998.

(14) "Chance and Necessity – An Essay on Natural Philosophy of Modern Biology," by Jacques Monod, Collins/Fount Paperbacks, 1983.



LOVE AND BHAKTI

Panchanan Satapathy, MD *

It seems *Bhakti* is a word everybody knows. But what does *Bhakti* actually mean? *Bhakti* holds different implications for different people. There is ample discussion about this concept by Lord Krishna in the Bhagabat Gita. The word *Bhakti* is not mentioned in any of the principle Upanishads. In the Sanskrit dictionary, there are about twenty meanings of this word. The word *Bhakti* comes from the root word *Bhaj*. The primary meanings of *Bhakti* are love, honor, respect, and devotion. The second important meaning of *Bhakti* is the worship of God. However, to understand the concept clearly, we should first determine what the love of God is and what it the worship of God. The meaning of love is completely different than that of worship.

Love is an attitude of the mind towards God that we enjoy most. Love is not a particular action at a particular time and place. The love of God is enjoyed by the *Bhakta* always and all the time. The meaning of worship is a spiritual sadhana followed by a seeker. The discussion in this article will be limited to *Bhakti* as love only.

Let us look first at what love means. In Sanskrit, love is known as *prema*, *priti*, or *anurakti*. As found in the Hindu Scriptures, love of God is described as three types or three directions: *Manda Bhakti*, *Madyama Bhakti*, and *Uttama Bhakti*. *Manda Bhakti* is the lowest form of love, *Madyama Bhakti* being mediocre, and *Uttama Bhakti* is love of the highest order. Before exploring the differences between these three types of love, let us first have a general discussion of what love really means.

The first direction of love is love of the self. The love towards the self is the highest and greatest love. This is called *Atma Pritihi*. The love of one's self is natural, universal, and starts from birth. The love for the self is an uncultivated and unconditional love. I love myself whether I am rich or poor, educated or illiterate, male or female. I love myself irrespective of my caste, religion, or nationality. The technical name for self love is *Siddha Visaya Pritihi*. *Siddha* means I am not away from myself in either time or space. The love towards oneself is *Siddhaha*. This is the greatest type of love.

The second direction of love is love of any goal or end that I would like to accomplish. If my goal is to possess a house, a car, wealth, or a relationship, then I love those things the most. Usually the goal is an object, situation, or relationship. This is called *Saddya Visaya Pritihi*. The first direction of love is *Siddha Visaya Pritihi* or the love of the self. The second direction of love is *Saddya Visaya Pritihi* – the love for the goal or end to achieve it. If we compare *Siddha Visaya* with *Saddya Visaya* love, then the love for the self is superior to the love for the goal. The logic here is very clear. The love for objects, situations,



or people is naturally not evident from birth. This is cultivated in time as per our desire and as we grow, and this is *Saddya Visaya Pritihi*. This also varies from individual to individual. The *Saddya Visaya Pritihi* is also a conditional love. The objects, situations, or relationships we wish to possess, usually give us happiness, comfort, and security. The moment I find out the object is a problem. and I am unhappy with it, or it fails to fulfill certain conditions, I then wish to dispose off the very object, which at one time was loved by me. An example of this is in a garage sale. This is *Madyama Bhakti* or mediocre *Bhakti*.

The third category of love is love of any means in which one can accomplish his or her goal. To achieve a goal, one has to attain some means, be it money or materials. For instance, if my goal is to secure a house or car, I need money to make this purchase and thus attain my goal. Therefore, money becomes the means in achieving my goal and the love of this means is called *Sadhana Visaya Pritihi*. This is love of the lowest order. Love in this respect is greater for the goal than the means of attaining the goal. For example, if my goal is to purchase a house, I have to pay money for a house. So my love for the house is more than my love for money, as I am willing to relinquish money in order to get the house. We always pay money to buy various things and so money becomes means to achieve our goals.

In summary, *Siddha Visaya Pritihi* is the love of the self and the love of the highest order. *Saddya Visaya Pritihi* is love for the goal; this is *Madyama Pritihi* and *Sadhana Visaya Pritihi* is love for the means to achieve the goal and this is love of the lowest order called *Manda Pritihi*.

Keeping these different types of love in mind, we may now analyze *Bhakti* as love of God. We are typically exposed to religion and God through parents, relatives, and community at different times in various ways. We are told to pray God to achieve our goals. If we pray God, God will remove all our difficulties and problems. God is thus used here as the means to accomplish a variety of things, such as the attainment of wealth, health, family, and other successes. We also pray God to remove our pain and suffering. Therefore, one may pray God for *Dukha Nivruti* and *Sukha Prapti*. So, we use God as a means to remove pain and suffering and also to bless us with health, wealth, and success. God becomes *Sadhana Visaya* to achieve various things. Love towards the means to achieve the goal is the lowest order of love and is *Manda Bhakti*. This is called *Sadhana Visaya Bhakti*.

If the *Bhakta* is intelligent, grows, and matures with the grace of God, then s/he will realize that the materialistic goals are finite and temporary in this life. These objects, situations, and relationships come and go, and are not permanent. After this realization, the *Bhakta* changes his or her goal. Now the goal is *Bhagavan* only. The goal is loved more than the means. There is a big shift in attitude of the *Bhakta* here. This is *Madyama Bhakti*, or mediocre *Bhakti* called *Saddya Visaya Bhakti*. The same devotee whose



goal is God begins to praise God while simultaneously seeking scriptural help and knowledge through the guidance of a Guru. The pursuit of this knowledge is from the *Upanishads* and *Vedanta Vichara*. To his or her surprise, the devotee finds out that the goal of attaining *Bhagavan* is actually not far away as once thought because God is infinite and cannot be away from anyone at anytime. God cannot be away from me. The gap or division between the devotee and God is no more. The devotee is not different from God and vice versa. Once this is discovered through *Vedanta Vichara*, God is no longer the goal or end. God is me and myself. Now = 'self love' and the 'love of God' become one and the same. This is the love of God and the *Bhakti* of the highest order. This is called *Uttama Bhakti* and *Siddha Visaya Bhakti*. This is repeatedly told by Lord Krishna in the Bhagabat Gita. This is also explained in the *Upanishads* as *Tat Tvam Asi* and *Aham Brahmasmi*.



CONSCIOUSNESS IN PLANTS

Arun Misra, Ph.D*

The question of consciousness in plants is often dismissed as absurd. But this neglect has deeper roots. Biologists consider it a subject of psychology, philosophy and metaphysics. Philosophers are busy with human consciousness. Yet there have been numerous philosophers, biologists, and psychologists, since time immemorial, who have analyzed it from wider angles.

But a firm consensus has not evolved due to a lack of clear distinction between concepts such as 'consciousness', 'reflex-action', and 'instinct.' Personal preference of scientists is also a major factor in continuing this stagnation.

Instinct, reflex-action, and consciousness are interrelated. Instinct is inherited, not developed by deliberate practice, and is executed spontaneously. Reflex-action is also spontaneous, but is not inherited. It is learnt by experience or executed from assumption by the unconscious mind. Consciousness is most refined, controlled by brain, the seat of mind. Consciousness is displayed with great coordination of body and mind. It brings another concept into picture, the intelligence, ability to correlate and take decisions, modify life and behavior with the change of circumstances and the environment. Consciousness is a trait of intelligent life.

We consider both plants and animals as living beings. We call all animals conscious, but hesitate to label plants as conscious. Life can not be realized without consciousness. We hesitate to admit consciousness in plants, because physical manifestation of consciousness through the movement of organs and production of sound, common in animals has no parallel in plants. But we all agree that plants possess sensitivity.

Right from the time of the Vedas, all who talk of consciousness in plants accept that plants are sensitive. Manusmriti (c.200 BC-200 AD, P. V. Kane 1968 History of Dharmasastra 1, Pp 148-156, Poona. , Mahabharat (Santiparva 184, 6-18, R. Sastri 1965 Mahabharata, Part V, Pp 4893-4894, Gita Press, Gorakhpur), western thinkers like Schopenhauer, Fechner, de Candolle have been quoted in the works of Hartman (E.V. Hartman 1972 Philosophy of the Unconscious, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London), Jagadish Chandra (J.C.) Bose (1858-1937) was the champion in the field, and performed numerous experiments to demonstrate the existence of consciousness in plants (J.C. Bose 1927, reprinted 1955 Plant Autographs and their Revelations, Bose Institute, Calcutta) Brajendra



Nath Seal, in his book, 'Positive Science of the Ancient Hindus'(B. N. Seal 1958 Reprint, P 175, Motilal Banarasidas, Varanasi) (1958) mentions of Indian philosophers who lived between AD 100 through AD 1500, agreeing to the fact that plants are conscious, but the state of consciousness is 'dormant', extremely dull' and 'stupified'. Rg Veda and Atharva Veda, though in a poetic way, attribute the sense of hearing in plants (late Dr. Laksman Jha, Personal Communication). Buddhist philosophers, like Gosala and Ajivak have mentioned (B.M.Barua 1970 History of Buddhistic Indian Philosophy, Calcutta) that plants are capable of the feeling of touch. Umasvati mentions of Lajjalu (Mimosa pudica), Lajjavatilata) being sensitive to touch and having sense organs. Gunaratna of 14th AD opined that plants are conscious like human beings (Saddarsana Samuccaya with Gunaratna's Commentary, Bib. Ind. 1151, 158, Asiatic Society, Calcutta). Several plants fold their leaves when the sun is down, others open their petals when the sun is up and many move and follow the path of the sun in the sky. Around the 10th century, Udayanacharya and Sankar tried to provide deductive hypotheses to prove the existence of consciousness in plants aisesika Sutra of Kanad, Ed. With commentary of Samakara Misra, SHE Series (5) 1911, iv. 2.5, Allahabad).

Those who agree to the idea of consciousness in plants will also admit that plants are sensitive. The modern experimental basis of science will ask for the existence of brain within the vegetable body. The absence of brain in plants will dismiss the notion of consciousness in them. Of course, plants do not have a brain, and the complex nervous system associated with it. However, Vaxter (1972) used a lie-detector on plants and showed that plants get fearful when someone speaks of burning or destroying them, and they respond to these feelings/threats as sensitive beings (Anonymoyus 1972 Per Paudhon men anubhuti, Dinman, 22 Oct. P 35, Delhi, and Anonymous 1973 Paudhon ki bhavanayen, Navabharat Times, 4 March, P 4, Delhi).

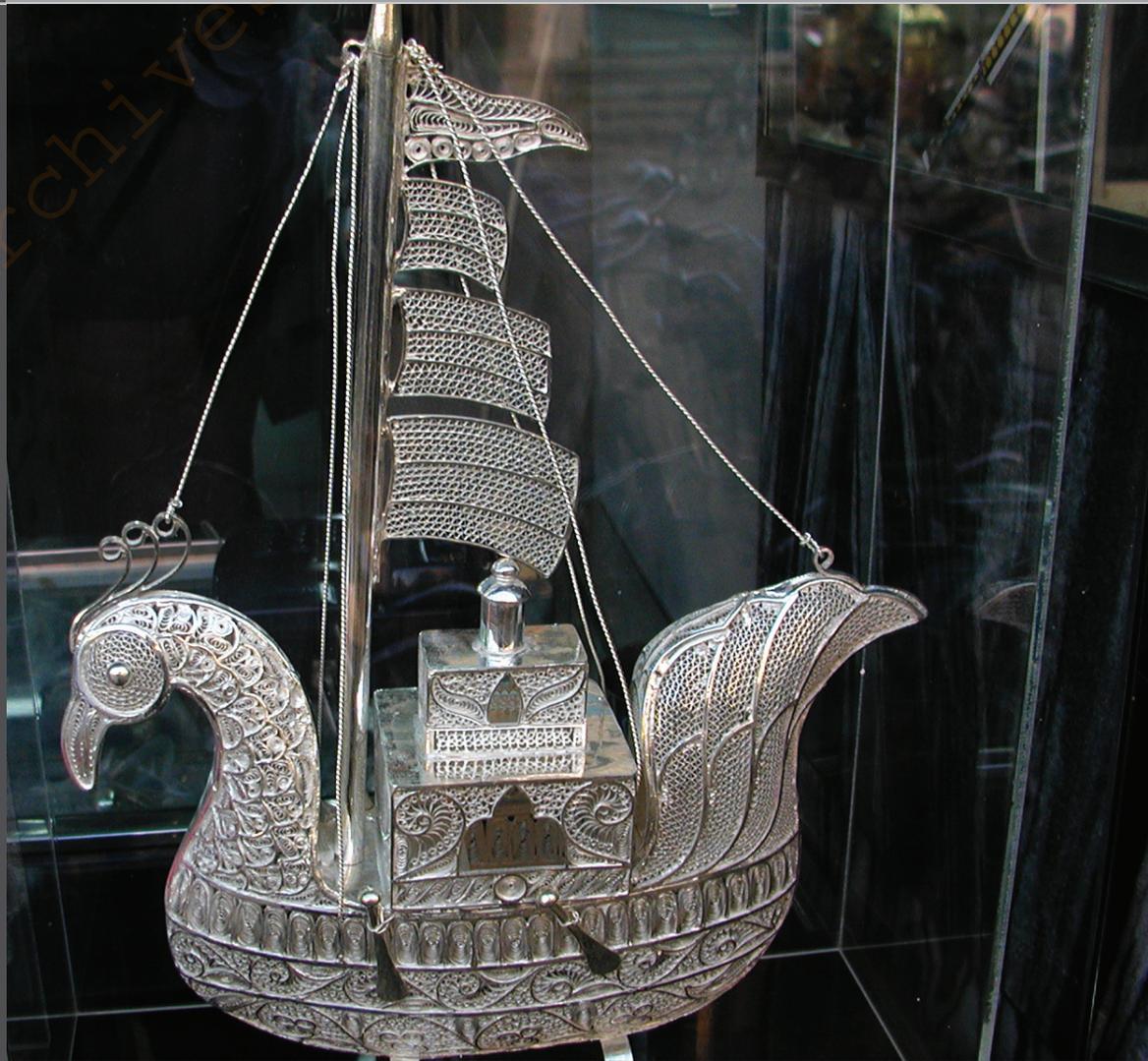
Without discussing the host of newer experiments to prove the point, which are available from popular press to the most prestigious scientific journals, as well as the views of philosophers speaking of 'plant-psyche' I will like to end by mentioning the poetic thoughts of Shelley, 'that every flower enjoys the air it breathes'.

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Glories, Problems and Promises



JAGANNATH AND HIS FESTIVALS AT PURI

Dr Kabi P Misra*

Lord Jagannath (literally, Lord of the universe) is the Presiding Deity of Orissa and His overwhelming presence is seen everywhere and felt in every activity of socio-cultural and spiritual milieu of Orissa. In fact Lord Jagannath is worshipped along with his elder brother, Balabhadra and younger sister, Subhadra. Sudarshan, the wheel (*chakra*) of Lord Krishna is also worshipped along with the trinity.

The history and the legends of Lord Jagannath are very mysterious and shrouded with folklores, mythology, legends and historical records in such a way that one can never get authentic dates and periods of the developments in the march of time in the worship of Lord Jagannath.

In the Vedas *darubrahma* (the supreme force manifesting in the form of wooden idols) is identified with Lord Jagannath and his family. All the idols are made of neem wood in an elaborate ritualistic procedure, which is strictly followed even today since last hundreds of years. These idols are also the only ones which are not only made of wood and painted in three different colors of mankind (the black, white and yellow for Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra respectively) but also are replaced by the new wooden images made every 7, 12, or 19 years which is called the Navakalevar (the rebirth of the deities by newly made wooden images in a very elaborate and meticulously carried out procedure).

Uniqueness of Jagannath tradition and culture:

The tradition of Jagannath culture has many unique features not found in any other tradition nor with any other god or goddess in the entire pantheon of Hindu gods and goddesses. These unique features are as follows:

(1) Jagannath temple at Puri the *chaturdha murti* (the four divine beings namely, Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshan) are worshipped. The trinity of Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra are unique in the sense that two brothers and the younger sister are worshipped and the respective consorts are kept outside the sanctum sanctorum. In no other Hindu tradition, brothers and sisters are worshipped in any temple. As if Jagannath wishes to propagate the universal brotherhood of mankind.

(2) Jagannath though worshipped as Krishna by Vaishnavites is not an incarnation of Krishna but the manifestation of the formless supreme Brahman. That is why he does not appear as one among the ten *avataras*. He is worshipped as the source of all *avataras* instead of being an *avatar* Himself.



(3) Being supreme Brahman Jagannath is neither male nor female as he transcends the gender of his creation. That is why Jagannath wears sarees as his costume, has a big nose ring and is also worshipped as Shakti in various festival days.

(4) Jagannath is perhaps the only God, which is very much humanized. He has the rituals of a human being. In fact he is so much humanized that he 'undergoes death' also every seven, twelve, nineteen years (when two ashadha months come in a calendar year). The suas (who are the descendents of the tribe who were worshipping Him in the earlier form of Nilamadhava – the blue complexioned Madhava) are considered his own relatives and observe meticulously the rituals followed after death of a family member, everytime Jagannath and the trinity undergo the rituals of death and in fact are buried in the ground on the northern side of the temple called koili baikuntha. This indeed is absolutely unique for any God (though it is also necessary that Jagannath changes his bigraha as the idols are made of neem wood which cannot last more than 15-20 years).

(5) Like any human being Jagannath not only 'eats' a variety of dishes (approximately 60 recipes everyday) but also wears very fashionable costumes throughout the year and on various festival occasions. He has one costume called picnic dress and another called Nagarjuna vesha which occurs once in 25-30 years. The last costume everyday Jagannath wears around midnight is the most beautiful bada singhara besha (the most magnificent floral costume) with which he sleeps listening to the recitations of the Geeta Govinda. This again is a unique ritual only followed in the Jagannath temple.

(6) Jagannath temple is perhaps the only temple in India and the Hindu tradition that was completed by the king of Puri without any knowledge of who was the Deity to be installed therein. Only after the construction of the temple was a search party sent to identify and locate the Deity to be installed.

Today Orissa is almost a synonym for Jagannath desha or the land of Jagannath. Followers of various religious streams and beliefs such as *vaishnavas*, *saivas*, Buddhists and Jains draw inspiration from this strange deity of Orissa. Great saints and scholars like Adi Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhwa, Chaitanya, Guru Nanak, Tulsi Das and numerous other sages, saints, devotees and *acharyas* of different faiths and denominations have visited Puri to have Jagannath's darshan. Jagannath Puri is one of the *chatur dhams* (four most important places of pilgrimage) of India.

The Madala Panji (the most authentic temple records of Puri) states that King Anangabhima Deva, anticipating trouble from neighboring countries made a proclamation that the entire land of Kalinga (the ancient name of Orissa) was under the protection of Lord Jagannath. The king of Puri merely acts as the God's representative to manage the administration of the kingdom. This proclamation seemed to



provide the land of Orissa with a divine cover. For Indradyumna, the temple was symbolic of the infinite space in he was to raise an eternal sun, which could be as dark as mystery despite being the sun, and whose round eyes always remained too amazed to blink.

The Grandest Festival – The Car festival of Lord Jagannath

The most important festival at Puri is the chariot festival of Lord Jagannath in the month of June-July (*asadha*) every year. Jagannath and his family traverse just a three-kilometer route and come back to their original abode in eight days spending a budget of approximately a million rupees every year for the arrangements of this festival. Which king or emperor can have such a luxury in this grand scale? At the time of the car festival, Lord Jagannath and his family of elder brother and younger sister along with the Sudarshan travel in newly built chariots from the main Puri temple to his aunty's place and also to a temple built in the name of the wife of king Indradyumna, popularly known as Gundicha Mandira, about three kilometers away on the grandest and the broadest road in Puri, in fact in whole of Orissa.

Two days after the new moon day in the *asadha* month, the wooden idols of the three deities are mounted on their respective chariots. The chariots are made every year anew exactly two months before the festival from wood cut out from the specified trees grown for this purpose. On the day of the beginning of the construction of the massive chariots new clothes are presented to the 10 head-carpenters who are traditionally in charge of the chariot construction. Not only the carpenters but even the weavers who weave the multi colored clothes of red, yellow and blue must live on a strict vegetarian diet during the period of construction of the chariots. The carpenters, weavers and many others involved in this massive work have been doing this job traditionally in their respective families for many centuries. The construction spreading over 59 days in a grueling 8-10 hour a day schedule involves 1072 pieces of wood (exactly to the number, neither more nor less) that are brought from two forests in the neighbouring districts of Dasapalla and Banapur. The 1072 wooden pieces are of different sizes and dimensions exactly as specified in the elaborate records followed over centuries. For every item in building up the chariots, there is a prefixed procedure strictly followed by the carpenters. Each chariot has a specific name and various ornamental objects attached to them. The Jagannath's chariot is called *Nandighosha*, Balabhadra's *Taladhwaja* and Subhadra's *Darpadalana*.

This most famous festival of Lord Jagannath is watched by millions of people assembled at Puri (and now by many more with live broadcast on television). In the year of Navakalevar (mentioned earlier as the time when the wooden images are changed with newly made idols), the number of people visiting



Puri may exceed one to two millions. The return Car festival (called *Bahuda Jatra*) takes place after eight days in a slightly smaller scale when the deities return to their original abode in the main shrine.

The other major festivals of Lord Jagannath

In a calendar year there are many many festivals of Lord Jagannath as mentioned earlier. However the following are the main festivals celebrated on different occasions throughout the year.

Niladri Mahodaya

In January, this festival commemorates the first installation of the idols in the temple. On a full moon day all the idols are decorated with gold ornaments, which give them the look and majesty of a royal family. Jagannath's family wears different costumes on different occasions throughout the year. Some of them are spectacular and colorful and this is one of them.

The Holi

The Holi festival is celebrated all over India with spiritual fervor and abundant gay and joy in the month of March. This is the spring festival of colors, which is quite popular among Indians. Lord Jagannath is no exception. He also celebrates this festival on a Pandal, *Dola Bedi* that is outside the main shrine. On this occasion replicas of the deities are taken to this altar and placed on a swing for five days. Rituals are performed to symbolize playful role of Lord Krishna with the *Gopis* of Brindavan.

Sahi Yatra

Jagannath being manifestation of the Supreme Brahman is considered the source of all incarnations including Krishna. He is also worshipped as Lord Rama. As Lord Rama's birthday usually falls in April all the life and activities of Sri Rama are recreated in an eleven-day festival on the streets of Puri. Thus the act of Ravana taking away Sita from the forest in his chariot, Hanuman going to Lanka and ultimately Lord Rama killing Ravana in the battle field are played with excitement and enthusiasm before the final act of killing Ravana, Rama and his followers in these street plays go inside the main temple and have Lord Jagannath's *darshan*.

Nrusingha Yagna

Lord Nrusingha, a half-lion-half-man incarnation of Lord Vishnu was in fact the original God



worshipped in the Jagannath temple complex. In fact even today the Nrusingha temple on the southern side of the main shrine is considered to be the oldest among all structures inside the temple compound. For every major function in the Jagannath temple *homam* and *yagna* are performed for Nrusingha. In the month of May this special Nrusingha *yagna* is performed inside the temple complex. The images of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subadhra were supposed to have been first reflected in the flames of the fire at the time of Nrusingha *yagna* long ago.

Chandan Yatra

This is a very popular festival in the month of May-June .Lord Jagannath takes part in a boat ride in a nearby pond in Puri not far off from the temple. The replica and representative of Lord Jagannath called *Madan Mohan*, takes part in a dancing festival as if replaying the leela of Lord Krishna with Radha in the temple tank called Narendra Tank. The festival continues for nearly twenty one days when devotees gather and dance and sing bhajans with some young people even swimming along with Lord Jagannath on a boat ride.

The Costumes and Decorations of Lord Jagannath

From time lost in antiquity Jagannath was worshipped originally in the hills of Orissa by the tribals as Neela Madhava (the blue complexioned incarnation of Lord Krishna). There must have been in those days' only flower were the decorations . However with passage of time as Jagannath was worshipped in the temple complex at Puri devotees must have offered special dresses and costumes, some with gold and precious gems. These have come to stay and even today Jagannath is decorated every day with different floral dresses and beautiful colored clothes and ornamental items at different times of the day and on different occasions throughout the year. Sometimes He is decorated as an elephant (called *hathi vesha*) and at other times as different incarnations and on some other occasions as the all-winning victorious king. One of the very special and most attractive costumes is called the *Nagarjuna vesha*. This is usually done in a leap year when the five days of Panchaka become six days. There are some stories relating this costume to Nagarjuna who was a Buddhist and got defeated by the Pundits of the temple. The *Naga* dance festival in the temple seems to have originated from that time. It represents the martial or warrior dance of victory.

Perhaps the most attractive costume of Lord Jagannath is called *Bada Singhar vesha*, which literally means costume for magnificent love or divine love. On this occasion the most beautiful silken



clothes and the most fragrant flowers are used to decorate the deities. During the very elaborate and piously celebrated occasion of this particular dress of Lord Jagannath, the Geeta Govinda depicting the *leela* of Krishna and composed by the greatest poet of Orissa, Jayadeva (who created Geeta Govinda in most musical and soul soothing style) are recited by a royal command from Puri. Jagannath has a special costume called the picnic dress when he symbolically goes out on a picnic once in a year.

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KALINGA IN ANCIENT INDIA

Pradyot Patnaik*

Resplendence of a new dawn was slowly spreading over India, casting a glimmer of a new age ----That was the sixth century BC, the time of Mahavira Jina and Gautam Buddha. History of ancient India was still in its early infancy. Several small but powerful kingdoms were rising up in the Gangetic plane. The glamour and the glory of India by then had shifted from Indraprastha to Magadha. A new Magadha era was looming over the horizon. Sisunag dynasty was ruling over Magadha (South Bihar) at that time and its powerful king Bimbisara was building his capital in Rajagriha at the foothill of Giribraj. The kingdoms of Kausambi (Benaras) and Vatsya (Allahabad) were flourishing under King Udayan, so were Kosala (Ayodhya) under King Mahakosala and his son Prasenjit and Avanti (Vindhya with Ujjain as capital) under Chandraditya Mahasena. They were all powerful rulers of that period, especially, Prasenjit, Bimbisara and his son Ajatsatru... All the sixteen *mahajanapadas* (provinces) of that period were powerful kingdoms or chiefdoms extending from Gandhara (Peshawar) and Kamboj (Southwest Kashmir) in the north to Kosala, Vraji (North Bihar), Magadha, Chedi (Yamuna and Narmada valley) and Avanti in the heartland of central India to Anga (East Bihar) and Kirata (Assam) in the east. Also, around this time India awoke to a religious renaissance, with both Mahavira Jina and Gautam Buddha, preaching their religions and the message of nonviolence. That was the ancient India of the sixth century BC.

The short span of peace and tranquility that prevailed around the mid-sixth century BC, however, started eroding soon, especially with the advent of two most powerful kings of that era, Ajatsatru in Magadha and Prasenjit in Kosala. The bigger and the stronger kingdoms were starting to grab the weaker territories. Thus, India's political map changed within a short period. Magadha with its new capital shifting from Rajagriha to Pataliputra under Ajatsatru emerged as the center of India's power.

In the eastern part of India, on the south of Magadha and the north of Chola (present Andhra), there lied another powerful territory, a nation by itself, named Kalinga (the present day Orissa and beyond). Kalinga was a unique land, distinctly different from the rest of India. The land was prosperous and very fertile from the waters of Mahanadi, Vaitarani and Rusikulya. Its people were fiercely independent. Two hundred years before, around 800 BC the territory of Kalinga was much larger, extending from Ganges in the north to river Godavari in the south. Meghasthenes the Greek ambassador during Maurya period recognized the strength of Kalinga's army, especially its elephant force. So did Kautilya in his *Arthashastra*, describing the huge size of the elephants in this land which probably discouraged Chandragupta Maurya,



whose empire covered almost the whole of India from raging a war against Kalinga.

There is no record that Kalinga ever had any king in the early period. There is no mention of any king's name from Kalinga neither in ancient texts nor in early writings including the inscriptions of Asoka. Like the Sakya dynasty in Kapilavastu, or the territories of Malla (Eastern Uttar Pradesh) or Vaisali, the capital of Vraji, Kalinga too probably was a 'democracy', ruled collectively by representatives from various clans. The powerful chiefs in Kalinga and other places in the area latter became to be known as kings. However, such democracy if existed in Kalinga did not last long. It caved in to monarchy like most other parts in India. Kalinga, however, remained an independent territory most of the period in the BC, retaining its glory and glamour all throughout. When expansion of territories and empire building were the symbols of strength and valor of emperors in ancient India, Kalinga withstood the might of Ajatsatru, Mahapadmananda, Chandragupta Maurya, Satavahana, Kanishka and others.

Mahavira Jina, after attaining enlightenment traveled through Kalinga to preach his message. The inhabitants of Kalinga welcomed Mahavira; they were awestruck by his message but found it hard to follow and practice his teaching, especially the rigorous practices associated with it. Brahmanism remained as the main religion for a good length of time and the tribal population of Kalinga worshipping their own gods. There is no record of Buddha ever visiting Kalinga. However, after Buddha's death, one of his disciples, Khemathera carried Buddha's tooth to Kalinga. Many Buddhist texts describe miracles associated with his tooth. The kings in the other regions were soon vying to bring Buddha's tooth to their kingdoms and succeeded in doing so temporarily. The tooth was moved in flower-bedecked chariots from one area to another. The name, Dantapur, the ancient capital of Kalinga situated at the mouth of river Rusikulya, probably attained its name from the Sanskrit word *danta*, meaning tooth. Tosali (outskirt of present Bhubaneswar) was the headquarter of Kalinga during Asoka's time in the third century BC. Another major city was Somapa (present Jaugada in the district of Ganjam).

In the mid-third century BC Magadha was ruling India. Although Asoka's vast empire stretched over the entire country Kalinga was still an independent territory. An independent and undefeated Kalinga which was then a maritime power too, was a challenge to Magadha's power and pride. In 261 BC Asoka invaded Kalinga. Although his army was bigger and superior in strength and in fact the largest army in all time history of ancient India, Kalinga troops fought gallantly to their deaths. In a fierce battle at Tosali, Kalinga's capital at the bank of river Daya at the foothill of Dhauli 100,000 Kalinga troops died defending their land and a lot more injured and captured. Magadha won the battle but not the war that changed the heart of Asoka and the course of the history of India. A bleeding Kalinga witnessed the healing touch of nonviolence after but remained unbent and became independent a decade latter.



During the first century BC the kingdom of Kalinga once again became extremely powerful with the rise of Chedi (Aira) king Kharavela. Kharavela's ancestors migrated from the kingdom of Chedi to Kalinga. Chedi was one of the sixteen *mahajanapadas* of the sixth century BC. Kalinga's richness, fertile land and oversea trade with Southeast Asia enticed people from all over India. The population migration continued for centuries. Kharavela's coronation took place sometime between 100 to 40 BC. During his reign Kalinga reached at its peak in might and prosperity and was unparalleled to any other kingdom in contemporary India. Kharavela's vast empire spread from Ganges in the north to Kaveri in the south, comprising the whole of central India, and the entire South. His was the third largest empire of ancient India after Chandragupta Maurya and Asoka. He assumed the title *Mahameghavahana* which literary meant 'the rider of the mighty cloud'. Kharavela's advent was meteoritic. True to his appellation, riding as if on a hurricane Kharavela blazed into the history of ancient India like a meteorite but his empire also disappeared at the same pace.

Kharavela had a very large army comprising over two hundred thousands troops, forty thousand horses and several thousand elephants and chariots. In a series of blitzkrieg conquest Kalinga troops stormed into the banks of Narmada defeating the formidable Rashtrikas and Bhojakas, besieged the city of Asika, near the river Krishna and defeated the very powerful Satavahana king, Satakarni-I, thus conquering the large territories of Mahishaka (Maharashtra) and Chola (Andhra). Territories were falling like pricks to the might of Kharavela. Soon Magadha succumbed to Kalinga, — Rajagriha fell, Pataliputra was in shiver and the citadel of India was crumbling. Brihaspatimitra, the Sunga ruler of Magadha was made to pay obeisance at his feet. Kharavela brought back the image of Kalinga Jina, the venerated Mahavira image of Kalinga. Defeat of Magadha was a glorious moment for the Kalingas who had not forgotten nor forgiven Magadha for its bloodbath in Tosali two hundred years ago.

Kalinga Nagari was in festive mood. Its triumphant troops were returning back from Magadha bringing back the image of Kalinga Jina with its throne that was taken away by the Nanda king of Magadha, Mahapadmananda three hundred years ago. Thousands of Brahmins, Shramanas (Buddhist monks) and Arhats (Jain monks) were fed to celebrate the occasion. All houses in Kalinga Nagari were festooned with mango leaves and earthen lamps glowing at every door. A victory tower was built latter to commemorate the victory over Magadha.

After vanquishing Magadha, Kalinga again turned towards South. Chola had already fallen. The confederacy of Satyaputras (Karnataka), Tamraparnis (Tamilnadu) and Keralaputras (Kerala) surrendered to Kharavela's might and so were many other kingdoms in India. Kalinga's suzerainty was accepted by the Pandya king of South India and the Naga king of central India. The Indo-Greeks who



occupied Mathura for a while fled without fight hearing the arrival of Kalinga troops.

The first century BC of the history of ancient India apparently belonged to Kalinga. The power of India by then had descended down into Kalinga. During this period and also well before that not only its sailors were traveling from its ports on their trade routes to Southeast Asia but also many Buddhist monks were arriving in Kalinga from all over India to set their voyage in the sea to spread the message of Buddhism. Such practice continued for centuries. Although emperor Kharavela patronized Jainism, that did not deter the Buddhist monks and the Brahmin sages to assemble in Kalinga Nagari to take part in religious discourses and a large number of them dwelled in huts spread over the foot of Kumargiri (Khandagiri) and Kumargiri (Udayagiri) hills. Such harmony among the followers of different religions was never seen before nor after at any period in ancient India. India under Kharavela witnessed a greater harmony and an intense interaction of all religions than that ever existed under any other emperors including Asoka and Kanishka. During Asoka's reign many Brahmins silently resented his too much shift towards Buddhism and Kanishka was poisoned to death by his general Pushymitra who was a Brahmin and who after ascending power crushed many Buddhist practices.

The power and the glory that was Kalinga in the first century BC were dying and evaporated shortly after Kharavela. Many succeeding rulers of Chedi dynasty tried to live in the remnants of the blazing glory of its past. Some even assumed Kharavela's title *Mahameghavahan*. Chedi king Sada still ruled Kalinga and Mahishaka in the first century AD. However, in the post-Chedi period in the second century AD the Satavahan dynasty of Chola once again was raising its head. In a short time its powerful king Gautamiputra Satkarni took over Kalinga.

The ancient Kalinga was replaced by separate and smaller kingdoms such as Utkal, Odra, Kosala and Kangoda. While the former became to be known for its magnificence in art and culture and mentioned by Mahakavi Kalidas in *Raghuvansa*, Odra became the vertices of three holy places, namely, the Purushottam Kshetra, Arka Kshetra and Biraja Kshetra. ————— The languages of ancient Kalinga, namely, Pali, Bramhi and Sanskrit were slowly metamorphosing into one and over a millennium blended into music, transforming into a new script and a language and an ornament that became to be known as Oriya.

* A connoisseur of history who peeps into the past with his crude little vision



AN ORISSA HERITAGE PRIMER FOR OUR CHILDREN

Sneha Prava Mohanty*

Orissa presents a kaleidoscope of ancient splendor and contemporary expression with its old monuments built by Buddhist, Jain, Hindu and Muslim rulers. It has a glorious history spanning a period of over 2000 years. It is a treasure land for exquisite temples, superb architecture, and sculptors, inviting beaches, enchanting wildlife, and natural lush green landscape. Orissan people share a strong sense of holiness, peace, and tranquility, a sense of belonging with their beautiful mountains, lakes, paddy fields, and their enduring links with the past and spirituality. People of different faiths such as Hindus (Shaivites, Vaishnavites), Jains, Buddhists, Muslims and Christians have lived in total harmony for centuries. Its main language is Oriya is one of the earliest languages of the Indo-European languages. It is closely related to Sanskrit and Pali language, language of Buddha. It has its own unique Oriya script. Present Orissa population is 37 million, scattered in an area of 156,000 sq.km. On the east, 300 miles (482 km) of gentle coastline are open to the Bay of Bengal, while the western borders are sealed by the high hills and mountains of the Eastern Ghats. Orissa is home to three mighty rivers and to the largest brackish water Lake Chilika in Asia.

History:

The ancient kingdom of Kalinga, the coastal Orissa plus parts of Andhra Pradesh (Srikakulam, Vishakapattam and others), Bengal (Midnapur), Bihar (Saraikela and Kharasuan, and Chakradharpur), and Madhya Pradesh (Chatisgarh) (even now Oriya is spoken at these places), grew prosperous through trading, using its port of Kalinganagar, Tamralipi (now in West Bengal), Chandipur, and Paradip as early as the fourth century BC. Kalinga was a major seafaring nation that controlled most of the sea routes in the Bay of Bengal. For several centuries, a substantial part of Southeast Asia, such as Kampuchea (Cambodia), Java, Sumatra, and Thailand were trading partners of Kalinga. Its cultural influence is still visible in modern Indonesia. Its people are now called Kling in Indonesia. Orissa architecture and culture is even now visible in Bali, Java, and Yogyakarta in Indonesia and in Angkor Wat at Siam Riep, Cambodia. The temple at Angkor Wat is a fine example of Orissan architecture, with some local variation. Bali has a Puri temple, along with other Orissan heritages. Even now, there is an annual celebration of Bali Yatra – bon voyage to Bali – that is observed in giant fair and festival at the Mahanadi river, at the old capital of Orissa, Cuttack. Vast majority of Sri Lankans are ethnically linked to Orissa. The Mayuryan Emperor Ashok crushed the Kalinga Kingdom at Dhauligiri, near the present capital Bhubaneswar in



261 BC, but after experiencing the horrors of war and the accompanying bloodshed he converted to Buddhism, a watershed in Indian history. He preached the philosophy of peace, endemic to the region. And Buddhism flourished in all directions to other countries to Burma, China, Japan and Afghanistan, among many others. His tolerance allowed Jainism and Hinduism to continue. After Ashok, the first century BC King Kharvela, a fervent Jain, built up vast empire recorded in the remarkable Udaygiri caves near Bhubaneswar. After Kharvela, separate political territories emerged in the north, Utkala, where arts and temples excelled, and center (Tosali) of the region and a part of the West as Kosala.

In 795 AD, the King Yayati united Kalinga, Kosala, and Utkala into a single empire. He built the famous Puri Jagannath temple. King Narasimha Dev is reputed to have built magnificent Sun Temple Konarak. Maritime trade flourished and Buddhism once again became a popular religion. The greatest period of temple building in Bhubaneswar coincided with Keasris (6th to 11th century), to be followed by the Ganga Dynasty (11th to 15th century), who were responsible for the Jagannath Temple (circa 1100) and Sun Temple (circa 1250). The ruins of a major ancient university and center of Buddhist learning, Ratnagiri, was recently discovered in Orissa. Scholars from far away places lands, such as Greece, Persia, and China used to study philosophy, mathematics, astronomy, and science at this famed university. Taxila, Nalanda, and Ratnagiri are the oldest universities in the world. Orissa was the cradle of the Buddhists civilization and the Chinese chronicler Hiuen Tsang visited Orissa in 638AD and reported the existence of several hundreds of monasteries and more than 10,000 monks.

The Sun Temple at Konarak, near Puri, includes in its decoration many vignettes of military life. The thousands of elephants marching around the base of the temples are not figment of imagination. Rather they demonstrate pride in the superb war elephants for which Orissa is famous, in contrast to horses of invaders. Despite her great devotion to religious and spiritual activities, Orissa was also a strong military power and she was able to hold off the Moslem rulers of the north long after most of the rest of India has been conquered. Orissa resisted the annexation of her territory by Moslems. After a short period of Afghan rule, the powerful, ruthless Mughals arrived as conquerors in 1592 and during their reign, they destroyed many of the Bhubaneswar and Puri temples... It was their violent disruption of temple life in Puri and Bhubaneswar that later led the Brahman community to ban all non-Hindus from the precincts of the Lingaraj (Bhubaneswar) and Jagannath temples. Even till 1947, some princely states remained as sovereign. The Mughals were followed by Marathas, led by Shivaji, in 1751. British rule came to Orissa in 1803, last one among all the states.



Places and Products:

There are some places in the world that are special, and Orissa definitely is one of them. It is rich in culture, craft, music, dance, and festivals round the year, rich in minerals and industrial material, but undeveloped economically. Orissa is a veritable museum of India's sculptural and artistic heritage and has long been famous to scholars, devotees, and connoisseurs for the magnificent, majestic Sun Temple at Konarak (2), near the Indian Ocean bay (the legendary Black Pagoda of European mariners for several centuries)and for the one of four holy sites of Hindus, Jagannath Temple at Puri, renowned also for the yearly Rath Yatra, car festival, the largest gathering in and most spectacular religious pageants in the world, with millions of people vying to pull the chariot, which is seen as Juggernaut, the powerful, massive inexorable force.

The artists of Orissa still live and work in remote tribal habitation, small villages, and traditional pilgrimage towns with world-wide clients including very famous fashion houses in Paris, Rome, and New York. Entire communities are devoted to the making of bell-metal wares, the paintings of brilliant, exquisite pata-chitra pictures, the etching of palm-leaf manuscripts, the castings of metal sculptures, the fashioning of silver jewelry, the carving of stones imitating temple sculptures and symbols, the working of wood and horns, the stitching of appliqué, and the weaving ,by more than 40,000 weavers, of famous silk and cotton Sambalpuri and Berhampuri saris and textiles, and gorgeous ikat silk. It is often been said that if one knows Orissa, one knows India. The fields and lush wilderness of Orissa carpet the entire state in every imaginable shade of green. They enclose wildlife and bird sanctuaries, hot springs, mountains, waterfalls, lakes, backwaters, and beautiful, unpolluted beaches including Puri and Gopalpur-on-Sea beaches. The vast and dream like Chilika Lake is host to boating and water sports enthusiasts, honey-mooners, and in winter to millions of birds migrating from poles to Siberia to South America. There is a huge tiger wildlife sanctuary and many other sanctuaries filled with lions, rocodiles, leopards, giant Ridley sea turtles, deer, birds, and other species and animals.

Culture:

The best of Buddhism, Jain, Hindu civilization, and tribal belief have fused to mold the Oriya culture, all theses existed in Orissa in different strength at different period, constantly reacting with each other, borrowing from each other, energizing, developing, and synthesizing. This evolved, for instance, in the total deity of Lord Jagannath, an absolute unique god, amalgamated from both orthodox and tribal traditions with no trace of caste distinction and untouchability. There are over 6000 Pandas/sevaks



(helpers) in 36 categories of labor for each, rendering a specified hereditary service to the deity from flower collecting to garlands to hoisting flag at the top of the temple. The vegetarian food, Prasad, with more than 64 courses prepared daily at the temple, serving ten thousands (twenty-five during festival times) of visitors from all parts of the world every day, is not just hygienic, healthy, and wholesome but tasty, representing the authentic Oriya cuisine. The origins of this curious God Jagannath (3), so unlike any other divine image in India, are enigmatic. It is evident that he represents a synthesis of Hindu Orthodoxy and strong tribal traditions, incorporating some elements of Buddhism and Jainism as well. Many legends are recounted to explain his strange form. According to the most popular legend, Vishwakarma, the divine architect, appeared in the guise of an old carpenter and undertook the task of construction of the images on the condition that the doors of the room where he would work would remain closed for a fixed period.

After some days the queen got nervous and curious and caused the doors to be opened to find that Vishwakarma had disappeared leaving behind three unfinished wooden images, Jagannath, his brother Balarama, and his sister Subhadra. Because the divine images of Jagannath and others are wooden, they are periodically replaced. On a cycle determined by the Hindu calendar, and generally once in 12 years, the deities cast off their old frames and get new ones. The process of renewal of the body, known as Nava Kalevara (new embodiment), is one of the great secrets of the world. It is performed by the older and senior distinguished temple priests, each of whom knows only his own part of the ritual. The process includes selection and felling of the Nim tree, carving and painting of the new images, and transferal of the divine essence from the old to the new frame. The latter critical activity reaches its culmination when an unknown 'divine substance' is transferred from the chest cavity of the old image to that of the new. This final, crucial step is performed in the dead of night by the senior most priests, working with eyes blindfolded and hands covered with cloth.

The history of the of the Jagannath Temple liturgical rituals reveals the variety and splendor of Jagannath -Dharma, the profundity of its theological thought as well as their deep impact on culture and society of Orissa. Its syncretism of all divergent forms of Indian metaphysical thought and spiritual faculties tend to transcend it to sanatana (ancient) proportions- the cumulative result of fervent and indulgent dispensations of all segments of Indian spiritual tradition. Further, Jagannath Dharma (loosely religion, conscience, duty, and heritage) is soaked in Santana, humanism i.e., neither materialistic nor spiritualistic but compatible with both. It neither dehumanizes nor sublimates its followers to a state of spirits. The Jagannath culture has been a balancing act, always striking a balance between freedom and creativity on one hand and discipline and restraint on the other. The Jagannath culture always



takes a positive view of life. It does not admit of the pessimistic thoughts of grief, suffering, and death. It recommends staunch faith in the Divine. It teaches mankind to strive for the perfection of their soul by the sacrifice of their soul. Material pursuits find no place in the culture. Here, a devotee does not ask for anything material. He or She prays for Divine love. Lord Jagannath is the ocean of mercy (much prior to Christ's birth). By his benediction He can liberate us out of our mortal existence to the Divine Abode. Unflinching faith in the Lord will kill all mundane desires and elevate the human soul. The Jagannath culture teaches us that faith in the Lord and self-less service in the world will usher redemption to mankind. The martial arts of Orissa originating from the Akhanda tradition of Puri for the defense of the pride and heritage of Orissa, the world's famous Odissi dance and music coming out of temple tradition, the open-air theater of discourses known as Mukta Mandap are but a few illustrious examples of the former. While this freedom has been a personal necessity, the discipline has been a social compulsion. Examples galore of the first invocation of Jagannath in each and every auspicious ceremony in the family- whether religious, social, personal or political are found plenty. Every Oriya household grows up under the influence of Jagannath, in rituals, almanac, traditions and culture irrespective of their secular or ecclesiastical contours.

Sculpture:

Every Orissan Temple consists of two essential components: The tall structure, Deul, has a soaring, conical-like, convex spire, crowned with a lotus-shaped flat member at the top. At the core of the Deul is the cubical inner sanctum, in which temple deity resides. In the front of the Deul is a porch structure, Jagmohana, shorter and rectangular in shape. The roof of the Jagmohana which is rather squirts and pyramidal, contrasts strongly to the heaven pointing, curvilinear tower of the Deul. These components are often supplemented by halls of dance and of congregation, by ritual bathing tanks, and by subsidiary shrines, and with the whole enclosed by a compound wall. Every single part of a temple is alive with meaning and reference including decoration and depiction of mythical and godly objects. The spire is often known by words which refer to its role as a symbol of the divine mountain of the universe, and is also considered the embodiment of the magic axis which literally pillars separating heaven and earth. Terms used for various parts of the structure often refer to the Cosmic Man as well as to the Cosmic Universe, which lately astrophysicists are discovering as observed by late Carl Sagan. Tagore, a literature Nobel laureate, after seeing Orissan Temples wrote, 'Here the language of man is defeated by the language of stones.' It is an Indian aesthetic concept that only things covered with ornaments are beautiful. Nowhere else in India is this concept portrayed so brilliantly, and so literally, as in the temple



sculpture of Orissa. Divinities, and devotees , kings and craftsmen and women , pilgrims and priests, celestial maidens and earthly beauties, amorous couples, elephants horses, swans, birds, and mythical beings, swarm over every surface of every temple. Surrounding them are flowers, jewels, long strings pearls and architectural motifs, framing and embellishing hundreds of thousands of enchanting scenes of myth, legend, divine, and sublime life

Dance:

The traditional Orissan dance, Odissi, is mentioned in the inscriptions dating as early as the first century BC, and depicted in sculpture in Khandagiri and Udaygiri, and Rani Gumpha caves. On many extant, Orissan temples and the dancing hall of Konark Sun temple hundreds of elegantly sculpted panels depicting dancers and musicians can be observed. The fact that the Nata Mandir (dance hall) became an integral part of the Orissan temple complex confirms that dancing was an important part of temple life. The tradition of devdasis (female temple dancers) seems to have existed since the time of Somavamsis in the eleventh century. In the 1950s, however, a movement began to revitalize Odissi dance. The discovery of a fifteenth century treatise on dance, the Abhinaya Chandrika, and study of ancient sculptures enabled a few dedicated artists to reconstruct the form. Weaving together traditional poses to the accompaniment of talas (cycles) of sung poetry, particularly love songs of the famous Sanskrit poet Joydev' Gitagovinda. Odissi has today become a highly stylized and beautiful genre (credit to late Kelu Charan Mohapatra) .Orissa is rich with many folk dances, Chhau, day long Danda Nata, Chaiti Ghoda, Ranapa, and Koyas, reflecting martial war traditions and folk tales

* A regular contributor to The OSA Journal. A version, compiled and edited from several sources, this was written on the occasion of the celebration of Orissa Heritage Day at Southern California in 2004.

Presentation skills

କହି ଡାରିଲେ କଥା ସୁନ୍ଦର

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FUTURE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY IN ORISSA:

AN ASSESSMENT

Priyadarsan Patra*

“The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”

US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Second Inaugural Address, 1937.

Much has been said about the fairness, culpability and the broken promises about establishing a National Institute of Science in Orissa. In 2005 I argued, from a somewhat different perspective, that such an institute is critical to the development and international competitiveness of the Orissa region and the Indian nation as a whole. Here I elaborate a bit more. A World Bank report states that tertiary (read higher) education is more than the capstone of the traditional education pyramid; it is a critical pillar of human development worldwide. In today's lifelong-learning framework, tertiary education provides not only the high-level skills necessary for every labor market but also the training essential for teachers, doctors, nurses, civil servants, engineers, humanists, entrepreneurs, scientists, social scientists, and myriad personnel, and support the production of the higher-order capacity necessary for development.

Institutes of higher education have a few primary and interwoven purposes: (1) Meet the learning needs and aspirations of individuals through the development of their intellectual abilities and aptitudes, and equip individuals to make the best use of their. (2) Provide the labor market, in a knowledge-driven and knowledge-dependent society, with the high-level of competencies and expertise necessary for the growth and prosperity of a modern economy, starting at the regional on to the national level; to teach and train people to be successful in entering the learned professions, or to pursue vocations in administration, trade, industry and the arts, etc.

Because of the growing realization of importance of institutions of higher education, the economic development policy-makers worldwide are increasingly attempting to draw universities and colleges into their strategies. Research lays the long-term foundations for innovation, which is central to improved growth, productivity and quality of life, and arrests the “brain-drain” to the far-away places. This applies not just to the scientific and technical knowledge. Research in the social sciences and the arts and humanities can also benefit the economy, e.g., by impacting tourism, social and economic trends, design, law, and the performing arts.

The state of Orissa, albeit its beauty, serenity, natural and cultural wealth, is one of the most economically disadvantaged states in India. Income poverty in Orissa is 12 times that of the best performing Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) which stands at 4%. Poverty level in Sikkim stands at 36% with



Bihar, MP and Assam coming in before the last place finish for Orissa at 47%.

PM Vajpayee, on July 15, 2003, said that Orissa had only 270 hospitals as against 2,100 in Kerala. "While Kerala had one hospital bed for every 330 people, Orissa had one per 3,000." While Karnataka had 30 medical colleges and Maharashtra had 36, Orissa had only three. Orissa, considered a backward state along with UP, MP, Bihar, and Rajasthan, has the worst infant and maternity mortality rates and malnutrition. The proportion of women undernourished is highest in Orissa (48%, according to Mr. Padam Singh, ICMR). Women who are undernourished are more likely to have children who are under-nourished. Orissa is one of the poorest states with the second lowest per capita income after Bihar (East India Human Development Report, 2004). Orissa is also one of the low literacy states, ranking 13th among the sixteen major states in the country. Less than 64% of the population has been enumerated as literates in the 2001 census. It is also one of the least urbanized states in India. The infrastructure, higher education, access to health facilities, and family income areas in South-West Orissa are yet more deplorable. Orissa is no doubt a major state in terms of population and size, and the abundance of natural resources, and yet the table below shows a glaring disparity and neglect in her economic state of development.

HDI and HPI (calculated for fifteen major states)	Orissa	India
Human Development Index Value 2001	0.404	0.472
Human Development Index Rank 2001 (out of 15)	11	
Human Development Index Value 1991	0.345	0.381
Human Development Index Rank (out of 32)	28	
Human Poverty Index 1991	49.85	39.36
Human Poverty Index Rank (out of 32)	31	
Gender Disparity Index Value 1991	0.639	0.676
Gender Disparity Index Rank (out of 32)	27	

The Indian Govt.'s per capita average development expenditure is Rs 2,645. In contrast, Bihar and Orissa, the two poorest states of the union, had only Rs 1,211 and Rs 2,101 per capita, respectively. Moreover, it's estimated that the central Human Resources spending per head in a state such as Karnataka is Rs. 25 versus Rs. 4 in Orissa and Bihar, indicating some regional imbalance.

From another angle and a different set of data, let's look at a study by Dr. Sarvalingam and Dr. M. Sivakmar of the Department of Economics, C.N. College, Erode, Tamil Nadu. They calculated the Deprivation Index(DI) for all the Indian states/territories as follows: $DI = 1/3 (PL) + 1/3 (IR) + 1/3$



(IMR), where the poverty line PL (year 1999-2000), illiteracy rate IR (2001) and infant mortality rate IMR (2001) numbers come from recently published data. This data is tabulated below with the respective state ranks.

Statewise Human Deprivation Index:

Orissa's rank, culminating from a decades-long trend, is the worst.

Sl.No	States/UT	Poverty line	Illiteracy 2001	IMR 2001	Deprivation Index	Rank
1	AndhraPradesh	15.77	38.89	66	40.21	9
2	ArunachalPradesh	33.47	45.26	44	40.89	7
3	Assam	36.09	35.72	78	49.93	5
4	Bihar	42.60	52.47	67	54.02	3
5	Goa	4.40	17.68	36	19.35	27
6	Gujrat	14.07	33.57	64	37.21	12
7	Haryana	8.74	31.41	69	36.38	16
8	HimachalPradesh	7.63	24.09	64	31.90	18
9	Jummu&Kashmir	3.48	45.54	45	31.34	19
10	Karnataka	20.04	32.96	58	36.99	13
11	Kerala	12.72	9.08	16	12.59	30
12	MadhyaPradesh	37.43	35.92	97	56.77	2
13	Maharashtra	25.02	28.73	49	34.24	17
14	Manipur	28.54	31.13	25	28.21	21
15	Meghalaya	33.87	36.69	52	40.85	8
16	Mizoram	19.47	11.51	23	17.98	29
17	Nagaland	32.67	32.89	N/A	N/A	N/A
18	Orissa	47.15	36.39	98	60.50	1
19	Punjab	6.16	30.05	54	30.06	20
20	Rajasthan	15.28	38.97	83	45.74	6
21	Sikkim	36.55	30.32	52	39.61	10
22	Tamilnadu	21.12	26.58	53	23.54	23
23	Tripura	34.44	29.36	49	36.59	15
24	UttarPradesh	31.15	42.64	85	52.92	4
25	WestBengal	27.02	30.78	53	36.92	14



Sl.No	States/UT	Poverty line	Illiteracy 2001	IMR 2001	Deprivation Index	Rank
26	Andaman&Nicobar	20.99	18.81	30	23.06	24
27	Chandigarh	5.75	18.24	32	18.65	28
28	Dadra&NagarHaveli	17.14	39.97	61	39.36	11
29	Daman&Diu	4.44	18.91	N/A	N/A	N/A
30	Delhi	8.23	18.18	51	25.80	22
31	Lakshadeep	15.60	12.48	30	19.36	26
32	Pondicherry	21.67	18.51	21	20.39	25
33	India	26.10	34.80	71	43.96	

Source : 1. National Human Development report 2001. India

2. Based on NHDR 2001 literacy rate

3. Economic and political report 2003, May. 10.

There is already strong evidence of socio-economic benefits from the linkages though integration of a new institution of higher learning into a regional development strategy. Take for example the young University of Oulu in Finland which has become one of the best universities in all of the Nordic countries despite being located in a remote area close to the Arctic Circle. The rural region of Oulu has been transformed into a high-tech zone where symbiotically coexist the several winning companies such as Nokia, the science parks dedicated to applied research in electronics, medicine and biotechnology, and the 13,000-student university.

There are certain native products, the flora and the fauna, regional skills and expertise that need be leveraged, and the regional development that need be addressed by a geographically close and locally identifiable institute of research excellence. There are many different ways an institute of higher education and research can contribute: involvement in local and regional partnerships, student placements in local businesses and the tying of student projects to the needs of businesses and local community groups, links with local business and industry through targeted training and research consultancies; the establishment of research incubators, of science parks, of quasi autonomous R&D companies and the commercialization of research via spin-off companies, and through its wider role as part of a network of knowledge industries to attract investment from overseas and out-of-state.

While India may be "shining", I abhor to see my state at the bottoms of the performance lists. But that is a fact. In a post-industrial, knowledge society, higher-education and sane and sustainable



regional planning hold the greatest promise for socio-economic progress, balanced and longterm growth, and national unity. Today's market economy transforms a large nation such as India into a true microcosm of the globe: each region/state must compete and fend for itself much like a country within a union -- except that a lot of fiduciary, regulatory control and power is concentrated with the Union Government. Thus, equity and thoughtful government strategies are ever so important. All, especially, the state and the central government planners, the educationists, and the civil-society, must take prudent actions and make longterm investments NOW.

We, the people of the state, must stake claim for what's due to us, but must not stop there. What is greatly fruitful and fundamental is our own persistent, quiet and resolute endeavor to transform for the better: equitability, sustainability and excellence. We must plan ahead to build the foundations to help feed and nurture such an institute of excellence, and to leverage it for strengthening the foundations, in turn. We need pay attention to sub-regional parity as well. It would require deeper thought and commitment from us all.

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Parts of this article has been published online @ <http://www.odiya.org/ornet/ornmain.shtml>



GLOBALIZATION, WOMEN IN ORISSA: SOME PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Annapurna Devi Pandey*

The benefits of, and problems created by, globalization and responses to it have been very uneven. Gender, region, ethnicity, and economic conditions have all played a role in the differential impact of the forces of globalization. With case studies from the state of Orissa in India, I show how the neoliberal policies associated with the current form of economic globalization have intersected with earlier policies of “development” and “modernization” and have presented both challenges and opportunities for Indian women. Paradoxically, globalization has given the women of Orissa the educational tools and, increasingly, the social and cultural freedom to combat the social problems and dislocations created by economic globalization itself. At the same time, even the gains achieved—as in the case of education—have proven to be a double-edged sword and, as I will show below in the case of the college girls in Kendrapada and the Kond (tribal) women, have come at a heavy price.

In the process of taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by legal equality, enshrined in the Indian Constitution and law, and of challenging the inequities of the newer economic developments, the women of Orissa, India, have created a form of feminism which does not reject tradition outright, nor pose women as victims and men as oppressors, but creates a coalition in which women and men are partners in promoting the interest of the socially disadvantaged. These women, through the process of organizing, have promoted, above all, networking and connectivity. In short, many women in Orissa have a more complex reaction to globalization than being “for” or “against” it. They have sought to take advantage of the benefits of modernity while resisting, and even opposing, its abuses. In the case studies that follow, I hope to show how the culturally distinctive response of Hindu and Kond (tribal) women in Orissa constitutes a particular form of Indian feminism that emphasizes recognition of cultural identities, that is, of a notion of womanhood where women are defined according to their roles rather than their sex(1) in a common struggle for empowerment and against injustices.

The situation of women in Orissa is lagging far behind the rest of the country. Orissa has a sex ratio of 927 females per 1,000 males according to the 2001 census. Female life expectancy is 59.71 as against the national average of 66.91 for women. Infant mortality rate is 92 for females and 98 for males, as against 67 and 69 at the national level. Female literacy is 50.97% while the male literacy rate is 75.95 %. According to the 1991 census, only 27.28% of the total workforce in Orissa is comprised of women. The unorganized primary sector (e.g., agriculture) employs 82.7% of the total of employed female workers. Around 5.2% of the female workers are engaged in household industries, while other



sectors of the economy provide employment to 12.1% of female workers. According to the National Family Health Survey, about 48% of the female population suffers from nutritional deficiency.

Marginalization and Women's Activism

On my last visit to Orissa in 2004, I attended a workshop against alcoholism in Bhubaneswar. In the process of globalization, alcoholism among lower and lower middle class men who feel cheated and left behind has become a major social problem in not only endangering the lives of the chronic drinkers but also ruining their family relationships and the future of their children. Since they cannot afford foreign liquor, they buy the rotgut made locally. Various women's organizations shared their experiences combating alcoholism from different parts of the state. A 70-year-old illiterate woman presented her triumphant account of smashing an illegal "moonshine" tavern serving bootlegged liquor along with her *compares* in the village, and dragging the tavern owner to the local station. The police had no choice but to arrest the owner. In her own words, "the country liquor factories have ruined our lives. Our husbands, fathers and brothers have become puppets in the hands of these taverners. They are dead even being alive." The women attacked the taverns in order to keep their men folk off of country liquor and save their family life. Here, women were taking the law in their own hands to promote the well being of their families. The state in the guise of police, excise officers have been complicit in promoting country liquor. Each one of them gets a fat share of the profit from the illegal enterprises. Women were proving their sense of agency and empowerment as active participants against the system, which had allowed the commercialization of liquor. Women were coming out of the confines of their homes and challenging the social injustice promoted by the state.

In another instance of marginalization in relation to education, an 18-year-old college girl from Western Orissa had acid thrown on her face for not marrying a street hooligan. Her face was completely disfigured, and required total plastic surgery. Even from the hospital bed, she was determined to fight for justice. I was amazed to see her courage; I heard her telling Saila Behera, the secretary of Basundhara, "Older sister (apa), I am not alone in my suffering. I have you and my brothers (referring to the voluntary workers at Basundhara) with me." She got support from various women's groups and other NGOs, which forced the state to take up her case, provide her with the necessary financial assistance, and punish the culprit.

A classic example of globalization spawning at once injustice, marginalization, and women's resistance is provided by the unpleasant ironies of "education," so often taken to be the hallmark of



enlightened modernization and development. Schools in Orissa are meant to be a site of women's empowerment. With increasing industrialization and urbanization, tribal girls are attending schools along with other Hindu children. The State promotes compulsory high school education for the tribals to bridge the educational gap between various ethnic groups. Girls are offered more and more incentives such as free books, tuition-free education, mid day meals and small scholarships to finish their high school education. Also, the state provides guaranteed positions for women with degrees and diplomas in various public sector jobs. In the process of globalization, educated tribal girls have better opportunities to migrate to urban areas for better jobs. In short, tribal women are beneficiaries of an Indian affirmative action program. It is therefore ironic when schools become the site of exploitation of these disadvantaged people.

On March 11, 1998, a school headmaster who happened to be a Hindu Brahmin raped two middle-school girls aged 11 and 12. Sadly, these girls were abused in the process of improving their status. Fortunately, these girls got the support of local women's organizations, which in turn were able to persuade the state to take up the girls' cases. In spite of several threats from the accused and bureaucratic harassment by police and other state government officials, the activists who advocated for the girls and their families, the victims and their families ultimately obtained vindication.

Indian Women's NGO work

Yet another sign of hopefulness for the women of Orissa can be seen in another case I studied: In rural Orissa, I focused on an organization called Center for Public Health and Environment Education (COPHEE). It was founded as an NGO (nongovernmental organization) to fight against various social taboos, stereotypes, injustices, inequality, and forms of exploitation of the disadvantaged, including women. It was started in Jajpur about 60 km. from Cuttack City by two like-minded social activists and became very active after the powerful cyclone faced by the state in October 1999.

COPHEE promotes income-generating activities among women by providing them savings and credit facilities. It has undertaken women's empowerment programs through the formation of women's self-help groups (SHG) in five village *panchayats* covering 45 villages in Jajpur district. These women's groups not only work to contribute to their family income, but the members, comprising middle-aged as well as teenaged girls, also focus on family health, education of children, and take up issues of gender discrimination in public life. An anti-tobacco campaign has been waged by these women and has been a very successful experience for them. According to a survey by COPHEE, 47% boys between 12-14



age group use tobacco (or pan,bidi, gudakhu, gutka, gundi, the locally grown addictives). Shanti from COPHEE shared this story with me,” when a minister from the state had come to inaugurate our school in the village, we demanded from him to stop chewing betel nut to honor our anti-tobacco campaign. The minister was very embarrassed. The best part was it was broadcast all over the state.” The members are using street plays, walking marches and putting posters to oppose social ills like tobacco, dowry, alcohol making and selling and abuse of women in the hands of husband and in-laws. The focus is to involve the whole family in this awareness program.

Members of COPHEE shared many of their dreams and vision with me when I visited them in 2004. At a welcome meeting, several young women, their mothers had come to greet me at their village school. The welcome song was very meaningful, sung by a few teenage girls. The song translates as follows: “We adorn the whole sky and are like the stars. We can combine the sky, air, earth, and water and build a new world order, where there would be no exploitation and no frustration. We are the anchors, and hold the oars of our own boat; we can build our own future. We can fill everyone’s life around us with the scent of life’s flavor.” Urmila, in her fifties, sang a song felicitating goddess Durga. These songs were written by women in the group.

With very few resources, these women are very hopeful, resilient, and actively organizing to improve their situation—not just for themselves but as families incorporating their husbands and emphasizing the education of their children to build a better future. In the process of globalization, they do not want to be left out. In regard to their needs, some high school educated girls shared,” We would love to have vocational training to get jobs, we would benefit from a computer center. So many of us would be able to connect with the outside world.” They dream to have access to computers so that they can learn better skills and be engaged in various employment opportunities available outside their community.

Around lunch-time I asked, “Would not you like to go home to your men folks?” They confidently said, “ See, our men are here to watch and appreciate our organizing efforts. They encourage us to join the samitis (associations) and have learned to adjust their schedules.”

To share another instance of women’s activism, one of the COPHEE members who had recently been married was sent back to her parents for not fulfilling dowry demands. The girl and her parents were very worried. They could not afford to go the court and avail of themselves of any legal help. COPHEE members came to her rescue. They formed a committee and approached the village heads in the girl’s husband’s village. A meeting was arranged at which both the parties and COPHEE members were present. After a mutual discussion and intervention from the village Panchayat, the husband’s



family invited the girl back to their home.

As a result of such successful efforts, women feel more confident to take up important issues of human rights and women's rights. While working to resolve many of the problems created by the "development" model, these women are attempting to take advantage of the freedom and opportunities—as they see them—of globalization. Whether their dreams are illusory only time will tell, but their organizing is very much in the tradition of Indian feminism which has achieved success by forging a partnership with men, community, and even the state, which, perhaps dragged kicking and screaming, has been led to uphold its ideology of gender equality.

Conclusion

The India of 2005 is a very different country distinguished by its vibrant economy, a fast rising middle class (larger than the population of USA) and a world-class exporter of "knowledge" to the Information Technology sector (Das, 2005). Girls in middle class urban families are encouraged to study science, engineering and computer science to better train themselves in the age of globalization. Yet, while "women" generically can avail themselves of these rosy opportunities, cultural and social realities often dictate otherwise. For example, just recently a 15-year-old dalit (untouchable) girl, Mamata Nayak in the village of Narsinghpur, Orissa became the first girl in her community to graduate from high school. Her plans to become a teacher and educate other dalit girls in her village are threatened because she has to bike through an upper caste community to go to college. The upper caste people not only bar her from biking on "their" road but also threaten her family with dire consequences. Her father says, "I do not want to take the risk of waging a battle against the mighty upper caste"(India West, Aug 26, 2005). Another dalit asks, "Who will come to our rescue? Can the Police and the state protect us and our daughters from the wrath of these people?"(Ibid, p. A18). This example, illustrates the distinctive culturally-rooted forms of marginalization Oriya women—whether Hindu or Kond (tribal), rural or urban—face and the challenges women's organizations in Orissa and elsewhere in India confront in resisting such abuses and injustices in a globalized world.

Ultimately, "globalization" as discussed here, and "development" and "modernization" before it, are the site at which is played out the unfolding drama of Indian feminism—the response of Hindu and tribal women to their economic and cultural marginalization, as well as to their opportunities. Kond women in Phulbani, rural women in Jajpur, and urban women define their tradition differently: each group has found strength in its own tradition, has found new meaning in tradition to draw from which to



draw courage and support. These women have shown extraordinary strength in fighting against women's abuse, alcoholism, and the state when it becomes the oppressor in the process of globalization. It is the distinctive features of this response and the differential impact that globalization and "modernization" generally have had on women, with which I have been concerned here.

The "Janus" head of the Indian state in globalization can be seen especially well in the cases of education and the reconstruction of swadeshi. In the process of globalization, education has played a critical role in rural, urban and tribal areas. Yet, the process of education and the people in charge of education have marginalized women, robbing them off their cultural identity, freedom and their sense of self. The state portrays its benevolent image in emphasizing the welfare, growth and overall development of women. It also uses women as an umbrella category to be defined as "swadeshi", upholders of the nation's values and tradition. But Indian women are not content to succumb to the state's definition of swadeshi: they want the right to modify it, refashion it in order to participate in the new opportunities made available to them. Here women are redefining their tradition, reinventing their new swadeshi image, as not static or unchanging- rather like a river flowing through many lands, collecting all the treasures as well as pollutants. They would be called swadeshi on their own terms free to chose what to accept from it, what to reject as the ills and the pollutants. They do not want to be puppets in the hands of the state or globalization phenomenon. This is the new face of feminism emerging in Orissa in the face of globalization.

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Extreme Specialization

ଢିଢ଼ି ସଂଗଠନକୁ ଗଲେ ଧାନ କୁଟେ



ENERGY NEEDS OF INDIA

Baidehish Dwibedy

India has a growing economy since the early 1990's and has been able to grow at a rate of 7-8% annually. The reforms initiated by the then Finance Minister Manmohan Singh and Prime Minister P.V. Narashimha Rao have made tangible contributions to the Indian economy. The reforms have continued from that time as the subsequent Governments have promoted and never objected to this process. This growth rate has led to an increased demand for energy.

Although energy production has expanded substantially since 1950s, an inadequate supply of energy remains a constraint to industrial growth. Overall growth in the demand for energy was rapid in the early 1990s, but commercial energy consumption was among the lowest in the world. Currently India uses around 3% of world's energy compared with China, which uses 7.6%. India has less than 0.5% of global reserves & has 15% of the world's population. The average consumption of oil and gas is one-third the global average. With this attribute, it's easily understood that India will remain import-dependent for oil and gas for many years to come.

This need for energy security has come in the wake of steep increases in the price of oil and natural gas, the country's unprecedented growth, a lack of energy-efficient technologies and reliance on energy-heavy industries for modernization and development. Rapid modernization, economic growth and instability in a few oil-rich regions around the world have helped the energy prices to go up astronomically. India has a choice to make in this environment, separating politics from business and tweaking the foreign policy, to secure energy.

India has the world's fastest-growing car market, which is driving oil consumption and imports. India already is among the top consumers of petroleum products in the world. By 2010, it will be the fourth-largest energy user (currently it is the sixth-largest energy user in the world) after the United States, China and Japan. Trying to ensure India's energy security are state-owned corporations such as ONGC, India's largest producer of oil and gas. However, it can roughly meet a quarter of India's petroleum needs.

Sources of Energy in India

Coal

The coal industry is a key supplier of energy. India has some of the largest reserves of coal in the world, estimated at 192 billion tons, for which around 45% are proven to exist. The bulk of the coal found has been in Orissa, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, and West Bengal.



However, with the present rate of around 0.8 million tons average daily coal extraction in the country, the reserves are likely to last over a century. The energy derived from coal in India is about twice that of energy derived from oil, as against the world, where energy derived from coal is about 30% lower than energy derived from oil. Indian coal has high ash content (thus causing environmental damages, due to the lack of implementation of clean coal technology) and low calorific value.

One of the major constraints on the profitability of the coal sector is the low productivity. In order to encourage private investment, the Coal Mines (Nationalization) Act 1973, was amended with effect from June 9, 1993 for allowing private sector operation of captive coal mines by companies engaged in production of iron and steel, power generation and washing of coal.

Oil and Natural Gas

India has indigenous sources for around 30 percent of its oil needs. The early oil fields discovered in India were of modest size. Oil production amounted to 200,000 tons in 1950 and 400,000 tons in 1960. By the early 1970s, production had increased to more than 8 million tons. In 1974 the Oil and Natural Gas Commission discovered a large field—called the Bombay High—offshore from Bombay. Production from that field was responsible for the rapid growth of the country's total crude oil production in the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s. In 1989, oil production peaked at 34 million tons. In the early 1990s, wells were shut in offshore fields that had been inefficiently exploited, and production fell to 27 million tons in 1993. That amount did not meet India's needs, and 30.7 million tons of crude oil was imported in 1993.

India has thirty-five major fields onshore (primarily in Assam and Gujarat) and four major offshore oil fields (near Bombay, south of Pondicherry, and in the Palk Strait). India's offshore crude oil reserves in 2005 stood at 376 million metric tons, and offshore natural gas reserves were 340 billion cubic meters in the same year.

Electricity

The electric power industry is both a supplier and a consumer of primary energy. In the beginning of 2000s, the Electricity production was of around 533 billion Kwh (Fossil fuel – 82%, Hydro – 15%, Nuclear – 3%), out of which around 500 billion Kwh was being consumed, 321 million Kwh was being exported & 1.5 billion Kwh was being imported.



Nuclear Power

There are around nine operational plants with a potential total capacity of 1,800 megawatts, about 3% of India's total power generation. There are two units each in Tarapur, north of Bombay in Maharashtra; in Rawatbhata in Rajasthan; in Kalpakkam near Madras in Tamil Nadu; and in Narora in Uttar Pradesh; and one unit in Kakrapur in southeastern Gujarat. However, of the nine plants, all have been faced with safety problems that have shut down reactors for periods ranging from months to years. The plants operate at only a fraction of their capacity, and some foreign experts consider them the most inefficient nuclear-power plants in the world.

The way around

India, like China, is seeking to acquire energy producers in other countries to ensure a stable supply of oil and gas.

India's current requirement of crude oil is 115 million tons a year, while domestic output is static at about 33 million tons a year. India has been spending \$30 - \$40 billion a year on crude oil imports, which drains the nation's foreign exchange reserves.

India is poised to buy new oil assets overseas to meet its long-cherished energy security dream. As domestic oil production is declining alarmingly, India is aiming to try all available options.

One of India's major gas companies, ONGC Videsh Ltd., has acquired 13 oil assets in 17 countries and is looking for opportunities to buy more. Similarly, the Indian Oil Corp. and Oil India are also desperate to buy stakes in oilfields in other countries. The Indian oil ministry has of late put in place an amended exploration policy to boost domestic production of gas and oil. Under the new licensing rules, the Indian oil ministry invited bids by domestic and foreign companies for oil and gas exploration ventures in India.

Pact With Russia

During Russian president Putin's last visit to India, the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding for joint exploration and distribution of natural gas in the Caspian Basin, as well as for building underground gas storage facilities in India and technology transfers to India from Russia. While visiting Moscow last October, India's Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Manishankar Aiyar stated, "In the half-century of Indian independence, Russia has guaranteed our territorial integrity, and in the second half it may be able to guarantee our energy security. What I am talking about is the strategic alliance with Russia in energy security, which is becoming for India at least as important as national



security.”

Reportedly, India is to consider investing a further \$1.5 billion in the Sakhalin-3 gas field and another \$1.5 billion in the joint Russian-Kazakh Kurmangazy oilfield, both in the Caspian Sea. The Russian invitation to India to join the Sakhalin-3 project is especially noteworthy, since it occurred shortly after Moscow removed a major US oil company from the same project.

Pact with China

India is attempting to join major international oil companies to jointly bid for overseas oil and gasfields, and to that end has recently signed an agreement with a state-run Chinese oil company to jointly bid for oilfields in Kazakhstan and African countries.

As one of the planned Indo-Sino joint ventures, Indian and Chinese oil firms lined up together as Asian customers for the possible purchase of the some of the assets of the Russian Yukos Oil Co., confiscated by the Putin regime in Russia.

Pact with Iran and Pakistan

Iran is the second largest crude oil producer among the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). It owns 10 percent of the world's proven oil reserves and also has the world's second largest natural gas reserves. India perceives Iran as a viable corridor to access the natural resources and economic opportunities of Central Asia and the Middle East.

The suggestion by Iran to the previous BJP-led Indian government about the construction of a pipeline to supply oil and gas from Iran to India is once again on the table. Iran is scurrying to secure diplomatic ties with Asian powers via energy deals in order to counteract US threats of economic sanctions and military invasion. A \$40 billion deal was drafted on the 7th of January with the National Iranian Oil Co. (NIOC). The deal would allow India to import natural gas over a period of 25 years, starting in 2009. NIOC would also develop two Iranian oil fields and a gas field.

The Indian government had reconfirmed that it will not stop its dealings with Iran because of US objections. India has formally informed the US about its energy needs and US understands that. However, an agreement needs to be reached between the countries for an amicable solution without hurting each other in a business sense.

The development of an Indo-Pakistani-Iranian pipeline is seen by New Delhi as a means of both helping to meet its energy needs and fostering a closer economic relationship with Pakistan. The



Indian political elite calculates that this will cut across Pakistan's ability to pursue a policy of geopolitical confrontation with India and enable Indian business to dominate the Pakistani market.

However, to bypass a direct agreement with Pakistan, India has proposed two separate agreements—one between India and Iran on purchasing the gas and another between Iran and Pakistan for the pipeline.

Pact with Burma & Bangladesh

Dropping the earlier policy of isolationism practiced by New Delhi in relation to the military junta in Rangoon, Burma, the Indian government hosted a week-long visit from the Burmese military general Than Shwe in October. The visit aimed to accelerate closer diplomatic ties with Myanmar and also neighboring Bangladesh, in part to pave the way for a pipeline to bring Burma's natural gas to India via Bangladesh.

The Burmese pipeline agreement has been hailed in India as a major step toward regional cooperation. It is particularly seen as a landmark in India-Bangladesh relations. Reportedly this is the first time in over 30 years that Bangladesh has agreed to its territory being used for transport of any commodity to the Indian market.

Explorations in African and South American Nations

To the west, India has secured energy deals in Africa, including including Libya, Sudan and Ivory Coast. India also is looking to establish long-standing relationships with a number of South American countries, among which Venezuela has become prominent.

Venezuela, the world's fifth-largest oil exporter, is currently seeking to diversify its markets as a means to reduce its dependence on the United States, which currently buys over 60 percent of Venezuelan oil. Venezuela has recently deepened cooperation and signed a number of agreements in the petroleum sector with Russia, China, Brazil and Argentina.

During his four-day visit to India this month, Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh signed six energy and cooperation agreements. The ONGC Ltd and GAIL Ltd., are planning to take a 49 percent stake in the Venezuelan oil fields of San Cristobal and PDVSA. Venezuela's state-run oil company is to invest in India's Mangalore Refinery in the state of Karnataka.



Nuclear Deal with US

Nothing much can be said about the historic nuclear deal signed by President George W Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during the recent visit of the US president to India. This civil nuclear deal between the largest and oldest democracies in the world is bound to change the whole equation of relationship between the two countries. With the implementation of this treaty (which is currently debated in the US senate, and which has mixed response from the Nuclear Security Group members), India will be able to meet a big chunk of its civilian energy needs.

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Disclaimer: The author doesn't claim himself to be an energy analyst. The information provided in this article is an effort to compile information from various sources. The numbers provided here might not be exact, though it's a close call.



JUGGERNAUT

Hemanta Ranjan Panda*

English word 'juggernaut' has originated from our own Lord Jagannath (a title of Krishna, a Hindu god). In Sanskrit jagannath means jagat (Universe) + nath (lord) i.e. Lord of the Universe. This word finds much relevance in our life as well. It means a Herculean task requiring blind sacrifice. Also it do so, due to lack of money. indicates a massive relentless force, person, institution, that crushes everything in its path.

Speaking of Herculean task, Lord Jagannath's powers have caught everybody's attention. As a warrior, he fought for his devotee King Purushottam Dev, to secure victory over KAnchi and got his devotee married to Princess PadmAvati, just to save his devotee's honor. By drinking sweet curd from ignorant MANika Gauduni, he fulfilled her desire to see the Lord in her eyes, who could not afford to do so, due to lack of money.

His call for DAsiA BAuri is indicative of his love and loyalty to his disciples, however rich or poor they may be. He is often referred to as Lord of the devotees (bhakta ra bhagabAn). A little girl was singing Gita Govinda with love and devotion in a garden. Lord Jagannath was immersed so much in the song that, he followed the little girl and unknowingly injured himself with the thorns of the branches. Therefore Gita Govind is recited while the lord sleeps.

He could wait in his Nandighosha chariot for hours for SALabeg, who wished to have a glance at him in the holy chariot. He could not live in peace when Bandhu Mohanty was starving. He in turn gave Prasad offered to him to Bandhu Mohanty in disguise

Everything about the lord is massive and magnificent as the word 'juggernaut' suggests. Jagannath temple kitchen in Puri is reputed to be the largest kitchen in the world, working around 200 hearths, with 400 cooks to feed over 10,000 people every day. Nobody ever returns empty stomach from 'ananda bazaar', lord's cafeteria.

Speaking of his great heart, the Lord himself appear in his chariot with his Brother and sister every year, to see all of us. A procession of Lord Jagannath takes place each year at Puri (India) and many places around the world. Devotees pull a huge cart carrying the deity. Some have been accidentally crushed under the wheels (or are said to have thrown themselves under them knowingly). It is described in ancient scriptures that if anyone is fortunate enough to pull the rope of the chariots or even see the Lord of the Universe while he is on his chariot, then they will have all of their desires fulfilled.

The English language has flair of embracing words from other cultures and colloquially speaking



groups similar to word 'Juggernaut'. The examples of Verandah, Messiah, and Guru have all evolved from Asian origin. Bon Voyage, bon appetit have European origin.

Many tales of almighty has touched the hearts of millions of devotees. We should pray that, Lord Jagannath guide us onto the path of righteousness (jagannathah swami nayana-patha-gami bhavatu me). Let's take a moment to immerse ourselves in his big eyes and devote ourselves to the most powerful lord of the universe, symbolizing Juggernaut.

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Note: All the references to Oriya words (Italics) with 'a' is uttered like the first alphabet of Oriya and 'A' is uttered similar to the second alphabet of Oriya.



I WILL DO SOMETHING FOR “MO ODISHA”

Jatish Chandra Mohanty*

Utkal Janani and her children (all of us) are in distress. This is the ripe time to take a pledge: “I will do something for *Mo Odisha*”. Below I present some details as food for thought to all our friends, who are concerned about our state.

Orissa’s Past Glory:

Orissa, our motherland, had a glorious culture and heritage to be proud of. All of us read in history that once upon a time, the boundary of Orissa extended from the Ganges to the Cauvery. The hallmark of Orissa was also prosperous trade and commerce with countries of Far East. Some historians claim that the first war of Indian independence started in Orissa much prior to 1857. We have also very rich traditions of fine arts, natural bounty, and many other appreciable attributes.

Today’s Status:

Unfortunately, Orissa today is in a precarious situation: India Today magazine, in its May 19 2003 issue, depicted Orissa at rank 18, just above Bihar in over all ranking of states. As far as socio-economic parameters are concerned, out of ten parameters Orissa stands lowest in two, second lowest in five, third lowest in one, fifth lowest in one, and seventh lowest in one. There is appreciable downfall in most of the parameters compared to those in 1991. In its August, 2004 issue Orissa is shown to have gone down in rank in most of the parameters compared to 2003.

State with highest % of population living below poverty line

In 2003, Orissa had the negative distinction of being the state with highest percentage of population living below poverty line (47.15%), the all India average being 26.1%. In erstwhile districts of Koraput, Kalahandi and Phulbani, poverty level has remained around 80% during the last 30 years. These statistics are possibly an under-estimation. For example, in the same survey, the overall poverty in Andhra Pradesh is mentioned as about 15%, whereas a detailed survey thereafter indicated the overall poverty level in Andhra Pradesh at 55%. The CARE-STEP study in tribal areas of north costal Andhra Pradesh (Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Visakhapatnam, and East-Godavari Districts) showed that 92% of the population lives below poverty line. Situation in Orissa would be worse.



More than 40% of Orissa population will be below poverty line in 2020

The most disturbing factor as per India Today survey of August 2004 is that Orissa is projected to have more than 40% population below poverty line 16 years after i.e., by 2020. Whereas Rajasthan, a constituent of BIMARU states will have about 1.88% of its population below poverty line in 2020. Our neighbouring states West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh are projected to have 11.15% and 4.71% of their population respectively below poverty line in 2020.

Very low capita income

At current prices the per capita income for Orissa is Rs. 12,388, whereas it is Rs. 20,989 for India, Rs. 26,979 for Gujarat, Rs. 20,757 for Andhra Pradesh, and Rs. 20,896 for West Bengal.

Growth of per capita GSDP slow

The growth of per capita GSDP between 1993-94 to 2000-01 for Orissa is 2% compared to National Average of 4.4%. This figure is the second lowest in the country (the lowest is that of Assam) and is lower than that of Bihar. This is clearly evidenced by the fact that at 1993-94 constant prices the difference between per capita income of Orissa and All India was about Rs.1250/- (All India Rs.5352/- , Orissa Rs.4085/-) in 1980-81. The gap has increased to more than Rs.5000/- in 2000-01 (All India Rs.10254/- and Orissa Rs.5187/-).

Heavy per capita debt burden

The debt of Orissa Government is around Rs. 36000 crores i.e., the per capita debt stands at about Rs.10,000/-. The growth of per capita debt is more than 10% every year (Rs. 3000-4000 Crores being borrowed every year). Compare this with per capita income of Rs.12388/- and per capita GSDP growth of about 2%. That is year by year the people of Orissa are being burdened with more debt with very little increase in the per capita income.

Close to a debt trap

It is very gloomy to note that 90% of the borrowings in 2001-2002 were used towards debt servicing leaving only 10% towards infrastructure and development. As the state borrows more and more, and earns less and less, possibly 100% of the borrowings will go towards debt servicing in the



near future, entrapping the state in debt.

State's own revenue inadequate

According to one of the research papers the most worrisome factor is that the state's own revenue receipt is not sufficient to meet salary and pension expenses of its employees. If we add the interest payment to it, the total expenses outweigh the state's own revenue receipts by more than twice. Of course, it is reported that the tax revenue of the state has increased appreciably in 2005-06 and the above problem may be ameliorated to some extent.

Negative growth in agriculture sector

It is well known that agriculture is the major source of income in rural Orissa. In this field also the performance has been highly discouraging. For example growth in agriculture and allied sector for Orissa from 1993-94 to 2000-01 is minus 0.43% compared to plus 2.73% for all India.

Poor performance in other parameters of agriculture sector

Per capita agriculture credit in Orissa is Rs. 379 as against all India average of Rs. 897, that of Punjab is Rs. 2219 and of AP is Rs. 1380 during 2003-04.

Consumption of electricity for agriculture to total consumption of electricity for all India is 26%, Andhra Pradesh 43%, and for Orissa it is only 3%. No wonder per capita agricultural consumption of electricity in Orissa is about 6 KWH compared to 90 KWH of All India. Stated otherwise Andhra Pradesh has 22 lakh agriculture pump sets against only 24,000 in Orissa, i.e one 100th of Andhra Pradesh.

Average yield per hector of major crops in Orissa is significantly lower than that of India. For example the average yield of rice per hectare in Orissa is about 16 Quintal compared to All India average yield of 21 Quintals.

Less Irrigation facilities

It is well known that provision of irrigation facility enhances the productivity of land and opens up several opportunities of cropping. Orissa is unfortunately lagging behind in this field also. Irrigated area (% to gross cropped area) in Orissa is 27.35% in 2001 compared to All India figure of 38.45%.

Low yield in fisheries sector

The present level of production and productivity of the reservoir resources of the state have been



estimated at 1830 metric tonnes and 9.3 kg. per ha. respectively. But if the same reservoir resources are developed on scientific lines with appropriate operational and conservation measures as outlined in the draft policy, the projected production and productivity would increase to 19,748 metric tonnes and 100kg/ha. respectively.

Vulnerabilities

The deadly cocktail of floods, cyclones, heat waves and droughts made Orissa the disaster capital of India'. ... (Down to Earth, 2001)

- Most prone to natural disasters with increased frequency and coverage
- During last 100 years: 90 disaster (49 floods; 30 drought; 11 cyclone)
- Flood: once in four years (1834-1926) to once in two years (1926-2001)
- Since 1965, there was not a single year when the state has not experienced drought in one or another part.
- Drought/flood/cyclone are striking areas where these never occurred in past:
Drought in southern Orissa; Flood in Kalahandi; Cyclone in Bhubaneswar
- Natural disasters exact a large toll every year in terms of human lives and livelihood in Orissa
- 1998 heat wave: Killed 1500 people
- 1999 cyclone: Killed >10000 people; 7.5 million homeless; Rs. 10000 crore loss
- 2001 flood: Crop failure of Rs. 1500 crores
- 2001 drought: 61 starvation death; half million migration to neighbouring states

Recurring drought could be avoided

As seen from above, Orissa faces drought situation very frequently. Interestingly, the normal rainfall of Orissa is 1482 mm, the minimum being 1296 mm in Gajapati and Ganjam districts and the highest rainfall being 1648 mm in Mayurbhanj district. Though drought may occur sometimes, given proper management with the kind of rainfall mentioned above drought should not affect Orissa very much. Possibly, necessary practices are not in place and therefore, drought is becoming a recurring phenomenon in Orissa.



Industrial sector performance – not encouraging

In industrial development field also we have fared poorly. All India growth in industry during 1993-94 to 2000-01 is 6.25% compared to 2.49% for Orissa. Similarly per capita credit to industry for Orissa is a meager Rs 373 compared to All India figure of Rs 6967 in 2001.

Much to be desired in health sector

Our health sector performance is in no way better. In 2001 infant mortality rate (IMR) for Orissa was 96 compared to 68 for all India; death rate in Orissa was 10.5 compared to 8.5 for all India.

Education and HDI

Our literacy is comparable to all India figure. However, number of our students joining prestigious institutions like IIT, BITS etc is much lower compared to neighboring Andhra Pradesh. Our average Human Development Index (HDI), 0.404, is also lower than country's average of 0.472 in 2001.

Poor spending on development front

To overcome all the problems the state should spend on infrastructure and livelihood activities more than other states. On the contrary Orissa is unable to spend what have been provided for in the budget. For example, 10th five year plan expenditure of Orissa till September, 2005 is only 44%. All these indicate that year by year Orissa is going down compared to other Major States of the country. ORISSA IS IN THE MIDST OF A BIG VICIOUS CYCLE.

Should we be content?

Given the above scenario, should we bask in our past glory and be indifferent to the current situation? As we observed Orissa is sliding down year by year. Should we be silent spectators or be proactive and initiate corrective actions!

Orissa – A Land of Huge Potential:

We are also aware of the vast potential our state has to turn around.

- We have varied agro climatic conditions, which could provide plenty of opportunities to grow high value commercial crops, horticultural produce etc. and consequent possibility of setting up



large number of agro-processing industries. If we increase the yield in 58290 sq. km of net sown area (145.7 lakh acres) @ Rs 1000 per acre per annum by adopting better crop practices, it will create an additional annual wealth of about Rs 1450 cr.

- Vast scope for diary, poultry, goatery, sheep rearing
- Total annual precipitation volume in Orissa is estimated to be 234 cu km, of which 130 cu km flow to all rivers. The total surface water potential of Orissa is about 100,000 million cu m with 80% dependable run-off, of which little more than 10,000 million cu m have so far been utilized. Therefore, there is ample opportunity for increasing surface irrigation facilities and fisheries.
- Total replenishable ground water resources of Orissa is 21 lakh ha.m. Additional irrigation potential expected to be created is 17.70 lakh hectares. If horticulture crop is taken up in the additional area, it will generate an annual wealth of about Rs 4400 cr. (@ Rs 25000 per hectare)
- About 42% of geographic area of the state comes under forests. When properly planned and executed it will improve the ecology of the state and will provide sufficient income to large proportion of tribal population of the state.
- The non-renewable mineral resources like chromite, nickel, bauxite, iron ore, manganese ore, coal etc.should be planned carefully with a long term perspective.
- Rich scenic beauty, temples, culture and heritage of Orissa make it a hotspot for domestic and international tourists.

What should we do?

Given the dim scenario and vast potential our state has, we as conscientious Oriyas should ponder whether the present Status of Orissa to continue or should we do something to take our state forward. We have to remember the fact that if conditions in Orissa further deteriorates, we will be the sufferers since multiplier effect of good or bad of our surrounding affect us. Therefore, all of us should be participants and stakeholders in a massive campaign to improve situations in our State. No doubt the task is gigantic, but when it is broken down to smaller parts (80 lakh parts based on number of families in Orissa), it becomes doable by each one of us. As we have mentioned earlier about 40 lakh families in Orissa live with an annual income of about Rs.5000. If we take all of them above poverty line i.e., we increase their income by about Rs.20000 per family per annum, the annual wealth created will be of the order of Rs.8000 crores. Imagine the flurry of economic activities that will be generated. Let me remind you that the income level we are talking of our poor brethren is 25% of national average (Rs.20000 per capita) and 1.5% of world average (Rs.3 lakhs per capita). It is achievable given proper



planning and execution.

Now let us discuss as an individual what can I do for “Mo Odisha”

1. Increase your legal income by 15 – 20% every year

which I am sure you can with little bit careful planning. See what magic it creates: Our per capita income is Rs.12000 per annum. An increase of 15% for 3.8 crore population will mean an additional annual wealth creation of Rs.6840 crores. If 50% of this goes for consumption and with 10% Sales tax, State Government gets about and additional Rs.340 Cr. per year, which could be used for creation of the much desired infrastructure. For increasing our income we have to be more productive and efficient.

2. Do something for the society within our capability

The list could be very long. Let us give physical/financial/emotional support to some individuals/some cause. For example, can we teach a few students for 2 – 3 hrs/week to improve their standard, can we keep our streets clean, can we represent to authorities for a good cause, can we as professionals help the community to improve their income/infrastructure? Let us decide now what we will do during one year and let us have self-monitoring system.

3. Influence your friends/relatives to adopt similar agenda

All of us have to play a significant role. My plea to everybody is to join the campaign “I will do something for Mo Odisha”. Let us have self-monitoring system and record our progress. We should have a coordinator for every group for systematic follow up of our activities. Let us do networking to spearhead this campaign.

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CHALA AME ODIYA SIKHIBA 'CHAOS'

Sudam Sahoo and Manoj Joshi*

ଉଚ୍ଚ ହେବା ପାଇଁ କର ଯେବେ ଆଶା
ଉଚ୍ଚ କର ଆଗେ ନୀଜ ମାତୃ ଭାଷା

(If you want to soar higher in life, take pride in your own mother tongue)

Gangadhar Meher

The mission of CHAOS is to promote basic education in Odiya literacy and culture for all interested students thereby enabling them for reading and writing in Odiya script. Ever since its inception, it has been raising awareness of Odiya culture and heritage by arranging programs such as story telling, asking students to write about great personalities from Odiya literature and organizing small cultural events involving students and their family. This innovative program of Odiya Literacy & Culture is organized once a week to provide a forum for teaching Odiya alphabets and language through music, story telling, reading, writing and project work. CHAOS is an integral part of the community and participates in the cultural events such as Saraswati puja (Goddess of Learning), and Ganesh Puja (Lord of Auspicious Beginning)). With the help of parents and teachers, the student sing Odiya songs, stage dance drama and celebrate festivities such as Kumar Purnima, Raja, Ramanavami etc. The teachers and parent volunteers of CHAOS program have been able to build a greater self esteem and spirit for team work while preparing the students for such community events. Of course, the students of CHAOS along with their Odiya friends have own several awards and accolades in many cultural competitions in the Bay area often outside the Odiya community.

CHAOS program now has five parents volunteering as teachers (Kuku Das, Gayatri Joshi, Meeta Moharana, Jayashree Panda, and Manoj Joshi) to help towards imparting knowledge to 25 students. The curriculum is stretched over 3 years covering Varna Matra Parichaya, Juktakshyara, writing and communication skills improvement, and project work. To bring about a balance in the hectic life style of the Bay area, yoga has been introduced to provide relaxation of the body and the mind. Chaos also invites visiting parents and grand parents to share their wealth of knowledge and experience with students. Such activities give a memorable experience for both the parents and the younger generation. Some of the notable visiting parents are Smt. Meenakshi Dash, Dr. Bhagbanprakash, Dr. Binodini Devi, Mr. Balaram Sahu, Mrs. Roma Pattnaik and Mr. Nayak.

The annual summer camp is organized for two full days to encourage parents to witness the



Personal Reflections and Views



OSA Archives 2008-09pp



ODISSI – MY ODYSSEY

Sri Gopal Mohanty*

Could I believe my eyes to read the publicity material ‘ Odissi dance by Indrani Rahman in Montreal’ in 1960? In 1959, I joined as a Ph.D. student at the University of Alberta and was visiting Montreal out of natural curiosity. But my curiosity ran high - Odissi and Orissa in Canada, when even those days many Indians were not sure about the location of Orissa. I walked to the Theatre and lo and behold I was able to meet Guru Deba Prasad Das. For me this was out of a dream. That evening I went to the programme and my eyes watered to hear Odissi music and watch Odissi dance. I was totally enraptured with emotion and enchantment. Truly speaking that could be my first formal exposure to this dance form.

I was in New Delhi when Priyambada Mohanty danced a special dance form from Orissa at Talkotra Garden in the First Inter-University Youth Festival in 1954. Nobody exactly knew what this new dance form could be since it was not an officially recognized one and yet it caught the attention of many critics including Dr. Charles Fabri, the then art-critic of Statesman. According to Dr. Mayadhar Mansinha in his book ‘The Saga of the Land of Jagannatha’, Oriyas should be eternally grateful to that great discerning western Indologist and art-critic Dr Charles Fabri, who after having witnessed till-then-unknown dance-form immediately proclaimed its peculiar aesthetic value and importance to the Press. In 1960 March Issue of Marg, Dr Fabri says: “When I first wrote of Orissi and venture to call it one of the most perfect classical systems of Indian dancing surviving, I met incredulous people who shook their heads dubiously. No one ever heard of it and as far as I know I was the first person ever to print the name ‘Orissi Dance’... The discovery of Odissi should be hailed as one of the great events in recovering a much lost heritage.” The challenge to meet the rigor for acceptance was spearheaded by Kavichandra Kalicharan Patnaik and other leaders and gurus, and Odissi finally emerged into the outside world. Thus began a new beginning, even though almost all Oriyas were caught bewildered.

A musical sounding word ‘Odissi’, similar to Urbashi, Ketaki, Sundari, Manjushree, is charming and graceful as the very dance form is with soft motions of a creeper floating in the whispering wind. It conjures up an image of the Land of Orissa adorned as an amorous belle to win over the hearts of the people by her subtle rhythmic movements of every part of the body and by lilting sounds of ankle bells.

Probably it was 1965 when Gopi Kishen, the then famous Kathak dancer (who was in the main role in the movie, Jhanak Jhanak Payal Baje) performed in Hamilton where I was in the faculty at McMaster University. I was deeply hurt when I found Odissi missing in the list of Indian classical dances



in the brochure circulated for the performance. I was also painfully reminded of another instance. As a statistician expert present in a committee meeting of I.C.A.R. to examine various agricultural projects, I was watching the fight among members representing projects from respective states. Often the winner was the weightiness of the person presenting it, not necessarily based on the merit of the project. Then I was wondering who would represent Orissa? Even today the same thought recurs within me and even today the same game is played on.

During my days in New Delhi and later, I was embarrassed when almost every time to my answer “ I am from Orissa”, people even well-educated ones showed signs of ignorance to recognize the name ‘Orissa’. I asked myself: Why is it so and what could help Orissa’s name to be recognizable? And the answer came: Odissi and Lord Jagannath. No doubt, Lord Jagannath and spread of its culture would be helpful within India. But for sure, ‘Odissi’ would catch the eyes of the world because of its sheer beauty. I was more encouraged by the thought that this is perhaps the only field where Orissa and Oriyas have demonstrated the ability and originality to raise an art form to an unparalleled level.

As soon as I settled down in Hamilton at the end of sixties, my immediate concern was to mobilize Oriyas in our area (mostly in Toronto and vicinity) and as a result we organized the first celebration of Kumar Purnima in 1971. Persuaded by me, Chitralekha Patnaik presented ‘Kadamba Bane Banshi Bajilare’ in her semi-professional skill (she was out of touch for a long time) in that event. Our satisfaction was that it could be the first Odissi performance in North America by an Oriya expatriate. Those were the days my memory led me to my earlier time in Delhi to reminisce Basanti Mangaraj’s performance ‘Dekhiba Para Asa He’ as part of cultural functions by Delhi Oriya Samaj and Kumkum Mohanty’s dance programme at IFAACS, New Delhi. I was simply enthralled.

In Toronto area, soon we came across Menaka Thakkar, a disciple of Guru Kelucharan and were privileged to witness a complete Odissi repertoire by her in 1973 at the University of Toronto. As Chitralekha was watching the performance sitting by my side, tears welled from her eyes with a sigh: she could be on the stage. This could be the strong inspiration for her to institute Chitralekha Dance Academy, which is now a well-established school to impart training in Odissi.

Both I and my wife Shanti were incessantly thinking of promoting Odissi in this continent and working in our modest way towards that goal. We were helping Menaka to establish herself and encouraged Chitralekha who went to Orissa to polish her training. During 1974-75, we put our two daughters for training in Odissi, the elder one Jini being under Guru Deba Prasad Das in Bhubaneswar and the younger one Rini having a preliminary exposure under Guru Muralidhar Majhi in Calcutta. In 1977, Chitralekha along with Jini, Rini and Mamuni (Sumita Mahalanabis), a student of Guru Mayadhar



Rout presented a full Odissi programme at McMaster University.

Towards the end of sixties, Oriyas in North America formed an organization called Orissa Society of Americas and introduced a tradition of organizing an annual convention. In 1975, a complete Odissi repertoire by Menaka was presented for the first time in the OSA Convention held in Toronto. I realized that the real recognition and spread of Odissi (and thereby recognition of Orissa) throughout North America would be possible by introducing an Odissi celebrity and thus my next target was to bring Sanjukta Panigrahi to this continent. I planned it through India-Canada Society, Hamilton by being its President and through OSA during 1975-76. Unfortunately, the twist of events just stopped it to succeed. However, it generated a substantial enthusiasm among Oriya and Indian communities and the dream was fulfilled by her first North American tour during 1981. She was accompanied with her Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra. Then began the first chapter of Odissi promotion in North America. An important event in 1979 that aroused interest on Odissi in North-American Oriya community was the tour of Dr. Minati Mishra along with eminent Oriya singer Akshya Mohanty. Their visit created an unusual passion for Orissa's music and dance but the real impact was set in after Sanjukta's tour.

My daughter Rini's (she is Niharika and we call her Rini) strong desire to learn Odissi took her to Bhubaneswar for a brief period in 1978 and she was privileged to be properly initiated to Odissi under the guidance of Guru Pankaj Charan Das. It was yet very difficult to sustain her interest without proper teacher but we managed her to be exposed to Ananda Radha (a disciple of Guru Kelu Charran) in Bay area during 1981-82. In eighties she became a student of Menaka Thakkar. By the end of 1980, we witnessed the establishment of two Odissi schools in Toronto and vicinity, one as a branch of Nrtyakala run by Menaka Thakkar and the other being Chitralekha Dance Academy, and of Anjali Academy of Classical Indian Dance run by Anjali (Anne-Marie gaston) in Ottawa which also imparts training in Odissi. However, Ritha Devi, a disciple of Guru Pankaj Charan Das came to the U.S.A. in early seventies and was probably the first Odissi dancer in North America coming from India.

It was my love for Odissi that led me to emphasize its inclusion at the annual OSA Convention in 1986 in Toronto. By then Chtralekha's school was running smoothly. In addition, appeared in the scene was Jayashree Mahapatra, a disciple of Raghunath Dutta and a student of Kala Bikash Kendra, Cuttack - the earliest school in Odissi. It became apparent that Odissi became dominant feature in the cultural programme. The hearsay was that there was indigestion due to overdose of Odissi during the convention. I was amused.

After some sporadic and spotty initiatives on Odissi scene, the second phase of the movement of Odissi promotion in North America started in eighties. It was more assertive and organized. More Odissi



schools emerged and dancers of younger generations were groomed. Tours of different artistes were sponsored. Practically every OSA Convention has started to have Odissi programmes. The Jagannath Society of America invites Odissi dancers on an annual basis.

During that period, Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, Bhubaneswar Mishra and Rakhal Mohanty came to Canada quite a few times at the invitation of Menaka Thakkar for her dance tours and running workshops. During one of their visits, L. Mansinha and I interviewed Guru Kelucharan. Under our editorship the content was published in the OSA Journal 1991, along with articles by Sanjukta Panigrahi, Priyambada Mohanty-Hejmadi, Oopalee Aparajita, Menaka Thakkar, Ritha Devi, Chitra Krishnamurti (Director, Nrityalaya in Maryland, U.S.A. an Odissi school established in 1989) and articles on Orissa Dance Academy, Chitralkha Dance Academy, Kala Bikash Kendra and on Balasore Music and Dance Kalamandir written by Sarat Chandra Das. This collection was an attempt to sustain interest in Odissi among North American Oriyas. In the meantime Odissi was spreading throughout India's big cities and cities outside India. During the same period, Rini (Niharika) has her dream fulfilled to become a disciple of Guru Kelucharan. In every major performance, Orissa's name is mentioned. Now I could sit down and relax. I visualized many 'Odissi' lamps being lighted here and there, more and more. Guru Kelucharan came to this continent several times but only as a Guru and percussion accompanist. It became imperative that his presence on the central stage in North America and elsewhere would spread 'Odissi' illumination farther and brighter. Thus I planned an international celebration of Guru's 70th Birth Anniversary in collaboration with Center for World Music, San Diego, U.S.A. (I am not part of any arts promoting organization and needed the help of an organization) during 1996. Guruji being the Patron of Srjan, came with artistes from Srjan and toured the entire continent. True to my belief, the whole Odissi dynamics changed since then and a third stage started sprouting up. I must acknowledge tremendous help and organizational support from Purna Patnaik, Centre for World Music and the administrative help of Niharika (Rini) with gratitude. She prepared an Odissi database, which have been frequently used on different occasions.

The third stage is the legitimization of Odissi in North America. The schools and dancers are coming up and often in isolation having no communication with each other. It is difficult for many to visit Orissa/India to learn more about the field or get exposed to renowned schools, scholars and artistes. I felt the necessity of developing networking and interaction among Gurus, scholars, critics and dancers from India and those in North America. This process is expected to enrich the Odissi community in North America. With this view in mind, I thought of an Odissi Festival and talked to two ardent promoters, Pratap Das and Purna Patnaik in 1999. It was decided to hold the Festival in Washington DC in 2000.



Within a short period Pratap Das formed the organization called Indian Performing Arts Promotion (IPAP) which in collaboration with Center for World Music organized the First Odissi Festival. To my delight IPAP organized the second one again in Washington DC in 2003 and is planning to hold the next one in Bhubaneswar at the end of this year. We also have learnt that due to the initiative of Dr. Ratna Roy, a disciple of Guru Pankaj Charan, an Odissi dance curriculum programme has been introduced at The Evergreen State College, Olympia in Washington State. In the mean time another organization called Center for Orissa Performing Arts for Americans has come up in Dallas, Texas founded by Niranjana Tripathy. I feel extremely satisfied and leave Odissi promotion scene to these young enthusiasts.

During this colourful journey, Shanti and I were privileged to meet, interact and develop close relation with many eminent dancers, teachers, scholars, gurus, musicians and vocalists. They have all kindly shared themselves with us and thus enriched our life. We owe them our immense gratitude.

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BHUBANESWAR – THE CAPITAL CITY OF ORISSA: A REMINISCENCE

Saradindu Misra*

Last January, I was on a trip to India. After spending a week in Mumbai and in the South India, I arrived in Bhubaneswar in the first week of February. My association goes back a long way with Bhubaneswar – the capital of Orissa. I spent ten years of my life in this Capital City, working for the Government of India, before coming to the United States. I have since been going back to Orissa and Bhubaneswar, at least once in two years. Each time, I find Bhubaneswar to be changing rapidly. I was in Bhubaneswar in the month of February and the city's temperature had soared to 35° Celsius, which is the equivalent of 90° Fahrenheit! Was it like that when I lived here from 1961 to 1971? No, I don't think so. Vast changes in the city have taken place, both good and bad.

The Government of Orissa decided to move the state capital from Cuttack to Bhubaneswar after independence. The move was materialized in 1948. The vast tract of barren land west of the railway tracts was where the new capital was established. While the Old Bhubaneswar has its own history and importance, and a lot can be written about it, I will focus my memory solely on the evolution of the New Capital.

Although I lived in Bhubaneswar for ten years before coming to this country, my association with the city goes back to as early as mid-fifties when Orissa's Account General office got transferred from Ranchi to Bhubaneswar. The A.G. quarters were the first construction in Unit-IV, which was a barren land before, an extension of the *Chandka* jungle area. The construction uprooted thousands of snakes and lizards from their habitat and one can see those roaming around freely in the newly constructed sites. Snake charmers were abounded and their daily catch exceeded half a dozen snakes including cobras. I distinctly remember that day when I was coming from the Unit-IV towards Rabindra Mandap on my bicycle. I saw a lizard (*Godhi*) crossing the road. I thought that by the time I am close to the lizard, it would have crossed the road and would vanish in the nearby swamp. To my horror, I found that the lizard had almost filled the entire width of the road, and is still crossing. It was as big as a large crocodile! My uncle, who was working in the AG office in Ranchi also got transferred to Bhubaneswar and was one of the early settlers in an AG quarter in Unit-IV. The MLA quarters came much later to that area. I was in the first or second year of college and would visit my uncle, who was a bachelor then, quite often. There were times when I, along with my friend, Sikarder Alam would drop by in his quarter. After eating the mess food, Alam would entertain my uncle and his friends with his melodious voice until the wee hours of the morning.



Bhubaneswar, the New Capital was a sleepy town those days. Government quarters only in Unit-I, II, III, IV, VI and XI were constructed. The Secretariat building, Raj Bhaban and the AG office were the major office buildings. Business was centered around Units I and II – the market building, bus stand, daily market, police station etc. Capital Cabin (later Raj Mahal) was the only worthwhile restaurant in Bapuji Nagar. Although housed under a thatched roof, the meals and snacks served were mouth-watering and the price was cheap. The New Capital looked picture perfect with tree-lined boulevards and neat looking government quarters. Barring a few two-storied buildings, most of the government quarters were single-storied. The bungalows of the ministers and high-level bureaucrats had beautiful gardens. The whole city looked neat and colorful. The railway station, much smaller then, was another area where a few shops mushroomed. The first cinema hall, Kalpana Talkies, was built around this time. Incidentally, the Kalpana area was one, where construction of private houses was permitted. The other area was Bapuji Nagar.

In 1960, I moved from Cuttack to Bhubaneswar with a Government job. My friends in Cuttack thought that I was crazy leaving Cuttack, the ever-bustling big city of Orissa, in favor of the barren Bhubaneswar where jackals would be howling as soon as it becomes dusk. True to their prediction, upon my arrival, I found that all the activities of the city stopped at dusk and the jackals literally started howling. However, by 1960, Bhubaneswar had grown considerably with a lot of new shops, restaurants and private dwellings. The notable additions were the Assembly building, Rabindra Mandap, Utkal University at Vani Vihar and the Orissa University of Agriculture & Technology.

Capital Cabin by now had become Hotel Raj Mahal, the first A/C hotel with an air-conditioned restaurant. Around the hotel, a lot of shops came up and it became the major hub of the city, a gathering place for the residents and visitors. The food in Raj Mahal was superb and the price was very affordable. You could eat a good meal there for less than Rs.5. Because of the importance of Raj Mahal, the crossroads around the hotel was named Raj Mahal Chhak from where the road to north led to Vani Vihar, south to the Aerodrome, east to the Kalpana area, and west to the Raj Bhaban. Indeed, the most important crossroad of the New Capital.

The Capital got transferred from Cuttack to Bhubaneswar in 1948. One Otto Koenigsberger, a German architect, did the city planning. Originally, the city was built to accommodate only 40,000 people. One would wonder why and on what basis? By the time, I moved to Bhubaneswar, new constructions became rampant - both by Government and by private parties. The low-rising structures gave way to multi-storied quarters and buildings. Still then Bhubaneswar had retained its charm and grace. Clean and quiet with plenty of open space. People were relaxed and the city was considered very safe. Anti-



social activities, including burglary and theft were few. During the hot summer months, an easterly wind would blow around early afternoon and cool off the entire city. During the monsoon season, even after a torrential rain, the streets will become dry immediately, leaving no residual rain anywhere. Menace of mosquito was non-existent. I remember, during my ten years of stay in Bhubaneswar, I never had to use a mosquito net. There was a general sense of camaraderie among the people and they felt proud of their capital city. Bicycle was the normal mode of transport. Automobiles were few, mostly belonging to Government and officers in high positions. So it was very safe to walk on the roads, no matter what time of the day or night.

When I left the city in 1971, the population of Bhubaneswar was a little over 100,000. According to 1991 census, its population rose to 411,542. Now the estimate is that Bhubaneswar has more than 600,000 people. A city that was originally planned only for 40,000 people is buckling down under the weight of this enormous population growth. Gone are the vast stretches of open land along with its fauna and flora. Construction has taken place on every inch of the soil, both authorized and otherwise. According to a news report in *Pragativadi*, Bhubaneswar has 172 recognized slums. In actuality, there may be more than 300 of them that account for 20% of the population of the city. The largest among them is *Salia Sahi*, which has the dubious distinction of being the biggest slum in the country – bigger than Mumbai's *Dharavi*. And who are the residents? They are either poor laborers or people with anti-social activities, and criminals from the neighboring states. Bhubaneswar is no longer that peaceful city where one can feel safe. Murder, rape, stabbing, burglary, purse and ornament snatching is a part of daily life now. Lack of drainage and sanitation facilities in those slums creates open sewage, which has become the harbinger of acute mosquito menace in the city. Instead of one or two storied buildings, the city is now studded with high risers. So there is no movement of wind as used to be. The trees are gone. The super cyclone of 1999 had wiped out whatever greenery were left. Bhubaneswar is now among the hottest places in India. 90° in the month of February! Walking or crossing the street is next to impossible as the roads are jammed with cars and two wheelers without adequate traffic lights or traffic police. Fatal road accidents happen often. But then these are the symptoms of any growing city. I lived in the New York City for 30 years and have experienced those symptoms.

Despite all the shortcomings, Bhubaneswar is still our capital city, which is also the largest and only metropolis of Orissa, touching Cuttack on one side and Khurda on the other. It also boasts of having the only commercial airport, so that most of us visitors to Orissa have to pass by it. It is no longer that sleepy town, devoid of amenities available in other metropolis. It now boasts of five star hotels and restaurants, clubs, parks, museums, innumerable colleges and schools, cinema halls and theatres,



and what not? I remember visiting Calcutta when I was a young college student and got bewildered with the razzle-dazzle of Calcutta. Neon lights, 5-star hotels, a/c restaurants and a/c cinema halls – compare that to Cuttack, the biggest city of Orissa, that seemed so poor and undeveloped. Now look at Bhubaneswar. It can boast of all the glamour of Calcutta. During our last trip, a friend of mine from New York, who was visiting Bhubaneswar, then, threw a party for the benefit of the visiting non-resident Oriyas, along with her family and friends in a place called *Pal Heights*. Sitting on a few acres of land with fountains and big statues, this huge and ornate restaurant can be compared with any five star facility of Chowringhee or Park Street in Calcutta. This is only one and there are others such as Oberoi's, Mayflower, Swosti Plaza, Best Western – all five star facilities.

Good or bad, we still love our capital, an extension of the ancient city of Bhubaneswar that bears the proud distinction as the Temple City of India. Just before the plane lands in Bhubaneswar, one gets a glimpse of the Lingaraj Temple from the air and the sight fills our hearts with pure pleasure, and we are all set to renew our acquaintance with our beloved capital city of Bhubaneswar.

*Saradindu Misra is a life-member of OSA. He lives in Franklin Park, NJ with wife Lata.





MY UNCLE RALPH, DR. RALPH GERD VICTOR 1917 - 2005

Lalu Mansinha*

Dr. Ralph Gerd Victor, a friend of Orissa, passed away on January 11, 2005. He and his wife Polly spent two years in the village of Barpali in the mid-1950s as part of a project to improve the village and the surrounding region. The Victors established the Ananda Fund in 1961. To date this fund has helped some 17,000 needy school students in Orissa to get an education. The Orissa Society of America recognised the many contributions of Dr. Victor to Orissa by inviting him to address the 1987 OSA Convention at Stanford, California.

Ralph Gerd Victor was born in Hamburg, Germany in 1917 and immigrated to America in 1936, attended Columbia University, and then studied medicine at the University of Rochester, where he met Polly. Ralph and Polly were married in a Quaker ceremony in 1943.

The Religious Society of Friends (commonly known as Quakers) was founded as a sect within Christianity in the seventeenth century England with a belief in peace and opposition to war. The American Friends Services Committee (AFSC) was founded by the Quakers in 1917 to provide service, social justice and peace programs in projects throughout the world. In 1954 the AFSC chose the village of Barpali in Sambalpur District for a project to improve rural living conditions. Dr. Victor took leave from his medical practice in Seattle so that he, Polly and young Joyce could be part of the AFSC Barpali project. A team of other dedicated Canadian and American engineers, doctors, social workers came in to join the project in Orissa.

One lasting result of the AFSC Barpali project has been the Barpali Paikhana, in widespread use in Orissa today. This simple latrine design, easily made of poured concrete, has improved sanitation in towns and villages throughout Orissa.

Before he returned to the US, Dr. Victor asked my father Dr. Mayadhar Mansinha as to the best way to continue to help Orissa. Bapa suggested scholarships for poor students. In 1961 Ralph and Polly set up the Ananda Fund and requested Prof. Surya Kanta Das, then a lecturer at Gangadhar Meher



College in Sambalpur, to administer the program. From a letter from Ralph and Polly Victor to Prof. Surya Kanta Das, dated May 23, 1961: *"It has occurred to us that there are a great number of students in Orissa High schools who hardly can meet their ongoing expenses and that we watched many of them in hostels at a nutritional level where they hardly could be expected to be able to study properly. We also believe that there are some students whose families cannot send them to High school or cannot permit them to continue because of the economic burden involved."* In November 1961 the first Ananda Fund scholarships were awarded to seven boys at Sohela High School and two girls in the Lady Lewis Girls High School in Sambalpur.

In 1959 I was admitted to the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, just two hours away from the Victor's home on Mercer Island, a suburb of Seattle. I had not met the Victors in India. They drove up from Seattle to visit me and after that I spent many a weekends and holidays at the Victor home on Mercer Island and in their cottage in the woods, in the Wenatchee National Forest, in Washington State. I became part of the family. Whenever I was with the Victors in Mercer Island on a Sunday, I went to Quaker worship services. In the Quaker service we all sit silently, meditate, and try to listen to the Spirit, until someone is moved by the Spirit to speak.

It is the same quest for social justice that led Dr. Victor to move to Seattle to practice medicine. In the 1940s in the US, quality health care was too expensive and out of reach for a significant proportion of the population. A group of doctors in Seattle formed the Group Health Cooperative, to bring quality health care within the reach of the average American. Dr. Victor moved to Seattle in 1948 to join Group Health. The Group Health Cooperative continues to flourish, providing health care to over 540,000 residents in the Seattle area.

After 20 years as a specialist in Internal Medicine with Group Health, Dr. Victor felt that many of his patients needed treatment for emotional problems and began training in Psychiatry in 1968 and in 1971 he moved to Fresno, California as Director of Mental Health at the Fresno Community Hospital, where he stayed until retirement at age 72.

It is what he did after retirement that is so astonishing. He took lessons to play the viola and became good at it to become a member of a string quartet. The quartet played locally and went on an European tour. He was on the board of the Fresno Philharmonic Orchestra. A musical memorial to Dr. Victor was hosted on Fresno radio station KFCF.

When I visited Uncle Ralph after his retirement I expected to see a 75-year-old man taking it easy and enjoying life. Instead I found an very physically fit man who swam, bicycled, walked for several hours a day, putting me to shame. But I was stunned to discover that in his old age he had started a



factory, The New American Industries, to provide employment and experience to members of the Hmong people of Vietnam. They had been evacuated by the CIA at the end of the Vietnam War and placed in Fresno. They were tribals, from the highlands of Vietnam, with no skills to survive in America. The factory made fabric goods, such as bags etc. and still going strong.

Charu and I visited Uncle Victor just last year when he was ailing. He was direct and forthright in telling us about his illness. We discussed death and dying. He told us he was not afraid. We could stay only a few days. On the morning of our scheduled departure, he got up early in the morning and waited for Charu, and said 'Do you have to go today? Please stay a little longer.' We did. Next day he did it again, and we stayed. We were touched. We are glad we spent the extra few days with him.

Uncle Ralph gave me a Christmas gift of a LP recording of the Symphony #3, the Eroica, by Beethoven, a stirring music written in honour of Napoleon. I listened to this music again and again, and wondered how and why what a composer wrote in 1800s in Europe would stir a boy born in Orissa one and half century later. I am still in love with the music of Beethoven.

There were several memorial services to remember and honour Dr. Ralph Victor at Fresno, and in Seattle. There was a Quaker service in Visalia, a town south of Fresno. It was a peaceful setting, with the greenery, the trees and the sunshine showing through the doors and windows. We sat in silence in this worship hall, remembering Uncle Ralph. Then one person spoke, and then another, and one by one, family and friends spoke of the man who had touched our lives in so many ways. I rose and talked about what Uncle Ralph had meant to me personally, his visit to Barpali and the lasting benefits that the Ananda Fund has brought to so many thousands of poor students in Orissa.

Without consciously trying, just by example, Uncle Ralph had influenced my personality to an immeasurable extent. He imbued in me a quest for social justice, and I am now active in community building projects in Canada and India. For Orissa, a true memorial to Dr. Ralph Gerd Victor is the thousands who benefited from the Ananda Fund. Aunty Polly and Joyce are resolved to continue the Ananda Fund. The Hmong people of Fresno will also remember Dr. Victor. And it was the dedication in the early days of doctors like Dr. Victor, who made the Group Health Cooperative of Puget Sound survive to this day.

* Lalu Mansinha is a founder member of SEEDS (Sustainable Educational and Economic Development Society). SEEDS undertakes village level community projects in Orissa. He is on the Executive Board of the Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute (SICI). SICI funds India studies in Canada and Canada studies in India. He is also a founder and current Chairman of Kala Manjari, a presenter of classical Indian dance and music programs in London, Canada. In his other life, he is Adjunct Research Professor of Geophysics, University of Western Ontario.



A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Sangita Misra*

It is again the dawn of another day. It is time for a general checkup at my primary physician's office. An appointment has been made and I arrive at the appointed time. As my blood is being drawn, I am asked – "So where are you from?" "Orissa, India" I reply.

"Fascinating, I mean the way you speak English – were you raised in England?" I raise one eyebrow and answer "No, but I studied in a Catholic school and English was taught to us by nuns from Wales, in Orissa" "Uh, huh, what was that? 'OR' what? The doctor enquires. The blood is drawn and the needle is taken off my veins. The conversation ends, the case is dismissed. I have been pricked in the hand but I feel the prick in my heart.

In the library where I work, a customer approaches me "You have an exotic face, where are you from? Let me guess, you do have an Irish accent". "Do I look Irish to you?" I question. Laughter like jingle bells tinkle through the air "No, no but I guess you were brought up in Ireland – but you look Cuban though". "Do I really?" That was indeed a revelation to me. Anyway I don't even know how a Cuban looks. I answer "No, no I am from Orissa." "God bless you." He says. He thought I sneezed. I repeat slowly "Orissa"

"Where is that?" "Where is what?" I hiss. "Orrezza?" It sounds like 'Orzo' – you know the pasta, so that makes you Italian!" He laughs at his own crude joke. I look at him with pity. Then I look up at the heavens and tell HIM "I can't take it anymore".

Finally another day comes into my life. This time, it is time to take my children for their annual health check up. We arrive at the pediatrician's office. The receptionist informs us that their regular doctor is off and will it be alright to see another doctor from the group? I nod my head patiently and after a long wait, we are ushered into an examining room. Dr So & So enters. He is a distinguished looking elderly gentleman with a sparkling white apron and a stethoscope hung around his neck. He shakes my hand vigorously and pats my children affectionately. With one end of the stethoscope on my child's chest, he shoots the dreaded question at me "Where are you from?" I groan silently, and answer clearing my throat "I am from Orissa, you know it is a state in India – eastern part of India, that is near West Bengal, along the Bay of Bengal, I mean you must have heard of Calcutta, well it is.." He cuts me short by waving his stethoscope at me and says "I know, I know" I exclaim "You what!" "You what know?" I mean you know what?" I blabber making no sense. He flashes a bright smile at me and says "I have been to Orissa. I was there Oh! Golly, long time ago – maybe you were not even born then – beautiful place, beautiful



friendly people – poor but warm hearted and welcoming. I had been to Puri – magnificent beach. I also saw the temple of Lord Juggernaut (Jagannath) from outside and the spectacular Sun temple at Konark – absolutely amazing. And you will not believe it; I also met the Maharajah of Puri! I still have paintings that I bought from a village near Puri, unique to that place. The artistes use vegetable dye on a piece of silk and also on palm leaves, I am sorry I have forgotten the term used for that kind of painting. It starts with e ‘P’ though” He starts to tap his head with the stethoscope and I answer in a rasping voice unable to hide my excitement “PATTACHITRA”. He nods his head happily “yes, that is it!” He looks at me fondly and says “Fancy meeting an Oriya in my office in the U.S. of A!” He gives me a bear hug and wishes me good day. My large eyes become misty and tears roll down my round face. The session is over yet I am unable to move from where I stand, too shocked beyond words to find out that at least someone knew where I came from. And that, that someone was neither an Indian, or of Indian origin but a learned white physician who happened to travel to many places in India and among them to the state of Orissa, long ,long time ago even before I was born.

* A Librarian by profession at Bayside in New York.



REFLECTIONS

Priyanka Patnaik*

Before I start this venture into the past, I'd first like to thank a couple of people. Without them, this trip would have not have been close to possible I'd like to thank the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs, specifically Mr. Malay Mishra, Joint Secretary (MOIA), the Government of Uttaranchal, Mr. Amit Dadhich , the Liason Officer (MOIA) or Amit Ji, and to Cistel Technologies for sponsoring my trip to India.

Born and brought up in Ottawa, Canada, my parents have never failed to keep me in touch with my Indian culture. It was almost as if I was raised as an Indian in Canada and I like to refer to myself as being Indo- Canadian. I have been learning Classical Odissi Dance from the age of 8 and have been under Hindustani Classical Vocal training from the age of 5. Last year, I started to teach at the Chinmaya Mission Ottawa as a teacher for children ages 3-5. I enjoy going to Garbas, anywhere where there is Indian dancing, weddings, and enjoy participating in the various cultural shows that are held during the times of Indian festivals such as Diwali or Holi. As you can see, I immensely enjoy staying in touch with my Indian culture. As a result, when I heard about the Internship Program for Diaspora Youth to India, I immediately jumped at the opportunity and made sure to apply for the position. To my luck, I got it! And I only had one week's time to make sure everything was set for the trip. Booking tickets, applying for Visa and packing were only some of the important things that had to be done before I left for the trip.

I arrived in New Delhi on August 17th, 2005. After spending a couple of days with relatives, I made my way to the Youth Hostel Association in Chanakyapuri, New Delhi. This was the place where all the interns would meet up and where we would all be residing for the next couple of days. There were 23 interns in total from different places such as, South Africa, Zambia, Canada, United States, Fiji Islands, Thailand, Malaysia, Israel and the UK. I must admit that at first I was a bit apprehensive. Meeting people I have never met before and spending 3 weeks with them was something I had never experienced before. Fortunately, everyone came in with the same attitude as well and before we all knew it, it was as if we had all known each other before! The first day, we had a meeting and briefing with Shri Malay Mishra, Joint Secretary (MOIA), and we discussed the internship

The trip consisted of a lot of traveling and site seeing. The Ministry had organized tours to all the popular and scenic tourist attractions in India. We were able to visit places like Humanyans Tomb, Raj Ghat, Mehrauli Arachaeological Park, Sanskriti Kendra, Qutab Minar, Red Fort, Dilli Haat, Crafts Centre and the Ba'hai Temple in New Delhi. We also traveled to Jaipur and had the pleasure of touring the famous Amer Place while riding on elephants. We also saw the new Bollywood film, Mangal Pandey: The Rising in the famous Raj Mandir Theatre in Jaipur. The day after, we made our way to Agra and



toured around Fatehpur Sikri. In the late afternoon, we visited one of the most famous wonders of the world, the Taj Mahal. In the evening we had an absolutely breath taking dinner by moonlight organized by the tourist office in Agra.

After returning to Delhi to touch base, we quickly hopped on the Shatabdi Express and were on our way to Dehradun, Uttaranchal. With lots of excitement and a great air conditioned compartment on the train, almost all to ourselves, us cartload of interns arrived in Dehradun, not really knowing what to expect. As we set our foot down on the platform, there were already people waiting for us. We were escorted to our bus and treated with royalty. We arrived at Sela Qui World School (www.selaqui.org). Being one of the most prestigious boarding schools in India, the students and staff of Sela Qui World School not only opened their homes, but their hearts to us.

I was very impressed with education system that we were exposed to in India. The students of Sela Qui were very friendly and extremely talented as well. We were invited to a Quiz show that the students had organized. Not only did this program display the knowledge of the students, but it also showed that the kids have time to do other things than just study. The schedule that the students would undergo everyday would be something like this.

As you can see, the schedule the students follow is very tight. Not only do they have specific timings for classes but everything up to even their free time is limited. It may seem like a very rigid and unfair schedule to some students living here in Canada, but this is how students go about planning their day, or as I can say in this case, having it planned out for them. This method of teaching that Sela Qui uses is not only efficient but has said to be very successful as well. Sela Qui World School is also one of the many schools all over India that offers the International Baccalaureate or better known as the IB program in their school. Because it is an international school, students from all over the world arrive in Dehradun to attend and benefit from the advantages that Sela Qui has to offer. Also, for the international students, Sela Qui provides special preparation for students who wish to take entrance exams for IIT, CPMT or SAT and apply to universities and colleges abroad. While on the topic of education, the Jawaharlal Nehru University (<http://www.jnu.ac.in/index.asp>) in New Delhi was one of the places where a lot of us were quite impressed with the development of the Helen Keller Unit. The Helen Keller Unit is a system which helps visually impaired students use computer and internet services.

To most people, India is looked at as a land of spiritualism, a land of culture and a land of customs. What many people fail to see is that India is advancing in aspects and areas that we tend to ignore India for. The business aspect is one that should be looked very closely.

In the capital city of India, New Delhi, we visited ASSOCHAM, Associated Chambers of Commerce



and Industry in India (<http://www.assochem.org/>). ASSOCHAM is a chamber of commerce which plays a proactive role to act as a bridge between the government and the business industry. There are close to two hundred thousand direct and indirect companies including TATA, The State Bank of India and HSBC that are apart of this assembly. Basically what ASSOCHAM does is acts as a mirror for the government. They have in house research groups who keep companies who are apart of ASSOCHAM aware of all the activities that other companies around them are up to and how they affect your specific company. ASSOCHAM is an autonomous and independent association and is funded by the companies that are apart of the ASSOCHAM group. As mentioned earlier, the members of ASSOCHAM are said to be around two hundred thousand direct and indirect company members, and the number of members are still growing.

In addition to ASSOCHAM, we were also able to visit PBC: Parharpur Business Centre - Software Technology Incubator Park (<http://www.pbcnet.com/index.html>). While listening to the presentation given by the General Manager of PBC, Ms. Roopali Shahaney, I came to realize how much I didn't know about the business sector in India. The Parharpur Business Centre essentially provides a place and venue for businesses to start off. They offer office space and fully equipped training rooms that are able to hold 2 -330 people. Also, facilities such as, computers, internet connection, laser printers, scanners, photocopiers and fax machines are available. They even have the latest video conferencing device for conferences and provide conference rooms and meeting rooms that are equipped with tele-conferencing and other new technology. The Parharpur Business Centre is a place where new companies and businesses can make a base and start off on a good foot with the help of all the benefits of PBC. I felt that this visit was very beneficial to the internship program because as we get to know more and more about India, we realize that its not only the culture that India is rich in, but it also has the capability to be a place where it is possible to grow and maintain a business. It was also a very good opportunity for those on the internship who might want to come back to do any type of business in India. Visiting the business sector was an advantageous way to build a link of some sort with India and also gain more knowledge about India's business division.

For those of you have visited India before, you'll probably know what I'm talking about when I say smog and pollution! Compressed Natural Gas has finally become a great part of India. Now, when you step out of the airplane onto Indian grounds, you don't get a whiff of disgusting pollution, but you actually are able to breathe in reasonably clean air! Along with this, we visited a couple other institutions that are dedicated to the improvement and preservation of the environment. We went to TIFAC - Technology Information Assessment Council (<http://www.tifac.org.in/>). The council is based on



Honourable President Kalam's vision of the year 2020 and it strives to work on aspects of Vision 2020 such as in the fields of education, health care, road construction, textile machinery and agriculture.

One thing I really enjoyed about the internship program was not only the fact that we were able to see the industrial and developed part of India, but we also experienced the rural and village life. With great pleasure we traveled on the hour long bus ride, which by the way, felt way longer than an hour, to Bhatti Mines, a village in New Delhi. There we interacted with the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (<http://youth.nic.in/indexabout.html>). This organization is run by a group of youths who involve themselves and others in activities such as knitting, sewing, basket weaving etc. By doing this, they are able to develop skills that they are able to use when they are older and take those skills and values and use them when they are ready to enter work field. It was really an amazing experience. When we reached the venue, all the youth just stared at us. Almost as if they had never seen any type of human being before let alone someone from another country. When we started talking to them, we found that they had quite a defined perception of us youth coming from different countries.

Bollywood has been one of the major reasons for this confusion. A lot of the recent movies portray Indians living abroad as being these people who have no respect for their culture and no values, wearing short mini skirts and walking around abandoning their heritage and only following the culture of the country they are residing in. One of the interns from Thailand, Lavisha Kapoor says while addressing the village youth, "You know, we're just like you. We have friends, we watch movies, we eat the same kind of food, we perform pooja's at home and celebrate Diwali. The only difference is that we live in another country." The youth of the village were astonished to hear when some of the interns spoke up and said that even in their own respected countries, they still had Diwali and Holi celebrations. After interacting with the village youth, we took part in a special ceremony that they had organized for us. They had planted a tree bulb in honour of each and every one of us interns and they helped us plant those trees. They told us that they were honoured to have us visit them as their guests and will maintain and take care of the trees long after we left. The adolescents of the village were so kind and giving. You could feel the love and warmth.

As I mentioned earlier of the schooling systems we were exposed to in New Delhi, well, the old schooling system still exists in the villages! You know, the kind where little kids sit on the bare ground with a small chalkboards and a piece of chalk, while the teacher points out letters standing in front of the classroom with a stick. Its still there! It just goes to show how much education has evolved and how far it has gone.

In Dehradun, we visited a village in which a recent method of banking systems has been



established. This system was started by Mr. P.S Hooda, Managing Director of State Co-operative Bank, Rajpur Road Dehradun. The most interesting part of this banking system is that, it is only managed by women! I am telling you, the era is over where it is looked at as the male to be doing everything in this world, especially in places like India! Be it in any field, women are making their equal mark everywhere in this world. This woman organized banking system started off by every woman from each family in the village, putting one rupee into a small wooden box that was given to them. As time went on, that rupee grew to two rupees, then three and so on. Soon enough, under the guidance of Mr. Hooda, this banking system was established and so far has been running successfully.

It was really amazing to be in India and be able to experience and see both the rural and industrial aspects of it. Moreover, all of this was experienced only in New Delhi and Dehradun; imagine how all the other states must be!

Finally, the reason why I've been holding off discussing about this next particular topic is simply because I like to save the best for last! Not only did we as interns have a chance to experience, business, culture and all the other parts of India, but we also had a chance to undergo a spiritual experience.

I can still feel the hot breeze blowing the hair off my face, and feel the cold water of the Ganga River run through my toes. I remember getting a chill down my spine the first time I stepped into the Ganga. And for those of you who have not yet experienced this, what everyone says is true, it's a simply purifying experience. The first day we reached the city of Rishikesh, also known as the "divine city" we made our way to Parmarth Niketan (www.parmarth.com), the ashram of Sri Swami Chidanand Saraswati. I do not think it is possible to put into words the amount of love and warmth we felt as soon as we reached there. Swami Ji personally invited us and addressed us. I remember his exact words being "welcome to your home away from home". Right now as I listen to one of the Bhajans that Swami Ji sang during the Ganga Aarti, memories flood my mind and I'm trying to find the words to write them down. Every day at 6:30pm there would be a beautiful Ganga Aarti. Sitting right on the banks of the Ganga River and singing the name of the Lord was something I had never experienced in my life and as I speak for all of the interns on the trip, it was simply overwhelming. Our days at the Ashram were a limited amount but in those few days, we were able to be the most relaxed that we ever were on the trip. We went on morning walks with Swami Ji and the Rishikumars early at 5:30am in the morning. One thing I absolutely must mention is the food at the Ashram. After eating heavy amounts of paneer (cheese), daal (lentils), rice and roti (bread) every single day, it was very relieving and amazing to eat 'home food'. A simple vegetable sabji (dish), plain simple daal (lentils) and roti tasted so satisfying to all of us. We were also able to attend meditation and yoga sessions that were organized by the Ashram. I feel that after



following a schedule that was very tight and close-fitted, staying at the Ashram was just what we needed to relax and enjoy the beautiful city. We all went around and explored the city of Rishikesh. Sometimes, the best thing to do would be just to sit on the banks of the Ganga and have your feet in water. Every night before dinner, we had the pleasure of having a discussion with Swami Ji. We were really grateful for this since Swami Ji made time for us out of all the other amazing things that he is doing. The last night we were there, after Aarti Swami Ji garlanded us with flowers and gave us each our own Rudraksh Mala. I think I can speak on behalf of everyone when I say that Rishikesh and Parmarth Niketan was our favourite part of the trip!

Since we were in Uttaranchal for quite a significant part of our whole internship, we got to see many people and institutions that were newly formed in the state. The very well-known company of Microsoft has opened their own mini branch in the Dehradun. They are working on a project entitled Project Shiksha (<http://www.microsoft.com/india/education/pil/shiksha/>). We were all very impressed to see that even in such a new state like Uttaranchal the knowledge of computers and the latest technology has been updated. During our stay in Dehradun, we were able to meet some of the most important people who play a central role in making the new state work. We met and had meetings with The Forest and Rural Development Commissioner and the Director General of the Police Department in Uttaranchal. We also had the honour of meeting the Governor of Uttaranchal, Honourable Sudarshan Agarwal. He gave us a briefing about what his plans are in reference to guiding the newly formed state of Uttaranchal to prosperity. Not only did we get to meet the Governor of Uttaranchal, but the MOIA was able to organize a formal discussion and question answer session with the honourable President of India, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalaam. He spoke to us youth about the Mission 2020 and also about what kind of aims he has envisioned for India and stressed that us youth, both in India and abroad are a big part of the development of India as a country. One of the many notable things that President Kalaam said was that before coming to India and giving to India, we should be patriotic and give to our own respected countries.

The Internship Program for Diaspora Youth was by far one of the most amazing experiences in my life. The MOIA did an absolutely fantastic job of organizing each and every event of the trip. Everywhere we went we were welcomed with open hearts and treated like royalty. The love and warmth that India has shown almost made me forget that I'm actually from Canada. I have been to India before, but only to visit family and never really got the chance to actually see India. This trip not only gave me the opportunity to get to know India better but also to form bonds and relationships with other Indians from around the world. The 22 other people whom I traveled with on the trip are all unique in their own ways. It is only fair



to say that it was more than a pleasure to meet each and every one of them. I am sure that we all took a little piece of each other back home with us. I feel that for Indian youths who are living abroad, a trip like this one is very important. Whether you live abroad or live in India itself, to be able to relate, connect and just know about the country that you come from is very important as an Indian. Not only does this increase your knowledge, but it also helps you develop as a person. I know for me, this internship has been an eye opener. Although it is true that things like poverty and unemployment do exist, it is also even truer that India is a rising country and has a lot of potential to flourish in the future. Speaking on behalf of the Indian youth living abroad, our job, as President Kalaam said, is to make sure that we give as much as we can to our own country. After that, we can use those skills and that knowledge and use them to do something for India. It's in our hands to make sure that we pass this "Indian -ness" on to our next generations and preserve it so we can see both our own countries and India grow together. As Mr. Malay Mishra (Joint Secretary MOIA) stated, "today's youth are tomorrow's decision makers".

Jai Hind!

* Priyanka Patnaik lives in Ottawa, Canada. This article has been published online @ <http://www.pbd2006.org/reflections-priyanka.pdf>

Thoughts during company down sizing

ତଳ ବରତା ଖସୁଛି
ଉପର ବରତା ହସୁଛି
ମଝି ବରତା କହୁଛି
ମୋ ଦିନ କାଳ ଆସୁଛି



RISHIKRISHI, FARMING OF THE SAINTS

Amulya Garabadu*

“This land was stony, bald without vegetation 20 years back when we came here. Except a handful of trees in their skeletons, there was hardly a blade of grass in most part. Moroms, soil concretions, laterite and shining stone faces joined the villagers in mocking at us when we announced our intention of farming. *Asambhab*, impossible they warned, shaking their heads.” These were the stunning words from Km Sabarmati of 35 years to 45 BVP** members clustered under a shade in the cool breeze of sunny January noon. We had traveled 143 Km west north west of Bhubaneswar reaching the flat, hard rock terrains of central Orissa where the annual rainfall is 17”, a third of coastal average with temperature ranging 48 to 10 deg C or 118-50 deg F. It was a personal balmy break for me and my wife who had hit the dust and dirt of concrete forest of Bhubaneswar last December after being spoilt by a 6 month vacation in the pollution free, tree lined silicon valley of CA, USA. The chartered bus trip was the culmination of our yearlong planning since we heard of this project named “Sambhab” meaning “Possible” in answer to the villagers’ warning. Started by Prof. Radhamohan, a retired Government college principal, he has drawn other educationists and environmentalists to this challenge of meeting the “impossible” task of retrieving the lost forest and farmlands of Orissa. A Gandhian, he has shed his surname to turn cast-less and named his daughter “Sabarmati”, after Babu’s Ashram. She is totally wedded to the cause and is a full time worker in the project. Following the Gandhian policy of “The means should justify the noble end”, the process of restoration is traditional. He has termed it “Rishi Krihi”, the farming of the saints.

After a brief introduction to the history of restoration of the 100-acre bald land, Sabarmati led us to a tour of the site. We walked through trees and bushes of every description. She showed older trees, which were carefully selected to survive in early harsh conditions. They were watered from rainwater stored by embankment raised at the lowest end of land and wells dug in central area with water levels boosted in the process. For optimization, water was poured in to a perforated earthen pitcher sunk close to tree roots. More grass grew as the trees spread their branches. A mixture of native and indigenous plants gradually filled the space among the first trees. The density of trees and bushes raised the water table. The water harvesting now extended to three pools in a row de-silting the rainwater as it flowed from one to the other below. We walked along the dry *nullah* course that drains the land with a good 50 feet level difference between the highest and lowest. Planting of strong rooted *Sabai* grass from north Orissa stabilizes the *nullah* banks and yields fiber for ropes and handicraft.

Grass and fodder shrubs were planted close to the pool that fed the first cows, the source of early manure. The grass at poolside subsequently gave way to rice fields, while the fodder could grow



further up. De-weeded plants are never wasted. The underbrush and weeds are left on the same ground with roots up, gradually decomposing to manure. Thorny bamboos were planted at the boundary to make a natural fence preventing trespassers. There are now 50 varieties of mangos besides *Lichu*, *Sapetaa* and *Jamun* etc. Against 7 initial dying species, the site now boosts nearly 700 species of trees. The names cover an amazing range, from un-transplantable *Sal* to stubborn *Bara-Aswastha*. We also encountered Teak, *Piasal*, *Karanj*, Sandal, *Raktachandan*, *Mahul*, *Arjun*, *Harida*, *Bahada*, *Awnalaa* the list being almost end-less. Even the cocoanut trees are flourishing located far from sea. I guess that without any significant hill range obstructing its path some breeze from sea reaches the area. And all these have come up without chemical fertilizers and pesticides

Sabarmati was all smiles and assuring voices. The termites are our friends she explains. They take off the dead tissues from the barks preventing bacteria growth over tree trunks, leaving the live part of the bark healthy. Then they would withdraw into the earth leaving the nutritious clay casing to be washed down to tree bottom. Millions of termites housed in mounds burrow the sub soil enriching it by their refuse and drawing vital nitrogen and moisture for the plants. "They are our natural tillers" she quipped.

We now walked over a causeway crossing the drainage and reached the boundary of thorn-bamboo fence. A few clumps of regular bamboos showed up in front of them. These are regularly used for thatches housing the cows, farmer families, stores and workplaces. She chose a trail through fruit bearing, herbal and flowering plants along a chain of irrigation pits and wells. Water was hauled by *tendaas* or levered buckets from wells manually and transferred into pits through cement channels. It was then pored into perforated earthen pitchers sunk into ground close to tree roots. There is no mechanization except a pump for use in emergency only.

We reached the shelter which was an octagonal concrete canopy with a central column designed to resemble a tree trunk. The walls had large window like openings without shutters. It could sit 100 people for a meeting. One corner boasted a catering counter with improvised wooden stoves for a kitchen. The walls were mud-plastered carrying murals of traditional rural arts of Orissa. There were posters showing the evil of chemical manures and pesticides and the gains of traditional methods. All of us were treated to a simple lunch of *Usunaa* rice, *dali*, *saaga*, vegetable curries, salad and *khattaa*. There was no onion or garlic.

With Sun dipping west, we hurried to the farm plots. There was a mixture of vegetables in the same plot to get optimum results. There were rows of potato plants by the side of onion and garlic. The eggplants were supplemented by rows of beans and *jhudang*. Sabarmati explained that there are



friendly sets of crops, which supplement each other. Eggplant and Chili form one group, which should be rotated with nodular plants like Bean, pulses and *Shimba*. They do not rotate here but plant them together with better result. Marigold is planted around to prevent Nematodes. There were plenty of cabbages, cauliflower, tomato, peas, *Shimba*, lettuce, carrot, *cucumber*, *pumpkin*, *Lau* etc. Plots of spice plants yield Coriander, *Panmahuri* etc. Black pepper creepers snaked up a few coconut trunks. Even the old cosmetic “*Kunkum*” is grown here. Weed and grass cleaned from the plots were left in bunches to rot in the fields. There were large covered earthen jars preparing plant feeds out of cow-dung, oil cake and cow urine. Root irrigation pitchers were everywhere sunk into ground close to plant roots. The pests surely attack. They use old technique of all sorts, cow-dung ash to soap water, failing which they spray the never failing *Nim* oil. Chemicals of all forms are forbidden here.

Pitched among the coconut grove were rows of sheds housing ten farmer families, the store, work place, the oxen and cows. There were primitive ploughs, a bullock cart and traditional farm appliances. One of the sheds housed the breeding vats of earthworms. Lot of innovations has gone into making the vats safe and favorable for these natural tillers of the soil. The matured worms are transferred to fields in due course.

Close by, we were shown a few brick and cement houses which were the guesthouses for farmer trainees. The Professor lectures on *Rishi Krishi* to farmers all over Orissa inviting them here to stay & experience the sustainability of the system. These are also community-training centers in crafts and indoor skills for the neighborhood, particularly girls and women, in about two dozen nearby villages. Sabarmati tells us the great cultural divide between the two adjacent districts of Puri and Ganjam. Ganjam men venture out for job in distant states forcing the women to care for home. Often they take women near their jobsites making the wife back at home more aggressive to seek out an independent earning. The Puri men are confined to village dominating the women. She adopts different technique for the two categories. The aim is however the same, making the rural woman economically independent. She introduced affordable health care, childcare, small family and value of education.

We invited her to a seminar to hold on *Rishi Krishi* at Bhubaneswar during our annual conference next month. We bade her and the team a grateful farewell and wondered if these man made voids would ever be filled with green. Sambhab holds out a message and faith in human endeavor. We let out a silent prayer that it may succeed.

* A former Director of Mines, Orissa .



WANTED ENTREPRENEURS

Laxman Mohanty*

I spent prime of my life in setting up and running a business in Orissa. Currently I am located at Bhubaneswar. I was at Ahmedabad- for last 6 years. Ahmedabad is fairly a large city, almost 4 times of Bhubaneswar in population and may be in infrastructure and economic transactions too. What I found out that one can try any new business and succeed in Ahmedabad, while it is very difficult to try out new things in Bhubaneswar. .

What I am trying to point out that you can easily find out how people in Ahmedabad have lots of money while that may not be true in Bhubaneswar. The same difference you will find out when you compare Orissa and Gujarat. But look into another dimension. You will find the soil condition in Ahmedabad is not very good. We find so difficult to grow anything in our garden. But in Bhubaneswar just plant a tree and you can find it grow handsomely. There is no doubt that while Orissa is endowed with rich natural resources Gujarat does not have that luxury. In Gujarat there is not much rainfall and it does not have many rivers too.

So the question arises how Gujarat in spite of being not so endowed with resources has been able to create so much of prosperity! I think one needs not to do a detailed research to find the answer. It is almost obvious – entrepreneurship is the key. Initially when we had come to Ahmedabad, people here will ask us about our work. In spite telling them what we do for our living (most of us work in some or other organizations) they still keep repeating the same question. We used to get puzzled and used to not know what to answer. Then they used to clarify that they were interested to know if we carry out any “dhandha” (business). You will be surprised to know that in spite of working somewhere each one is also expected to carry a side business too. That is almost the rule of the game.

Now, compare this with the experience that I faced when I went back to Bhubaneswar to start a computer business in 1986. Most of the people thought that I could not find a job, so I came back to Bhubaneswar to do a business there. The reality was that I had studied in some of the best institutions of the country and also turned down a foreign assignment only to come back to Bhubaneswar to start the business. I remember the headmaster of a Kendriya Vidyalaya suggesting me not to delve into this madness (business) but go for a government job. My partner’s father who was a doctor in the medical college in Cuttack was worried that his son would not get a good girl to marry because of doing business. He even had forced his son to accept a temporary engineering job in Irrigation Department of Orissa government for a consolidated stipend of Rs.2000/- per month.



Any of us now who live outside Orissa get hurt when we find people around us having no clue about a state called Orissa. To inform them about Orissa or Bhubaneswar or their geographic location we force ourselves to link it with Kolkata. That compels us to think that we do something for our state where our roots lie and to which a lot of our inherent pride is connected in some way or other. We find some easy way out; pull in some rupees or dollars and donate that to a NGO that we come across or advised. We feel good about our generosity and continue to move on with our routine lives again. But have we really pondered if that has made any difference?

Let us look at the fundamental question that we had raised initially. It is not the resource that makes a set of people prosperous; otherwise Orissa would have been way ahead of Gujarat. Resources are not our constraint but the will and know how to convert such raw resources into final products and acquire economic returns from them. A small experience can be narrated here to highlight this point. Few years back we had gone to visit a village in Kalahandi (few kilometers from Bhawanipatna). That village had a lot of trees bearing berries or *barakoli*. But it was disheartening to see that people would gladly exchange a few bag-full berries for one kilogram of salt – a real unequal bartering. Either they had no clue or something stopped them to make pickles out of those berries and get higher returns. There are enough stories of selling raw materials at dirt-cheap price and not trying to add value and get better returns. Even selling iron ores by the government is a part of that mentality.

So it boils down to one requirement – how to raise entrepreneurship in Orissa that can utilize the resources available and generate better benefits for the people there. I have been always proud of one contribution of our business. Most of our employees who left the company became entrepreneurs and started similar businesses. The sad part of this, however, was that they could not think of doing something different where they could have had the niche and better economic prospect. But one silver lining is that we have emerged as some kind of role models for them and they now can dare to start up something of their own rather than look for a job in another company.

If people like us who have been privileged to have better education and understanding of the world can take lead in entrepreneurship I am sure some kind of entrepreneurship culture can be established. We not only bring in prestige to the status of entrepreneurship, we also can build a lot of know how for others to follow and use. So today what Orissa requires is not some Tata or Birla coming and putting up huge plants there but thousands of small entrepreneurs trying to make money for themselves and create value for the society at large. The success and failures are creation of mind and once we make up our minds I am sure nothing can stop us.

*Laxman Mohanty the founder of Silicon Institute of Technology, Bhubaneswar laxman_mohanty@yahoo.co.in



LETTER TO A CHILD: REFLECTIONS ON INDIA

Srikanta Mishra*

We are walking the streets of Old Mumbai. Mumba Devi Temple, Bhuleshwar Road, Surti Hotel Lane – gradually come and go along the way. The streets keep getting narrower, and the crowd keeps getting thicker. You clutch my hand as we wind our way through the milling masses, searching for shop number 73. This is an important mission because we have to find Maganlal Dresswala, the much-recommended tailor for Bharatanatyam costumes. The sidewalk is missing many a brick along the way, and quite often we have to step down to the street. *Keep an eye on the puddle*, I caution you as we approach yet another tea stall jutting out into the narrow sidewalk. I can sense your tension building as we navigate our passage through housewives and errand boys, bulls and beggars. Suddenly you stop and point at a fading signboard – we have arrived at our destination.

In the air-conditioned comfort of the store, sipping a Mirinda, you look at me with a wan smile. I engage the salesman in the usual introductory chitchat, and wonder what is going on in your mind. Perhaps you are trying to contrast this experience of the “real” India with the opulence of the departmental stores we visited yesterday – those multi-storeyed glass-and-chrome temples of consumerism patterned after Macy’s of New York, Harrod’s of London or Globus of Zurich. I want to tell you that the fundamental character of Bhuleshwar Road hasn’t changed in a hundred years and is unlikely to change in the next several decades. That commerce in old Mumbai will continue to thrive regardless of the fortunes of these departmental stores. That the traditional and the modern always manage to co-exist with a nonchalance, is fascinatingly Indian.

Gandhi Bazaar, Bangalore. We are looking at a collection of exquisite silk sarees in the showroom of a cooperative store. The angavastra-wearing salesman with vibhuti-smeared forehead is working with a saree-clad saleslady whose tightly braided hair reeks of jasmine oil. There is a certain diffidence in their manner, a willingness to be of service – unlike the *May-I-help-you-but-I-don’t-know-nuttin’* attitude of Melinda at Sears or Gabriella at Kohl’s back in Texas. I want to point these things to you, but you are standing by the door, gazing at the swanky AirTel customer service center next door. *Shall we go and quickly check it out*, I ask. You are game, and we mosey over. There is a steady stream of customers walking away with colorful boxes containing the latest mobile phones from Nokia and Samsung. Young service reps wearing jeans and T-shirts walk around in wireless headsets, speaking in convent-accented English laden with American slang. It is all very brisk and businesslike, and I see a quick smile on your face as you finally come across something that feels familiar.



Then we step outside and it is traditional India all over again. Flower vendors, vegetable sellers, sugarcane hawkers, tea delivery boys, bootpolish-wallahs and mid-morning shoppers – all vie for the same piece of real estate. This is an oriental bazaar scene at its finest, and I am glad to see you taking in the fragrance, colors, and aroma mingled with the omnipresent din, dust and stench. *This place is so ... so alive*, you murmur, as you accidentally bump into a matronly lady with a shopping bag in each hand and a mobile phone dangling from her neck. I could not have put it any better. The next day, we drive by the sprawling Infosys campus in Electronics City that puts to shame any high-tech corporate headquarters we have seen in Central Texas. *Are you sure this is the same Bangalore*, you ask. I nod, and remind you of the same contrasts between old and new India that we saw in Mumbai.

In Mumbai, Bangalore and other metro areas such as Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Hyderabad and Pune, one keeps encountering this dichotomous nature of India - somewhat akin to parallel railway tracks. There is a fast track that looks increasingly like a copy of the US (think about desi MTV, Indian Idol TV shows, thematic birthday parties at McDonald's and such). Then there is the slow track, where ancient traditions and customs – social, cultural and culinary – continue to thrive. But neither Mumbai nor Bangalore gives us the chance to interact with people from traditional middle-class backgrounds, to see how the flow of their life finds its own sweet spot amidst the turbulence imposed by modernity.

Bhubaneswar, where we cross paths with relatives and friends, offers interesting glimpses into a cultural hybridization of sorts, i.e. college-going kids addressing their parents as “Mom” and “Dad”, Winnie-the-Pooh party hats and favors adorning children's birthday celebrations., parents proudly displaying their 2nd or 3rd grade child's “talent” to gyrate her hips in tune with the latest Karishma Kapoor hit dance number., wedding receptions serving overcooked-overspiced-overgreased combinations of mangled malai kofta, chewy chicken tikka, dubious dal makhni, vapid vegetable biryani, and ghastly gulab jamun. *This is practically the same menu as the dinner buffet in Taj Palace*, you observe with astonishment. I shake my head, trying to conjure memories of the old staples – maacha munda chenchadaa, buta daali, aloo potala rasaa, rasagolaa. Gentrification must require abandoning one's traditional habits in favor of what the big-city brethren practice, I conclude.

The city of my birth and school-going days has been spruced up some. Rajarani Temple sports a well-manicured lawn with walking paths chockfull of senior citizens on their constitutional. Forest Park has become the go-to-place for joggers, walkers and purveyors of healthy snacks (gajaa muga with a squeeze of lemon juice, anyone?). The main roads have been widened and resurfaced. The multi-lane highway between Bhubaneswar and Cuttack is a travelers' delight. Specialty restaurants are sprouting to satisfy the craze to eat out and sample a variety of cuisines. Availability of quality health



care continues to improve - albeit primarily for the well-heeled. A spirit of entrepreneurship appears to have energized the youth. The smell of disposable money is very much in the air as one drives by gleaming saree boutiques and jewelry stores.

Yet, Bhubaneswar depresses me in myriad ways. Most of the traffic lights in the city do not function. The primary highway to Puri is a disaster, especially between Kalpana Chhak and Rabi Talkies Chhak - as fishmongers and vegetable sellers make steady inroads into the road proper, and no one pays any attention to the hapless traffic constables at 4-way intersections. Potholes on side streets continue to replicate with a vengeance. The city public transportation system is in the same shambled state as a decade ago. But more than these problems caused by limited resources or lack of an infrastructure planning process, I am dismayed by the unfulfilled promise, and attempts to obfuscate current mediocrity with constant reference to past greatness.

Hope springs eternal in the Oriya mind as Infosys sets up shop in Bhubaneswar, only to ebb as the next wave of BPO projects go to Coimbatore, Vishakhapatnam or Indore. The once gleaming Biju Patnaik "International" airport is beginning to lose luster as it waits for a direct connection to Bangalore, let alone a flight path to Singapore. Intellectuals continue to wax eloquent about the far-reaching voyages of Oriya traders. Wouldn't it be nice to have some solid historical analysis of when and how far the traders sailed, rather than continuing to rely on legends and anecdotal tales? The genius of our literary ancestors is regularly extolled at OSA conventions by speaker after speaker - even as their own children are sent to English medium schools in Orissa. How about an effort to translate the wonderful works of Upendra Bhanja or Fakirmohan Senapati so that non-Oriyas, and the next generation of the Oriya diaspora, can appreciate them?

But I digress. Going back to the cultural transformation in progress we saw in Bhubaneswar, perhaps assimilating new trends and ideas into the fabric of life is not an easy endeavor. The information age constantly finds innovative channels for exposing people to new "cultures". Only a lucky few are able to successfully make this cultural transition work. The majority of us must learn to take pride in our heritage, be secure about our identity, and accept those elements of the culture that are consistent with our basic values. Otherwise, we run the risk of becoming like the jackal who fell into the blue pot and reappeared as a glorious new character.

*Srikanta Mishra, an engineer and risk analyst who also dabbles in conversational Sanskrit, lives in Austin, TX.



MY FAMILY

Snigdha Das*

The Orissa Society of the Americas (OSA) means different things to different people. For some it is a tool to meet others who share a common background and language. For others it provides the opportunity to do social work in Orissa. There are even those who use the annual conventions as a venue for finding a “match” for their sons and daughters (do not think I am oblivious to why Aunties keep telling me I should go to the next convention). For over 30 years OSA has provided Oriyas in this country with a chance to bond with other Oriyas. I grew up hearing about OSA from my parents. I’ve heard about the “good old days.” I have seen how it has brought so many people together. I have felt how it has given all of us a family. Over the years it has come to mean something special to me.

Growing up in the United States, we miss out on a lot of things. I remember my classmates who would see their extended family members at annual reunions and holidays. Their grandparents were able to go to soccer games and videotape graduations. Their relatives could share in the milestones of their lives. I always felt a little left out because I didn’t have aunts and uncles at talent shows or birthday parties. No matter what my accomplishments, I always thought something might be missing since I did not have all my relatives here. Indian culture is based on the extended family. My cousins were lucky because they were able to share their lives with my grandparents on a regular basis. I felt I was missing out on an important experience. The truth is that I wasn’t really missing anything. I have a whole extended family here. Every weekend when I was little girl I went to Oriya parties. I had countless aunties and uncles who watched me grow up. They have been there for birthdays, Arangetrams, and graduations. They encouraged me to succeed and celebrated with me

In truth, those aunties and uncles are my family. My Dad always tells stories of how the first OSA gatherings were. The OSA founders were just starting out in this country. They all wanted to get in touch with something familiar, something that would help them to stay connected with the home and family they had left behind. In those days before email and easy telephone access to India, all they had to call family were the other Oriyas they happened to meet. My Dad has told me about how they would crowd into cars and stay together in one-bedroom apartments with one bathroom. All discomforts were forgotten because they were with family.

I have traveled all over the country and everywhere I have gone Oriyas that my family has met through OSA have helped me. In fact, when I went to school in Kansas City, Missouri, my parents went through the OSA directory and called a family they had never met. This family went on to help me for the



next 5 years. From Providence to Kansas City to Los Angeles, I have never felt alone. There has always been an Auntie more than happy to be my Mom. What more could I ask for? I have had a family to love me everywhere I have gone.

I know each year's OSA convention will be grander than the last. The number of people attending will grow. The amount of money spent on the convention will increase exponentially. I only hope that people do not forget about the "good old days" and why the association was founded. I hope they remember the times that people crammed into small apartments sharing a bathroom with several other families. I hope they remember the joy they felt at feeling at home thousands of miles away from their homeland. OSA is not about who will get to speak at the convention, or how many dance performances one gets to present, or even how many committees one gets to chair. OSA's goal should remain providing us with an extended family in this country. As with any family, the important thing is having the opportunity to spend time with each other. I hope this spirit of family will continue so that I will always have a family no matter where life takes me.

*Dr. Snigdha Das resides in Perris, CA and is currently completing her residency at Loma Linda University Children's Hospital.



THE HISTORY OF REC ROURKELA ALUMNI ASSOCIATION IN NORTH AMERICA

Debendra Kumar Das*

PREAMBLE

The Regional Engineering College Rourkela (RECR) Overseas Alumni Association was formed around 1996. Presently it is known as NITR (National Institute of Technology Rourkela) Overseas Alumni Association after REC Rourkela was elevated to the status of National Institute of Technology. Although born in North America, the word "Overseas" had been included from the beginning to welcome alumni from all over the world to join this organization who are living away from India. A historical outline of the birth of this association and its growth up to the present time will follow in this article.

INITIAL IDEA

The idea of forming an alumni association was conceived around 1994, when I was visiting my alma mater RECR and had a discussion with Prof. Ajit Behera of the Mechanical Engineering Department about creating scholarships for needy and meritorious students of RECR by collecting contributions from alumni.

This thought had come to my mind after receiving the fund raising solicitations from Brown University every year before the Christmas holiday, which was regularly followed up by a telephone call from a Brown University student asking for a pledge of donation. I observed that Brown and other Ivy League schools had a well-organized fund raising system in place through which, they were raising vast sum of funds every year.

This fund-raising model appeared very appealing to me to successfully apply to raising funds for RECR. Therefore, during my visit to RECR, I discussed the following proposal with Prof. Ajit Behera. The Overseas Alumni Association will raise funds to offer a scholarship for a needy meritorious student each year. Prof. Behera should discuss this proposal with RECR faculty and Principal and form a Professorial Committee comprising of a senior faculty member from each branch of engineering at RECR to select the recipient of the scholarship every year.

Prof. Ajit Behera first consulted the Principal, Prof. Somnath Mishra and thereafter, Prof. Ashok Mohanty, who succeeded Prof. Mishra as the Principal during those periods. With their approval and with the consent of other professors, he informed me that a Professorial Committee was ready.



Encouragement from Alumni

Soon after that assurance we started raising funds earnestly. Our fund raising efforts began with e-mail messages to REC alumni I knew in North America.

In the early stages of forming this Overseas Chapter, many alumni had sent encouraging messages to me. Mr. Satya Parakala, who was staying then at Falls Church; Mr. Bhaskar Marthi, who was in graduate school in the Dakotas; Mr. Raja Sekhar Reddy, etc. (I recall they were REC graduates of early 90's) sent me many supporting e-mails. Over the years I have lost touch with them. But I truly valued their support.

Many of my classmates of the RECR 1972 batch: Laxmi N. Bhuyan (past president of the Orissa Society of Americas), Srinivasan Giridhari, Prakash Patro, Hari Patro and many more sent incredibly supporting comments to my initial e-mails.

Prof. Niranjana Mishra, a 1965 graduate of the first batch of RECR living in Canada, was also an ardent supporter of this association from the beginning. I even received an encouraging note from India from Prof. Deba Tripathy of IIT Kharagpur, who was very pleased to hear about the formation of this alumni association.

I vividly recall a message from my classmate Jaisen Mody, who resides in Portland, Oregon. He wrote " Deba: In the United States many schools are raising millions of dollars from their alumni; there is no reason why we can't raise a portion of that for REC Rourkela ".

MODEL

Buoyed by the enthusiastic support of RECR alumni, I approached the University of Alaska Foundation to learn about their successful endowment model. They receive contributions from alumni and channel them to separate endowment funds for various causes depending on the wishes of the donors. The Foundation invests those endowment funds carefully and receives investment earnings every year. From those earnings a portion is put back into the endowment fund to inflation-proof the principal and the rest is disbursed as scholarships or for other developmental projects. The earning in a good year supplements the earning in a lean year, so that the scholarships are guaranteed every year. Historically it has been observed that the principal of the endowment keeps growing as a result of which, the net amount for scholarships keeps increasing modestly every year.

The biggest advantage of this endowed scholarship fund model is that the scholarship will remain in perpetuity, long after the donors have departed this good earth. The scholarship funds will



remain as their legacy.

In the early stage of fund raising I was sending e-mails to a handful of alumni I knew requesting them to forward the message to their friends. In order to expand our e-mail base and to streamline the process, I sought the help of Dr. Laxmi N. Bhuyan because of his prior involvement in the Old Boys Association in REC. He lined up Mr. Ashutosh Dutta (electrical engineering alumnus of RECR) of Columbia University to be our mailing coordinator. With the mass mailing in place we were more effective in reaching a larger audience to raise funds. Furthermore, I could keep the alumni informed about important events at our alma mater.

THE SCHOLARSHIP

With the support of many alumni, the total amount raised for the scholarship in installments was \$2506 by February 2004. During those fund-raising periods, I requested Mr. Pratap Dash (electrical engineering alumnus of RECR) to serve as the Treasurer. He served as the Treasurer receiving the donations and helped deliver a check to Prof. Ajit Behera during a trip to RECR.

In due course of time, with the suggestions of our alumni and RECR faculty, the name of the scholarship became Prof. Bhubaneswar Behera Memorial Scholarship. The principal of this endowment fund now stands at about Rs. 1.1 lakh. From its interest earning, scholarships have been given to needy meritorious students for the past three years. This past April it was awarded to a well-deserving chemical engineering student.

IMPROVEMENTS

What we have raised thus far is a small amount of endowment funds and we need to improve our fund-raising efforts. At Brown University, each year's graduating batch has a volunteer who raises a contribution for that batch. If we follow that approach we can raise a substantial amount of funds for scholarships and other developmental projects for NITR. I recall our Chapter President, Prof. Niranjan Mishra had proposed a similar model a few years ago.

Additionally, the alumni who are presently business owners will be the best potential for sizeable donations, as the US tax structure provides an initiative to give tax-deductible contributions to educational institutions. Furthermore, we need alumni with strong fund-raising experience. With these attempts, I am optimistic that someday we will be reaching the levels of fund-raising that American universities are able to accomplish.



Due to my heart bypass surgery, I was unable to continue the task of fund-raising and in maintaining the linkage with RECR. Therefore, I nominated Prof. Niranjan Mishra as the President, who appointed Dr. Birendra Jena as the Secretary. Under their leadership the NITR Overseas Alumni Association is continuing its activities. Presently they are preparing a set of bylaws and policies and procedures for election of the officers of the Overseas Chapter,

OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

About two years ago, our Overseas Chapter received a request from the Head Office of our Alumni Association at RECR to contribute for the construction and erection of a bust of the founding principal of RECR, Prof.. Bhubaneswar Behera. Under the able leadership of Dr. Laxmi N. Bhuyan, Dr. Niranjan Mishra and Dr. Birendra Jena, \$1857 was raised. Now the bust of Prof. Bhubaneswar Behera adorns the entrance of our alma mater.

MY GRATITUDE

I personally thank the people who encouraged me in the early stages of the formation of this association, those who contributed funds for this great cause, and the past and present executive officers who have given their time unhesitatingly, although it is very hard to find time in our busy lives. I also thank the NITR faculty serving in the committee to select a proper recipient each year. Prof. Ajit Behera, upon his retirement had passed on the task of administering this scholarship matters to Dr. Saroj Patel. I am personally grateful to both of them for their service in initiating and in maintaining this scholarship.

Prof. Niranjan Mishra has provided the needed leadership and helped the association in his quiet way and deserves my appreciation for tackling the issues of bylaws and election policies and procedures of the Overseas Chapter. Dr. Birendra Jena, our Secretary receives my applause for his dedication to our association. In order to keep this alumni association informed and engaged, Dr. Jena has created an overseas NITR e-mail group. He has kept us informed on NITR issues in a timely manner. He maintains contact with our NITR Alumni Association in Rourkela and provides messages to them on behalf of our affiliate. At the request of our parent organization, the NITR Alumni Association, he prepared the messages for the homecoming ceremony that was held in April 2006. His message was well received at the ceremony at our alma mater. He has kept us informed about notable accomplishments of RECR alumni from time to time



In order to have a face-to-face contact and cohesion, we have been meeting in the Orissa Society of Americas (OSA) annual meetings. It is not the best way, as we miss out meeting our non-Oriya friends, however a partial meeting is better than no meeting at all. We aspire to have the critical mass for an exclusive NITR gathering some day. I have heard of small gatherings of NITR alumni. We met in California in July 2005 in the OSA convention. I am grateful to the alumni, about fifteen of them, spanning from the first batch (1965) to late 1980's graduates who attended that meeting. Many developmental projects for NITR were discussed, including one for the best teacher award proposed by Mr. Sandeep Dasverma (class of 1965) and a distinguished speaker scheme proposed by Mr. Raj Kishore Pati (class of 1973). I request the volunteers to support these projects and take a lead and move ahead.

THE FUTURE

Like any new organization, the NITR Alumni Association had a humble beginning. However, I am optimistic that it will flourish under the leadership of young alumni and will become a well-endowed association in the future, procuring substantial sums of funds for various endowments. Future funds will not be limited to provide scholarships to numerous needy scholars to continue their academic achievements. It will also help fund many worthwhile educational projects such as; student and faculty exchange, distinguished lecturer scheme and teaching awards for faculty, to list a few.

*Dr. Debendra Kumar Das and his wife, Katherine Anne Cross-Das make Fairbanks, Alaska their home, where Debendra serves as a Professor of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Alaska.

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SAVE RETREATS FOR YOURSELF

Dr. Nrusingha Mishra*

Do you feel sometimes overwhelmed by situations around you? You have too much in the work to catch up with. You are trying to keep things under control at home with your family. This is very common for people living in the western world. The external stimuli completely take over the inner system. You have got to watch yourself and need to go inwards to seek joyful quiet moments. You try to find for an hour specifically for relaxation at least twice a week. Initially you may feel that it is really difficult to get an hour of quite time. However, it is very essential just like you have to go to a doctor when you are ill. You do not think twice to wait for getting an appointment. This is just like an appointment for yourself to nurture your mind, body and soul to get these three connected with each other.

Tell your family members or roommates that you need quite time for yourself and request to keep the noise level low by turning down TV or radio. If it is not possible, look for a quiet place around you besides your home or apartment. It can be your neighbor's house, your friend's house, or your apartment landlord's place.

The very first thing to do is to turn off phones, television including all the electronic equipments around you which make sounds. Let your family members know that they need to keep silence. If for some reason it is not possible to keep perfect silence, please close your room and play some smoothing music. After all these things fail, put ear plugs and relax on a chair or a bed by closing the eyes and focusing on your breath. You may choose to concentrate reading a spiritually uplifting book if you do not like lying on bed or relaxing on a sofa.

It is alright if you fell sleepy while relaxing on the sofa or lying on the bed or reading a book. Then go ahead and take a nap without any sense of guilt or feeling that you are idling away your time. Make for yourself a cup of tea or any of your favorite drinks. If you are hungry, prepare for yourself a healthy snack. Take your time going through all of these thinking that you rae taking care of yourself. Spend time to notice the taste of each sip of drink, each bite of snack that you eat. Close your eyes and focus on the taste in your tongue.

You may like to engage yourself in some yoga practices or other relaxation techniques you may be familiar. To some, the name yoga itself may sound difficult. By closing eyes and focusing on breathing without any thoughts will suffice. Some times, just sitting outside and observing nature constitutes a very effective way of relaxation. In good weather conditions, mild walking outdoors in nature is a good way of exercise. After a mild exercise, you may prefer to sit down for listening to soothing music in your



favorite tape or CD, reading an emotionally, spiritually uplifting book, or finding a place where you can continue your writing exercises if you are used to such activities.

Finally you may choose to spend some good amount of time in massaging your body with gently warm sesame oil or any oil that they recommend for massage therapy followed by a warm bath. You may choose to focus one of these activities rather than a combination of all these. It is essential that after a while you watch yourself, if all these retreats are helping you in taking away those overwhelming moments. Make sure that these activities are pursued at regular intervals. Even it will be rewarding if you can take twice a year a full day event full of such mini retreats. You are the best doctor to yourself in managing your physical, mental and emotional conditions. Your awareness, spending more time in listening and watching yourself, and saving these nurturing sessions regularly will help the internal healing processes.

* Dr. Nrusingha Mishra lives with his family in Germantown, Maryland. Presently serves as a senior scientist at the U.S Army Medical Research and Material Command, Fort Detrick, Maryland. He is the Co-Convener of the 37th OSA Convention in 2006.



TEN TIPS TO RAISE A BRIGHT KID IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

Gopal Mohapatra*

"Children are a living message into the time we will never see" – anonymous

Several times I have been asked by experts in various fields related to child development to express my thoughts on ways to prepare our children to face the challenges of twenty-first century. In the past researchers have gone into painful details on the topic and have produced volumes of papers only worth recycling. The topic needs, what the experts term, a "thirty-thousand feet view" or what laymen call "the big picture view". Here, I am going to address some of these big issues, and challenge the reader to work out the details on his or her own. One must remember that there is no prescribed formula to raise a smart kid, hence a 'take-it-easy' approach supplemented by 'you gotta have what you gotta have' attitude is the key to prepare your stressed-out child to be ready for an already stressful twenty-first century.

Tip 1: Don't worry if your child is not a good eater. Bhata, dali, saga bhaja and janhi posta and other food types such as pasta and hamburger are not what your kids would be eating in future. They would be eating a buffet of Protein, Fiber, Carbohydrates and Non saturated fat through tablets, syringes or electronic chips. There would be no time to eat at dinner table then just like we have no time to cook everyday.

Tip 2: Don't worry if your child cannot speak Oriya. See, I am writing this article in English. If you are teaching him Oriya so that he can talk to relatives in Orissa, don't sweat over it. Kids back home don't want to speak in Oriya. 'Good morning' to 'Good night' have already become a part of life over there. So by the time your kid is grown up and does a 'namaskara' to his contemporaries in Orissa, he would get a reply back 'Take it eezee dude.'

Tip 3: Speaking of language, send your kid to "Chinese pathshala" rather than "Oriya pathshala". China is poised to be the largest economy in ten years. Your kid may end up in Shun-Gan-Zee city to earn big bucks just like we ended up here in the US. If you are working on having a kid in future, don't worry about Chinese at all. By the time he or she grows up, the Chinese would be speaking great English, much better than anyone else as they have proved themselves in business.

Tip 4: Don't mess your kid's weekend with too many activities – Soccer, Piano, Kung-foo, Dance, Swimming, Skating etc. He may put his foot on the Piano board and pick up the soccer ball in his hand and run. Just think how well you perform when your boss pushes you into too many things at the same time. Have mercy. The poor guy is just a kid.

Tip 5: Be proud of your kids. Because I tell you these kids are a lot smarter than we were at



their age. Imagine they are speaking English so well when they are just two years old! And we still can't. Don't demand your kid to be at the top. Because, being at the top is very lonely and this is going to haunt sooner or later. And remember this joke – A dad told his boy “You know when Nehru was of your age, he stood first in the class”. The boy replied, “Dad, you know, when he was of your age, he was already the Prime minister of the country”. Also make sure you find out what happened to the guy who topped in your class.

Tip 6: Don't demand “Share, Share, Share”. They will learn it if you are sharing at your level with your spouse, friends, relatives, neighbors and other needy people. At one party, when a gentleman asked his non-sharing boy to share, share and share a toy, I said “brother, why do you force?”. He replied, “What do you mean?” I said “Can I get your Lexus for a few minutes to get some beer from the store?” He stumbled and replied, “Are you mad, man? There is an insurance problem I hope you understand!.” I said “Exactly brother, your kid has also an insurance problem with that toy he is holding. So let them play and figure it out; time will teach them sharing if you are doing your bit well”. I never saw the gentleman again.

Tip 7: Teach them to say “WAO, WAO, WAO” as a bedtime prayer. In today's world, this is more important than any mantra from any religious book. WAO stands for Water, Air and Oil. In our children's time, good water, good air and oil will be much more precious than stocks, gold, and temples or mosques.

Tip 8: Use prudence as you expose your children to religion and Godly things. Tell them that God made the universe and man made the religion. With growing insecurity and intolerance all over the world, the ones who would survive through ages are the ones who are ATMA (Soul) believers. ATMA believers are Adaptable, Tolerant, Meek, and Agile.

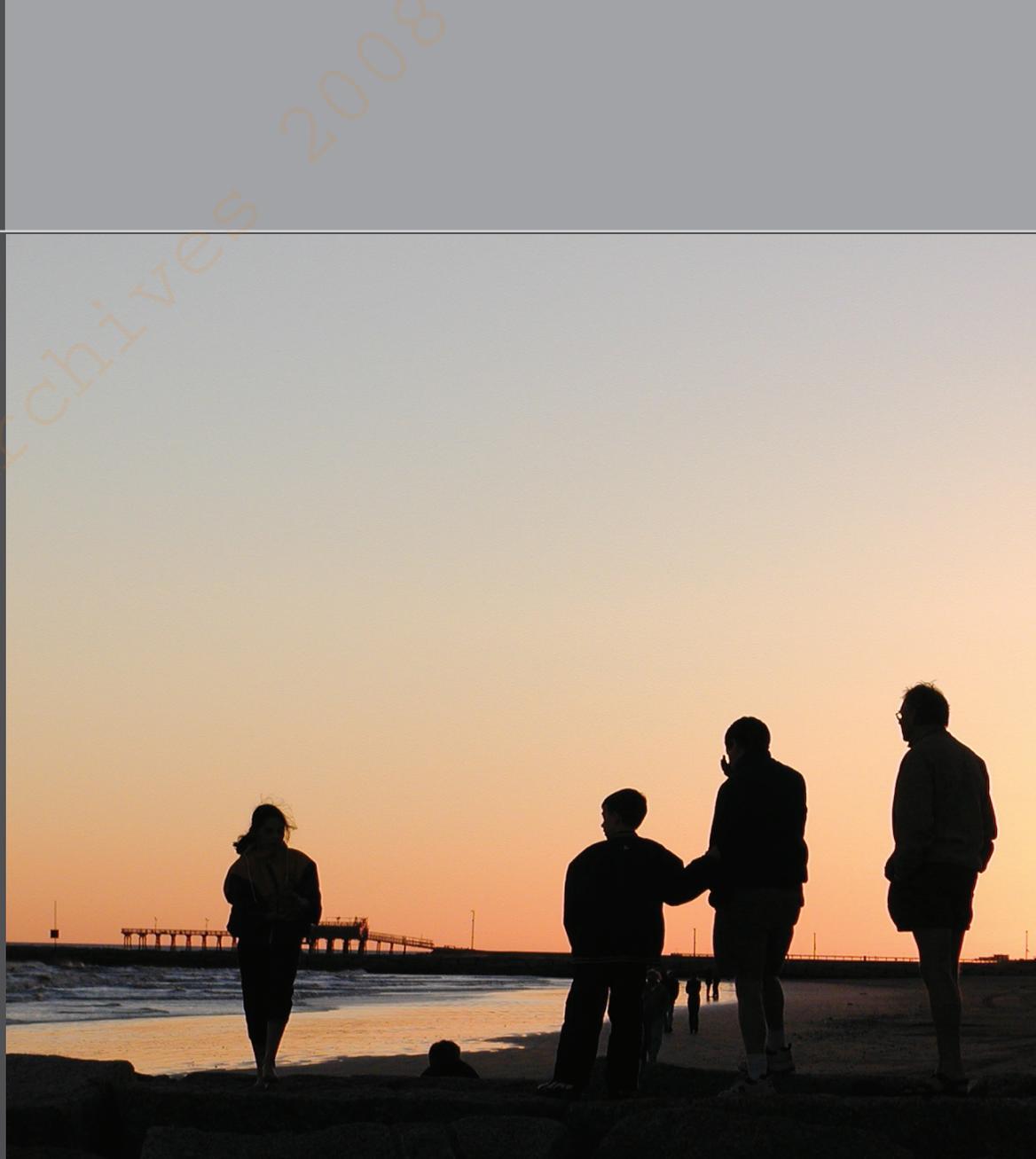
Tip 9: Through ages, people have prescribed different formulas for happiness and success including spirituality, health, and wealth. But give your children this simple mantra - the best and cheapest way to be happy is to avoid boredom. No success or wealth can bring you happiness if you are bored. Routine life kills life.

Tip 10: Finally, teach your children to handle 'failure' successfully. Failure happens when one cannot cope with the undesired outcome.

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Stories of the Heart



OSA Archives 2008-09pp



NO RETURN FROM HARADWAR

Dr. Prasanna K. Pati*

It was a cold, rainy and depressing morning, a typical January Oregon day. It was not a great day to walk, in the rain and the wind blowing. I began day-dreaming about my childhood in Sambalpur in the 1930's; very pleasant weather in January, cool with lots of sunshine. Some memories of those days have faded away, some are blurred and some are sharp.

It was late in the morning when there was a knock on my front door. The mailman had me sign for a registered letter. It was from one Dr. Chandra Kumar Dash in Detroit, Michigan, posted from the Henry Ford Hospital. For a moment, I couldn't remember him. I immediately opened the letter and this is what I read:

Dear Doctor Sonjee:

You may not recall me but let me refresh your memory. It was exactly fifty years ago that you came to the University of Michigan Hospital in Ann Arbor. I was three years senior to you at the University Hospital. We became friends. Do you remember me now? We visited Detroit frequently. I was your mentor. We had some nice times together and I fondly recall our many, many discussions.

Why we bonded as friends was probably because we were both Brahmins. You came from Orissa and I, from Calcutta. After a year, I moved on to Detroit, to join the faculty of the Wayne State University and was a Professor of Urology in the Medical School for many years. You may not remember, but I was the only child of my parents. I never got married. I have some cousins still in Calcutta, but I lost all contacts with them.

My parents passed away in the mid-sixties. I was widely known among the vibrant Indian community in Michigan, but I never became close to anyone. Medicine became my Goddess. I had no social life, was isolationistic and had too little connection with others outside my profession. Like many who become isolated, I became an alcohol abuser, but not to the point of impairment that impacted my performance as a surgeon. I retired in 1996 and moved into a retirement community in Ypsilanti to lead a meaningless life like a façade. Alcohol abuse was no longer a problem. India was slowly making a comeback into my daily thinking. I began visiting the Hindu Temple in suburban Detroit. My early years were making a comeback through my treasured memories of my family's frequent visits to the Temple of Kali in Calcutta, and the Festival of Goddess Durga, in Calcutta. In Detroit, during my visits to worship our Gods and Goddesses, I would become emotional. My mother was a devotee of Goddess Durga and my father of Lord Shiva. Perhaps, I was depressed, but, on the surface, I got along fine. I missed Calcutta. I



longed to go back, but I knew, the India I knew was gone forever.

Now let me come the point as to why I am writing to you. A couple of years ago, I was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and you know the prognosis. I will be discharged to a Hospice in a few days. I am truly sorry that I never kept in touch with you. I know, you are retired in Oregon. Do you remember that you were like a younger brother to me in Ann Arbor? You may not remember, but I used to introduce you to others as “my little brother.” Please visit me here, if you can.”

Signed: Chandra Dada

I read this letter a few times and tears started running down my cheeks. Then, I started sobbing. It continued for a few minutes. I couldn't understand why I would react in such a manner. Slowly, the images of Chandra in my mind became sharper and sharper: a brilliant person, loving and affectionate, stubborn, argumentative, outspoken, very much a Hindu at heart, but fully accepting others.

During our days together in Ann Arbor, a diverse University city, he easily mingled with anyone. It was beyond me why he took a liking to me, a shy and quiet person and a workaholic. Chandra had a vast repertoire of jokes and stories and he kept his company entertained. He had such an infectious laughter, so loud, sometimes tears rolling down his cheeks.

Sometimes, we cooked some Indian dishes. Even though he was an only child, his mother taught him some basic cooking. I particularly remember excellent fish curry, which vastly outshone my so so potato and cauliflower curry. A man of broad interests, Chandra also studied the history of India, of Hinduism and the Gita and the Upanishads.

All of this was coming back to me. I asked myself why Chandra would request me, after some fifty years, to come and visit during his last days. He must have come in contact with thousands and thousands of people during his remarkable professional career. Perhaps it was because we were both devotees of Lord Jagannath of Puri and because both of us visited this greatest shrine of Hinduism on multiple occasions before coming to America. But, ultimately, I had no right answer to this question.

Despite the heavy rain and forbidding weather, I decided to go on my usual meditative walk, going over the letter again and again, sometimes weeping.

The question was: should I go to be with Chandra, a man who is in his last days of his life, without any family members, and in a foreign country? I had powerful reasons on both sides of this question. After no contact for all these years, to go across the country to see a dying old friend seemed to border on insanity, as most relationships are fleeting, in contrast this one was based on love and affection for a person who was like an elder brother. The calling of my heart was the compelling reason.



Finally, I decided to make the trip to Michigan. Considering the sad prognosis and Chandra being in hospice, I thought it might be a brief visit. I called him saying I would be with him within a week. His brief response was, "I knew in my heart you would come."

All the travel arrangements were made and I arrived in late January early in the day. I gave him a big hug around his emaciated body. No word were exchanged, just tears. This highly verbal man was speechless and I was overwhelmed with emotions.

I visited him twice daily. Fortunately, he was mentally sharp, though physically feeble and understandably a bit depressed. The more we talked, though, the more vibrant he became. He even told me some old jokes that he had shared with me in Ann Arbor. We relived our days, in Ann Arbor, not very far from where the hospice facility was physically located, yet half a lifetime removed. We talked about growing up together in India. Even sometime, we would drift into discussing the Bhagavad Gita and the Upanishads. We shared our knowledge of the history of the Jagannath Temple in Puri and the mythology and culture of Lord Jagannath. I knew and he knew that the end was approaching, but we did not talk about it. In fact, he always greeted me with a smile. It was mid-February, on my way to his room, that the nurse stopped me, she gave him only a couple of more days. A profound sadness came over me. But, when I entered his room, his smile was especially beautiful. He was fully conscious. There was something joyful, something peaceful about him.

As usual I listened to him. He was frail and weak-voiced today; he talked about the message from the Gita, interspersed with quotations from the Upanishads. I held his hand, unable to control my tears. Then, he began to hum a hymn to Goddess Kali in his native language, Bengali, as if he was in front of the Goddess chanting, which he might have done long ago as a boy in Calcutta. Then, very softly, he asked me to sing a hymn to Lord Jagannath of Puri and I started to humming a famous soulful hymn, "Oh, black clouds, I am far away from Nilachala (Puri) and ask you to take my respectful submission to Jagannath." Then he quoted

Lord Krishna's message to Arjuna in a clear voice, "Oh, Arjuna, you speak sincerely, but your sorrow has no cause. The wise grieve neither for the living nor for the dead. There has never has been a time when you and I and the kings gathered here have not existed, nor will there be a time when we will cease to exist." Then he started chanting. " OM NAMOH SHIVAYA, I bow myself in your feet Lord Shiva" and I softly joined in his chant.

As he was slowly lapsing into a coma, the chanting became more and more inaudible. I was still holding his hands when the nurse came in. As it was 8 PM, she suggested I go back to the hotel and rest, that she would call me. Finally, I was able to drift off about 1 AM until awakened by the shrill ringing of



the phone around 7 AM. When I arrive, his face displayed calmness and I thought there was still a hint of a smile. I touched his feet and wept uncontrollably. There were many hospice staff members in the room. Some of his former colleagues and acquaintances were coming in. There were some people of Indian origin including the priest from the Hindu Temple.

Mrs. Phillips, the social worker, asked for everybody's attention as she opened an envelope and read the following Will:

"I have made arrangements with the Detroit Law Firm of Dickinson and Richards to transfer half of my assets to the Hindu Temple in Detroit and the other half to an orphanage in Calcutta. My body is to be cremated here in Detroit with Hindu rituals. I direct Dr. Sonjee of Oregon, to take my ashes to Hardwar, India, to be consecrated in the waters of our sacred river, Mother Ganges with full rituals."

I was stunned and in a state of shock. For a moment, I could not think. Excepting for the hospice staff, none there knew me. Mrs. Phillips introduced me to the group. I asked myself, why me? Why me? Why me? Lord Jagannath, did you arrange all this? Oh, Goddess Kali, did you have a hand in it?

Then, it flashed into my mind that Chandra had repeatedly told me in Ann Arbor that he had not brothers or sisters, that I was his younger brother. Only then, it became clear as to why he had given me, an eighty year old man, this awesome responsibility.

Chandra was cremated in a local funeral home accompanied by the Hindu priest's incantations in Sanskrit followed by a funeral service.

Early the next day, I collected Chandra's ashes that had been placed in a copper urn. I made arrangements to return to Oregon the following day. Several people came to the Detroit airport to see me off. I had been gone for almost three weeks. On the drive from the Portland, Oregon airport to my home, I briefly related the entire journey to my wife. I placed the copper urn under the image of Lord Jagannath in my home. Though Chandra had given no instructions on the rituals following the demise, I decided to conduct a ritual and memorial service with the assistance of a Hindu priest on the twelfth day after the demise. This was attended by my family and friends. Every day during my walks, I asked myself whether I should make the trip to Hardwar or if I should mail Chandra's urn to my brothers in India to take it to Hardwar. I knew at my age of eighty, I might not come back from such a trip. Finally, I decided to have a conference with my wife and four adult children. It was a very emotional conference, but their consensus was that I should do what my heart dictates. It was my decision to take this journey, even if I didn't come back. I told them it was a duty assigned to me, not by the deceased, but by Lord Jagannath of Puri. My wife and children might have thought I was insane in undertaking such a trip, and they would



have probably been right.

It took me several months to plan the trip. I had a nephew in New Delhi, who agreed to accompany me. Finally, the trip was set for the next December. I arrived at the New Delhi airport early morning on December 15 and my nephew, Sanjiv, was there to meet me. I was so relieved to see him. I rested overnight in his home in suburban Delhi and the next day, we took the overnight bus to Hardwar with me cradling the copper urn the entire way.

Hardwar is where our sacred River Ganges touches the plains. It means “the gate of Vishnu,” one of the Trinity of the Hindus.

My nephew knew exactly what to do. He made arrangements for hotel. He insisted that I rest the whole day since all the rituals were to be performed the next day. On the next morning, we were ready. The hotel was very close to the river. Both of us put on shawls with inscriptions of Rama and Krishna. I had never been to Hardwar. As we stepped out of the hotel, I could see the ancient hills of the Sewalik Range just above the point where the Ganges emerges from the hills. We descended to the river on the steps of the Hari-ki-Pairi Ghat, which, according to Hindu mythology, has the footprints of Lord Vishnu. Temple bells were tolling. There were thousands of pilgrims. The river reflected the early morning sun. It was cold. There was an overwhelming smell of burnt cow dung, commingling with the scent of flowers and sandalwood. There were Vishnu and Shiva worshipers in various garbs. There were all kinds of shops selling trinkets, flowers and items for rituals. The place was literally swarming with Sadhus, the Holy men, and pilgrims.

They were all chanting prayers for Lord Vishnu, Lord Shiva or Mother Ganges. I had been away in America for so long that, for a moment, I thought, this was madness.

We entered the temple of Gangadwara, the gateway to the river Ganges. We worshiped at the temple before going down to the river. All this time, I was clutching the urn to my chest. Then, my nephew directed me to a barber, who shaved my head before ritual bath in the Ganges. Then, we went to a priest who did the rituals concerning the deceased. It was all in Sanskrit. The ceremony lasted about an hour.

It was almost noon when the rituals were completed. The priest guided us to the edge of the river, my nephew holding my hand. We were waist-deep in the water and I was still holding the urn close to my chest, waiting for instructions. The priest was droning in Sanskrit, asking me to throw flowers on the water at certain points of the chanting. Finally, he directed me to empty the ashes onto the swirling currents, followed by more chanting. Then, he asked me to take a dip in the waters of the Holy Ganges. It was cold, but invigorating. At this point, I could visualize the smiling of Chandra during his last days



in Detroit. Strangely enough, only at this point, I had a fleeting thought that perhaps I should be swept away by the strong currents. Was it suicidal idea or was it the Hindu in me that wished I depart on the sacred River Ganges? Then, the priest handed over to me, a boat-shaped container made of stitched leaves filled with rose and marigold petals and sweets. He told me to place it carefully on the water. The waters whirled around and carried the contents away. The rituals of consignment of Chandra's remains into question River Ganges were completed as per his wishes.

We returned to the hotel as we were going to stay overnight. In the evening, the temple bells tolled. The pilgrims were visiting the temples. We too visited the temples, walked down the steps of the Hari-ki-Pairi Ghat to the river. There was a priest who handed over to us, two tiny boats of leaves and a small lighted candle and told us to float them down the river. Only at this point, did I first look up to the distant hills, then down the river with hundreds of tiny flames, and say "Goodbye, Chandra Dada." I asked my nephew to chant with me, "OM NAMOH SHIVAYA."

Several months after my return to Oregon, I was relating the entire happenings to my American friend, Gene, who had been to India a couple of times. He was familiar with the teaching of the Gita and the philosophy of the Upanishads. Having been to the temple city of Puri, he was also familiar with the mythology and mysticism of Hinduism. At the end of the recital, Gene asked me, "Dr. Sonjee, is this all a story you made up? I know you have been to India recently. If this is a story, why did you title it as 'No Return From Hardwar'?" I responded, "If it is fiction, the title came out of my heart. A part of my soul died in Hardwar and that part of me was consigned to the sacred river, just like Chandra's." Gene became pensive, he was trying to grasp what I had said. His next question was, "Dr. Sonjee, perhaps this is all true. I am confused." I replied, "Gene, I, too, am confused. You decide whether it is truth or fiction. I refer you to the Katha Upanishad, specially to Nachiketa's third question to Yama, the King of Death, 'when a person dies, there arises the doubt: he still exists say some, he does not, say others. I want you to teach me the Truth'.

*Dr. Prasanna K. Pati is a regular writer for the OSA souvenir. He is a retired psychiatrist and lives in Oregon with his wife Norma.

To fall in love
ପିରତି ପଥ ଖସତା



LIFE IS GIVEN TO MANY, BUT ONLY A FEW LIVE IT

Anukta Jena Philip*

I had had a bad day at the office: The usual politics of it all with no concept of right or wrong. I was feeling totally out of context and feeling so not connected to the real world. This is what my life has taken me to: A feeling of having achieved absolutely nothing day after day. I wonder where I chose wrong.

My mind slid into my escape pod and shot off to that place that I call childhood. I laugh today when I think of what I was and what I had become twenty-five years later.

I remember this incident when I was five years old and always playing out in the fields or building secret tree-houses with my brother. The sky was very hot from the summer sun and it decided to cool off, so we were caught in this torrential rain, and our refuge was our little tree-house. My grandmother had warned us not to be outside. She always knew when there was going to be rain, the stillness of the animals and birds were what she attributed her experience to.

I heard my grandmother calling us from the house, warning us to be careful of the lightning. We decided to make a run for it, back to the house to safety. The storm went through its usual coastal rampage, and subsided after the fury had taken down a huge branch off one of our oldest banyan trees on to our front lawn and driveway. My gardener and my mother were contemplating on a plan to get the branch out of the driveway, when we heard the shrill cry of something much unknown to me. I was curious and very eager to get to the source of that noise. My brother and I went through each patch of the grass, soggy from the rain and could not find anything. Suddenly the shrill cry went out right next to my feet. There he was a small pink, raw looking creature. I was afraid to touch him, but my brother bravely picked him up and decided it was a baby squirrel. I accepted the verdict, because according to me, my brother was never wrong about anything.

We brought him home; he was already looking comfortable in the palm of my brother's hands. I could see his veins through his pink skin and he looked hungry. I had never felt this much excitement in the five years of my life. We made a small bed for him from some old cloth and cotton, to give him the cushion. We stole a little dropper from my grandfather's medicine chest and made some warm milk to give our little friend his supper.

And then, my brother made the fatal mistake. He decided to give him a single drop of a multi-vitamin in his milk. He told me that it would make him strong and the next morning he would be able to walk. My brother was only ten at that time.



The next morning, I could not wait to wake up and see our new friend, only to find his lifeless, over medicated body, lying there. I pressed his little stomach lightly to feel his heart, but even I knew that he had not survived the night. I was heartbroken, my first close friendship, though only for a night and then the brutal separation. This can be hard on a five year old. I decided to mourn his death the only way I knew how, by giving him a burial. I made sure he was rested in a place where the gardener had finished weeding.

These were my thoughts, as I sat on the heating vent of the Bay/Bloor building, waiting to meet up with someone. As my mind wandered hopelessly for some focus, my eyes rested on a figure at a distance. He came down the wheel chair access and stopped near the bank machine and withdrew some cash, and then he came into my view. He was on a wheelchair that was not motorized and he was totally paraplegic. Every step the wheelchair took was such an effort on his part.

Painfully, I watched as he made his way, through the atrium and onto the other side.

For those few moments, I forgot my everyday life and was overwhelmed at the strength this man exuded that I lacked today. I was almost like my little friend who was given a shot at life, but gave up before the night was even over.

*Anukta Jena Philip lives in Toronto, Canada



THE IN-BETWEEN WOMAN

Joyshee Mansingh*

"A poison does not cease to function simply because it was drunk in ignorance."

Jonah Blank in *Arrow of the Blue-Skinned God*, 1992.

On her way to the bus, she saw a tiny dead mouse, no bigger than a quarter. It lay there on the sidewalk, with its mouth open and legs stiff in the air. There was not a trace of blood, no missing parts of its body. On the surface, it looked like it had died of natural causes.

Later, she was listening to Beethoven's third concerto in c-minor live from the Lincoln Center, Zubin Mehta was conducting the New York Philharmonics. She was sitting in an apartment on Upper West Side of New York City; the room was dappled with golden lights of the setting sun over the Hudson River. This was an apartment better than any she had lived in, all high-tech modern with tastefully elegant minimalist furnishing. She watched the brilliant autumn leaves drop one by one outside. Autumn was her favorite time of the year. Summer made her homesick for India, the winters are too desolate and alien but she loved autumn, its crisp air, the cobalt blue sky, trees with leaves of myriad colors of orange, yellow, russet, and red. When she walked under the trees in Riverside Park, the leaves seemed almost translucent against the bark and the blue sky.

What has gone wrong with her life? It is like a Gahan Wilson cartoon in the New Yorker -- something has gone terribly awry!

It all started with innocent small things; reading her horoscope occasionally in the newspaper in the library where she worked; glancing at her horoscope at the end of the Elle magazine while she was browsing the magazines at Barnes & Noble; hiding the brooms in a part of the closet where she could not see them; filling a kettle and leaving it on the counter on the kitchen; not coming back to the apartment if she forgot something, not trying to notice the neighbor's black cat on her way out; being careful not to walk under a ladder at construction sites; not stepping on a crack on the pavement; not opening a wet umbrella inside the house; trying not to spill salt and mustard seeds while she was cooking; eating a dish of yogurt before any important journey; trying to schedule all important meetings or interviews only on Wednesday mornings. If she saw a solitary star in the evening sky, she had to look for two more, a far away superstitious memory from her grandmother when she was a child in Orissa: *ek tara, manisha mara*, if you saw a solitary star, there will be death in your family! However, the Canadian part of her knew that a solitary star was a good omen: star light, star bright, the first star I see tonight...



At times, the twofold burden of two sets of omens and superstitions of diametrically different cultures was too much to follow. Strange things were taking control of her normal mundane, everyday life.

Slowly, the list of things grew. Stepping out of the bed on left side, putting the right shoe on first, being very careful with her hand mirror in the bathroom, one could not risk seven years of bad luck!; avoiding the number thirteen at any cost; worrying about the flickering in her right eye, which was definitely a very bad sign since it went on flickering for ever.

She stood in front of the framed picture of *Radha Madhaba* in her closet with eyes closed and palms together before stepping outside. The outside was full of perilous things that she had no control over, where events and normal logic did not prevail. Where old memories caused havoc, regrets of the past never let go but grew and grew to an enormous size like the monsoon clouds to obliterate any peace or good deeds of the present. Reality was almost bordering on madness in a nightmarish world full of only happier days of the distant past.

She started to read the teachings of *Manu*. What crime has she committed as an Indian woman! What can she do to undo those! She made “*manasika*” to all the Gods she knew in her childhood; wrote to her mother to do a *Nabagraha Puja* to appease the evil spirits who were controlling her universe. She gave up eating meat, fish, and eggs on Mondays and Thursdays. It was not enough, she became a total vegetarian. She was becoming the “Edible Woman”, a book of Margaret Atwood that she had admired twenty-five years back! She started going to the local temples regularly, wearing a freshly washed sari and after washing her hair, offering food and flowers to the Gods. She started praying to the Lord *Hanuman* for his power of “*sankata mochana*”.

The only troubling thought was that she had no idea what she was doing! When she was in the temples, standing with eyes closed and palms together, she had no idea what she was supposed to do! Was she supposed to ask the Gods to grant her favors, fulfill her wishes, and take her out of this difficult period of her life and give back the people in her life who mattered the most! Do the Gods have the power to do that! Was there a God! She grew up as an obedient and docile daughter of a religious family where there was a family deity *Radha Madhba* in a temple in her ancestral village. As a child, she performed all the *pujas* girls were supposed to perform for a happy future full of children and a good husband. She had obediently followed all the religious rituals and has fasted on all the occasions. However, why was she being punished now!

When she came to Canada, religiosity was extracted from her like a bad habit by the sheer ridicule of the man she was married to who did not believe in religion. Since she was too young and



ignorant to defend any of her religious beliefs and too embarrassed to continue it in front of a total stranger (her husband), she started to do the religious rituals secretly. Then, slowly over time, not being in constant touch with the Indian community, her religious rituals were getting weaker and weaker, though she never completely stopped. Meanwhile, the man who forced her to give up her religion had become a Born Again *Hindu*, spouting words and philosophy of Hinduism eloquently to the community!

At a low point of her life, she had smashed all the Gods in the garage with a hammer into tiny pieces. It seemed that there was no God as her world had come crashing down. This act of defiance and rebellion was to convince her that there was no God, or if there was a God, He was evil and malevolent to make her go through that living hell. Now she knew better, the sins of her past life were making her suffer in this life. Somehow, by avoiding all the bad omens; perhaps she could neutralize her past sins!. She was becoming a “closet” *Hindu*! She had again bought all the icons of the Gods from Little India on Lexington and Sixth Avenue, displayed secretly in her closet.

All of a sudden, her world was full of evil omens and she had to be consistently vigilant of what they can do to her. She could no longer control her life or destiny with rational thinking and acts; she had to rely on supernatural powers to rescue her.

She started to notice the advertisement for Psychics and Palm Readers on city sidewalks. When she was watching an Indian program on Sunday mornings, she started to jot down the name and phone numbers of the astrologers. Sometimes, her rationality prevailed; she had a smile on her face when she wrote down the name and the phone number of the plump female astrologer on the local Indian program, who got her M.A. in astrology from *Kurukhetra* University!

In the twilight state between sleep and insomnia, sinister visions of a desolate future danced in front of her. Looking at the twinkling lights of the city under an inky black night sky, she plotted how to escape her life. Past regrets and anger danced around her like flames, threatening to devour her sanity. Ominous visions of Alzheimer’s and fear of becoming a bag lady surrounded her like the dense fog of the English countryside. The “past” haunted her more than any person she knew. Distant past seemed like full of happiness in her homeland; the past that she longed to forget; the past that was full of bitter memories of yesterday. Her fantasy was to get hit on the head to suffer amnesia. In the old movies people got amnesia to forget their turbulent past, only to start a new and spotless life full of happiness. Her past haunted her because it was in front of her, but she was not a part of it. She can never share happy memories or pain with the people of her past in her present.

It was too futile to wait for the future where sorrow, pain, memories of yesterdays can be magically erased from the brain like in the movie *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind*. Sadly, there



was no “delete” or “undo” key in life! To her, her life was in limbo, the pause button of her life was stuck at a particularly bad patch of her life and it was beyond her control to unstick the pause button. She fantasized about converting to Catholicism, saying a few Hail Marys that will be her penance for her past sins and all will be well. She wished for a miracle, to have supernatural power, power that will neutralize her past and bring back the people who will give her a reason to live.

She walked around the cold and empty apartment aimlessly; the rain fell outside streaking the windowpane. She sat in the dark watching the streetlights make a pattern on the wall through the rain-blurred windowpanes. She had nothing to do, nothing at all, but to keep herself alive! When she was a child, in a far away country, she never imagined her life would turn out the way it did – empty, solitary, desolate, in an alien and hostile country. Perhaps, it has happened to her because she was so afraid of this kind of ending of her life!

Like a victim, meek, she waited for this reprieve to end. From time to time, it occurred to her that she ought to feel, abandoned, frightened perhaps, but she seemed to lack the strength to feel these things. She felt nothing – only, randomly, the vision of the dead mouse drifted into her mind.

Death is not a stranger to her. It had been tapping at her door for years.

* Joyshree Mansingh is a Librarian at Toronto, Canada.



Melodies of the Souls



OSA Archives 2008-09pp



TO FALL WITH LOVE

Arjun Purohit*

When I fall
How shall I fall?
Shall I fall like a fallen soldier?
In a patch of distant land
Avenging the honour of my king?

Or, shall I fall on my four, or six, or eight?
At the feet of a footless God
Asking for things I don't deserve?
Or, shall I fall like a thunderbolt?

Thrown by a God with angry mood
Piercing the heart of peace?
Or, shall I fall like a kingfisher
Diving into the depth of the tranquil lake
To catch the unsuspecting fish?

Nah, when I fall
I will fall to meet my mother
I will fall with gentle grace
Like a maple leaf glowing red
Undulating, caressed by the autumn breeze
Carrying no baggage but love.

* Clinical Psychologist at Kingston, Canada



CONTRADICTIONS

Malabika Nayak *

They say I must be strong to work in the fields and stand on my own,
Yet they crush my bones as they bind my little feet

They tell me I should be healthy and of good color
Yet, lest my skin turn dark, they keep me indoors and rob me of fresh air and sunshine

They write poetry eulogizing kohl-lined eyes and shapely hands
Yet they veil me and encumber my movements with gloves

They laugh when I am clumsy and teach me to be graceful
Yet it is I, who must walk behind and stay in the shadows
I must be fluent in the art of words, they decree,
Yet they will not let me speak my mind.

Understanding human emotions is a skill I must perfect
To soothe, calm, sympathize, tolerate
Yet they look upon my self-expression with disdain
They worship the goddess, deify motherhood, and celebrate weddings
Yet it is I, who must pay a price to be wed

Their insecurities are ropes that bind my body, my heart, my soul
Fear that seeks to control, to contain my strength
My only crime, being born into womankind

* Malabika Nayak, M.D., Ph.D. is a clinical Psychologist, San Jose, California



Epitome of a Heart

Anwasha Panda*

Like a dream
You can't be explained
Why you left
My heart complained:

When I never dreamt of you
Then you came to me
Stealing my heart and soul
Left me with eyes so stormy.
I search you in the green
But you remain unseen.

I sob by the spring
Just to silence my feelings.
I sang our old love songs
To remind you our auspicious past
With our hands in lock
All the obscene we trespassed.

The birds those murmured with us
Now quirking at me with fuss.
And cries my heartbeat
That why you malice with it.

The beauty of the nature
Attracts me no more
The waves mentoring the seashore
Are not telling our stories anymore
But my heart still gives uproar



Whenever in the distant horizon I see a dusty figure.

With the joy of victory
You are coming back to me
Holding me in your arms
That taking my breath away.

*Anwasha Panda is a Software Engineer by profession and is currently living in Lindenhurst, IL with her husband Mr. Baidehish Dwibedy.



STONES AND EMOTIONS

Anuranjita Nayak*

Cascades of waves shattered on him relentlessly...

Breaking into thousand rivulets.

Akin to an emotional meltdown!

Then loosing trace in oblivion.

Alone he stood this chilly night of winter.

No, he cannot shudder.....

Deep in the rugged body was beating a warm heart!

He would longingly watch the ships sailing past.

Morning came, with invigorating citrus infusing the sky.

Along came the busy cry of seagulls flying by....

Crabs scurried down him to avoid predator wrath.

He felt a puddle atop his head nursed a lush algae growth.

Suddenly he realized he was no longer alone.

Just a bad dream now gone.....

He was the life source of many

Noble he braved the corroding sea's years of tyranny

The warmth of love spread out from his core

He was not "just a rock on the sea shore"

* Anuranjita is a Pediatrician, currently living in Long Branch, NJ
with daughter Aarushi and husband Siddhartha



OSA Archives 2008-09pp



Between the Worlds



OSA Archives 2008-09pp



VINAYAKA

Sanjiv Behera*

I can't take you there," Pavan said. "It's too far."

"Oh come on Yaar," the pushy tourist replied. "It's only a few kilometers away. Twenty rupees?"

NRI's no doubt, Pavan thought as he stared at the couple before him. The tall, thin man's moustache was too big for his face and hid what was probably an annoying smile. His wife, dressed in a simple yellow salwar kameez, was a bit on the heavy side. Pavan looked at his two skeletal legs and sighed. He was dead tired from his last fare, and knew that this would be a torturous ride. But, he could use the money.

"Okay," he said. "I'll take you, but for thirty rupees."

"What!?" the man shouted. "That's ridiculous! I could get an auto . . ."

The man's wife pulled at his shirtsleeve. She gave him a look that Pavan knew all too well. The man fell silent.

"Fine," the mustached man said after a while. "Thirty rupees is just fine."

"Get in."

Pavan smirked at the site of the young couple struggling to get into the rickshaw's tattered carriage. He took a deep breath, gave his bony legs a quick rub-down, and jumped on the cracked, black vinyl seat. His bare feet pressed against the worn pedals and he was off with his fare, headed toward the Lingaraj temple.

Winter in Orissa was always bittersweet for Pavan. On one hand, it was tourist season. Thousands flocked to Bhubanaswer to get a glimpse of Orissa's historic city of temples. They brought with them cameras, bottled water, and pocketfuls of cash. In his seventeen years as a rickshaw driver, winter always produced the best income for the year. But, with each winter came the constant reminders of opportunities lost.

If only I had an autorickshaw, he thought as he peddled. *Then I could make ten times as much as I do now. Ten times at least! Someday . . . someday.*

Pavan rode his rickshaw through the various Nagars - Satya, Ashok, Bapuji, and Jayadeva, among others - until he found himself coasting alongside the Bindu Sarovara. It was said that Lord Shiva himself created the lake with water gathered from India's holiest of sites. Pavan's legs burned, but it wouldn't be much longer. He could see the Lingaraj's nearly two-hundred-foot-tall *shikhara* just ahead.

Finally, dripping with sweat, he dropped off his fare and collected his hard-earned thirty rupees.



He was too tired to take on another fare right away. A sudden and unusual urge to enter the temple complex rose from within him.

Why not? He thought. *I need to rest my legs anyways.*

Pavan washed his hands, feet, and face, wiped them with the small towel he kept tucked in his shorts, and walked in as he had done many times before. He crossed a gate in the carved perimeter wall, and soaked in the sheer size and sculpted details of the eleventh century tribute to Lords Shiva and Vishnu. The smell of incense consumed him. He took particular notice of the grand temple in the complex, the towering Ganesh at the top of its pyramid-roofed *jagamohana*, and the large stone lions on its *shikhara*, their mouths agape. Smaller temples riddled the complex as well, combining with the outer wall to form corridors and passageways of carved stone.

A group of workers congregated around some scaffolding at the temple's north face, taking a break from their restoration efforts. Ignoring their conversation, Pavan ambled into one of the empty corridors. Something about temples made him want to be alone. Religion to him was a private matter, not something to be shared with the masses.

Alone in a corridor, Pavan suddenly heard a strange shuffling noise. His curiosity led him through a maze of stone, and gradually closer to the growing sound. He turned the corner around one of the smaller temples, and there he saw it. Hunched against a carved dancer in the wall, stood a small creature the size of a child's doll.

It looked like a bird at first. It had sharp talons, white feathered wings, and a distinct yellow beak. But when it stood, Pavan clearly made out the chocolate skin of a human-like torso, with arms and legs.

What could it be? He thought. He edged closer, but the creature caught sight of him and fluttered frantically, banging into the surrounding stone wall twice. Its desperation wasn't enough for it to take flight. Something was stuck in its right wing. Pavan took pity on the small creature and wanted to help. He pulled the towel from his shorts, held it open with both hands, and cornered the specimen. "It's okay," he said reaching for the winged being. "I'm not going to hurt you."

The creature pecked at his outstretched hands. A sharp pain reflex caused Pavan to jerk them back. Blood dripped from his slender fingers, but he was relentless. He tried again and again until he finally caught it and wrapped it in his now blood-stained towel.

The creature was furious, swinging its arms, kicking its talons, and snapping its beak. Pavan stroked its wings and shushed into its ear. The soft sounds were like waves spilling onto sand, and eventually, the creature calmed. "It's okay my tiny Garuda," Pavan said. "Easy now. I'm going to help you."



Let's see what's wrong with your wing, Vinayaka."

He brought the creature closer. Easing his grip ever-so-slightly, he unwrapped the towel. The miniature bird-man looked up at his captor with stern, eagle-shaped eyes. Pavan caressed its wings. When he felt he had gained the creature's confidence, he carefully unfurled its right wing and saw what kept it from flying.

"Gum?" he said. "Of all the things in the world . . . chewing gum? How'd that get in your wing?" The creature squawked. Pavan pulled at the sticky pink glob. Stretchy lines of goo wrapped around his bloody fingers, and he ended up making a bigger mess than before. Removing the gum wasn't going to be easy.

"Kids today!" he sighed. "We're going to need some ice and water." He wrapped the creature back in the towel amidst its mild protests, and tucked the bundle underneath his arm. His brisk steps took him out of the temple complex and into the crowded street, where he bought an ice cold soda at roadside stall and put it into his pocket. He needed some water, and a conspicuous place. Scanning his surroundings, he turned to an isolated bank by the Bindu Sarovara. He hurried along the lake's adjacent footpath until he was far enough away from any potential onlookers.

Pavan removed the towel and placed the cold soda bottle on the gum-laden wing. He expected some kind of reaction from the tiny bird-man, but none came. It was as if the creature understood what he was trying to do, and gladly let him proceed. The gum hardened and he plucked it from the creature's feathers. With most of the gum gone (and a few feathers with it), he gave the wing a thorough washing, dried it off, and set creature free on the bank, where it stood awkwardly on its pointed talons.

"Fly!" he said. "Fly away! You're fixed. You're free." The creature stared him straight in the eye. It seemed cautious at first, taking timid steps away from the water. Then it flapped its wings once, as if to test his repaired appendage. Finally it squawked and sprung into the air.

Pavan watched its shrinking form glide against the clouds above. It wasn't long before he couldn't distinguish the creature from a common pigeon. He followed it with his dark brown eyes until it vanished into the sky. Disappointed, he headed back to the temple gate.

I should have kept it, he thought while walking. I could have sold it to a circus, or an exotic animal collector or something . . . I could have made a lot of money . . . But who am I kidding? That's not me . . . I don't want to be rich. I just want an autorickshaw to make a better living. Nothing more, nothing less.

He passed by the temple's entrance and saw some of the restoration workers that were inside the complex earlier, engaged in an animated discussion. "What do you mean it's gone?" one of them



said.

“It’s gone,” another replied. “The small statue of Garuda . . . you know, the one on the north side of the *shikhara*? It’s gone. I can’t find it anywhere in the temple complex.”

“Damn thieves,” the first worker said.

Pavan paused momentarily, but his senses got the better of him. *Best not to tell anyone what happened*, he thought. No one would believe even the possibility that the stone Garuda might have come to life. In fact, they might just accuse him of taking the missing statue. He kept quiet and continued on his way.

When he arrived at his rickshaw, he saw a strange package on the seat of his ragged, black carriage. Curious, he looked to see if anyone was watching before untying the string. He tore away the brown paper and gasped at the sight of two stacks of crisp one-hundred rupee notes. Thumbing through the notes, he counted the money. There was one lakh to be exact, precisely the amount needed to buy a brand new Bajaj, two-stroke autorickshaw. And underneath the stack was a single, white feather.

*In some circles, Garuda is also known as Vinayaka, similar to the Lord Ganesha. And as Ganesha, he is also considered to be a remover of obstacles. Sanjiv Behera is a second generation Oriya, and lives in Durham, North Carolina, with his wife Millie, and three children, Karina, Shefali, and Shanak



SHAPING MYSELF

Bagmi Das*

Footwork runs through my head; expressions, actions, the stories I am to depict dance around, igniting a new *josh* within me. My *ghungrus* begin jingling in anticipation of the rhythm yet to come and I lose all physical feeling as my heart races to the *taal*. I hear the flute whistling the entrance segment of Sajani Lo, an abhinaya depicting the greatness of Lord Krishna through the eyes of an enamored gopi. This song blends so much together—the words of my mother, the dance of my guruji, and the music of several talented musicians. As I prepare for my dance in our annual JOGA festival, I'm reminded of how many people it took and how much people had to endure to raise me to this level. I look back and realize that I did the least amount of work. From planning my stay in India, to teaching/choreographing my dances, to decorating the hall, so much work was put into a product of seeming perfection. It took me time to realize that this was not an everyday chore. I had been gifted with talented and dedicated people to guide me through life.

My initiation into adulthood was not like most others; there was no bat mitzvah, confirmation, quinceañera, or expensive sweet 16 bash. Instead of having a ritualized process in which some random authority figure deemed me adult, I experienced the maturation myself, making it a process to be remembered and cherished. Upon graduation from high school, I was positive that I was ready to take on the world. My upcoming Mancha Pravesh seemed like just another homework assignment and Carnegie Mellon was just an entrance into thirteenth grade. I thought nothing of the pressure or the sacrifices people were making and I thought of my upcoming trip to India as just another vacation. My take-off from Dulles Airport marked the beginning of an arduous lesson, hopefully to end in my maturing into adulthood.

My parents, typical of most Indians, were extremely protective of me as they saw me off on my first solo flight. They had not only packed bags of food, flight material, and first-aid necessities, but they also included pages upon pages of instruction so that I would know exactly which move to make when faced with any random situation. With this eclectic knowledge in hand, I took off, hoping to spend a short five weeks in India and come back to hang out with my friends, returning the same life I had lived for the past several years.

Being cautious, I had been assigned a guardian for the trip. Unfortunately, they became shafted as we tried to depart Frankfurt. By the time we landed I was left alone to claim my baggage and see myself out through immigration, I realized that anxiety was a given. Travelling sans guardian turned out to be more nerve-wracking than typically perceived. I was alone in Mumbai, speaking Hindi to the best



of my ability so that they did not discriminate against me as an outsider. Pulling my several suitcases along as I pushed through crowds of raving women and excited children, I realized that every attempt to hustle through was futile. There was an order to this mayhem and I had been left out of the logistics. As my phone card did not work, I had no means of communication with Bapuni bhai, who was to pick me up, but somehow, everything was communicated on the outside and I ended up finding my cousin and family friends right away. I was thus saved from further embarrassment with my fragmented Hindi and little knowledge of the deranged processes of my home country.

In Mumbai, I stayed in Anushakti Nagar Colony with my cousin, Titi apa and her host family; I was relieved to finally be with my family again and eating familiar food. The nostalgia pulled me further back as I took a trip to IIT's campus, the place where my parents had met, fallen in love, and birthed me. I was not accustomed to such an environment; this was one in which everyone lived within the community, feeding off of each others teachings and improving their own minds. Impressed, I ventured into the hostel in which I spent the first years of my life and continued forth to encounter families that had been my parents' best friends and supporters throughout their IIT days. Interestingly, they never treated me as a stranger. They did not call me "Bigyani's daughter" or "Naresh's daughter." I had my own identity, "Liti."

With this certain identity, I traveled across the country to Orissa, Cuttack to be more specific. There, I lived with my uncle, who I lovingly addressed as "Baba" and my aunt, "Mami." My cousin, Twin apa, was conveniently very close to my age and alone in Cuttack as all of her friends had already gone off to school. Of course, the true reason for my trip to India was to learn Odissi from my guruji, Meera Das. I had last encountered her when she came to my home here in Maryland. I remembered her as one of the most beautiful and talented women I had ever met. I expected her to train me hard, and force me to gain stamina and strength for my Mancha Pravesh. I never expected her to become a second mother. She, as expected, built my stamina and such with dance. Discipline was almost a new idea to me and it rushed within me, giving me motivation to work towards a goal. I danced for hours in 46 degree Celsius weather and practiced with her other students.

Dance is not a skill one acquires; rather, it is an eternal journey to perfection. I was enlightened to this idea during my stay with Meera mausi, as she nurtured me with *thanda thanda* Horlicks, movie watching sessions, and trips to luxurious hotels and such. She brought me to my most riveting realization- I loved Odissi. I may never attain the level of discipline Meera Mausi had to reach for her to have seen such fame and expertise, but I know now that when I dance, I am happy.

Though Odissi was the main reason for my voyage, I also made friends there that opened me



to new ideas and situations. There was a Sangram bhai, who spoke English with the thickest accent I had ever heard, but in a very adorable way. Together with him was Bishnu bhain and Kabuli bhai, who both had spread their horizons from Modern Dance to Odissi, attempting to better themselves with classical training. There was also a Polish girl there to learn from Meera Mausi. I enjoyed listening to her conversations with Sangram bhai as she complained about health issues and attempted to give us facials. All of these little things, Issu's birthday party, mehndi parties, sitting in on the modern dance classes, made the trip all the more endearing. Rickshaw accidents and the wedding season followed me throughout Cuttack, as I made encounters with bazaars, people's homes, schools, and Mongini's (an eating place along one of the Cuttack streets). All these characters enlightened me to how much I had and how fortunate I was. I admired them for all the difficulties they had to endure for the sake of an urge to learn dance. Thoughts about all that I was leaving behind flooded my thoughts and manifested themselves in the tears I wept during take-off from Bhubaneswar airport.

My trip concluded in Delhi, where I reacquainted myself with my Mamu and Mai and two little cousins. I think the highlight of that stay was meeting Maa again, who had raised me, both as a baby and as a preteen here in the United States. She seemed the same, but more cautious about life. I was scared to see her in such a state, in which she seemed upset by everything that happened and never satisfied with life back in India. It was an unnerving contrast when I thought to myself how I did not want to return to America ever again. Maa and I had switched ideas on what we believed to be the ideal and were unfortunately trapped in the decisions of circumstance. The unfairness of life hit me then, as I looked at her toothless smile with her teared-up eyes. In the oldest age, one does not experience happiness. It is a sublime idea, one not to be attempted by mere mortals. Yet, I understood that this was the concept of life. We are always striving for this ideal.

Now, as I sit here, two semesters into my college career, I cry because I am missing home, but I still do not know what I identify as a physical home. For me, home is where I find unconditional love, which is available both in India and here in the USA. As for happiness and a true sense of maturity, that is too intangible of an idea for me to conceive. I have steps yet to take and amazing characters yet to meet. These and ones before will be the ones that shape my personality, my ideals, my life and these are the people and situations that will take my legacy.

* Bagmi Das will be a sophomore in Carnegie Mellon University during Fall 2006. She is a student of Mellon College of Science. Her extracurricular activities include dancing, writing and acting.



WHAT WOULD MITHU DO?

Smita Das*

“Mithu, my Oriya name, can you talk to (insert child’s name) for a little bit? Tell her what you think about (insert topic: including, but not limited to, dancing, SATs, and college admissions).” This is a typical party conversation I often have with an Oriya Aunty or Uncle who has a younger child. First, I would like to make it clear that I enjoy these conversations with parents and their children. I see it as my duty as an older “kid” in the Oriya community to share what I learned works and what I think doesn’t work. I, most definitely, do not see myself as the perfect role model, but I do believe I have had experiences as an Oriya youth brought up in America that allow me to pass on advice that I think would have been useful to me. I feel honored when I am approached for advice and I love to share my thoughts. (I am lucky to have an older sister, my Snigdha Apa, who helped guide me along with my parents.)

Anyhow, I have decided to share my thoughts on a variety of topics I am “consulted” on at Oriya parties. Each section below begins with a question posed to me (Mithu is my nickname) and my response...

Q .Can you give advice to my son on college admissions?

I graduated from Stanford in 2004 with a BS in Chemistry and Statistics. As a result, some aunties and uncles think I have the magic solution to college admissions. I’ll share that magic secret with you now: *there is no magic solution*. What is most important is for a student to be true to his or herself; each path is individualized. Throughout high school it was important for me to be myself and follow my own aspirations. Additionally, while my parents fully supported everything I did, they never pressured me; my work and activities stemmed from my own initiative. Therefore, doing a summer program at Stanford or research at Harvard should only be a part of a student’s resume if these activities reflect a student’s own desires and goals.

Sometimes, people will ask me what I got on the SAT. This is problematic for two reasons. First, while I am very eager to lend advice to parents and kids in the Oriya community, there are some things which I consider personal and my SAT score is one of them. In fact, my parents do not even know what I got. Second, the SAT is simply a measure of how well someone performs on a standardized test—it does not measure one’s potential as a student. Colleges are seeking well-rounded individuals who can add to their academic community, not as a score, but as a person. Additionally, while achieving a good score on the SAT is important, it is equally important for high school students to participate in extracurricular activities.



For example, while I was in high school, I was on the school district board, the president of four campus organizations and an officer for two others. It is very important for me to emphasize that I did not take part in these groups for the sake of listing them on my resume—I took part because I believed in their causes and activities. I knew that serving as an officer and member would be a way for me to better myself. My advice to parents and students is to get involved in activities the student has a passion for and not just any activities to fill in lines on college applications.

In terms of pre-college school, many parents are under the impression that sending their children to top-notch private elementary, intermediate and high schools will ensure their success in college admissions. This may not be true at all. The strongest predictor of success in admissions is the student. Even the best schools cannot allow the worst and least motivated student to make it. On the other hand, the hardest working and most motivated student at a “bad” school can be successful. My sister and I attended a public high school in the San Francisco Bay Area. While the school offered a medical magnet program, the majority of its students were disadvantaged and the environment was dangerous. However, we both were able to attain strong higher education because we worked hard and had motivation. Furthermore, schools such as my high school receive special funds from the government and private funds (from Stanford University in our case) to give motivated students more programs and opportunities. This type of outreach is less prominent at advantaged public schools or private schools. Regardless of the high school, success is really based on the student.

I have a final piece of advice for parents and students frustrated with the outcome of an application process: do not let an unexpected outcome bring you down. There are a few reasons for taking rejection in stride. First, as South Asians are well-represented at many elite universities, schools are less inclined to reach out to Indians. In the end, the decision is a “crapshoot” and while this is upsetting, it is the sad reality. Second, a school may not accept someone if they are not the best fit; this is actually a blessing, because there is no point in spending four years at a place where you may be unhappy. For example, I cherish my undergraduate career at Stanford, but admire the undergraduate life (and my own graduate student life) much more at Dartmouth. While Dartmouth is in the Ivy League, I never gave it much thought when I was in high school. This is an illustration of how a place that is not high on a wish list could be a better fit for an individual. Finally, I am a strong believer that everything happens for a reason. We may not always see things happen as we expected them to, but eventually it all makes sense. I feel this applies to education. Also, hard work always pays off, wherever you are.



Q. Can you give my daughter advice on dancing? She is thinking of starting.

When I completed my graduation dance recital in Kathak, I was disappointed to hear several elders in the community ask me why I did not choose to do Odissi instead. Aside from the sheer lack of *Odissi* teachers in the Bay Area when I was growing up, I had another reason for choosing Kathak over Odissi and Bharatanatyam—I loved Kathak from the first time I tried it. I don't regret my choice.

When younger children in the Oriya community see me dance and their parents express their interest to me, I encourage the kids to try Kathak. Obviously, I have a strong affinity for Kathak and this dance form has allowed me to share Indian culture with many audiences at many venues. Kathak has also helped me improve my ability in modern dance; in fact, it was a Kathak/filmi fusion that won me the Best Dancer and Star of the Year Awards at the National India Waves Pageant a few years ago.

My best advice for Oriya youth (and adults) about dancing is to keep an open mind. Try a style with a guru and assess how much you enjoy it. If you find yourself waking up extra early on Saturday morning because you are excited about dance class, then you have a good fit. If you are not as motivated, try another style. I began in Bharatnatyam as a result of my sister's influence; after about two years, I asked my parents if I could try Kathak and they supported the change. Whatever the dance and whatever the style, if you are motivated, it will be rewarding. Classical Indian Dance provides its students with discipline, rhythm, knowledge of culture and vocal skills.

Q. Talk to my kids about speaking Oriya

My sister has always been much better than me at speaking Oriya; this is something I very much respect about her. Her ability to speak *Khanti* Oriya stems from my parents' refusal to speak to her in English when she was very young. This forced my sister to learn Oriya well; English came easily to her starting in kindergarten. On the other hand, I grew up with my parents speaking to me in Oriya and my sister speaking to me in English. This produced the difference in our abilities.

My sister and I also speak, read, and write Hindi. Though I did take a Hindi course at Stanford, most of my Hindi education comes from movies and my adoration for Hindi film songs. Growing up on Dilip Kumar and Madhubala hits, I was able to develop my understanding of another South Asian language and improve my understanding of Indian culture.

My advice on Oriya (and Hindi) is to start early and practice—try to speak at home whenever possible. Being able to master another language is priceless.



Q. Tell my daughter why she should not apply to medical schools.

No, I will not tell your kids that they should become doctors. This might come as a shock to some, but don't worry—there is an explanation. Choosing a path in life is a very individual process. Going to medical school should not be based on the goal of having an "MD" after one's name. Pursuing the art of medicine is much easier if one is passionate about doing so. Furthermore, the training is difficult and requires time and perseverance. If someone goes into medicine purely for the title or the money, then life down the road might not be too great. Explore all your options early on to determine what will be best for your future.

I took a path that allowed me to explore my options and reinforced my interest in medicine. After graduating from Stanford, I was admitted to Dartmouth to obtain my MPH (Masters in Public Health). 60% of the program's students are physicians. There, my peers helped me reaffirm my interest in medicine. Learning about public health care needs increased my interest in the field even more. I was lucky enough to explore my career interests before entering the field. This program combined with my previous undergraduate research helped me understand that I would like to get a PhD as well. In just a few months, I will start an MD/PhD program at the University of Illinois. What helped me choose that calling was a thorough exploration of my interests. Most importantly, my parents encouraged me to explore my future and find the best choice for myself.

Be it medicine, art, engineering, sociology, law, or any other path, my most important advice is to explore options and find the best fit. Pursuing a line without an interest or passion for it means having a job, not a fulfilling career.

Q .My son needs some direction in life. Please talk to him.

This is a question I am asked often. I am not quite sure why I am asked this, but here is my advice: most Oriya youth are blessed with the background to give them direction. It may not be obvious, but we all have talents that make us extraordinary. For some it is, others academics, and others sports. Whatever a child's special quality is, my advice is to embrace it and nurture it. The wrong thing to do is to point a student in a direction they are not interested in; this will only lead to frustration for the parents and their kids. Instead, take a quality or interest that the student already has (even if it is not conventional) and work with that.



Q. What should my daughter do over the summer? Classes? Research?

My advice for this question varies by age. If a 5-year-old's mother asks me this, my immediate response is to let him be a 5-year-old. There is no use, and possibly even some harm, in working kids constantly in classes. Younger kids should take part in outdoor events, physical activities or camps over the summer. Encourage - but don't pressure - them to read for "fun." For slightly older kids (junior high and early high school), it might be useful to take a light class, especially if they are unusually interested in a subject. For older high school kids, it is useful to take part in light community college courses, shadowing a professional, or an undemanding part time job. In college, research is a great summer option, regardless of your academic interests.

However, at the end of high school, I always tell fellow youth to do one thing over the summer: relax. I won't lie: college is tough. Therefore, it is important to enjoy free time before the stress begins. Take it easy, go to India, sleep, whatever—just take advantage of your free time.

Q .You didn't answer all of my questions!

This article is in no way meant to be a complete guide. Each person is different and my advice in this piece is based on my personal experiences. I often tailor my advice based on who I am talking to, since everyone is different. So, at the next wedding, party or *Puja*, feel free to pull me aside and ask a question: "Mithu..."

**Currently completing her MPH at Dartmouth; she will be starting an MD/PhD program at the University of Illinois later this year.*

Presentation skills

କହି ଜାଣିଲେ କଥା ସୁନ୍ଦର

ବାନ୍ଧି ଜାଣିଲେ ମଥା ସୁନ୍ଦର



A NOTE ON HYDROGEN FUEL CELLS

SAMBIT MISRA*

Hydrogen fuel cells are possibly the cleanest form of energy. The fuel cells work exactly like batteries but are more efficient. They are environmentally safe and easy to make. Hydrogen is a flammable gas and oxygen supports burning. It is ironic since water, made of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen, puts out fire. Hydrogen besides being the most abundant element in the galaxy is also the lightest. As a gas it takes up much space but it can be condensed into a liquid form when it will take up 1/700 of the space it takes up as a gas. Sir William Grove of Wales, UK, is the "father of Fuel cells" and invented it in 1839. The hydrogen fuel cell is very much like a battery but more energy efficient and as long as hydrogen and oxygen are supplied, it provides continuous power.

The fuel cell has no moving parts unlike normal motors. If it is used to power cars instead of gasoline then we will have fuel-efficient cars. Cars using gasoline leave behind unburned gasoline, carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide and oxides of nitrogen, which cause the smog, acid rain and even depletion of the ozone layer. Cars running on hydrogen fuel cells will produce water, which does not pollute the atmosphere. A fuel cell is a box with many cells, which contain an anode (negative charge), a bed of catalyst, surrounding the catalyst and a cathode (positive charge). Hydrogen enters from the anode side and oxygen from the cathode side and water is discharged from one side. An electrolyte contains positively and negatively charged molecules as ions and it allows the flow of electricity in the fuel cell. It is every naturalist's dream to run machines on hydrogen power.

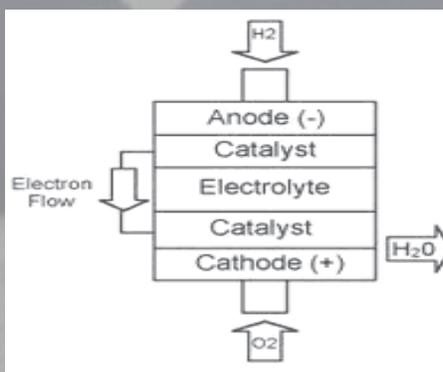


Figure 1: The Hydrogen Fuel Cell

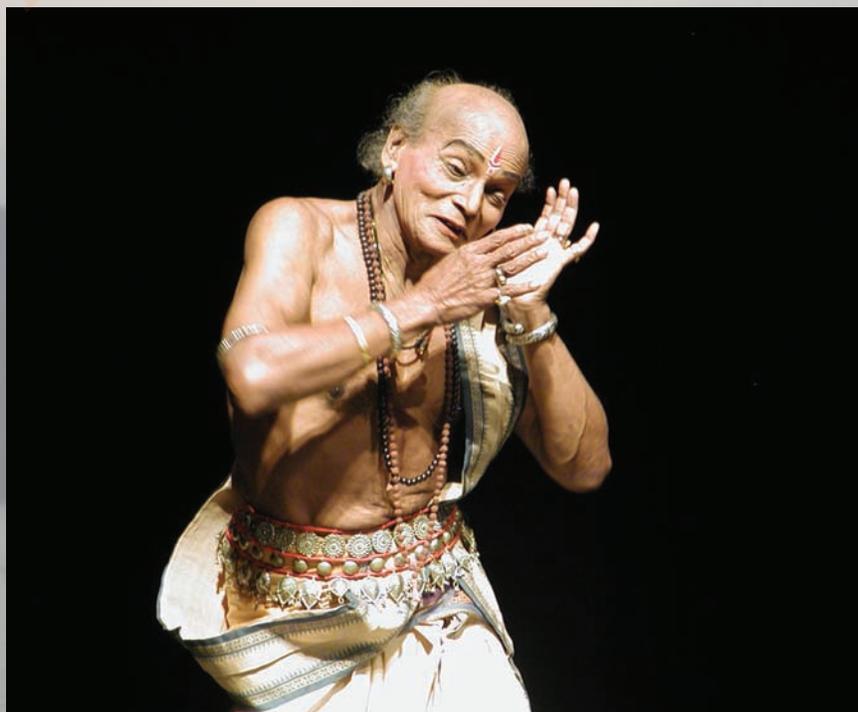


A Note on Hydrogen Fuel Cells

Any country can produce hydrogen from water using wind, solar or hydroelectric energy. So no particular nation can have a monopoly on hydrogen fuel cells, Figure 1.

Most Americans have a passing concern about pollution in general, but there is growing interest in fuel cells. Brazil, Canada, Japan, India, many European countries and the US are working hard to bring in fuel cells. Getting energy using fuel cells is expensive today as expensive platinum metal is used as the catalyst and there is a significant cost involved in breaking water down to hydrogen and oxygen. In nature some enzymes produce hydrogen and scientists are studying these enzymes in order to understand how they do so. May be someday we can harness enzymes and use iron instead of platinum to break water at a low cost. There are many efforts to commercialize hydrogen fuel cells. Some cars, buses and fork lifts use fuel cells. Fuel cells for providing power to the home will soon be available in Japan.

**Sambit Misra is an eighth grader from Randy Smith Middle School in Fairbanks, Alaska.*



CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Sonia Chakrabarty*

Imagine yourself in a dusty classroom, with only a fan to ward off the stifling heat. Everyone speaks in a language you don't understand. You are not in a grade: you are in a standard. Do you play soccer, or is it called football here? Or the ever popular cricket? The yellow school bus never arrives, never departs, so you must walk or ride a school bus to school. Can you believe that you have school on Saturday?! This is a small town's school in India.

Now go back to your own classroom. The air conditioning is a blessing after a sweaty play outside or rock climbing in gym class. You understand everything, except maybe what your teacher is trying to explain or a code your classmates are using. Cars and buses take you to and from school. Unless you ride a bike or walk, that is. How many sports do you play? Football? Basketball? Tennis? How many clubs are you in? Student council? Beta club? What about band or chorus? Are buying lunch today or are bringing it from home? The library wants your overdue book back. This is a small town's school in America.

These paragraphs describe schools in small towns. Yet, they are as different as fire and water. But isn't that a good thing? Do you want everything to be predictable, or do you want the unusual to be usual? The unexpected expected? The world needs a bit of spice every now and then, don't you think?

Now imagine the sun streaming through the stained glass windows, warming your face. People are wearing neat, tidy clothes. Creased trousers and skirts with button up shirts and blouses the basic apparel. The choir is singing heavenly hymns. The preacher lives up to his namesake, and preaches with all his heart. The Bible is resting on the podium in front of him. This is the typical Christian church in America.

Transport yourself to a spacious room with devotees, waiting for the *puja* to begin. The chants commence and you find yourself following along with each word. The chants are now for all to sing and the many deities are adorned with flower garlands. One person starts and the rest follow, you included. Colorful *saris*, *salwar kameez*, and *dhotis* are the basic clothing here. *Prasad* is waiting for you after the ceremony. This is the Hindu temple in India.

Once again, you can find immense difference in the same area. Is it really possible that countries can be so different in the same topic? Well, I just gave you proof that is exactly what happens. Religion is such a huge and interesting subject that, to destroy all the others and to make one religion supreme, would tear the world as we know it, apart, literally. Christianity believes in monotheism and Hinduism



believes in polytheism. There you have it in hard, cold facts: The world isn't all the same and, in my opinion, shouldn't be either. Forgive the clichéd phrase; it just fit in that environment.

The world is a fascinating (and the only) place to live. The reason why is: oh, c'mon, you know you know it: cultural diversity. As we all should know, culture is our way of life, and diversity means difference. The result is differences in our way of life. Just picture a world where what you do is no different from what your neighbor does. Everyone follows the same religion. Your schools are the same. Your houses. Your clothes. You. They're all the same. Oh, don't worry, you aren't an individual anymore. We just randomly chose someone and photocopied them about six billion times. Without cultural diversity, everything would be so... yesterday. Cultural diversity is the heart and soul of our world.

*Sonia Chakrabarty attends 7th grade at Avery Trace Middle school. She lives in Cookeville with her parents Satya and Sangita and her younger brother Sanjay.



FAMILY, FAITH, AND FREEDOM

Prerana Pradhan*

Many of my relatives such as my great-grandmother, my great-aunt, my great-uncle, played active role in India's fight for its freedom in 1940s. To them, freedom was not a mere word that many would use to express the end of school, or the beginning of Christmas holidays. To them, freedom was life. They longed to be able to govern themselves, to be free from the inequity the British placed on them. They wanted to be able to express themselves – it is a freedom they believed should not be denied. I agree with them. Whether you are talking, writing, singing, dancing – does it really matter? No one should be denied the right to be able to express his or her thoughts.

During the early 1900s, India was a country of terrible unrest, caused by the years of locked up hate against the dominating English. When the East India Company took over India, the British mistreated the Indians. They took the princely states away from the kings and queens, and forced many of them to turn against each other. The British also forbade the Indians from harvesting salt or using cotton for clothes. Instead, they harvested the salt and the cotton themselves, and made the Indians (who desperately needed those materials) buy the finished products. The British wanted to keep all the money to themselves. The greed of the British caused poverty...and anger.

The Indians tried to resist the British. Through the leadership of the Mahatma Gandhi, they boycotted cotton and salt, and withdrew their children from government schools. They campaigned and demonstrated, despite being beaten by English officers and getting thrown into jail. So many Indians risked their lives for their liberties...including my great-uncle, my great-aunt, and my great grandma.

On April 13, 1919, the worst atrocity known to India's independence movement occurred in the state of Punjab. Some hundred people assembled in a garden, known as the Jallianawala Bagh. It only had one entrance. The mass was peacefully protesting the Rowland Act, which allowed officers to repress opposition without being convicted of offences against the state. Then, sometime in the evening, Brigadier General Dyer came into the garden, and locked the entrance. The next morning, villagers found men, women, and children strewn across the garden like forgotten toys. They were dead. Dyer's army had shot them all.

The Jallianawala Bagh incident marked the start of a violent uprising. Peaceful protests were not forgotten, however. My great grandma, great-aunt and great-uncle took part in nonviolent demonstrations. My great grandma worked with Gandhi; my great aunt and uncle protested. During one protest, my great aunt and uncle were arrested and sent to jail. There, my uncle was born. They named



him Swadhin – independent.

This fight for rights and liberty has been prevalent throughout history: the African Americans' civil rights movement in the 1960s, the women's rights movement in the 1920s, and the American Revolutionary movement in the 1700s. Like those who participated in rights movements, my ancestors longed for freedom.

The most important rights are the ones stated in the First Amendment of the United States Constitution are freedom of speech, religion and press. It is a freedom that all people require, all people need, and all people want. Theodore Roosevelt once stated that, "Free speech, exercised both individually and through a free press, is a necessity in any country where people are themselves free." It is what my ancestors fought for. It is what I believe.

*Prerana is the Daughter of Chandana and Padmanava Pradhan, of Edison, New Jersey



IT'S UP TO US

Rajashree Mishra*

“What will OSA look like in 50 years? Will our children continue our culture? Will they still host the Orissa Society of America conventions?”

Those are some of the questions we ask ourselves. As a teenager, I feel that in order to keep our tradition going, it's up to us, [second generation], to link every Oriya and continue bringing them together, every year, for many more generations.. It seems as if we are too occupied and busy with our own lives. Although, we have many other things to worry about, ,I still wonder about the future of Oriya culture in this society.

When I was a small girl,I spoke both English and Oriya fluently, mostly Oriya. However, as the years passed by, going through elementary school, and middle school in America, I gradually stopped speaking Oriya. Today, I still understand it, of course, but when I start to talk in Oriya, I don't have my accent anymore. It's not too late to pick of where I left off.That's why it's up to us, to keep our language alive and to make sure our children and their children and so on, keep speaking Oriya. It's up to us.

Right now, my mom is not doing so well, and is unable to cook for us. I am the only one in my family that can help her, by cooking for our family. So it's up to me to learn how to cook traditional Indian food. When I learn how to make Indian food, this time, I can make my favorite, Paneer. Just tasting many spices in the Indian food, makes me wish that these delicious Indian cuisines last a life time. Our children's children should taste it. It's up to us, to learn the recipes and take a break from pizza and French fries, and start eating alu dum and puri. It's up to us.

According to our parents, we are their future, They are counting on us to keep us involved in OSA conventions every year, which continues reuniting Oriyas. This is our “reunion”. It's up to us, to host the OSA conventions in future. Why wouldn't I want this tradition to last? This convention is something I look forward to each year, taking part in contests, seeing friends and family, performing, and watching other perform. There are not many cultures that have this kind of unique and a wonderful event, which makes The Orissa Society of America so lively and different, “Our Children, Our Future,” is our parent's motto, “It's Up to us,” is our motto, because our parents are counting on us to continue our Oriya culture . . . It's up to us.

*Rajashree (Raju) is 14 years old and a gifted talented student at Rocky Hill Middle School, MD. She is the daughter of Dr. Nrusingha and Mrs. Bandita Mishra



DREAMLAND

Arpita Mohanty*

"There are some parts of the world that, once visited, get into your heart and won't go."-Keith Bellows.

India. My motherland, the heartbeat of my country, lives inside me. India will always be another home to me. Most of my family live there, and I miss them terribly. When I do go and visit, I try to cherish every single moment so I can keep them in my memory forever. However, it ends altogether too quickly. I will always treasure India for its beauty, love, and comfort.

Sure, the Taj Mahal is magnificent, but the beauty I am talking about is in the everyday life of normal people. India has a beautiful simplicity that most places lack. These people walk down the street barefoot, not caring what anyone thinks of them. Children dance in the rain carefree, only pondering about the rain touching their lips. Weddings and funeral parades march past everyday; people share their own lives with perfect strangers. Part of this beauty is the beggars on the street; these people just simply are. When I look into their eyes, I feel as if they can see into my heart. They have experienced it all: starvation, loneliness, and pain. Though it pains me to see these beggars on the street, I feel India would not be whole without them. This is the kind of beauty that can change a person's life.

Love envelops me when I walk into my mother's or father's house in India. My extended family is very close-knit. There is always someone to talk to and someone to hold me. When my family and I go visit there, we never want to leave. There is so much to experience, even though I have been to India many times. My cousins, aunt, uncle, or grandmother and I stay up the whole night talking about anything, trying to create as many memories as our brains can hold. This is why I miss India the most.

Comfort seeps out of every nook and cranny of India. Of course, comfort is received within my family, but random store keepers or people on the street always smile or stop and talk to me also. However, comfort is not only given by people, but by the smells, sights, tastes, and colors. You can never feel cold mentally; there are too many warm things that surround you.

India is my homeland; it will always be another place I can go to for love. I will always appreciate India for its simple beauty, love, and comfort.

*Arpita Mohanty is 14 years old and lives in Mt. Pleasant, Michigan. She is the youngest daughter of Dillip and Rita Mohanty.



MY RECENT TRIP TO ORISSA

Ayesha Kar*

First, let me introduce myself. I am Ayesha Kar and I am 11 years old. I attend 5th grade at Sampson G. Smith Intermediate School in Somerset, New Jersey. Last year, during summer vacation, I took a trip to Orissa. I have been there many times. I was very excited when I found out that I was going to Orissa on July 15th and shall meet all my family members. There is also another reason behind being excited about going to Orissa. It was eating Pani Puri and other delicacies in the streets of Bhubneshwar and Cuttak. Pani Puri was my favorite snack to eat in Orissa. My mom makes it in America but Pani Puri tastes better in Orissa.

My father's side of the family in Orissa lives in a small village called Gholapur. Gholapur is located in Jajpur District.. My mother's side of the family lives in Jagatsingpur. Both families love me equally and spoil me rotten every time I go there. I take gifts for everyone. They always appreciate what I get them and they keep them in good shape. I am the oldest daughter of the oldest son (my father) on my dad's side of the family. I have a little brother who came along to India as well as my mom. My dad stayed home. We all visited my mom's house and we stayed there for a couple of days.

When we got to the airport, there was an extremely long line for the baggage checking thingy. It was long because that Air India flight was the only flight that goes to India from the Newark Airport. We stood there for half an hour. My dad was with us until we had to go to the airplane waiting area. My brother thought he was coming with us, but he wasn't. I made new friends at the waiting area. The airport people started to call us to board the flight with our boarding passes. We all entered the flight and we sat down. My brother enjoyed looking out of the window while we were waiting. I enjoyed looking through the T.V. guide so I will know what we will be watching. The pilot said that we were going to take off. Everyone put their seat belts on and my brother started jumping in his seat when I had to put on his seat belt.

When the flight took off my brother and I looked out of the window together. He enjoyed the take off very much. Once we got into the air, the airhostess brought us some drinks and snacks. After that the screen in front of us turned on and we saw a show called Potpourri. It was pretty boring. After we saw that really boring television program we had dinner. The dinner was pretty good. Then we saw a movie called 'Elvis Has Left the Building'. I didn't enjoy that either, so I pulled out my CD player and listened to music. While listening to music I fell asleep.

The next morning, I woke up around 9:30. So did my brother. We all went to the bathroom (which



was extremely cramped) and brushed our teeth. The airhostess brought us Orange juice and breakfast. Then we landed in Paris. Something had happened to the engine and we were stuck in the plane for about 3 hours. After 3 hours we took off from Paris and were headed for Bombay. My uncle and his friend were waiting for us at Bombay. We watched 'Are we there yet' while eating lunch. I drew a little bit in the plane. At Bombay it was night when we reached there. It was very humid also. We slept at my uncle's friend's house.

The next day, at 10:00 AM we had a train leaving for Hyderabad. My uncle lives there. We stayed there for couple of days. After those few exciting days passed my uncle, aunt, and some other members of my family were on a train to Cuttack. Yes finally, I thought in my mind.

We reached Cuttack! There my grandfather took me to his house on a scooter. We stayed there for a while and then we headed toward my village. When we got there everyone was waiting for us. All my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins all were waiting for me. The first step I took into my house was amazing. It felt like I was in a whole different world. I went into the room that is reserved for my family. That room has an AC. In Orissa I was treated differently. I was treated with respect and sometimes like an outsider.

After I got settled into my cozy room, we all had dinner. We had Daal and Rice. It was good to taste good ole homemade food. My aunt who lived in Delhi had come to Orissa to visit us. I was very excited to see her and her baby girl, Lisa. Some other cousins came also. They were staying until we left for Hyderabad. We all talked and gave out gifts while unpacking our bags. Because I had jetlag my brother and I didn't want to sleep. My brother was a pain in the middle of the night.

I got used to all the people around me as well as the climate/environment there. My two dogs were very glad to see me back home. They jumped all over me and followed me around everywhere. Whenever it was evening time, all the women (including me) sat down and we all ate rice in water (pakhala) and mashed potatoes (aloo chuckta). It was delicious and mouth watering that I would have seconds. I love the biscuits my Kuni grandpa sells in his store. My Kuni (little) grandpa owns a store near our house. He sells everything. He lets me have free biscuits because I am his sweet granddaughter. We have lots of fun together; hanging out at his shop, riding on his motor cycle and etc. My Bapu uncle is one of my favorite uncles. He loves to take Ayush and me on motorcycle rides, lets me play on his cell phone, and many other fun things.

My oldest grandfather and I read Harry Potter: The Half Blood Prince. We enjoyed it very much. We got Harry Potter from a small bookstore in Bhubneshwar. When my mom, brother, aunt and I went shopping in Bhubneshwar, we had loads of bags. We shopped at the little stalls where you can bargain



for cloths. My aunt bargained on the cloths the most. All the shopping was for me! After shopping, we went to a fabric shop to buy fabric for some dresses. The trip to Bhubneshwar was fascinating. Then, one of my favorite parts of the trip came, eating Pani Puri!

My grandmother is the main reason I have such good drawing skills. While I was there she taught me how to knit. I made a nice door curtain topper. My grandmother loves to take me on walks. During those walks we search for these simply delicious mushrooms. We will look and look until we have our hands full. My mom and aunts would stir fry them and it would taste so good that I would have thirds. Sometimes we have to run with the mushrooms because everyone in the whole village wants some, so they will ask us for some.

The part of the trip I hated was when some of my family members and I had to leave for Hyderabad. Everyone cried including me. It was soooooo sad to see everyone cry. We packed our bags into the car and then the car started to move. I took a last look at everyone and everything around me, and a gigantic teardrop fell. Then, we made it to the train station, which was in Cuttack. My grandmother and aunt came along to bid farewell to us. We sat on the train and I said good-bye to my grandma and aunt.

After a long ride on the train we reached Hyderabad. We settled in my uncle's house and got comfortable. We all had chicken curry and rice for dinner and then we went to sleep. We had to stay in Hyderabad for a week. My uncle decided that he wanted us to see Hyderabad. We visited many places and went shopping. It was time to leave Hyderabad. My two uncles came with us but we had to leave my aunts and cousins. We were headed to Bombay. We went on a non-ac train. That was more fun. When we reached Bombay we stayed in a hotel. We stayed there about 3 days. One day to shop and the others to relax and see the places. When we had to leave from India totally, it was very sad. My Bapu uncle and Dhaman Baba (uncle) bid my brother and I farewell my brother hugged Bapu uncle tightly because he loved him. They had lots of fun together.

When we reached in America it felt like another universe. There is so much technology and gadgets that it made us forget about our homeland and traditions. That's why we should still keep our heritage and traditions alive from generation to generation. That's why we have OSA. Thank you OSA for giving us an opportunity to learn a lot about our fascinating heritage, culture and tradition.

*Ayesha is the daughter of Mahendra & Milu of New Jersey



THIS IS MY ORISSA

Ayesha Misra*

India, India, India. For some reason it's means the world to my parents and all the other Indian folks we know. Me, I'm doing fine over here in my city of Sacramento, thank you very much. I've been born and brought up here, and am what some Indians call ABCD (American Born Confused Desi.) Ha! Get a laugh out of that. Anyway, I've been text messaging my friends for about an hour, and I expect my mom to yell at me any second now by my full Indian name, Meghana, instead of by Meghan, which is what everyone else calls me.

"Meghana, come downstairs right this instant!" yelled my mother. Told you. As soon as I got downstairs, my mom gave me "the look". It's what I get to warn me ahead of time that I'm in big trouble. "Sixty-four dollars of text messaging in one month?! What is this?!" my mom scolded. "Sorry," I sighed. I slouched back on the couch and nodded my head to the tune of my favorite rap song, which I was listening to on my CD player. "What kind of music is that? All the person is doing is talking," said my mom. She put on some Indian music instead. "You know, the OSA convention is coming up, and I want you to perform a dance to a Hindi song there, okay? That's final." my mom told me. Great, now I was stuck actually dancing to one of these songs.

My mom and dad made me practice the dance over and over again. Finally, I was fully prepared. What a drag it was! The day of the OSA convention finally came along.

When we got there, I noticed that were many non-Indians there also. Hooray! That must mean that this won't be so bad after all. I was soon proved wrong in a matter of five minutes. I ran over to talk to a French girl, and I discussed all the problems that I have with my religion. "*Vous êtes une mauvaise fille,*" she said to me in French. Unfortunately, I have taken French, and I knew what that meant. It meant that she thought I was despicable. She was stunned when I coldly replied, "*Merci, mais êtes ainsi vous,*" and left. That means, "Thank you, but so are you." After this little drama, my mom called me to get ready for my dance.

When I went backstage, I saw how many Oriyas there were. Wow! They finally called my name up.

It was terrific! I'm actually beginning to like OSA. We had many other activities during OSA, and it was all really fun. I can't wait to come back next year!

At home, my mom went on and on and on about how she had told me that OSA would be fun. She said "I told you so" about a million times. Then she also went on and on and on about how great Orissa itself was. I wondered why she was suddenly changing the topic to about how great it is *there*. At



dinner, all my doubts were cleared.

That night we were having fish, my favorite Indian dish. “Meghana, we wanted to discuss something with you,” announced my dad. “Yes?” I replied. “We’re going to India on vacation!” he said, waiting for a happy reaction. “Oh, No! I’ll have to be away from my friends for like a month, and I’m going to have to eat only Indian food, and oh, how am I going to pass my time there?” I cried. My parents looked surprised. I guess that that wasn’t the reaction they were expecting. “You’ll enjoy it, don’t worry. And we’ll take a lot of things to keep you occupied, though I doubt you’ll want to use them after we reach India,” said my mom. “When are we leaving?” I asked. “Next week,” they both replied in unison. I pinched myself to make sure this wasn’t just a nightmare. It wasn’t. “Start packing,” my dad said.

The next week, there we were, flying on a plane, which I’ve got to admit, was pretty cool. Right when we reached Delhi, we boarded another plane to Bhubaneswar, the capital of Orissa. There to meet us at the airport were my grandparents and all my cousins. As we were driving through the city, I saw that it wasn’t as bad as I thought it would be, it was actually pretty cool! Plus, meeting up with all my cousins was awesome, I had 26 total!

During our stay, I tried all these cool kind of foods. I had a tasty Indian dish called *pakhala*. I was impressed by the Konark and the Jgannath temple.

The days were very hot, and I got about 62 mosquito bites. But it was really fun swatting the mosquitoes away with my cousins. I played cricket and got hit 4 times. I was having so much fun, and I couldn’t believe that I hadn’t wanted to come.

But as soon as it all started, it stopped. One fine day when I was organizing Shah Rukh Khan posters with some of my cousins, my mom came up to tell me to start packing because we were to leave in two days to go back home. “What, already?” I screamed.

I sadly said my goodbyes at the airport to all my relatives. Then, with one last hug, we left to board the plane. The whole time we were on the plane, I cried. “Don’t worry, we’ll come back next year,” said my mom soothingly. That comforted me a little.

On the plane, I fell into a deep thought. I thought about all the great things my mom had said about Orissa, and I now finally understood what she had meant. I realized how wrong I had been before to shun my culture like that. Now, I can’t wait to go back to Orissa next year, because I have realized now that, *this is my Orissa*.

*Ayesha Misra, daughter of Manoj Misra, is a 7th Grade Student. She has interests in reading and dance.



MY VISIT TO INDIA

Susan Patnaik Sen*

I went to India with my parents last Christmas. When I came to know that we are going to India for Christmas, I did not like and I started crying thinking how Santa would know where I would be. My parents told me that Santa can fly anywhere as he has his own little Sleigh. I had been secretly wishing to Santa to give me a Game boy. I was never been to India before. My parents were born there. I have my grand parents, lots of uncles, aunties and cousins there in different places of India. We started packing and I packed some of my favorite toys with couple of new books we purchased from Barnes and Nobles. I have all collections of Junie B. Jones books. I packed my new Bratz doll with her clothes. My Mom packed all my dresses and jackets.

The women in India wear different long clothes from American. The streets are crowded and narrow. The cars look different. I liked to sit in auto rickshaw and rickshaw. A man pulled us in rickshaw. But I enjoyed sitting in those two- more than anything.

My cousin sister and I rode a motor bike with my cousin brother 'Chitu Bhai' to get ice-cream from the street. A man was selling ice-cream in a big wooden cart. My brother paid him Indian money. The money is different. The Ice-cream also tasted different but I enjoyed it. There are stray dogs, cats, bulls and cows in roads. Sometimes they don't move and cars honk them. It is very loud there. The houses and stores don't have carpets in it and I saw some people were walking in barefoot in streets, buses, and trains. Even in winter, it was warm sometimes. They have fans in rooms and they keep windows open and sometimes doors open. People come and go as they like.

I made lots of friends even they speak different languages. I understand the language. But, they could not understand when I spoke in English. They sometimes spoke in Hindi to me whenever I used English. Then we all laughed. We had lots of fun playing in dirt outside in streets.

My parents took me to Puri to visit a big temple called Jagannath temple. It is huge. I saw 6-7 monkeys playing, jumping and some were sitting in the tall temple wall. One was sitting with the baby monkey in her lap and jumping with the baby also. The baby monkey did not fall at all! They were making screeching noises while jumping.

We went inside the temple and we bought 3 dipa for each of us and I lit my dipa touching another dipa my mom was holding. I saw Jagannath from a little distance and my dad lifted me up so that I could see him clearly. He was sitting or standing I could not see. Jagannath's face is dark black with big round eyes, His brother's face is white and sister's face is yellow. I wonder who cut their hands.



We prayed and lots of people were praying also. I prayed that I want to be big so that I could reach to big heights I can not reach now. Then my mom and dad took me to Laxmi temple who is the Goddess of money. I prayed her to get lots of dollars so if Santa would not give me a Game boy I can buy it. My dad took us to Ganesh who has elephant face and he is God of Study, I prayed him that when I come back I could be able to bit Alexis in vocabulary. I saw one person was crying while praying. I asked my mother about that and she said she did not know why.

We went to beach and I played there little bit. It is different there than our beach here. They have lot of snacks sold in the beach itself. I bought a nice shell and a bead necklace with tiny shells in it. We came back to my grand parent's home in the evening. It was 25th of December next morning. Guess what, I found the Game boy next to my pillow. I was confused did Santa come here? Or did Jagannath or Laxmi give me the Game boy? My grand father told me that it must be from Jagannath. I was so happy.

People eat lots of rice and dal there. They did not have McDonalds or Wendy's. I did not like the fast food in India, except Samosas. There are no Kid's Meal and no toys like Sponge Bob or any kind toy comes with the kid's meal in fast food places. At night, my mom and dad put the mosquito net over me which looked like a rectangle. Three times I was bitten by mosquitoes. I am really scared of them. But I like to go to India again. The people love me there and I like to be with my cousins and with my grand parents. I think I got more love in India than here. I can not wait to go to India again. In the night, I had a dream and I was in India sitting in my grand father's lap.

*Susan is the daughter of Dr. Sulakshana Patnaik and Dr. Shukdeb Sen in Daytona Beach. She is in 2nd grade Horizon Elem. School. She drew the sketches shown below.



PONDERING THE PROGRESS IN INDIA

Soman Panigrahi*

The country, which we are all closely linked to, is classified as a developing country by the United Nations, and we would all like to believe that the government of this nation is working well to bring itself up to par with the great super power, the United States of America. But are these developmental measures really getting the country and its people anywhere, or are the true values of its culture being compromised in the name of 'becoming more Western'?

India's civilization dates back over 9000 years, starting in the Indus Valley. Due to the acceptance of religions and traditions of many, the culture and people of the Indian Subcontinent is exceptionally rich and vibrant, and unique. For hundreds of years the people of the subcontinent have not allowed colonists and invaders to expunge their ethnicity, but now this assimilation is happening almost cordially.

We are all well acquainted with the fact that multi-national corporations are setting up offices in cities such as Bangalore and Mumbai, and these projects are helping to boost India's economic stature. Now that this has been going on for the past few years, and many companies, namely TCS or Infosys, are investing billions of dollars in these endeavors. Subsequently, one would think that the Indian economy would be much better in ten years. This would also mean that the Indian government is equipped with a good amount of monetary resources, which could be used to help develop the many facets of the nation. Reputable sources, such as USAToday and BBC have declared India and China as the two next economic powerhouses of the world. But what does India have to show for it?

When one visits India, sure there are five star hotels with smartly attired valets parking someone's BMW 7-series, but once you take a step outside of the vicinity, they are met with the polluted streets, filled with poverty stricken families who have little income, if any. Where is all the acquired money that could be used to help balance this economic situation?

Coincidentally, we hear about scandals involving Members of Parliament, government officers and bureaucrats pocketing hard-earned money, and crores being squandered unnecessarily. Immediately people begin to shake their heads disapprovingly at the crooked individuals who are always seen living lavishly at some one else's expense.

Yet, the corrupt government should not be the only culprit for India's inefficiency. The people of India have a very strange perspective on their country and the rest of the world. The media (which



includes sports, movies, television and advertising) portrays the ideal life of those who live in 'America'. Suddenly, in India there are huge New Years bashes, Valentine's Day celebrations and Christmas Parties (keeping in mind that only 2.3% of the entire population is actually Christian). The middle and upper classes now enjoy eating out at so-called Chinese restaurants, and watch foreign movies and television series. Now, there is nothing wrong with doing all these things, as I personally take part in all of them. However, the cultural celebrations and traditions which are unique to the many localities of India are being slowly disregarded, and are being given less importance in some cases. The question we must ask is that, could this development be having a negative impact on the country and its people?

On my last trip to India (winter of '05/'06), I saw the effects of economic progress firsthand. In the city of Baleshwar, which has an official population of over 2 million (2001), it was evident that urban sprawl was taking place, but as much as it was spreading out, it was also growing inwards, crowding the city. People from nearby villages who had found work in the city wanted to live there, and as they got wealthier, also established their home as well. Now, instead of having a charted method of urban growth with numbered residential or commercial lots ordered in a grid pattern (which is present in North America) urban growth in India seems to me as having no organisation whatsoever. Houses are built upon houses, slowly encroaching onto the roads, which are already overcrowded and sometimes non-existent, to the point that only pedestrian travel is possible. Speaking about roads, the new NH-5 system which connects Chennai to Kolkata, is a commendable endeavour on the part of the Ministry of Shipping, Road Transport and Highways, and has been completed entirely except for some major sections. All of West Bengal has fully implemented the highway system as well as Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu to the south, excluding the state of Orissa. This could indeed be the result of corruption in the government leading to the misuse of the fruits of economic development. Or it could be due to the inefficiency of the government of Orissa.

On the flip side, when the government successfully employs the produce of the economy, it can allow regions to flourish. For example, the capital city of New Delhi now has an intricate road system, fully adorned with signs and lanes, resembling those of major cities in North America. This is the ideal usage of monetary resources, and does not compromise Indian culture. There is a 'but' to the development of this city as well, however. As is with many developing countries around the world, there is a huge gap between the classes. I saw businessmen and diplomats sitting comfortably in their Mercedes-Benz E 280, without a worry in the world, while beggar children come up to their windows and try to sell them some pens or assorted magazines. Why is the wealth not spread so there is not a huge contrast in the society?



My main message here is not to demean India, its people, and its government, nor to say India should not make advancements in technology and civilization. I am simply conveying my opinion on the current state of affairs to the non-resident Indians. Since we ourselves are living in a foreign country, I believe that we are misled by the media into thinking that India is stampeding through, great achievement by achievement. We always hear about extremely advanced high school tests (which are not at all efficient and are ridiculously hard) and Indian students scoring highly in competitions. This is only but a minute pixel of the whole picture. To create a balanced direction of development, we must try to involve ourselves as much as possible and go to the root of the issues and help come up with solutions. I care about India's development and prosperity because it is my second home other than Canada, and all of my extended family resides in Orissa, and I want the best for them. India should come to the right track and if its engines are fuelled properly, it will indeed become one of the next powerhouses of the world, bridge the gap between the rich and poor, and all the while still keep its culture intact.

*Soman Panigrahi is a Grade 10 student at the University of Toronto Schools.



WAITING FOR MAMU

Pallavi Raut Sodhi*

Anticipation. Excitement. Impatience.... All these feelings were present in eight-year-old Babul's mind. His uncle Bikram Mamu was to arrive from Bombay today. Bikram Mamu was Babul's idol: handsome, distinguished, and so loving. He visited Bhubaneswar once a year, but news of his impending visit would spread throughout the neighborhood, thanks to Babul's excitement and announcements. (Had All India Radio known then of Babul's broadcasting abilities, they would have probably hired him right away.)

"Ma, what time is Mamu's train going to reach Bhubaneswar?" Babul asked.

"Didn't you ask me this question ten minutes back? I said 5pm." Ma Nirupama said lovingly. She had grown accustomed to Babul's excitement that escalated by each passing moment up until her brother arrived.

"But look, Ma. It is already 6:30pm. The train would have arrived long ago. Why is Mamu not here as yet?" Babul said impatiently.

"Babul: give my brother some time to reach his own home in a rickshaw, freshen up and then come here," Ma said, only to be interrupted by a gentle knock on the door. That was enough to set Babul into action. He ran to open the door...and there was his favorite Bikram Mamu, in a starched white *dhoti kurta*, carrying a suitcase and shoulder bag. Babul touched his uncle's feet, but he had not even finished this act of respect, when Bikram Mamu swirled him up and gave him a hug. "Oh, so my boy is getting not just taller but heavier too. Hmm! I think the shirt I got for you may already be small for you," Bikram Mamu said affectionately.

Nirupama Ma intervened, "Bikram, why do you spoil him so much?" But Bikram Mamu ignored her plea, (not that he could have responded anyway, because, he was already being dragged by his nephew into the house.) Babul's sisters, were all shyly waiting behind the door, and greeted their uncle, though in a less vociferous manner than their brother. The next hour was filled with chatter, excitement and babble, as Bikram mamu opened his suitcase. It was as if Pandora's Box had opened.... there were saris, sweets, namkeen and fragrant lavender soaps (a scent that Babul associated only with Bikram Mamu). And then out came the things and the moment Babul was waiting for. It was almost as if half the suitcase was meant for Babul and the remainder for the rest of the family. Being the youngest had its advantages, especially if he studied well, and stood first in his class. Bikram Mamu always rewarded him.



This year, like every year, there was a crisp white shirt for Babul. And what was this? A Parker fountain pen? Wow! Fountain pens were what adults used. And a Parker? Babul had only heard of Parker. Wait till he showed it to all his friends. They would be green with envy.... and as Babul entered his dream world, Ma's scream invited everyone to gather for dinner.

"Tell me about Bombay, Mamu," asked Babul excitedly. "Can one really get a crick in the neck trying to look up at the towers there? Everyone must be really rich there? Can you get things from anywhere in the world in Bombay? Are all people really stylish...?" Babul went on with his incessant spate of questions, much to the dismay of his sisters, who were trying to appear sophisticated and eat in quiet and decorum. Bikram Mamu laughed aloud. He hated to dispel his dear nephew's myths about Bombay. He answered all of Babul's questions patiently.... by now he had got accustomed to them.

Ten years later

Babul was having a heated argument with his mother. The topic of debate: Bombay was the city of his dreams. That was where Babul wanted to finish his graduation and fulfill his dreams. And become like his Bikram Mamu of course. Ma's question was where he would stay. The answer to the question was quite obvious in Babul's mind, at Bikram Mamu's house of course. Ma said could make Babul understand that Bikram Mamu may not have time for his nephew. After all, he had a life of his own. He was busy now, more than ever, and had more responsibilities. He was now married, at a very late stage of life, and they had a baby girl Debajani, who would be Babul's little cousin. In Babul's mind, nothing had happened to affect Bikram Mamu's affection or affluence. Who else would come to visit them all every year, (in his crisp white *dhoti kurta* of course), and laden with gifts? Bikram Mamu would readily take care of his favorite nephew.

Nirupama could not dissuade her son from making a trip to Bombay. After all, an 18 year old could ask for worse things. Her boy was just asking to go to a city where her brother lived. At least there would be someone to take care of him. So she let him go, taking a promise from Babul, that he would return within about a week. And decide subsequently what to do next with life.

Babul left Bhubaneswar, in joy and in anticipation. Of course all his friends came to see him off. After all, Babul was going to the Big City,: the city paved with gold! They were already dying to see him back, laden with gifts for all of them and interesting stories to tell.



The City of Dreams

The Bombay Churchgate station was crowded. Babul had never seen so many people in his life. Babul stepped out of his bogie, and looked around for his uncle. He unwittingly was searching for the familiar starched white dhoti and kurta. But Bikram Mamu was nowhere to be seen. All of a sudden, he heard a familiar voice from behind. "Babula, at last you come to Bombay..." Babul turned around. Who was this? This could not be his Bikram Mamu. He looked tired and did he see some grey hair too? Why, his kurta was not even white. It was colored and crumpled. Gone was the dhoti. In its place, were grey trousers. Babul was at loss for words momentarily until Bikram Mamu said. "What happened, son? Is everything okay?" Babul reassured his mamu that all was fine, and respectfully touched his uncle's feet. He then fumbled, by way of explanation, "I...I...I guess I was looking out for the white dhoti and kurta..." Bikram Mamu laughed aloud, and said, "White in Bombay? Son, the train fumes would transform all whites to black. And I do not have a fancy car to take me around. I travel in the bus and train to go to work and return home. White is for my hometown..." and saying this, he ushered Babul to the bus station, amidst the crowd of Churchgate station.

A local train ride and two bus changes later, a much tired, but quite awake Babul reached his Bikram Mamu's home. What was this? Bikram Mamu lived in this small apartment? Uma Maain came out to greet Babul enthusiastically and disappeared into the kitchen. In a corner of the living room, Baby Debajani slept peacefully, despite the noise streaming in from the open windows.

Dinner was a simple affair, probably too simple. Bikram Mamu ate chidwa and banana out of a kansa bowl. Why, that was the food Babul's mother ate daily. Babul thought there would be a feast on the table: delicacies like fish and chicken and aamba khatta. Uma Maain brought Babul's plate: it was laden with rice and fish and....aamba khatta. It took Babul a few minutes to realize that his plate was different from the rest. Why? Not realizing he had voiced the question aloud. "Oh, do not worry, Babula. You do not need to go work tomorrow. I do. If I have such a meal at night, I may not be able to wake up tomorrow morning," said Bikram Mamu.

The next day, Bikram Mamu had already left for work, by the time Babul woke up. Uma Maain was busy feeding the baby, while also doing a host of other things. The water was running in the bathroom. "The water supply will stop in one hour. Do have a bath quickly and fill up the bucket afterward, Babula." Babul found the idea of vanishing water rather strange, but did as his aunt told him. He saw a note by his bed and some cash, which he knew must have been given by Bikram Mamu. There were instructions on what all to see in Bombay and how to get there, by bus and by train. The last stop on the list was Bikram Mamu's office. He had proposed they could return home together if he was up to it. Babul was



excited. He ventured out to see more of the city of his dreams....

Five hours later, Babul had barely seen two of the five places his mamu had listed. There were people everywhere. Everybody was so busy, with no time to chat. But Babul was enjoying every minute of his tour of Bombay. OK, so maybe the streets were not laced with gold. But the buildings were tall, and he did have to crane his neck to look up to the top floor. OK, so things were not really very clean everywhere. And there were slums right next to some very posh buildings. The Juhu beach was filled with dirt. Why, the Puri beach was so much more beautiful and clean to boot. But of course there were no busy stalls in Puri like there were at Juhu. The stalls sold *bhelpuri*, *pau bhaji* and *batata vada*. People ate in a rush, and left hastily, without sparing a minute to chat with the person who had painstakingly cooked them their meal. Babul decided to taste the Bombay cuisine. He quite liked it. He complimented the cook in the stall. The cook gave him a strange look, and asked him, "Are you new to the city?" Babul assumed his clothes were a dead giveaway. He was not very trendily dressed for sure. Oh well! On a sudden whim, Babul decided to surprise Bikram Mamu and go to his office. He bought a plate of *pau bhaji*, and asked the cook to wrap it up. He then headed to Marine Drive, the Queen's Necklace of Bombay. His excitement knew no bounds. Bikram Mamu's office was in the most prestigious location of Bombay. He envisioned a luxurious office, with his Bikram Mamu busy and seated in his leather chair....

An hour later, he reached the office building at Marine Drive. But what was this? None of the floors had Bikram Mamu's office listed there. He was about to leave, when he saw there was a little busy office environment under the staircase of the building, like a basement, but not quite. There were a few people seated close to each other, busy in their own work. Was this really an office? Curious, he ventured to look inside. And there he saw Bikram Mamu, laden with a heavy pile of files and moving towards a dilapidated wooden chair with an equally misshapen table. He saw Mamu sit down on his chair, and start typing. He looked wane, tired andold. Was this his dear Bikram Mamu? Suddenly, his Mamu looked up. His face lit up. There was joy and a sense of welcoming. Babul rushed to greet his mamu. He gave the carefully wrapped *pau bhaji* to him. "Mamu, I had a similar lunch at Juhu beach. I got this for you." Bikram Mamu had sheen of tears in his eyes. "Oh, Babula. You shouldn't have. I have already had my lunch. But you know...let us take it home and I will eat it, with Uma. She has always wanted to eat the Juhu *pau bhaji*. As if it tastes any different from what she makes! I have not been able to get it for her. It is always late when I leave office, and in fear of missing the train, I would not go to Juhu...." Bikram Mamu rambled on, and then stopped. He looked up at the wall clock, almost in panic. He had to finish his work before the end of day. But they could leave for home together.

Two hours later, Bikram Mamu packed all the files. Babul patiently waited outside the office, on



the staircase. Almost everyone else had left. Bikram Mamu was the last one to leave and lock up the office. He put a tired arm around Babul's shoulders and both of them headed to the bus stop to then catch the train to go home.

Such was the routine for both Babul and Bikram Mamu for the entire week. Babul saw his fill of Bombay. He never forgot to take *pau bhaji* for Bikram Mamu, which was eaten sometimes by his Mamu and sometimes by Uma Maain.

Babul returned to Bhubaneswar, happy, but much wiser than before. He realized that behind Mamu's pristine white clothes, there was a lot of hard work, sacrifice, toil and soil.... He had a long way to go before he could follow his beloved Bikram Mamu's footsteps. But he would try.

Epilogue

Babul went ahead to finish his graduation and masters in Economics at Bhubaneswar, much to the delight of his mother. For his MBA, Babul did head to his dream city, much to the delight of his Bikram Mamu. Babul worked part-time to pay his education fees. He stayed in a PG accommodation but always visited Bikram Mamu during weekends and when he was free. Babul's career dream was fulfilled when he was selected to join Reserve Bank of India.

The city of Bombay has changed its name to Mumbai. But Babul's name coined by his little cousin Debajani, remains the same. Pau Bhaji Babul Bhai.

Credits: Inspired by true incidents as narrated by my sister Mrs Kabyatara Choudhury to me, in turn narrated to her, by her husband Siladitya Choudhury AKA Babul.

Devil is in the details

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ମୁଗୁରା ପଛ ମେଲା



MY TRAIN TRIP IN INDIA

Tara Kanungo*

Last year I went on a trip to India. My family and I drove to Detroit from Windsor to take a plane to go to New York. We left home at 6:00 a.m. At 8:00 a.m. my parents, my brother and I left Detroit for New York. Three hours later, we took another plane from New York to fly to Singapore. This flight took sixteen hours !! Fortunately, I got to sleep in the plane. Finally, after arriving in Singapore, we went to a hotel to spend a day. We left the hotel the next morning to take a flight to New Delhi.

We stayed in New Delhi for one day. The next day we went to the train station. I met my Jeje (grandfather) there. He traveled with us. When we got into the train, I knew my family couldn't stay together in one room. So, Tej, my brother, my mom, and I stayed and slept in one room. My dad and Jeje stayed and slept next door in another room.

The train first took us to Jaipur in Rajasthan- The city is called the Pink City because all of the houses and buildings are pink. My favourite experience in Jaipur was that I went on an elephant with my mom. I learned that touching an elephant's trunk brings you good luck. The ride was high but obviously slow.

The next city we visited was Jaisalmar. There we rode camels !H This was like riding a horse. When we were going to sit on the camels, they were sitting down so that we can get on their back. The camels had someone beside them so that they could be controlled. I liked the camel ride because I got the feeling of a galloping horse when the camel galloped.

Next day, we went to a tiger sanctuary in a jungle. That day it was very cold. We were driven in a car that did not have a top. As we drove, the first thing we saw was a lot of trees. Then we saw a spotted doe with her children. This was cute. Later, we saw a male deer walking through the trees. After a while when the sun rose, I saw a real Bengal Tiger!!! It was standing on a rock. Then it jumped into a pool of water to cool off- This was so amazing!!

The final place we went to was the city of Agra to see the Taj Mahal there. The walls of the Taj Mahal are all made of marble. The Taj Mahal is a monument of love. A queen died when she gave birth to her baby. The king was so upset that he built this monument, a beautiful sign of love for his wife. I thought this was quite an amazing gesture! That was the end of my train trip. After visiting a few other places in Orissa, we returned to Canada.

*Tara is the daughter of Nachiketa and Paule in Belle River near Windsor, Ontario. This article won the first prize in a competition sponsored by CBC radio, Windsor and Tara's interview on her trip was broadcasted on the radio.



RAPUNZEL AND THE GIANT

Anshuman Mishra*

Once upon a time, there was a girl named Rapunzel who lived in a tall tower. She used to have long golden hair but then she cut it short. Her favorite things to do were cooking and reading. Fifteen miles up in the sky, a giant lived in a castle. He was fifteen feet tall. One day, the giant was out for a walk on the clouds when he slipped. He fell down right beside Rapunzel's tower. Rapunzel was leaning out of her window watching the giant fall. When the giant saw her, he wanted to eat her.

"Don't eat me!" she said. "I'll give you something you will like better." So Rapunzel cooked him a giant bowl of pasta, a big cheese pizza, a roast duck, and a huge jug of milk. Then the giant fell in love with her after the wonderful dinner. He built a mansion with a tall door and twenty-foot high ceilings beside Rapunzel's tower right away. They had a huge wedding and got married. Jack, Jill, Humpty-Dumpty, the Three Little Pigs, Snow White, the wicked stepmother, the seven dwarves, Sleeping Beauty, and Prince Charming all came to the wedding.

Soon, they had two children named Mark and Ella. Mark loved fishing and Ella loved spending time with her father. Rapunzel read eleven books a minute and read aloud to her family. The giant loved to climb trees. He could climb five trees in a minute. In spring and summer, the family lived in the giant's castle where it was nice and cool. In winter and fall, they stayed in the mansion where it was warm. And they all lived happily ever after.

*Anshuman, son of Srikanta and Snigdha Mishra, attends 1st grade at Pond Springs Elementary School in Austin, TX. He learns Karate and Hindustani classical music, and loves to read mysteries and books about space.

The first principle of criticizing others

ଗୋଦଡ଼ିଲୋ ତୋ ଗୋଡ଼କୁ ଅନା



OSA Archives 2008-09pp



Voices of the Youth



OSA Archives 2008-09pp



LUCKY

Ankita Mohanty*

ahh..in the seashell you hear an ocean...so far away. pink translucent swirls insist on carrying you away oh spin spin...sweet tooth of a little girl. it is too big for you. she chooses the banana split anyway because she believes she can eat it all. you may wonder if she finished it. spin spin... two paths in two different directions and a lady stands there waiting for a revelation. suddenly she realizes she can simply make her own path in between the two. crazy lady walking down the boulevard of split dreams. the little girl is growing up, too. not a drop of strawberry ice cream remains...

hopeless and lost
confused and forgotten
two culture collide

A young girl
so unsure of
where she belongs
so hard growing up here

often chaos reigns
inside her and clashes
metallic scrapes
Where and Why
scream relentlessly

suddenly
a Why not
a whisper floats through
and calms her crazy mind
why not why not
chant for me
take advantage of
this freedom



this opportunity
America holds for you
while India reminds you
of inner morals
rich culture
she is waiting to comfort
you with her dusty love
incomparable
can't you see why you are
labeled lucky?

lucky to be born confused
because this confusion
shall one day become beautiful
it shall encase you and become
your savior
look for the light in this
slow-spinning redemption

mother, father please
let me go
I don't want you to
become India
I am no longer a baby
I don't want you to
become America
I am not yet an adult
Can we please lay somewhere
in between it all
my spirit needs to be able to fly
please don't clip these wings



I want to win this losing battle
pessimistic thoughts get caught
in my mind-made net

Oh...India
where such kindness resides
I am inside the hearts of those
that love me and I forget what
I despise of this lovely place
with its prejudice
servants
caste system
and only find eyes for the
good warmth and love with
which my aunt insists on feeding me
far beyond my stomach's refusal
which I choose to ignore when I
glance into her eyes
our nightly prayers
a time when I feel connected
with the world
and our bedtime stories that
spin in the humid monsoon air

Ahh...America
I look around and forget
what I despise
the coldness of strangers
the layers of society
and need for money
and instead I see the freedom
the endless opportunity



diversity and security

and slowly I come to realize

I have two homes

two paths that join in harmony

where both charges,

negative and positive

dwell

a rain cloud

these charges

clash and lightning flashes

It is no wonder that I love

thunderstorms

their immense power and beauty

will you join me in the rain

my confusion leaks out of my eyes

and my tears and the Lord's mingle

inescapably becoming beautiful

The lady reaches the end of the boulevard and looks behind her for the first time. a slow smile creeps across her face. the two different paths were one all along. they came together at the fleeting moment in time the revelation bubbled up in her mind. she took both paths and realized it was going to be okay. better than okay. what a lucky lady.

* Ankita Mohanty is 17 years old. She lives in Mt. Pleasant, MI. She is the daughter of Dillip and Rita Mohanty.



MEMORIES

Mrunali Das*

Next Saturday was moving' day,
Everything must get packed away,
But her mind would easily stray,
With every little bit.

Everything had a story,
Whether sadness or glory,
Every piece of inventory,
Had a piece of wit.

The bouncy balls of summer,
The outfit of a plumber,
Drumsticks of a drummer,
Random little pieces.
Her favorite book,
A fishing hook,
Just one look,
And her sadness decreases.

But in the back of her mind,
Her knew she was leaving this behind,
Every photo would remind,
Her of this house.

Eyes always smiling,
Yet mind always distressed,
She was as radiant as a sunrise,
And had a sunset's zest.

She was, perfect,
An angel thru and thru,
No wonder she was chosen,
Once She bid adieu.

As this angel watched from up above,
She knew something had to be done
To make Her realize that
Moving could possibly be fun.

She interfered every now and then,
Because she couldn't see
Her sad again.
She cared like a mother,
About Her and no other.

But She was Her's guardian angel.
She couldn't let her cry.
Yet she felt, deep inside,
Those tears She couldn't dry.

So She snuck inside Her's dreams.
And told her of the tales,
Of the adventures that awaited Her,
But left out most details.

Those dreams of beauty comforted Her,
Enough not to break down.



Sadness still remained,
And her fears would not drown
The new house was not very far,
Yet it seemed a world away.
Whatever her parents told her,
Her mind would not sway.

Her hated leaving everything:
Her school, her friends, her yard.
The memories of past years,
Her couldn't just discard.

As they traveled down route 32,
That foggy fateful day.
She realized that Her,
Did not want to say.

Her didn't want this world.
Even without moving,
Her realized that in no possible way,
Could her life be improving.

Before Her even left,
Her friends were disappearing.
She knew that in Her's choice,
She could not be interfering.
She understood Her's choice,

Though she thought it unwise,
It was not right for Her to think,
That life is to despise.
Life is beautiful.
Life is amazing.
Life is powerful.
Life is worth praising.

Contemplating consequences,
She's heart stuck in the middle,
She made a difficult choice,
And bended the rules a little.

Heart and mind still torn,
Her senses nearly worn,
With a little swish of her hand,
She made Her understand.

When Her was in the hospital,
Her room filled with flowers,
She finally understood,
Life's awesome powers.

Her was the only obstacle,
Standing in the way,
Between a life of happiness,
And a world of dismay.

* Mrunali Das is 13 and will be attending River Hill High School this fall. She lives in Columbia, MD. She takes Odissi dance and Sitar lessons.



FATHER SUN AND MOTHER MOON

Anya Rath*

The sun drips his warm love onto me,
Rolling my body with psychic sense,
Sometime wild with fury or,
Drowsy with luxury,
All the while pondering
About things on the other side of the world,

Ah Mother Moon!

She wanders in
When the sun has become bored with us mortals,
Her pale gown glowing softly
With the stains of time glistening,
She gazes through windows
lulling men into deep slumber,

Awakening her subjects
Who would rather be with her than sleep,
She sits upon her throne of stars,
Cooling the earth after its sweltering day,
But she slowly fades away
As Father Sun makes his journey around the world,
He shines brilliantly and banishes her
To the other side of the world,
Until he comes to fetch her,
He settles upon his renewed heavenly throne,
And once again energizes the world...

* Anya is 12 years old and she lives with her mom and dad, Swapna and Nirmal, and her little sister Nayna, in Macomb, Michigan. She goes to L'anse Creuse Middle School North and has particular interest in English and Band.



HERE AM I WAITING

Nayna Rath*

Here am I waiting
My bulb is fading
What shall I do?
I can't wait for you
I guess I'm not yours.
You rather learn your fours!
Your bill is getting big
You'll be left with a fig
I will be left here all night
I will try to fight

*Nayna is 9 yrs old (a third grader) lives with her parents Nirmal & Swapna and older sister Anya in Macomb, Michigan .
"Nayna is a good writer" says her teacher Mrs.Kowl.One of her work has been published in Kaleidoscope2006 by Michigan Reading Association

HALLOWEEN

Satwick G. Misra*

Halloween, Halloween!
All the children wearing costumes
Looking for some yummy candies
Loading candies in our baskets
Opening candy wrappers
Walking down scary streets
Everybody telling scary stories
Eating candies while trick or treating
Nobody wants to go home!

*Satwick is in Grade 2 in Bayside, NY



I WONDER WHY

Ankita Ray

Crash!

My sister falls on the cold concrete.

She starts to wail almost as loud as an ambulance.

Before I get to know what hit her,

I find myself being yelled at by mom.

I get punished for none of my fault.

I wonder why!

I sit down in a hurry

Trying to finish my homework.

I look for a pencil.

Just, a pencil that works.

I get a gazillion ones but alas

All of them have broken leads.

I wonder why!

I played soccer inside the house.

The ball broke our best mirror.

My best friend says, it brings bad luck.

I wonder why!

Tomorrow morning we have violin practice.

I tell myself I HAVE to remember to carry my instrument.

I even write it down.

I wake up in the morning chaos

In a hurry for everything

Except my poor violin

I wonder why!

1...2 I count before putting everything into the washing machine

I come back after a few hours



1...then nothing.

How can it be ?

My sister says it is the sock monster
I don't want to believe her. But it's gone.

I wonder why?

I count the days to my birthday.

I love the gifts.

I love the attention.

My parents wish I was younger

I wonder why!

I see a picture on the internet

The girl's face is wasted with several tumors.

So many that she can't even breathe or see.

Some people are so unlucky.

I wonder why!

I try hard on a school T-shirt logo

I wrack my brain to create it

I know I have slogged.

Someone else wins the contest.

I wonder why!

Every night before I go to sleep

I work on my story

I write a lot but it's all gone.

I forgot to save.

I wonder why!



Dad and Mom fight.
They say we need more money to do this, to do that.
Money for everything.
I wonder why!

Christmas is here.
Everyone's grandparents visit.
I pine for my grandfather just as every year
He never comes. He never can.
I wonder why

Dad tells me we are going back to India.
We shall see everyone again.
I cry and cry.
I wonder why

*Ankita Ray 11, daughter of Abhijit and Julie Acharya Ray, lives in MD. She loves to paint and dance. Recently "I Wonder Why" was a topic given in her 5th Grade in Deep Run Elementary School Elkridge, MD 21075. Ankita won the first prize.



OUT OF THE SKY

Pratik Pradhan*

Out of the sky
Comes beautiful snow
Soon comes the blizzard
And roughly, it blows.

The wind controls the trees
Back and forth, back and forth
The leaves move like insects
Scurrying about the Earth

The tree carries the weight of snow
And looks like it will fall.
I grab my coat, and walk out
To make a snowman that is big and tall.

*Pratik is son of Padmanava and Chandana Pradhan. He is in Grade-3, Age-8

Consumer society

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SHE

Shashwati Das*

She lost her love of life.
The most precious gift God had given her,
She hated.
She could not take it anymore.

She lost her love of life.
The most precious gift God had given her,
She hated.
She could not take it anymore.
Her mother abused her,
People made fun of her looks,
She could never find one love.
It seemed like the world was against her.
Nobody listened to her thoughts.
Everybody ignored her.
She had no self-esteem.
She tried to stay out of trouble but it was too hard.
Then one day she came out of her shell.
She changed her look.
She took more chances.
She showed the world who she really was.
Suddenly people started to like her.
She was more daring.
She felt good.as she found her true love.
She realized who she really was.
That she was unique,
The true her,
Finally she loved life.

.....
*Shashwati Das is the daughter of Bigyani and Naresh Das. She is currently 11 and will be attending Folly Quarter Middle School this fall. She takes Odissi and gymnastic classes.



SORROW UNLEASHED

Sikha Das*

Ah, the feelings and emotions too,
They truly are inside of you
But sorrow, oh sorrow!
I am filled with nothing but sorrow!

Do not dare to ask why
It is a feeling...like no other
Mocking me day by day
Staying eternally in me...only me

I fear its presence always
For it comes everyday
But why, oh why!
Does it stay, never going out?

I ask: who can tame it?
Tame such a wild thing?
Something I never realized
Could be so very glum

I truly wish for a solution
One that will surely help
Quickly, please just fast!
Hurry, before it escapes in a tear!

But dropping, yes dropping!
It falls to my feet
Just like that others follow
Escaping without fear

While I wait and watch...
Waiting...yes waiting...
Who knows what will happen?
I am heartbroken for sure

Slowly the tears dry
By the rays of the sun
I felt glad again...
To know this isn't the end

My sorrow...now it is no more...

*Sikha Das is the only child of Durgesh and Satarupa Das. Currently she is in the seventh grade.

serendipity

ଆଜ୍ଞା ଖୋଜୁ ଖୋଜୁ ମହାଦେବ ବାହାରିଲେ



THE MERMAID'S LAMENT

Ananya Mishra*

I sat on the rocks, all alone
Waiting for the ship to return.
The sun sank down into the sea,
Until it bled and burned

Then, on the horizon there appeared
The silhouette of a noble vessel.
I smiled; here was my chance
To prove my charms had not gone dull

"Her hair shone with an eerie gleam,"
They said. "I was drawn to her glance.
I could neither steer nor look away,
I just prayed for deliverance."

"She beckoned to me,
And sang, nay! Crooned.
Her gaze never faltered
For she knew we were doomed."
The stars glittered on high
As I led the sailors to the reef.
She hit the rocks and then went down.
That was when I began to weep.

So hear my tale and cry for me.
The life of a mermaid may seem so fair,
But the souls of drowned men long gone
Make it a burden that I must bear.

*Ananya Mishra, daughter of Srikanta and Snigdha Mishra, is an 8th grader at Deerpark Middle School. She currently lives in Austin, Texas. Some of her interests are Bharatanatyam, Hindustani classical music, reading, and writing poetry.



MORNING

Rutuparna Sarangi*

Dawn begins with the sun's bright smile
Creating a view envying paradise isle
The night sky Mother Nature will emblazon
As a new day peeks above the horizon

The bright rays of the sun's waking yawns
Creep across the fresh cut lawns
Night bows out and day begins
These two are opposite twins

Morning dew bathes the grass
Shining drops as clear as glass
Reflecting rainbows in the early light
Bringing color to the fading night

Nature's palette is an artist's dream
For it's her work that becomes his theme
Truly no one can outshine
The glorious work of the divine

* Rutuparna, daughter of Pitambar and Anindita Sarangi is in 10th grade and lives in New Jersey

There is no free lunch

ବସି ଖାଇଲେ ନଇ ବାଲି ସରେ



TOUCH OF FREEDOM

Ina Dash*

There's that time
Where you come upon choices
and cry because it's so hard
you know what you wish for
And you know what is more suited
but you believe
beyond any of your dreams
That those days aren't worth sacrificing
And you turn as hard as you can from that direction of hope

But wanting to live out that freedom
That you touched once
But can no more
Because there's that time
Where you come upon choices
And just cry
Because it's so hard

But you don't do it for yourself
As much as that hope raises itself
You push it down
And how hard that feels
And how much you regret it
It is not possible

And wonder is on the other side
That maybe, they were going through the same thing
During that time
Where you come upon choices
And cry because it's so hard



And you wait
And wait
And you know that if you wait
That someday,
Maybe,
Just maybe,
You find that freedom
That you once touched
But can no more

You reconsider
And shake your head
Because you love so much
And you care so much
As much as that hope raises itself
You will always push it down
Because there's that time
When you come upon choices
And cry
Because it is that hard

*Ina Dash is 13 year old daughter of Debadutta Dash and Itu Mohapatra of Seattle, WA.



WORSHIP OF THE MOTHER DIVINE

Satish Mishra*

In great anticipation the devotees wait for the entrance
In a hurry, I push my way through the crowd so that I can get a glance
After reaching the perfect spot, my heart races at an unbelievable rate
To calm down, I fold my hands and make sure that my back is straight
With so many overwhelming thoughts, I close my eyes to picture her face
Then I imagine placing flowers at her feet, working at a slow and steady pace
Then I offer her moist chocolate cake and hot tea in a diamond-encrusted cup
After she eats the cake I see her smile and watch her eyes light up
As I open my eyes, I look up and see her standing there
Her incredible presence and scent quickly feels the air
With her hands out to the sides, she makes her way towards her throne
I reach out to touch her hand and get vibrations in every single bone
As she reaches the front of the room I close my eyes and begin to pray
As I call her name, MAA OM, all my bad thoughts and worries begin to go away
As long as she is with us, in our heart, we feel safe and secure
Imagine what it would be, if we had n't have kept our heart, the special place for her

*Satish is 18 year old son of Dr. Nrusingha and Mrs. Bandita Mishra.

wisdom of arguing

କଥା ମାଜିଲେ ମୋଟ

ସୂତା ମାଜିଲେ ସରୁ



OSA Archives 2008-09pp



ସୁଦୂର ଭାଷା



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ନାଟାଲିଆର ଓଁକାର

ଶାନ୍ତନୁ କୁମାର ଆଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ

ରାତି ପ୍ରାୟ ନ'ଟା । କିନ୍ତୁ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟାସ୍ତ ଏପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ହୋଇନି । ବଣ ଭିତରଟା ତଥାପି ବେଶ ଆଲୋକିତ । ପକ୍ଷିମ ଦିଗବଳୟର ଗୋଟିଏ ଅଂଶ, ଗଭୀର ପାଇନ ବଣ ଭିତରୁ, ଦିଶୁଛି ବେଶ ଆଭାସୁକ୍ତ । ତା'ରି ମଝିରେ ସେଇ ସିନ୍ଦୂର ଟୋପାଟି ! ମସ୍ତ ଏକ ଜୀବନ୍ତ ରକ୍ତଗୋପା ପରି ଧଲଧଲ ହରଥାଏ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ; ଅସ୍ତଗାମୀ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ।

ଏଠାକାର ପାଇନ ବଣ ପ୍ରକୃତରେ ବଣ ନୁହେଁ- ଗୋଟିଏ ବିରାଟ ଚାନ୍ଦୁଆ ଆବୃତ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ କହିଲେ ଚଳେ । ଯୁଆଡେ ଆଖିବୁଲାଇଲେ ସିଆଡେ ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ଗୋବର ହୁଏ କେବଳ ମସ୍ତମସ୍ତ ଡେଙ୍ଗାଡେଙ୍ଗା ମୋଟା ମୋଟା ଆଉ ବିଶୁଦ୍ଧ ସରଳରେଖା ଆକୃତିର ରୁକ୍ତ ନଭୁଝୁବି ଅସଂଖ୍ୟ ପାଇନ ଗଣ୍ଡିର ସ୍ତୂଭ । ସେଇ ସ୍ତୂଭ ଗୁଡ଼ିକର ଶୀର୍ଷରେ ସମ୍ମିଳିତ ପାଇନ ଡାଳପତ୍ରର ନିବିଡ଼ ଛୟାଛୟିରୁ ସୃଷ୍ଟ ସେଇ ବିଶାଳ ଆଦିଗନ୍ତ ଚୟାତପ ଯାହାର ନାଁ- ଜେ-ବି- ପାର୍କ ।

ଏଇ ପାର୍କ ଭିତରେ ହ୍ରାତ ଧରାଧରି ହେଇ ଚାଲୁଥାନ୍ତି ସାଠିଏ ବର୍ଷର ଜଣେ ଭାରତୀୟ ନାଗରିକ ତାଙ୍କର ଆଠ, ନଅ ବର୍ଷ ବୟସର ଆମେରିକାନ ନାଗରିକ ନାତିଟିଏ ସହିତ । ପାର୍କ ଭିତରଟା ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ନିର୍ଜନ, ନିସ୍ତର ମଧ୍ୟ । କେବଳ ଶୁଭୁଥାଏ ଗୋଟିଏ ଝରଣାରୁ ଗତିଗତି ଚାଲିଯିବା କ୍ଷୀଣ ଜଳପ୍ରବାହର ସ୍ୱଭାବିକ ଶାନ୍ତ ଗୁଞ୍ଜରଣ । ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ କେତେଟା ଅଦୃଶ୍ୟ ପକ୍ଷୀର କାକଳି ମଧ୍ୟ । ସେଇ କାକଳିକୁ କାନେଇ କାନେଇ ଚାଲିଥାନ୍ତି ଅଜାନାତି ଦୁହେଁ । ପାଇନ ଗଛର ସ୍ତୂଭଗୁଡ଼ିକ ମଝିରେ ସରୁ ଚଲା ବାଟଟିଏ ଧରି ହ୍ରାତ ଧରାଧରି ହେଇ ଚାଲିଥାନ୍ତି ସେ ଦୁହେଁ - ଦୁଇଟି ଭିନ୍ନ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଓ ଦୁଇ ପିଢ଼ିର ବ୍ୟବଧାନ ସତ୍ତ୍ୱେ ରକ୍ତସଂପର୍କରେ ବନ୍ଧା ଦୁଇ ବୟଃକ୍ରମର ମଣିଷ ।

“ତା ହେଲେ ତମର ଏ ବଣରେ ବାଘଭାଲୁ ନାହାନ୍ତି?” ନୀରବତା ଭଙ୍ଗକରି ପଚାରିଲେ ହଠାତ୍ ଗଭୀର ସ୍ୱରଟିଏ ଭିତରୁ ବୃଦ୍ଧ ଜଣକ ।

“No ଅଜା-” ନାତି ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଲା ଶଂକିତ କଂଠରେ, “No ! ଶେର୍ ଖାଁ here but” ଆଲୋକ ତା ଅଜା ଅମରଙ୍କ ହ୍ରାତ ଧରି ଭିଡିନେଲା ଟିକେ ଆଗକୁ । ସତେକି ଜାଗାଟା ଆଦୌ ନିରାପଦ ମନେହେଉନଥିଲା ତାକୁ । ଚତୁର୍ଦ୍ଦିଗକୁ କାନତେରି ସେ କଅଣ ଯେମିତି ଶୁଣିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରୁଥାଏ ।

“ଆଲୋକ ! ତତେ ତର ମାତୁଛି କି ବାପା?” ଅମର ଜାକି ନେଲେ ପାଖକୁ ନାତିକୁ । କୋମଳ ସ୍ୱରରେ ପଚାରିଲେ, “ବାଘ ଭାଲୁ ନାହାନ୍ତି ତ ତରୁଛୁ କାହାକୁ?”

“ଅଜା!”, ଆଲୋକର ଆଖି ଯୋଡାକ ଭୟରେ ସଂକୁଚିତ । ଧର ଧର ଗଳାରେ ସେ କହିଲା, “ଅଜା! The gun man, --there is a gun man- last year he killed five children in this forest.. let us go back home, ଅଜା!”

ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ତଥାପି ଅସ୍ତ ହୋଇ ନଥାନ୍ତି । ବିସ୍ତୀର୍ଣ୍ଣ ପାଇନ୍ ବଣର ପକ୍ଷିମ ଦିଗରୁ ଏକ ପ୍ରକାର ଅଭୂତ ରଙ୍ଗର ଆଲୋକ ମାଟି ଉପରେ ତରଳ ଜ୍ୟୋତିର୍ମୟ ଝରଣାଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ପରି ପ୍ରବାହିତ ହେବାକୁ ଆରଂଭ କରିଥାଏ ସେଇ ମାତ୍ର । ସେଇ ଆଲୋକରେ ଉଦ୍ଭାସିତ ପାଇନ୍ ବଣଟି ଦିଶିବାକୁ ଆରଂଭ କରିଥାଏ ସେତେବେଳେ ଅବିକଳ ଏକ ଅପୂର୍ବ ରଙ୍ଗୀନ ଛାୟାଚିତ୍ର ପରି ।

“Let us go back home ଅଜା!” ଆଲୋକ ଟାଣିଲା ଜୋର୍ରେ ପଛକୁ ଅମରଙ୍କୁ । ନାତିର ହ୍ରାତଗଣା ସଂଭାଳି ନପାରି ଅମର ଯୋଡା ଗୋଇଁକୁ ଚାପିଲେ ଜୋରଦେଇ ମାଟି ଉପରେ । ରୁଝି ପାରୁନଥାନ୍ତି ସେ ନାତିର ଅହେତୁକ ଭୟର କାରଣକୁ ଆଦୌ ସେତିକି ବେଳେ ସେ ଶୁଣି ପାରିଲେ ଏକ ଅସ୍ପଷ୍ଟ ଶବ୍ଦ- ଢପ୍ ଢପ୍ ଢପ୍ ଢପ୍ । ବେଶ୍ ଦୃତ ଗତିରେ ପାଖେଇ ଅସୁଥାଏ ଶବ୍ଦଟା । ଅମର ସତରେ ଟିକେ ତରିଗଲେ ବି । ଆଲୋକ ସେତେବେଳକୁ ତା ଅଜାଙ୍କ ଦେହରେ ଲେଖି ହୋଇ ଯାଇଥାଏ ଭୟ ଓ ଆଶଙ୍କାରେ ।

The gun man ତାହେଲେ ସତରେ ଆସୁଛି ? ପାଖେଇ ଆସୁଛି gun man ଯେ ଗଲାବର୍ଷ ପାଞ୍ଚଟା ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ହତ୍ୟା କରିଛି



ଏଇ ଅରଣ୍ୟରେ ? ଅମର ମଧ୍ୟ ହତବତେଇ ଗଲେ । ତଥାପି ସାହାସ ସଂଚୟ କରି ସେ ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟାକଲେ ପିଲାଟିକୁ । ନରମ ଗଳାରେ କହିଲେ , “ତରନା ବାପା - ମୁଁ ପଢ଼ା ଅଛି, ତର କାହାକୁ?” ସେତେବେଳକୁ ଆଲୋକ ଥରିବାକୁ ଆରଂଭ କଲାଣି । ତା ଦେହରୁ ଗମ୍ଗମ୍ ଝାଳ ବୋହିଲାଣି । ଢପ୍ ଢପ୍ ଶବ୍ଦ ଆହୁରି ନିକଟରୁ ଶୁଣାଗଲାଣି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଘନ ଅରଣ୍ୟ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ବିଚିତ୍ର ଶବ୍ଦଗାର ଉତ୍ସ ଅନୁମାନ କରିବା ସଂଭବ ହେଉନଥାଏ ।

ହଠାତ୍ ଅମର ସଚେତନ ହେଲେ । ଭାରତରେ ଅରଣ୍ୟ କାନ୍ଥରରେ ଏକାକୀ ଭ୍ରମଣ କଲାବେଳେ ବ୍ୟାଘ୍ର ଭୟ ଜାତ ହେଲେ ଗୋଟିଏ ମନ୍ତ୍ର ବୋଲିବାକୁ ଖୁବ୍ ପିଲାଦିନୁ ସେ ଉପଦେଶ ପାଇଥିଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ଅଜ୍ଞାନତାରୁ । ସେ ମନ୍ତ୍ରର ଉପଯୋଗ କଦାପି କରି ନ ଥିଲେ ସେ ଏ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ । ଭାରତର ଅରଣ୍ୟରେ ବାଘ ଭାଲୁ ଆଖାନ୍ତି ଅବଶ୍ୟ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏଠି ? ଏଠି କିଏ ରକ୍ଷା କରି ପାରିବ ତାଙ୍କର ଏଇ ଅସୁରକ୍ଷିତ ବଂଶଧରଟିକୁ ଏକ ଅଜଣା gunmanର ଆକ୍ରମଣରୁ ?

ହଠାତ୍ ଅମରଙ୍କ କଂଠରୁ ନିଃସୃତ ହେଲା, “ଓଁ ଉଗ୍ରବୀରଂ ମହାବିଷ୍ଣୁଃ କ୍ଳଳନ୍ତଂ ସର୍ବତୋ ମୁଖଂ / ନୃସିଂହଂ ଭୀଷଣଂ ଭଦ୍ରଂ ମୃତ୍ୟୋର୍ମୃତ୍ୟୁଂ ନମାମ୍ୟହଂ ।”

ସଂସ୍କୃତ ଭାଷାର ଅପୂର୍ବ ଧ୍ବନିରେ ପ୍ରତିଧ୍ବନିତ ହୋଇ ଉଠିଲା ଆମେରିକାର Connecticut ରାଜ୍ୟର ରାଜଧାନୀ Hartford ସହରର ଉପାନ୍ତ ଅଂକଳର ଏକ କ୍ଷୁଦ୍ର ନଗରୀ ଗାଁସଚନ୍ଦ୍ରବିର ଅରଣ୍ୟକ ପରିବେଶ ସମେତ ସାରା ପାର୍କିଂ ! ଆଉ ତା ସହିତ ମଧ୍ୟ ଶବ୍ଦର ପ୍ରଭାବରେ ସତେକି ସେଇ ଭୟଙ୍କର ଢପ୍ ଢପ୍ ଆବାଜ୍

ତୁପ୍ ପଡ଼ିଗଲା । ତାର ପ୍ରଭାବ ପଡ଼ିଲା ଆଲୋକ ଉପରେ ତତ୍କ୍ଷଣାତ୍ । ସେ ଆହୁରି ଜୋର୍ରେ କୁଢେଇ ଧରିଲା ତା ଅଜାଙ୍କୁ । ବିକଳ ହୋଇ କହିଲା-

“No, no, Don't do that ଅଜା He will kill us, kill us” !

Gun manର ପାଦ ଶବ୍ଦ ତଥାପି ତୁପ୍ । କ'ଣ କରୁଛି ସେ? କୋଉଠି ଠିଆ ହେଇ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ କରୁଛି ହୁଏତ ତା gun - ଅଜା ନାତିଙ୍କ ଉପରକୁ ?

ଅମର ଆହୁରି ବଡ଼ ପାଟିରେ ମହାନୃସିଂହ ମନ୍ତ୍ର ଆବୃତ୍ତି କରିଚାଲିଲେ । ଚାରିଆଡ଼ ନିଶ୍ଚ । ପାର୍କ ଭିତରଟା ନିଜସ୍ବ ସିଶୁରୀୟ ନିର୍ଜନତା ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତେ ଧାରଣ କରିସାରିଥାଏ ଏକ ଭୌତିକ ଉପସ୍ଥିତିକୁ । ଅମର କିନ୍ତୁ ମନ୍ତ୍ର ଆବୃତ୍ତି ଚାଲୁରଖିଲେ ।

ହଠାତ୍ ଶୁଣାଗଲା ଅପ୍ରତ୍ୟାଶିତ ଏକ ନାରୀକଂଠ, “Hey, what is that? is this an Indian song? What are you singing?”

ସ୍ବରଗାର ଉତ୍ପତ୍ତି ସ୍ଥଳ ତଥାପି ଅଦୃଶ୍ୟ । ଅମର ତୁପ୍ ହୋଇଗଲେ । ଆଲୋକ କାନ୍ଦକାନ୍ଦ ହେଇ ଗଲା । ଆଶ୍ଚେକରି କହିଲା , “ଅଜା! this is a she-gun man. still more dangerous-let us run away”

“No, no, don't run away! Stay, who are you?” ଗଛ ଆଡୁଆଳରୁ ସର୍ବସ୍ ଆଉ କେଟସ୍ ପିକା ମଧ୍ୟବୟସ୍କା ଗୌରାଙ୍ଗୀ ଭଦ୍ର ମହିଳା ଜଣେ ସହସା ଆବିର୍ଭୂତା ହେଲେ ଅମରଙ୍କ ଆଗରେ । ଚମକି ପଡ଼ିଲେ ସତରେ ଅମର । ଆଲୋକ ଏଥର ଟିକେ ସାହସ ପାଇଲା ଭଳି ଅମରଙ୍କୁ ତା ବାହୁ ବନ୍ଦନରୁ ମୁକ୍ତ କଲା ।

ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଲୋକଟି ଅହୁରି ପାଖେଇ ଆସି ଅମରଙ୍କ ଅତକୁ ହାତ ବଢେଇ ସ୍ବାଗତ କରିବା ଭଙ୍ଗିରେ ସହାସ୍ୟ ବଦନରେ ଚାହିଁ କହିଲା , “That's wonderful. Can you please sing that again?”

ଅମର ସଂକ୍ରୁଚିତ ହେଲେ । ଏକେତ ସେ ଆମେରିକୀୟ ଇଂରେଜୀ ଉଚ୍ଚାରଣ ଭଲକରି ବୁଝି ପାରୁନଥିଲେ ।

ପୁଣି ବଣ ଭିତରେ ହଠାତ୍ ଏ ଭଳି ଏକ ଅଦ୍ଭୁତ ଯୋଷାକ ପିକା ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଲୋକକୁ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ ନଥିଲେ । ତେଣୁ ସେ ତୁପ୍ ହୋଇ



କେବଳ ଠିଆ ହୋଇ ରହିଲେ ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ଆଲୋକ ସେତେବେଳକୁ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ସୁସ୍ଥ ଓ ସ୍ୱାଭାବିକ ହୋଇ ଯାଇଥାଏ । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ସେ ତା ଅଜାଙ୍କୁ ଆଗନ୍ତୁକାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ପରିଚିତ କରାଇବାକୁ ଆଗଭର ହେଇ କହିଲା, “She asked you to sing that song again, ଅଜା !”

ଅମର ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହେଲେ । ମନେ ମନେ ଭାବିଲେ - ମହା ନୃସିଂହ ମନ୍ତ୍ରଣା ତେବେ କଣ ଏତେ ଶକ୍ତିଶାଳୀ? gunmanକୁ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ କରିଦେଲା ନାରୀକୁ? କିନ୍ତୁ କିଏ ଏ ନାରୀ ? ବାସ୍ତବ ନା ଭୌତିକ ? ଭାରତରେ ଗଭୀର ଅରଣ୍ୟରେ ଏକାକୀ ଭ୍ରମଣ କରିବାରେ ସେ ଅଭ୍ୟସ୍ତ । ତାଙ୍କର ବାଘ ଭାଲୁଙ୍କୁ ଭୟ ନଥାଏ ଭୟ ଥାଏ ବେଶୀ ଅନ୍ୟ ଏକ ଜାତିର ଅଶରୀରୀ ସତ୍ତାକୁ । ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ କୁହାଯାଏ - ଶାଳ ଭଞ୍ଜିକା ! ସେମାନେ ଏକ ଜାତିର ଅଞ୍ଜରୀ । ଏକାକୀ ପଥକକୁ ସେମାନେ ଅରଣ୍ୟରେ ଦେଖିଲେ ନାନା ପ୍ରକାରେ ପ୍ରଲୋଭିତ କରନ୍ତି । ଅଯାଚିତ ଭାବେ ପ୍ରେମ ସଂଭାଷଣ ଜଣାନ୍ତି । ପରେ ପରେ ମହାବିପତ୍ତି ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହୁଏ । ବିଚରା ପଥକ ବିପଥ ଗାମୀ ହୁଏ ଏବଂ ଶେଷରେ ମୃତ୍ୟୁମୁଖରେ ପଡେ ।

ଅମରଙ୍କର ଆଗନ୍ତୁକ ଦୂଢ଼ୀଭୂତ କଲାପରି ଶ୍ୱେତାଙ୍ଗ ନାରୀଟି ତାଙ୍କର ଆହୁରି ନିକଟବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ହୋଇ ଆସିଲା । ନିଜର ପରିଚୟ ଦେଲା, “I’m Natalia, Come on, sing that song again, please, Your voice is marvelous, indeed! ପରେ ପରେ ସେ ଅମରଙ୍କ ହାତକୁ ନିଜ ହାତ ମୁଠା ଭିତରକୁ ନେଇ କରମର୍ଦ୍ଦନ କରିବସିଲା ।

ସେତେବେଳକୁ ଅମରଙ୍କ ଅବସ୍ଥା କାଲି ହୋଇ ଗଲାଣି ଅନେକଟା । କୁଣ୍ଡିତ ଭାବେ ସେ ନିଜଆତୁ ସଫେଇ ଦେଲାପରି ନାଟି ଆଲୋକକୁ ଚାହିଁ କହିଲେ

“ତାକୁ ବୁଝେଇ ଦେ- ଏ ଗୋଟାଏ ଗୀତ ନୁହେଁ ଆଦୌ ! ଯା ନାଁ ମନ୍ତ୍ର ! ମନ୍ତ୍ରକୁ ଏମିତି ସେମିତି ଗୀତ ଭଳି ବୋଲାଯାଏ ନା !” ଏହା ପରେ ଅମର ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ହୋଇ ପଡିଲେ ଶୀଘ୍ର ଘରକୁ ଫେରି ଯିବା ଲାଗି ।

“but ଅଜା”, ଆଲୋକ ଅପ୍ରତିଭ ଆଉ ଆହତ ସ୍ୱରରେ କହିଲା, “ସେ ପରା ଆସୁଛି-” ଓଡିଆ କହିବାରେ ଅନଭ୍ୟସ୍ତ ଆଲୋକ ଛନ୍ଦି ହେଲା ଉପଯୁକ୍ତ ଶବ୍ଦ ଖୋଜିବାରେ । କିଛି ବେଳ ଅଙ୍ଗମଙ୍ଗ ହେଇ ଶେଷରେ ସମାପ୍ତ କଲା ତା ଅଭିବ୍ୟକ୍ତି, “ସେ ଆସୁଛି ତୁମେ ସିଙ୍ଗ କର ସେ ଗୀତ ଆଉଥରେ । ସେ ତୁମର ଫ୍ରେଣ୍ଡ୍ ହବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଛି ।”

ଖୁବ୍ ଅସ୍ପଷ୍ଟ ଅନୁଭବ କଲେ ଅମର । ନିଜ ସାମନାରେ ମୁହଁକୁ ମୁହଁ ଯୋଡିଲା ଭଳି ଠିଆ ହୋଇଥିବା ଶାଳଭଞ୍ଜିକାଟିକୁ ଆପାଦମସ୍ତକ ନିରୀକ୍ଷଣ କଲେ ସେ । ଉଚ୍ଚତାରେ ପ୍ରାୟ ତାଙ୍କ ନିଜ ସହିତ ସମାନ ଏବଂ ଏକା ବୟସର ଶ୍ୱେତାଙ୍ଗ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋକଟିକୁ ଆଖି ସାମନାରେ ବି ଦେଖୁଥିଲେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଲାଗୁଥାଏ ସେ ଆଦୌ ଜଣେ ନାରୀ ନହୋଇ ପାରେ । ଭାରତରେ ସେ ଭଳି ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ କୁହାଯାଏ - କିଂପୁରୁଷ । ପୁଣି ଭଦ୍ର ମହିଳାଙ୍କ ବେଶ ଭୂଷା -! ପତଳା ଖେଳବାର୍ତ୍ତ ଶରୀରକୁ ଆବୃତ କରିଥାଏ ହୁଗୁଳା ହାତକଟା ଗୋଢ଼ି ଖଣ୍ଡେ । ଅଖଣ୍ଡ଼ି ବାଖଣ୍ଡେ ତଳ ଯାକେ ଲାବି ଥାଏ ମାତ୍ର ଚିପା ପ୍ୟାଣ୍ଟ ବା ସର୍ବସ୍ । ଆଉ ପାଦରେ ହଳେ ଧଳା ରଙ୍ଗର କେଟସ୍ । ମୁଣ୍ଡବାଳ କଟା ଯାଇଥାଏ ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ - ପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ଢଙ୍ଗରେ । ଚେହେରା ପାଖାପାଖି ପୁରୁଷ ପରି ; କିନ୍ତୁ କାନରେ ଯୋଡିଏ ବଡ଼ବଡ଼ ଆଖିଦୃଷ୍ଟିଆ ପଥର ବସା କାନଫୁଲ ଆଉ ଓଠରେ ଲିପ୍ଟିକ୍ ସମେତ ହନୁ ହାତ ଉପରେ ମଖା ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ ଲାଲ୍ ରଙ୍ଗର ରୁଢ଼ ପାଉଁଶର ଯୋଗୁ ହୁଏତ ସେଇ ବୃକ୍ଷପରୀଟିକୁ ନାରୀ କୁହାଯାଇ ପାରେ ।

ଅମର ତଥାପି କୁଣ୍ଡିତ ହେଉଛନ୍ତି ଜାଣି ଆଲୋକ ନିଜ ଆତୁ ଆଗନ୍ତୁକା ମହିଳାଙ୍କୁ ଭଦ୍ରତା ଖାତିରରେ କହିଲା,

“Excuse me, I’m Aloka’ and he is my grandfather Amar from India. He says he won’t sing that song again because that is not any ordinary song. it is a mantra- a very sacred sound from the Vedas.”

କିଛି ସମୟ ପାଇଁ ନିରବତାର ରାଜୁତି ଅନୁଭବ କଲେ ସମସ୍ତେ । ଝରଣାର ଝରଝର ଶବ୍ଦ ଆଉ ପକ୍ଷୀର କାକଳି ପୁନର୍ବାର ଫେରି ଆସିଲା କାନ ପାଖକୁ । ଅମର ନାଟିର ହାତ ମୁଠେଇ ଧରି ନେଲେ । କହିଲେ , ଚାଲ୍ - ଏ ଥର ଯିବା ଘରକୁ ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ଆଲୋକ ନଛୋଟ ବନ୍ଧା । ଯିବି କଲା ସେ । କହିଲା , ନା ! ତମକୁ ସିଙ୍ଗିବାକୁ ପଡିବ ଅଜା! ତମେ ସେ ଗୀତ ନ ସିଙ୍ଗିଲେ ସେ



ଅପେକ୍ଷାକୃତ ହବ । ଏ ଦେଶରେ ଏଇଟା very bad manners. Now sing it! Don't fell shy. yes, sing it please! ଗତ୍ୟନ୍ତର
ନଥିଲା ଅମରଙ୍କର । ତେଣୁ ସେ ଆରଂଭ କଲେ... “ଓଁ.....”

କିନ୍ତୁ ସେଇ ଓଁକାର ଟପି ଅନ୍ୟ ପଦକୁ ଯିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ସେ ଏକ ଅଭୂତ ଶବ୍ଦ ଶୁଣି ଅଟକି ଗଲେ । ତାଙ୍କୁ ଶୁଭିଲା ସତେ ଯେମିତି
ଗୋଟାଏ ବ୍ରାହ୍ମଣୀ ବେଙ୍ଗ ବଣ ଭିତରୁ ହଠାତ୍ ରୁଚି କରି ଉଠିଲା— ଡଃ-ଡଃ-ଡଃ! ଅମର ସତର୍କ ହେଲେ ।

ଦୁଝି ପାରିଲେ ବ୍ୟାପାରଟା । ଶାଳଭଞ୍ଜିକା ବା ବୃକ୍ଷପରାଟି ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଖତେଇ ହେବା ଆରଂଭ କରିଛି । ହସିଲେ ଅମର ।
ସାମାନ୍ୟ ପରିହାସ କଲାପରି ବୃକ୍ଷ -ପରାଟୁ ଚାହିଁ କହିଲେ , “No- not that! say ସେ ଅ-ଉ- ମ- “

କିନ୍ତୁ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଲୋକଟି ଏଥର ଅନ୍ୟ ଏକ ପ୍ରକାରେ ସ୍ଵର କରି ବନଭୃମିକୁ ମୁଖରିତ କରି ଚାଲିଲା ।
ଅମର ଜଣେ ଶିକ୍ଷକ । ଭାରତରେ ସେ ଶିକ୍ଷକତା କରିଥିଲେ ଦୀର୍ଘ କାଳ, କୌଣସି ଏକ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ, ଏବଂ ସଦ୍ୟ ଅବସର
ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିଥାନ୍ତି । ଆମେରିକାରେ ରହୁଥିବା ତାଙ୍କର ପୁତ୍ର ଜନ୍ମାମାନଙ୍କ ନିମନ୍ତେ ରକ୍ଷାକରି ସେ ଅଳ୍ପ ଦିନ ତଳେ ଆସିଥାନ୍ତି ଏଠାକୁ । ଏଠି
ପହଞ୍ଚିବା ପରେ ସେ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ କରିଥିଲେ ଏକ ଦୁରୁହ ଅବସ୍ଥା । ଦୁଃଖିତ ହେଉଥାନ୍ତି ସେ ଯେ ତାଙ୍କର ବଂଶଧର ନାତି ନାତୁଣୀମାନେ ଆଉ
ମାତୃଭାଷା ଓଡ଼ିଆ କହିଲେଣି ପାରିବା ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ନାହାନ୍ତି । ତେଣୁ ସେ ତାଙ୍କର ନାତି ଆଲୋକକୁ ଗତ କିଛି ଦିନ ହେବ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦେବାରେ
ଧ୍ୟାନ ଦେଇଥାନ୍ତି । ଦୀର୍ଘ ବର୍ଷର ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତାରୁ ସେ ଜାଣି ଥାନ୍ତି ଯେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଶିକ୍ଷାର ମୂଳ ସୂତ୍ରଟି ହେଲା ସଂସ୍କୃତ ଉଚ୍ଚାରଣ । ଶୁଦ୍ଧ ସଂସ୍କୃତ
ଉଚ୍ଚାରଣ କରିପାରୁଥିବା ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଇଂରେଜୀ ସମେତ୍ ଯେକୌଣସି ଇଣ୍ଡୋୟୁରୋପିୟନ୍ ଭାଷା ସହଜରେ ଶିଖି ପାରେ । ସେଇ କାରଣରୁ ସେ
ଆଲୋକକୁ ସାଥରେ ଧରି ବରାବର ଦୁଲୁଥିଲେ ଆଉ ସୁଯୋଗ ପାଇବା ମାତ୍ରେ ତାକୁ ସଂସ୍କୃତ ଶ୍ଳୋକ ଶିଖାଇ ଥିଲେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏ ବୃକ୍ଷପରାଟି ତ
ପ୍ରାଣବ ଅଶୁଦ୍ଧି କରୁଛି ଉଚ୍ଚାରଣରେ !

ଅମର ଏଥର ତାଙ୍କର ନ’ ବର୍ଷ ବୟସର ନାତିକୁ ମାଧ୍ୟମ କରି ଅଜ୍ଞାତ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଲୋକଟି ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟରେ କହିଲେ, “ତାକୁ କହ ସେ
ଓଁକାର ଉଚ୍ଚାରଣ ଠିକ୍ ଭାବେ କରିପାରୁନାହିଁ । ସେ ଯଦି ଚାହେଁ ତେବେ ମୁଁ ଶିଖାଇ ଦେବି ।”

ଆଲୋକ, ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଲୋକଟି ସହିତ କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା କଲା ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ଇଂରେଜୀ ଭାଷାର ଉଚ୍ଚାରଣରେ-ଯାହା ଅଳ୍ପ ଅଳ୍ପ ବୁଝିବାକୁ ସମ୍ଭବ
ହେଲେ ଅମର । କିନ୍ତୁ ପର ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତରେ ସେ ପୁରାପୁରି ଆତଙ୍କିତ ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କୁ ଜଣାଗଲା ସତେ ଯେପରି ତାଙ୍କୁ ଗୋଟାଏ ସାପ କବଳିତ
କରି ପକାଇଛି । ସେତେବେଳକୁ ସେ ପୁରାପୁରି ବନ୍ଦନରେ ପଡ଼ିଯାଇଥାନ୍ତି ସେଇ ଅଜ୍ଞାତ ନାରୀଟିର !

ଅମରଙ୍କ ଅକ୍ଷ୍ମ ଚାରିପାଖେ ନିଃସଂକୋଚରେ ନିଜର ସରୁ ହାତଟିକୁ ଗୁଡାଇ ଧରି ନାତାଲିଆ ତାଙ୍କ ଆଖିରେ ଆଖି ମିଳେଇ ଚାହିଁଲା
। ହସ ହସ ମୁହଁରେ ଅମରଙ୍କୁ ଅନାଇ କହିଲା, “yes please. I’m ready. Teach me that song. I love it very much!”

ଏଇ ଭିତରେ ସେ ଅମରଙ୍କୁ ଟାଣି ନେଇ ସାରି ଥାଏ ବେଶ୍ କିଛି ଦୂରକୁ - ଯୋଉଠି ଗୋଟିଏ ପୁଞ୍ଜରିଣୀ ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହୋଇ ଥାଏ ଝରଣାରୁ
ଝରିଆସୁଥିବା ଜଳଧାରାରୁ । ସେଇ ପୁଞ୍ଜରିଣୀର ଚତୁର୍ପାର୍ଶ୍ୱ ଘନ ବନାନୀରେ ଆବୃତ ହୋଇ କୁଞ୍ଜ ଭଳି ଦୃଶ୍ୟମାନ ହେଉଥାଏ ସଂନ୍ଧ୍ୟାଲୋକରେ
କୁଞ୍ଜ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସ୍ଥାନେ ସ୍ଥାନେ କାଠ ବେଞ୍ଚ କେତୋଟି ପଡ଼ିଥାଏ ପାର୍କରେ ଭ୍ରମଣକ୍ଳାନ୍ତ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଆରାମ ପାଇଁ । ସେଇ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ଗୋଟିଏ
ବେଞ୍ଚରେ ଅମରଙ୍କୁ ବସାଇ ଦେଇ ନାତାଲିୟା ନିଜେ ବସି ପଡ଼ିଲା ତାଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ଆଉ ପୁନର୍ବାର ଅନୁରୋଧ କଲା- , “Please sing that
again. is this an Indian song? Oh, How lovely! Start it from the beginning please.”

ଅମର ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ କଲେ ଆଲୋକକୁ । ପିଲାଟି ବିଶ୍ୱସ୍ତଭାବେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଅନୁସରଣ କରି ପହଞ୍ଚି ଯାଇଥାଏ ତାଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ । କଣ ଭାବୁଥିଲା
ସେ କେଜାଣି ହଠାତ୍ ଶୁଣାଗଲା ଅମରଙ୍କ ଉଚ୍ଚ କଂଠରୁ, “ଓଁ ଓଁ ଓଁ “ ଏକ ଲଂବା ଅସରକ୍ତି ଓଁକାର ଧ୍ୱନି ! ଏତେ ଲଂବା ସେ ଧ୍ୱନିର
ଉଚ୍ଚାରଣ ଯେ ସେଥିରେ ଧରିଉଠିଲା ଚତୁର୍ଦିଗ । ଅମରଙ୍କ କଂଠ ଜଣେ ଦୀର୍ଘ ଦିନ ଧରି ରେୟାଜ୍ କରି ସଂଗୀତ ଅଭ୍ୟାସ କରିଥିବା ସଂଗୀତଜ୍ଞର
କଂଠ । ସେଇ ଅଭ୍ୟାସ କଂଠ- ନିସ୍ତୃତ ପ୍ରାଣବ ମନ୍ତ୍ର ଉଚ୍ଚାରଣର ପ୍ରଭାବ ପରିବେଶ ଉପରେ ଆକର୍ଷ୍ୟ ଜନକ ଭାବେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କଲା ହୁଏତ ।



ସେଥିରେ ତତ୍ସତ୍ତ୍ୱ ନିଜକୁ ମିଶାଇ ଦେଲା ସେଇ ଶାଳଭଞ୍ଜିକା ବା ବୃକ୍ଷପତ୍ରୀ ନାଟାଲିୟା । ସେ ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କ ସମ୍ମିଳିତ ଓଁକାର ନାଦରେ ଗଗନ ପବନ ମୁଖରିତ ହୋଇଗଲା । ସେମିତି କେତେବେଳେ ସେ ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କ ଦୈତ ଗାନ ଚାଲିଥିଲା ତାର ହିସାବ ଅମରଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ନଥିଲା ।

“ଅଜା !” ଆଲୋକର ଆହ୍ୱାନଦ୍ୱାରା ଚିତ୍କାରରେ ଯାଇ ଅମରଙ୍କ ଧ୍ୟାନ ଭଙ୍ଗହେଲା । ସେତେବେଳକୁ ଆଲୋକ ଆଉ ଆଲୋକ ହୋଇ ନଥିଲା । ସେ ସତେବା ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନାଭିଭୂତ ! ସ୍ୱପ୍ନବିଭୋର ସ୍ୱରରେ ସେ ଜଳାଶୟ କୂଳରୁ ଚିତ୍କାର କରୁ ଥାଏ, “ଅଜା ! ଅଜା ! ଦେଖ ଦେଖ! pondର fishମାନେ ପାଣି ତଳୁ head ଉପରକୁ ବାହାର କରିଛନ୍ତି! ତମ songକୁ hear କରୁଛନ୍ତି !”

ଅଟକି ଗଲେ ଅମର ଆଉ ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହୋଇ ଚାରିଆଡକୁ ଚାହିଁଲେ । ପରେ ପରେ ତାଙ୍କ ଚାହାଣୀ ଘୁରିଲା ଗୋଟିଏ ପାଖକୁ ଯୋଉଠି ଓଁ ହୋଇ ରହି ଯାଇଥିଲା ନାଟାଲିୟା ।

ହଠାତ୍ ନିଜର ଗାଲ ଉପରେ ଏକ ଉଷ୍ମ ଚୁମ୍ବନ ଅନୁଭବ କଲେ ଅମର । ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ସଂକ୍ରୂତିତ ହୋଇ ଉଠିପଡିଲେ ସେ । ଏହା ଥିଲା ତାଙ୍କ ଜୀବନର ଏକ ନୂଆ ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତା ଯାହା ସେ ଆଦୌ ଆଶଙ୍କା କରିନଥିଲେ । ଖୁବ୍ ଲଜିତ ହେଲେ ସେ । ନ’ ବର୍ଷର ନାତି ସାମନାରେ ଏ ଯେଉଁ ବାଜେ କଥା ଘଟିଗଲା ସେଥିରେ ଅତିଶୟ ବିକ୍ରତ ହୋଇ ପଡିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେ ।

ନାଟାଲିୟା କିନ୍ତୁ ଅଦୌ କିଛି ନଭାବି ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସ୍ୱଭାବିକ ଭାବେ କହିଲା, “Thank you, dear friend. I got it now. Can we meet tomorrow? Tomorrow you will hear me singing it perfectly. To be sure. OK?”

ଅମର କିଛି କହିବା ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ନଥିଲେ । ନାଟାଲିୟା କ୍ଷିପ୍ର ଗତିରେ ଜଗିକ୍ କରିକରି ଜଙ୍ଗଲ ଭିତରେ ଉଭେଇ ଗଲା । ଦୂରରୁ ତାର ପାଦଶବ୍ଦ ଶୁଭୁଥାଏ ଢପ୍ ଢପ୍ ଢପ୍ ଢପ୍ …!

ଅଜା ନାତି ସାଙ୍ଗ ହୋଇ ଘରକୁ ଫେରି ଆସିଲେ । ବାଟରେ ଆଲୋକ ପଚାରିଲା, “Don’t you think that she is your girl friend ?”

ଅମର ହସିଲେ । କହିଲେ, “ସେ ତ ମୂଳରୁ ମଣିଷ ନୁହେଁ - girl friend ନା ଛତୁ !”

“ମଣିଷ ନୁହେଁ? then what? a ghost you think her to be? You make me scared, ଅଜା !” ଆଲୋକ ଅଭିଯୋଗ କଲା ।

ପର ଦିନ ଅଜା ନାତି ପୁଣି ହାତ ଧରାଧରି ହେଇ ପାର୍କକୁ ଆସିଲେ । ଆଜି ଆଲୋକର gunman ଭୟ ନଥାଏ । କିନ୍ତୁ ତା ଆଖି ଦୁଇଟା କନକନ ହୁଇଥାଏ । ସେ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରୁଥାଏ ସେଇ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଲୋକଟିକୁ- ନାଟାଲିୟାର ଜୋତାର ଢପ୍ ଢପ୍ ଶବ୍ଦକୁ ।

ସାରା ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟା ସେମାନେ ପାର୍କରେ ଘୁରି ବୁଲିଲେ । ଆଜି ଆଲୋକ ନିର୍ଭୟ । ସେ gunman କଥା ପୁରା ଭୁଲି ଯାଇଥାଏ । କିନ୍ତୁ ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ ସେ ଅମରଙ୍କୁ ପଚାରିବାକୁ ଭୁଲୁ ନଥାଏ, “ଅଜା ! ତୁମ girlfriendତ କାହିଁକି appear କରୁ ନାହିଁ ? ସେ କଣ ସତରେ ମଣିଷ ନା… “What do you call her? A tree fairy? “Druid” ?”

“ନା ନା…”, ଅମର ତଥାପି ଆଶା ରଖିଥାନ୍ତି ନାଟାଲିୟାର ପୁନରାବିର୍ଭାବ ପାଇଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ନାଟାଲିୟା ସହିତ ଆଉ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଭେଟ ହୋଇ ପାରିଲା ନାହିଁ । ଦିନ ପରେ ଦିନ ବିତି ଗଲା । ଗ୍ରୀଷ୍ମ ଛୁଟି କରିବାକୁ ବସିଲା । ଅଜା ନାତିଙ୍କ ପାର୍କ ଭ୍ରମଣ ସହିତ ନାଟାଲିୟା -ଅନୁସନ୍ଧାନ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ ତଥାପି ଜାରି ରହିଥାଏ ।

ଦିନେ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାରେ ଅମର ପାର୍କ ଭିତର ସେଇ ପୁଷ୍କରିଣୀ କୂଳର କାଠ ବେଞ୍ଚ ଉପରେ ବସିଥାନ୍ତି । ଆଲୋକ ପାଣି କୂଳରେ ଠିଆ ହୋଇ ଛୋଟଛୋଟ ଖପରା ସଂଗ୍ରହ କରି ପାଣି ଉପରକୁ ଫେପାଡୁ ଥାଏ । ହଠାତ୍ ସେ ଚିତ୍କାର କଲା- “ ଅଜା ! Look! The fishes are up from water again! They watch us! See! See!

ଠିକ୍ ସେଇ ସମୟରେ ପୁଷ୍କରିଣୀର ଆଉ ପାଖ ଗୋଟାଏ ଅଂଗଳର ଘନ ସାନ୍ଧୁ ନିବିଡ ପାଇନ୍ ବଣ ଭିତରୁ କେଉଁ ଠାରୁ ଶୁଭିଲା



ଏକ ଅସ୍ପଷ୍ଟ ଓଁକାର ଗୁଞ୍ଜରଣ ଖୁବ୍ ଧୀର ମାନବୀୟ ସ୍ଵରରେ । ସେଥିରେ କି ଅଦ୍ଭୁତ ଶକ୍ତି ଥିଲା କେଜାଣି ! ପାଇଁର ଗଛଲତାମାନେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେଥିରେ ପ୍ରଭାବିତ ହେଲା ପରି ଚତୁର୍ଦିଗ ଝରିତ ହୋଇ ଉଠିଲା । ଅସ୍ତଗାମୀ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ମଧ୍ୟ ବାଦ୍ ଗଲାନାହିଁ ସେ ପ୍ରଭାବରୁ । ହ୍ରାତ୍ ପକ୍ଷିମ ଦିଗ୍‌ବଳୟ ଏକ ଅପୂର୍ବ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣରେ ରଞ୍ଜିତ ହୋଇଗଲା ।

“ଅଜା ! Let’s go to that side. May be she is there.” ଆଲୋକ ଧାଇଁଲା ପୋଖରୀ କୁଳେକୁଳେ ସେପାରିକୁ ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ଅମର ଜାଣି ପାରିଲେ- ନାତାଲିୟାକୁ ଆଲୋକ ଠାବ କରି ପାରିବ ନାହିଁ ଆଦୌ । କାରଣ ସେ ଥିଲା ଏକ ଶାଳଭଞ୍ଜିକା ଯେ ଆମେରିକାର ଅରଣ୍ୟରେ ରହି ତାର ନିଜସ୍ଵ ଧର୍ମ ଭୁଲିଯାଇସାରିଥିଲା । ସେଇ ଶାଳଭଞ୍ଜିକାମାନେ ଭାରତର ଅରଣ୍ୟରେ ବୃକ୍ଷମାନଙ୍କରେ କେବଳ ନୁହେଁ ମନ୍ଦିର ଗାତ୍ରମାନଙ୍କରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ବାସ କରନ୍ତି । ସେଇ ମାନଙ୍କ ଯୋଗୁ ଅରଣ୍ୟର ନିର୍ଜନତା ରକ୍ଷି ମୁନିମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ତପୋଭୂମୀ ପାଲଟେ । ସେମାନେ ନିର୍ଜନତା ଭିତରେ ଶୁଣନ୍ତି- ଅନାହତ ଧ୍ଵନି ଯାହା ନାଁ ଓଁକାର ।

ଆଉ ସାଧାରଣ ସଂସାରୀ ଲୋକେ ଧର୍ମ ଅର୍ଜନ ପାଇଁ ମନ୍ଦିରକୁ ଯାଇ ସେଠାରେ ମନ୍ଦିର କାନ୍ଥରେ ଭେଟନ୍ତି ନୃତ୍ୟରତା ନଟନଟୀ ବା ଶାଳଭଞ୍ଜିକା ମାନଙ୍କୁ । ସେଠି ମଧ୍ୟ ନିର୍ଜନ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତମାନଙ୍କରେ କବିମାନେ ଶୁଣିବାକୁ ପାଆନ୍ତି- ଓଁକାର ଧ୍ଵନିମୟ ଉଚ୍ଚାଟକ ସଂଗୀତ । ଏଇ ହେଲା ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଧର୍ମ । ନାତାଲିୟା - ସେ ଯେକେହି ହେଉ ପଛେ ଆମେରିକାର ଅରଣ୍ୟ ନିବାସୀ ହେବା ପରଠାରୁ ସେ ବିଚାରୀ ଭୁଲି ଯାଇଥିଲା ତା ନିଜସ୍ଵ ଧର୍ମ ! ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ସେ ମୁକ୍ତ, ସଚେତନ ଏକ ବୃକ୍ଷପରୀ ଅର୍ଥାତ୍, “Druid”

“ଅଜା” ପୋଖରୀ ଆରପାଖୁ ଆଲୋକ ତାକ ପକାଇଲା, “No body is here ଅଜା ! ତୁମ୍ଭ girlfriend

ଏଠି ନାହିଁ! ବର୍, ମୁଁ ଝିଲ୍ ଶୁଣୁଚି ତା ଭଏସ୍ ପସ୍ ସେପାଖୁ - ତମ ସାଇଡ୍‌ରୁ ଅଜା ! “is she there already?”

ଶାନ୍ତନୁ କୁମାର ଆଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ , ୧୯୩୩ରେ ଜନ୍ମ . ଓଡ଼ିଶାର କଟକ ଜିଲ୍ଲାର ସିଦ୍ଧେଶ୍ଵରପୁର ଚାଙ୍ଗ ନିଜ ପୈତୃକ ଗ୍ରାମ. ଶିକ୍ଷା ଓ ବୃତ୍ତିରେ ସେ ରସାୟନ (କେମିଷ୍ଟ୍ରି)ର ଅଧ୍ୟାପକ ଏବଂ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାରଙ୍କର ଶିକ୍ଷା ବିଭାଗର ବରିଷ୍ଠ ପ୍ରଶାସକ ଭାବେ ଅବସର ପ୍ରାପ୍ତ । ତାଙ୍କର ବାହାର ମନନଶୀଳ ରଚନାଗଣର ଗଳ୍ପ, ଉପନ୍ୟାସ, ରମ୍ୟରଚନା, ଶିଳ୍ପ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ପାଇଁ ସେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଏକାଡେମି, ଭାରତୀୟ କେନ୍ଦ୍ର ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଏକାଡେମି ସମେତ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ କୋଡିଏଟି ରାଜ୍ୟ ଓ ରାଜ୍ୟ ସ୍ତରୀୟ ପୁରସ୍କାର ଏବଂ ସମ୍ମାନ ଲାଭ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ଉପନ୍ୟାସ ଓ ସମାନ ଫାଖ୍ୟାର ଗଳ୍ପ ବହି ସହିତ ତାଙ୍କ ରଚନାମାଳା ପ୍ରାୟ ଚାଳିଶଟି ସୂଚନଶୀଳ ପୁସ୍ତକ ଏଯାବତ୍ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ ହୋଇଛି । କେଉଁକେଉଁ କେତେକ ଉପନ୍ୟାସ ଓ ଅନେକ କ୍ଷୁଦ୍ରଗଳ୍ପ ଇଂରେଜୀ, ଉର୍ଦ୍ଦୁ ସମେତ ହିନ୍ଦୀ, ବଙ୍ଗଳା, ଗୁଜୁରାଟି, ତଥା ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଭାରତୀୟ ଭାଷାରେ ଅନୁଦିତ ଏବଂ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ ହୋଇଛି । କେଉଁକେ ଭାରତବର୍ଷର ସାରସ୍ଵତ ଜଗତର ଜଣେ ସୁପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ ଏବଂ ବରିଷ୍ଠ ସାଧକ । ସେ ସମ୍ପାଦକ ଭୂବନେଶ୍ଵରରେ ବାସ କରୁଛନ୍ତି



ଅଭିଶପ୍ତ ଅଭିମନ୍ୟୁ

ଡଃ ଜୀବନ କୃଷ୍ଣ ମହାପାତ୍ର

ବୃତ୍ତ ଏକ ବିଚିତ୍ର ଜ୍ୟାମିତିକ ଚିତ୍ର ।

ତା'ର ପରିଧି ଉପରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଆଡକୁ ମୁହଁ କରି ଥରେ ଗତି ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲେ ଯେଉଁ ଠାରୁ ବାହାରିଥିବ ପୁଣି ସେଇଠି ଆସି ପହଞ୍ଚି ଯିବ । ମଣିଷର ଜୀବନ କଣ ଏମିତି ଏକ ପରିଧି ଉପରେ ଗତିଶୀଳ ଏକ ବିନ୍ଦୁ ? କେତେ ଜନ୍ମ ଜନ୍ମାନ୍ତର ପରେ ସେ କ'ଣ ପୁଣି ତାର ପୂର୍ବ ପରିବେଶକୁ ଫେରି ଆସିବ ? ପ୍ରତି ଜନ୍ମର ଶେଷ କ'ଣ ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ନାଁ ପ୍ରତି ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ଏକ ନୂତନ ଜନ୍ମର ଆରମ୍ଭ ମାତ୍ର ?

ଏ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନମାନଙ୍କର ସମ୍ଭାବ୍ୟ ଉତ୍ତର ସ୍ୱାମୀ ଅଭେଦାନନ୍ଦଙ୍କର ବହି "Life beyond death" ଭିତରୁ ମୁଁ ଖୋଜୁଥିଲି । ମୋର ଆଖି ଏକାଗ୍ରତା ସହ ଗତି ଚାଲିଥିଲା ପ୍ରତି ଶବ୍ଦ ଉପରେ । ହଠାତ୍ ଠପ୍ କରି ବସିଗଲା ପୃଷ୍ଠା ଉପରେ ଏକ ଉଡ଼ନ୍ତା, ଛୋଟ କଳା ପୋକ ।

ତାର ବି ଗୋଟଏ ଜୀବନ ଅଛି ।

ତା' ଜୀବନ ବି କ'ଣ ବୃତ୍ତ ପରିଧି ଉପରେ ଏକ ଗତିଶୀଳ ବିନ୍ଦୁ ?

ମୋ ଚିନ୍ତାଧାରାରେ ବାଧା ଦେଇ ପୋକଟା ଉଡିବାକୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲା । ଉଡି ଉଡି ଯାଇ ପହଞ୍ଚିଲା ରେଳବାଇ ତବା ଛାତରେ, କାଚ ଢାଙ୍କୁଣୀ ଘେରା ଖୋଳ ଭିତରେ, ଜଳୁଥିବା ବିଜୁଳି ବଲ୍‌ବ ପାଖରେ ।

ଆଲୋକର ଆକର୍ଷଣ

ସେ ଆକର୍ଷଣ ଆଦିମ

ସେ ଆକର୍ଷଣ ନିର୍ବାପିତ ହେବା କଥା ନୁହେଁ

କାବର ଢାଙ୍କୁଣୀ ଭିତରକୁ ପଶିବା ପାଇଁ ସେ ପୋକ ଅବିରତ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରି ଚାଲିଲା । ସେ ଖୋଜି ଚାଲିଲା ଏକ ଛୋଟିଆ ରସ୍ତା ଯେଉଁଠାକି ଆଲୋକ ପାଖରେ ସେ ପହଞ୍ଚିବା ପାଇଁ ଏକାନ୍ତ ଜରୁରୀ ।

ଆଃ

କି ଆନନ୍ଦ ତାର

ତାର ଚେଷ୍ଟା ସାର୍ଥକ ହୋଇଛି

ସେ ପାଇଛି ଏକ ସରୁ ରାସ୍ତା

ସେ ରାସ୍ତା ଦେଇ ସେ ଭିତରକୁ ପଶିଗଲା ଅବୀରତ ଆନନ୍ଦ ପାଇଁ ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ଏ କ'ଣ . . . ?

ଓଃ . . . କି କଷ୍ଟ ତାର . . . ପଶିଗଲା ପରେ ହିଁ ଜାଣିଲା ଯେ ଭିତରେ ଉତ୍ତର ଅନଳ । ପଳେଇ ଆସିବାକୁ ଚାହିଁଲା । ଚେଷ୍ଟା ବି କଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ କେବଳ ଫର୍ ଫର୍ ଡେଇଁବା ସାର ହେଲା । ସେ ଅନଳ ଭିତରେ ତାର ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଯେ ଆଉ କାମ କରୁନି । ଫେରିବାର ରାସ୍ତା ସେ ଭୁଲି ଯାଇଛି ।

ଅଭିଶପ୍ତ ଅଭିମନ୍ୟୁ ସେ

ଛଟପଟ ହୋଇ ତାକୁ ତାର ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ପାଇଁ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରିବାକୁ ହିଁ ହେବ ।

ଠିକ୍ ଯେମିତି ମାୟା ମୋହର ଏ କାଚ ଢାଙ୍କୁଣୀ ଭିତରେ ଉଦ୍‌ଦେଶ୍ୟ-ବିହୀନ ଭଲ ପାଇବାକୁ ଖୋଜି ଖୋଜି ମୁଁ ଛଟପଟ ହୋଇ

ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରିଛି ମୋର ମୃତ୍ୟୁକୁ . . . ।

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ଶାଶୁ ବୋହୂ ଉପାଖ୍ୟାନ

ନନ୍ଦିତା ବେହେରା

ପିଲା ଦିନେ ଖରାଛୁଟି ହେଲେ ଆମେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଭାଇ ଭଉଣୀ ଅନେଇ ବସି ଥାଉ କେମିତି ଗାଁକୁ ଯିବୁ । ଗାଁରେ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ମିଶି ରଜ ସଜବାଜ, ନଇ ପହଁରା, ତା ସାଙ୍ଗକୁ କଖେଇ କୋଳି ତୋଳି ଖାଇବା ଆଉ ଗାଁ କନିଆ ମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ କନିଆ ତାକରା ଖାଇ ଯିବା ଗୋଟେ ବଡ଼ ପଟୁଆର କହିଲେ ଚଳେ । ମନେ ଅଛି ବାହାଘର ଠିକଣା ହୋଇ ଯିବା କ୍ଷଣି, ନଇତୁଠୁ ସରଗରମ ହୋଇ ଉଠେ ଆଗାମୀ ବିଭାଘର ଆଲୋଚନା ନେଇ । କନିଆ ଦେହରେ ହଳଦି ଯସି ଯସି ଚିକ୍କଣ କଲାବେଳେ ସାଇ ମାଇପେ ଘେରି ବସନ୍ତି କେତେ କଣ ଉପଦେଶ ନେଇ । ପ୍ରାୟ ସମସ୍ତ ଚପିକ୍ ର ଗୋଟିଏ ମୂଳଧାର- ସେଇ ଶାଶୁଘର । ବରତି କେମିତିଆ, ଗୁଣର କି ନୁହେଁ, ସେ ଚିନ୍ତା ପଛରେ ଥାଉ, ତା ଶାଶୁଟି କେମିତିଆ- ମତହସ୍ତି ପରି ନା ତନୁପାତଳୀ କଞ୍ଜ ମିଜାଜୀ ନା ମଧୁରା ବୋଲି ସେଇ ନେଇ କନିଆଟିକୁ ଡିଆରି କରାଯାଏ । କନିବୋଉ ପାନ ଚୋବୋଉ ଚୋବୋଉ ରତି କରିଉଠେ “ଶାଶୁଙ୍କ ଗୋତଧୁଆ ପାଣି ଟିକେ ସକାଳୁ ଗାଧେଇ ସାରି ମନେକରି ପିଇବୁ, ତାହେଲେ ବୈକୁଣ୍ଠ ଯିବାକୁ ସୁବିଧା ହେବ । ନଶରଞ୍ଜର ମନଜାଣି ସେବା କରୁଥିବୁ ନ ହେଲେ ଆମ ଗାଁ ନା ପଡ଼ିବ । ସେତ ଶାଶୁଘର ନୁହେଁ ଯମପୁର ଲୋ ମାଆମାନେ । ଥରେ ସେ ହରତଘଣାରେ ପଡ଼ିଲେ ଆଉ ଫେରିବା ବାଟ ନାହିଁ । ରୁକୁଣା ରଥ ଅଣଲେଉଟା” ।

ମୁଁ ସେତେବେଳେ ସାତ ସାନ । ଏମିତିଆ ଅବାରିଆ କଥା ସବୁ ଶୁଣି ଶୁଣି ଭାବେ ସତରେ ଶାଶୁଘରେ ଗୋଟାଏ ଗୋଟାଏ ବଡ଼ କଡେଇ ବସିଥିବ, ସେଥିରେ ତେଲ ଟକଟକ ହୋଇ ଫୁଟୁଥିବ ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ଗୋଟିଏ ଲମ୍ବା ଲୁହା ଖତିକାମାନ ଧରି ଶାଶୁମାନେ ବୋହୁମାନଙ୍କ ଖାଇ କତା କତା କରି ଭାଙ୍ଗୁଥିବେ । ଧିରେ ଧିରେ ବୟସ ବୁଝି ହେଲାପରେ ଶାଶୁବୋହୁ ସମିକି ନେଇ ଗବେଷଣା କରିବାକୁ ମନ ବଳିଲା । ଯଦି କେଉଁ ମହାବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟର ଫେଲୋସିପ୍ରୀଟି ପାଇଥାନ୍ତି ତାହେଲେ ନିଷ୍ଠୟ ଗୋଟିଏ ପୁସ୍ତକ ରଚନା କରି ଥାଆନ୍ତି ।

ଆମ ଜେଜେମା ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ଗାଁରୁ ଆସି ଆମ ପାଖରେ ରୁହେ । ତାର ଶାଶୁପଣ ସେତେ ଦେଖିଲା ଭଳିଆ ନୁହେଁ । ଥୁରୁଥୁରୁ ବୁଢ଼ିଟିଏ । ବୁଢ଼ୁଳାଟିଏ ପରି ବସି, ହବିଷ କରିବାରେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ନ ହେଲେ ମାଳି ଗତଉ ଥିବ । ଆମ ଘରେ ସାଧବ ଘର ତପୋଇ ଘର ଭଳି ପଲେ ବୋହୁ ନସର ପସର ହୋଉଥାଆନ୍ତି । ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ମୁହଁରେ ମୃଦୁ ମୃଦୁ ହସ । ସକାଳୁ ସକାଳୁ କିଏ ବିରି ଚାଉଳ ବାଟି ସାରିଲାଣି ତ କିଏ ଦାଣ୍ଡ ଲିପି ମୁରୁଜ ଝୋଟି ପକାଇଲାଣି । କିଏ ଦାଣ୍ଡ କୁଅରୁ ପାଣି କାଢି କଳସୀ ଧରି ଘରକୁ ଆସୁଛି ତ କିଏ ଭାଗବତ ଘରେ ଫୁଲ ଧୂପ ସଜାଇବାରେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ । ଖୁଡିମାନେ ଆସୁ ଆସୁ ଯଦି ହଠାତ ଦେଉଣୁର ମାନଙ୍କ ହାବୁଡରେ ପଡିଗଲେ ତାହେଲେ ହାତେଲମ୍ବ ଓଢଣା ଟାଣି ଚାଲିଯାଆନ୍ତି । ସେଠି ଆଉ ମୁଁ ତେଲ କଡେଇର ଚିହ୍ନବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ପାଇନି । ଆମ ଜେଜେମା ତା ଅମଳରେ ପ୍ରବଳ ପ୍ରତାପୀ ଥିଲା କି ନଥିଲା ଜାଣି ହେଲାନି ।

ମୋ ବେଳକୁ ସାହି ପଡିଶା ଥଙ୍ଗା କରି କହିଲେ “ଥରେ ଶାଶୁଘରକୁ ଗଲେ ସବୁ ଛଇ ଛଟକି ଛାଡିଯିବ ଲୋ ଝିଅ” କିନ୍ତୁ “ଯାହାକୁ ରଖିବେ ଅନନ୍ତ କି କରିପାରେ ବଳବନ୍ତ” । ଭିସା କାଗଜ ପତ୍ର ହାତରେ ଧରି ମୁଁ ବେଦିକୁ ଉଠିଲି ଆଉ ମୁହଁରୁ ହଳଦିରଙ୍ଗ ଛାଡିବା ଆଗରୁ ଶାଶୁଙ୍କୁ ବାଏ ବାଏ କହି ଏଠି ଆସି ହାଜର । ରକ୍ଷା ଗୋତଧୁଆ ପାଣି ପିଇବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ମିଳିଲାନି କି ତେଲ କଡେଇର ତାତି ଦେହରେ ବାଜିଲାନି । ଏଠୁ ଥାଇ ଚିଠି ପତ୍ରଦ୍ୱାରା ଶାଶୁ ସେବା ନିଷ୍ଠୟ କରିଚି । ବୋହୁ ପଣିଆ ଅଭ୍ୟାସ କରିବାର ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତି ଆରଂଭ ନ ହଉଣୁ ହାଲୁକିଲ୍ ଜୋତା ପିନ୍ଧି ଘୋଡାନାଚ ବେଶ ସାଜି ଗାଡି ଚଲେଇ ଅଫିସ ଯିବାକୁ ପଡିଲା । ଅଫିସରେ ଆଉ ମୃଦୁ ଭାଷାର ପ୍ରଚଳନ ନାହିଁ । ଖାଲି ଠକ୍ ଠକ୍ ଠୋ ଠା କଥା । ନହେଲେ ସେମାନେ ଭାବିବେ କୋଉଠୁ ଗୋଟାଏ ଉଷୁନା ଚାଉଳ ଆସିଲା ଯେ ଲେସେମା ହୋଇ ବସି ରହୁଛି । ଖୁବ ଶିଘ୍ର ନିଜକୁ ଚାଞ୍ଚି ତନୁପାତଳୀ ଅରୁଆ ଚାଉଳ ପରି ଚେହେରା କରି ବୁଲିଲି । ଆମ ଗାଁ ମାଇପେ ମୋ ଫଟ ଦେଖି ଭେଟେଣା ହୋଇଗଲେ । କହିଲେ “ଏତେ କରି କାନେ କାନେ କହି ବୋହୁପଣିଆ ଶିଖେଇଥିଲୁ, ଇଏ ପୋତାକପାଳୀ ସବୁ ପୋତି ଖାଇଲା ? ଆମ ଗାଁ ନା ବଦନାମ କଲା ସେ ଆମେରିକା ଦେଶରେ” ।

ହେଲେ ଆମେରିକା ଆସିଲା ପରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଶାଶୁବୋହୁ ଉପାଖ୍ୟାନ ମୋର ଶେଷ ହେଲା ନାହିଁ । ଆମ ପତାରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଗୁଢୁରାଟୀ



ପରିବାର ରହନ୍ତି । ଗୋଟିଏ ଘରେ ମୋ ବନ୍ଧୁ ନିଶା ଓ ତାଙ୍କ ଶାଶୁ ଦେହଶୁର ସମସ୍ତେ ଏକାଠି ଥାଆନ୍ତି । ଏଠିକା ବୋହୂମାନଙ୍କ ଦୁଇଟା ରୂପ । ସକାଳ ହେଲେ ପ୍ୟାଞ୍ଜ ସାଟ ପିନ୍ଧି ଗାଡିଧରି କାମକୁ ଯିବେ । ଘରକୁ ଫେରିଲେ ଲୁଗା ପିନ୍ଧି, ରୋଷେଇ ବାସ, ଶାଶୁଙ୍କ ସେବା, ଘରକାମ ଆଉ ତୁପିତୁପି କଥା । ମତେ ସବୁ ଅବାକ ଲାଗେ । ବୋହୂ ଯୋଡିକ ଯେତେ କାମ କଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଶାଶୁଙ୍କ ଖେଙ୍କେଶାରୁ ତ୍ରାହି ନାହିଁ । ଯୋଡିକ ଜାକ ଝଡି ସଲିତା ପରି ଦିଶିଲେଣି ତଥାପି ରକ୍ଷା ନାହିଁ । ମୋ ବାସବୀଙ୍କ ଦୁଃଖ ଶୁଣିଲେ ମନେ ହୁଏ ଇଏ ସତରେ ତେଲ କତେଇ । ଦେନେ ଏଠି ମଦର୍ସ ତେ ହେଲା । ବାସବୀ ନିଶାଙ୍କ ପରିବାର ରେ ଏକ ବିରାଟ ଭୋଜିସଭା ର ଆୟୋଜନ । ପୁଅମାନେ ମନପ୍ରାଣ ଦେଇ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତି କରିଥାନ୍ତି । ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରିତ ଭାବରେ ମୁଁ ଯାଇଥାଏ । ଅନେକ ବନ୍ଧୁପରିସର ଙ୍କ ସମାଗମ । ଶାଶୁଙ୍କର ଆନ୍ଦର ସୀମା ନାହିଁ । ପୁଅମାନେ ମା'ଙ୍କ ଗୁଣଗାନ କରି ପରିଚୟ କରି ଦଉଥାନ୍ତି । ଯେତେବେଳେ ମୋର ବାସବୀଙ୍କର ଶାଶୁଙ୍କର ବିଷୟରେ କିଛି କହିବାର ପାଳି ଆସିଲା, ମୁଁ ଚକିତ ହୋଇ ଶୁଣୁଥାଏ । “କହିଲେ କୁଳକୁଟୁମ୍ବ କୁ ଲାଜ, ନକହିଲେ କୁଳ ଭାଷି ଯାଉଚି ” । ବାସବୀ ନିଶା ମୋର କୌଣସି ମତେ ଚଳେଇଦେଲେ ସେଦିନ ।

ଏଠିକାର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟବ୍ୟସ୍ତତା ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଅନେକ ଦିନ ପରେ ହଠାତ ବାସବୀଙ୍କ ଫୋନ ଆସିଲା । ଏ ଭିତରେ ଶାଶୁଙ୍କର ଦେହାନ୍ତ ହୋଇ ଯାଇଛି ତେଣୁ ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧାଞ୍ଜଳି ପାଇଁ ଡାକରା । ଫୁନେରାଲ୍ ସର୍ଭିସ୍ ଯାଇ ଦେଖିଲି ପୁତ୍ରମାନେ ମାତୃଶୋକରେ ଶ୍ରୀହିନ ହୋଇ ପଡିଥାନ୍ତି । ବୋହୂମାନଙ୍କର ରୂପ ରଙ୍ଗ ଏକ ପ୍ରକାର ବିଷାଦମୟ । ମୋର ବାସବୀ ନିଶା ଚିନ୍ତାମଗ୍ନ ହୋଇ ମନେ ପକାଉଥାଆନ୍ତି ତାଙ୍କର ଶାଶୁଙ୍କ ସହିତ କଟାଇଥିବା କେତୋଟି ଅଭୁଲ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତ । ବାସବୀଙ୍କ ମୁହଁକୁ ଚାହିଁ ମୁଁ ଭାବୁଥାଏ ଗୋଟିଏ ପରିବାରରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ସୁତାରେ ଗୁଛା ସମିକିର ରୂପରଙ୍ଗ କେତେ ପ୍ରକାରର । ସବୁ ସମିକିର ମୂଳ ସାକ୍ଷୀ କେବଳ ଛାଡିଯାଇଥିବା ସ୍ତୁତି । ମନେ ପଡୁଥଲା “ପ୍ରାଣୀ ର ଭଲମନ୍ଦ ବାଣି, ମରଣ କାଳେ ତାହା ଜାଣି” ।

Nandita Behera is a famous Odissi dancer and teacher. She lives in Cerritos with her husband Niranjana and daughter Nupur and son Nayan.



ଦେବଦୂତମାନେ ଯଦି ହ୍ୟାପି ପ୍ରିନ୍ସର ହୃଦୟ ତଥାପି ଖୋଜୁଥା'ନ୍ତି

ଜୁଲି ଆଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ରାୟ

ମତେ ସେତେବେଳେ ହୋଇଥାଏ ଆଠ ବର୍ଷ । ଆମେ ତିନି ଭଉଣୀ । ମୁଁ ସବା ସାନ । ନାନୀମାନେ ମୋଠାରୁ ବହୁତ ବଡ଼ ତେଣୁ ମୋର ସବୁବେଳେ ଘରେ ଖେଳିବା ପାଇଁ ସାଙ୍ଗର ଅଭାବ । ମା' ଘର କାମ ନେଇ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ, ନାନୀମାନେ କଲେଜ ପାଠ ଓ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ପ୍ରିୟ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ନେଇ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ । ମୋ ଲାଗି କାହାର ସମୟ ନଥାଏ । ତେଣୁ ମୁଁ ଅଧିକାଂଶ ସମୟରେ ମୋର କାଳ୍ପନିକ ରାଜ୍ୟରେ ମନଗଢ଼ା ସାଧି ମାନଙ୍କୁ ନେଇକରି ଖେଳେ । ସମର୍ ଭେକେସନ୍‌ରେ ଦୁଇ ମାସ ଛୁଟି । ଦିନ ଦି' ପହରରେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଶୋଇବାକୁ ଯାଆନ୍ତି ହେଲେ ମତେ ନିଦ ହୁଏ ନାହିଁ । ମା ବାହାରକୁ ଖେଳିବାକୁ ଛାଡ଼ନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ ତେଣୁ ଖରାବେଳଟା ସାରା କେତେ ଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ଚେୟାର ଭିତର ବାରଣ୍ଡାରେ ପକାଇ, କିଛି କାଗଜ, ପେନସିଲ୍ ଓ ଗୋଟିଏ ସ୍କେଲ୍ ଧରି ସ୍କୁଲ-ସ୍କୁଲ ଖେଳେ । କେତେବେଳେ ଶୀତୁଲେଖା ମ୍ୟାଗାଜିନ୍‌ର କବିତାଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ସ୍ୱରଦେଇ ବୋଲେ ତ କେତେବେଳେ ରଙ୍ଗତୁଳୀ ଧରି ରଙ୍ଗ କରିବାକୁ ବସେ । ହେଲେ ସବୁବେଳେ ମନ ଖୋଜୁଥାଏ ଗୋଟିଏ ସାଧି, ଯିଏ ମୋ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ଖେଳିବ, ମୋ ଗୀତ ଶୁଣିବ, ମୋ ପେଣ୍ଡିଙ୍ଗ୍ ଦେଖିବ ଓ ଯାହାଠାରୁ ମୁଁ ମଧ୍ୟ କିଛି ନୁଆ କଥା ଶିଖିବି ।

ସେଦିନ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟା ହେଇ ଆସୁଥାଏ । ଆମେ ତିନି ଭଉଣୀ, ମା'ଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ଦାଣ୍ଡ ବାରଣ୍ଡାରେ ବସିଥାଉ । ଶୀତ ଦିନର ଆରମ୍ଭ । ଥଣ୍ଡା ପବନ ବୋହୁଥାଏ । ମା' ଚଉକି ଉପରେ ବସିଥାନ୍ତି, ମୁଁ ତାଙ୍କ କୋଳରେ ବସିଥାଏ ଓ ନାନୀମାନେ ତଳେ ବସି ଗପ କରୁଥାନ୍ତି । ହଠାତ୍ ଆମ ଗେଟ୍ ପାଖରେ ଜଣେ ଭଦ୍ରମହିଳା ଆସି ଠିଆହେଲେ । ହାଇଟ୍ କମ୍, ରଙ୍ଗ ମଇଳା, ସାଧାରଣ ଚେହେରା, ହେଲେ ଭଲ କରି ଶାଢ଼ୀ ପିନ୍ଧିଛନ୍ତି, ମୁଣ୍ଡ ବାଳରେ ସୁନ୍ଦର କରି ଖୋସାଟିଏ ପଡ଼ିଛି । ତାଙ୍କ ଭାବ ଭଙ୍ଗରୁ ଜଣାପଡ଼ୁଥିଲା ଯେ ସିଏ କିଛି କହିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଥିଲେ । ବଡ଼ନାନୀ ଉଠି ଗେଟ୍ ପାଖକୁ ଗଲା । ସିଏ ତାକୁ କିଛି କହିଲେ ଓ ତା ପରେ ନାନୀ ଗେଟ୍ ଖୋଲି ଭଦ୍ରମହିଳାଙ୍କୁ ଭିତରକୁ ଆଣିଲା । ଖଣି ଖଣି ଓଡ଼ିଆ କହୁଥାନ୍ତି ସିଏ-ଜଣା ପଡ଼ୁଥାଏ ବଙ୍ଗଳା ବୋଲି । କହିଲେ, “ଆମେ ଏଠାକୁ ନୁଆ କରି ଆସିବୁ । ମୋ ନାଁ ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା । ଏଇଠି ପାଖରେ ଘର । ଆପଣଙ୍କ ଘରେ ଥୁଡ଼ା ଗଛଟିକୁ ଦେଖି ଭାବିଲି, କିଛି ତାଳ ମାଗିନେଇ ଯିବି ଘରେ ସଜାଇବାକୁ” । ମା' ସାଙ୍ଗେସାଙ୍ଗେ ଗୁଆ କାଟି ଆଣି, ଥୁଡ଼ା ଗଛରୁ ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ଭଲ ଭଲ ତାଳ କାଟି ଦେଲେ ଓ କହିଲେ “କିଛି ଦରକାର ହେଲେ ଜଣାଇବ” । ମା' ଙ୍କୁ ନମସ୍କାର କରି, ଠିକ୍ ବାହାରିଯିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ, ଭଦ୍ରମହିଳା ଜଣକ ମତେ ଚାହିଁ କହିଲେ “ତିସେମ୍ବର ୨୫ ତାରିଖ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟା ବେଳେ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟମାସ୍ ପାଇଁ ଛୋଟ ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ଘରକୁ ଡାକିଛି, ତୁମେ ଆସିବ?” ମୁଁ ମା' ଙ୍କ ମୁହଁକୁ ଚାହିଁଲି । ମା ହସି ହସି କହିଲେ “ହଁ, ତାକୁ ମୁଁ ନେଇ ଛାଡ଼ିଦେଇ ଆସିବି” । ତାପରେ ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ମାଉସୀ ଥୁଡ଼ା ଗଛର ତାଳଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ଧରି ଚାଲିଗଲେ । ମା' କହିଲେ “ବଙ୍ଗଳା ଖୁଞ୍ଚିଆନ ବୋଧହୁଏ ।”

୨୫ ତିସେମ୍ବର ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟା ବେଳେ ମା' ମତେ ନେଇ ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ମାଉସୀଙ୍କ ଘରେ ଛାଡ଼ିଦେଇ ଆସିଲେ । ଅନେକ ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ ପିଲା ତାଙ୍କ ଡ୍ରଇଂ ରୁମ୍‌ରେ ବସିଥା'ନ୍ତି । କେତେକ ତାହା ଭିତରୁ ପାଖରେ ରହୁଥିବା ବସ୍ତ୍ରର ଗରୀବ ପିଲା ଓ ଅନ୍ୟ କେତେକ ଆଖ ପାଖର ଚିହ୍ନା ଛୋଟ ପୁଅ ଝିଅ ମାନେ । ଛୋଟିଆ ଦୁଇ ବେଡ୍ ରୁମ୍‌ର ଘର ଚିଏ । ଅଳ୍ପ ଜିନିଷ ପତ୍ର ହେଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଭାରି ସମ୍ପା ଓ ସୁନ୍ଦର ଭାବରେ ସଜା ହୋଇ ରହିଥାଏ । ଖଟ ଉପରେ ପରିଷ୍କାର ଚଦର, କାନ୍ଥରେ ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ ପେଣ୍ଡିଙ୍ଗ୍, ରବିନ୍ଦ୍ରନାଥଙ୍କର ପେନସିଲ୍ ସ୍କେଟ୍, ଦୁର୍ଗାଙ୍କର ଗୋଟିଏ ହାତ ତିଆରି ମାଟିର ମୁଖା ଯେଉଁ ଥିରେ ସିନ୍ଦୂର ଚନ୍ଦନ ଲଗାହୋଇଥାଏ, ଘର କୋଣରେ ଗିଟାର୍‌ଟିଏ, ବହି ଆକରେ ସଜା ହୋଇଥାଏ ବଡ଼ ଛୋଟ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଅନେକ ବହି ଓ ଫୁଲବାନିରେ ଯନ୍ତରେ ରଖାଯାଇଥାଏ ଆମ ଥୁଡ଼ା ଗଛର ତାଳ ।

ଡ୍ରଇଂ ରୁମ୍‌ର ମଝିରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଛୋଟିଆ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟମାସ୍ ଟ୍ରି । ତା ଉପରେ ଖଞ୍ଜା ହୋଇଥାଏ ରଙ୍ଗ ବେରଙ୍ଗ ରିବନ୍, ଅନେକ ରୁପେଲି ରଙ୍ଗର ତାରା ଓ ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ ବେଲୁନ୍ । ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟମାସ୍ ଟ୍ରିଟି ତଳେ ଜିଣୁଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟଙ୍କ ଜନ୍ମ ବେଳର ଚିତ୍ରଟିଏ ପ୍ରେମ୍‌ରେ ବନ୍ଧା ହୋଇ ରଖା ଯାଇଥାଏ । ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ମାଉସୀଙ୍କର ବର୍ଷକର କୁନି ପୁଅଟିଏ । ତା ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ସବୁ ପିଲାମାନେ ଖେଳୁଥାନ୍ତି । କିଛି ସମୟ ପରେ ମାଉସୀ plateରେ ଖାଇବା ଜିନିଷ ଧରି ଆସିଲେ । ଘରେ ତିଆରି କେକ୍, ଆଳୁ ଚିପସ୍, ଭେଜିଟେବ୍ଲ ଚପ୍ ଓ ତା' ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ଲେଠୁ ସରବତ । ଭାରି ସ୍ୱାଦିଷ୍ଟ ହୋଇଥାଏ ।



ମାଉସୀଙ୍କ କଥା ସାଙ୍ଗକୁ ତାଙ୍କ ଘର ମୋ ମନକୁ ଭାରି ପାଉଥାଏ । ମୁଁ ଘର ଭିତର ବୁଲି ବୁଲି ଦେଖୁଥାଏ । ଗୋଟିଏ ବେତ୍ ରୁମ୍‌ର କୋଣରେ ଝଡି ଟେବୁଲ୍‌ଟିଏ ପଡିଛି, ତା' ଉପରେ ଖୋଲା ଖାତା ଟିଏ-ବଙ୍ଗଳା କବିତା ପରି ଦିଶୁଥାଏ । ଟେବୁଲ୍ ପାଖକୁ ଗୋଟିଏ record player ଭିତରେ ବଙ୍ଗଳା ରେକର୍ଡ । ତା ପାଖକୁ ଡ୍ରେସିଙ୍ଗ୍ ଟେବୁଲ୍ । ଉପରେ ସଜତା ହୋଇ ରହିଥାଏ ଦାମିକା ପରଫୁମ୍, କସ୍‌ମେଟିକ୍‌ସ୍ ବୋତଲ ଓ ଚୁଡି କାନଫୁଲ ମୁଣ୍ଡବନ୍ଧା କର୍ମିର୍ ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ ତବା । ଅନ୍ୟ ବେତ୍‌ରୁମ୍‌ରେ ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କର ପୁଅର ଖେଳଣା ଓ ସିଏ ଯେଉଁଠାରେ ଶୁଖ, ଠିକ୍ ତା ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଉପରେ ଟଙ୍ଗା ହୋଇଥାଏ ରବର୍‌ କେଡେକ ରଙ୍ଗନ ପ୍ରଜାପତି । ମୋର ଇଚ୍ଛା ହେଉଥାଏ ସେଇଠି ରହିଯିବାକୁ !

୭ଟା ବେଳକୁ ଖୁମ୍‌ମାସ୍ ପାଟି ସରିଲା । ପିଲାଏ ନିଜ ଘରକୁ ଯିବାକୁ ବାହାରିଲେ । ଏତିକି ବେଳେ ମାଉସୀ କିଛି ଗିଫ୍ଟ୍ ପ୍ୟାକେଟ୍ ଧରି ଆସିଲେ । କାହାକୁ ଟେନିସ୍ ବଲ୍, ତ କାହାକୁ ସ୍କେଲ୍ ପେନସିଲ୍‌ର ସେଟ୍ ତ କାହାକୁ ରୁଲ୍‌ଟ୍ ଖାତା ଟିଏ । ମୁଁ ମୋ ପ୍ୟାକେଟ୍ ଟିକୁ ଖୋଲିଲି । ଦେଖିଲି ତା ଭିତରେ ନୀଳ ରଙ୍ଗର ସିଲ୍‌କ୍ ରିବନ୍‌ର ରିଲ୍ ଟିଏ । ମତେ ଗୋଟିଏ କୋଣକୁ ତାକି ନେଇ ମାଉସୀ କହିଲେ “ ମୋର ଝିଅ ଟିଏ ପାଇଁ ଭାରି ଇଚ୍ଛା ଥିଲା । ତ' ତ ହେଲା ନାହିଁ, ତୁ ଆଜିଠାରୁ ମୋର ଝିଅ ହେଲୁ ” । ମୁଁ ଜାଣିଲି ଯେ ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣ ମାଉସୀ ମତେ ସବୁଠାରୁ ବେଶି ଭଲପାଆନ୍ତି ।

ଧୀରେ ଧୀରେ ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଆମ ଘରର ସଂପର୍କ ବଢିଲା । ମାଉସୀ ଆକ୍ସୋପୋଲୋଜିରେ ମାଷ୍ଟରସ୍ କରିଥିଲେ । ବି-ଏତ୍ ମଧ୍ୟ କରିଥିଲେ । ବେଶ ଉଚ୍ଚ ଦରମାରେ ଆମେରିକାନ୍ ' କମ୍ପର ' ସଂସ୍ଥାରେ ସିଏ ଚାକିରୀ କରୁଥିଲେ । ହେଲେ ବାହାଘର ଓ ପିଲା ହେବା ପରେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଚାକିରୀ ଛାଡି ଘରେ ରହିବାକୁ ପଡିଥିଲା । ତାଙ୍କର ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଜଣେ ଉଚ୍ଚ ଡିଗ୍ରୀ ଧାରି ପ୍ରତିଭା ସଂପନ୍ନ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ସେ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ତାଙ୍କ ଯୋଗ୍ୟତା ଅନୁସାରେ ଭଲ ଚାକିରିଟିଏ ପାଇନ ଥା'ନ୍ତି । ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣ ମାଉସୀ ନିଜେ ଚାକିରୀ କରି ଘର ଚଲାଇ ପାରିଥାନ୍ତେ ହେଲେ ଏଇ କଥାକୁ ନେଇ ତାଙ୍କ ଘରେ କଳି ହେଉଥିବାରୁ ସିଏ ଆଉ ସେ କଥା ଉଠାଇ ନଥିଲେ ।

ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ସ୍କୁଲରୁ ଫେରି ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କ ଘରକୁ ପଳାଇବା ଥିଲା ମୋର ଅଭ୍ୟାସ । ମାଉସୀ କେବଳ ଜଣେ ଭଲ ମଣିଷ ନୁହନ୍ତି, ସିଏ ଜଣେ ଗୁଣୀ ମଣିଷ । ଭଲ କବିତା ଲେଖନ୍ତି, ଭାରି ଭଲ ଗୀତ ବୋଲନ୍ତି । ତା ସହିତ ଚମତ୍କାର ପେଣ୍ଡିଙ୍ଗ୍ ମଧ୍ୟ କରନ୍ତି । ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ମାଉସୀ ମୋ ପାଇଁ ଡ୍ରଇଁ ପେପର୍ କିଣି ରଖନ୍ତି । ମତେ ପାଖରେ ବସାଇ କାଗଜର କେଉଁ ପଟ ରଙ୍ଗ ପାଇଁ ଉପଯୁକ୍ତ ତାହା ଶିଖାନ୍ତି , ତୁଳାରେ ରଙ୍ଗ କମ ବେଶି ହେଲେ କଣ ହୁଏ ଓ କାମ ସରିଲେ ତୁଳାର କିପରି ଯନ୍ ନିଆଯାଏ ତାହା ଦେଖାଇଦିଅନ୍ତି । ଚିତ୍ର ଆଙ୍କିବା ବିଷୟରେ ସବୁକଥା ଅତି ଯୈର୍ଯ୍ୟ ସହିତ ବୁଝାନ୍ତି । ବେଳେ ବେଳେ କବିତା ଗୋଟିଏ ଲେଖିଲେ ମୁଁ ପ୍ରଥମେ ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖାଏ । ସିଏ ମୋର ସବୁ କାମକୁ ଭାରି ପ୍ରଶଂସା କରନ୍ତି । ସବୁବେଳେ ପାଠରେ ମନ ଦେବାକୁ କୁହନ୍ତି ।

ସେଦିନ ଚତୁର୍ଥ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର ବାର୍ଷିକ ପରୀକ୍ଷା ସରିଥାଏ । ରିପୋର୍ଟ୍ କାର୍ଡ୍ ମିଳିବାର ଥାଏ । ମୁଁ ଭଗବାନଙ୍କୁ ଡାକୁଥାଏ, ଭଲ ରେଜଲ୍‌ଟ୍ ହୋଇ ଥିଲେ ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣ ମାଉସୀ ଖୁସି ହେବେ । ସେଥର ମୁଁ କାଁସରେ ଫକ୍ ହୋଇଥାଏ । ଘରକୁ ଫେରି ବାପା ମା' କୁ କଥାରେ କଥାରେ ରେଜଲ୍‌ଟ୍‌ଟା କହିଦେଇ ଦଉଡିଲି ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କ ଘରକୁ । ମାଉସୀ ମୋର ରିପୋର୍ଟ୍ କାର୍ଡ୍ ଦେଖି ଖୁସିରେ ଗଦ୍ ଗଦ୍ ହୋଇପଡିଲେ । ମତେ ଶେହାଁ କରିଦେଇ କହିଲେ, “ଆ ମୋ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ, ତୋ ପାଇଁ ଗୋଟିଏ ପୁରସ୍କାର ରଖିତ ” । ସିଏ ମତେ ତାଙ୍କ ବେତ୍‌ରୁମ୍‌କୁ ନେଇ ଗଲେ ଓ ଡ୍ରେସିଙ୍ଗ୍ ଟେବୁଲ୍‌ର ଡ୍ରୟର୍ ଖୋଲିଦେଇ ଛୋଟିଆ ବାକ୍ସଟିଏ ବାହାର କଲେ । ତା ଭିତରେ ଥାଏ ଏକ ବିଦେଶୀ ପଥରରେ ସଜା ହୋଇଥିବା ସୁନ୍ଦର ବୃତ୍ଟିଏ । ତାକୁ ମୋ ଡ୍ରେସ୍ ଛାତିରେ ମାରି ଦେଇ କହିଲେ “ ଆଶୀର୍ବାଦ କରୁଛି ଶିକ୍ଷାର ସର୍ବୋଚ୍ଚ ଶିଖରକୁ ଯାଅ ” । ଏହା ସହିତ ସିଏ ପୁଣି ପଦ ଟିଏ ଯୋଡିଲେ “କବଳ ଡିଗ୍ରୀ ନୁହେଁ, ଭଲ ଚାକିରି ମଧ୍ୟ କର ଓ ତୋର ପାରିବାରିକ ଜୀବନ ସୁଖମୟ ହେଉ ।” ବୃତ୍ଟିକୁ ହାତରେ ଛୁଇଁ ମୁଁ କହିଲି, “ମାଉସୀ, ଏଇଟା କି ସୁନ୍ଦର ହେଇଛି, ତୁମେ କି ଧନୀ !” ମାଉସୀ ହସି ଦେଇ କହିଲେ “ତୁ କଣ ଭାବୁଛୁ ମୁଁ ଏତେ ଦାମିକା ଗନ୍ଧଣା, ପରଫୁମ୍, କସ୍‌ମେଟିକ୍‌ସ୍ ସବୁ କିଣି ପାରିବି? ମୋ ଭଉଣୀ କ୍ୟାନାଡାରେ ଥା'ନ୍ତି, ସେଇ ମୋ ପାଇଁ ଏମିତି ଜିନିଷ ସବୁ ପଠାନ୍ତି ।” ମୁଁ କହିଲି, “ମାଉସୀ, ତୁମ ଭଉଣୀ ତୁମକୁ ଦେଇବନ୍ତି, ତୁମେ ମତେ ଏଇଟା ଦିଅ ନାହିଁ” । ମାଉସୀ କହିଲେ “ ତୁ ଆଜି



ପାଠରେ ଏତେ ଭଲ କରିବୁ, ମୋର ଯାହା ଇଚ୍ଛା ତତେ ସେଇୟା ପ୍ରାଇଜ୍ ଦେବି ।” ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ କାଳରେ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କ ଘରେ ଚୋର ପଶି ତାଙ୍କର ସବୁ ବିଦେଶୀ ଗହଣା, ସାଜସଜ୍ଜାର ସାମଗ୍ରୀ ଚୋରି କରି ନେଇ ଯାଇଥିଲା ।

ମାଉସୀ ତାଙ୍କ ପୁଅକୁ ଶୁଆଇଲା ବେଳକୁ ଗପ କୁହନ୍ତି । ମୁଁ ମଧ୍ୟ ଶୁଣେ । ଗପର ଗୋଟିଏ ଧାଡ଼ି ବଙ୍ଗଳାରେ କୁହନ୍ତି ଓ କାଳେ ମୁଁ ନ ବୁଝି ପାରିବି ବୋଲି ସେଇ ଧାଡ଼ିକୁ ଅନୁବାଦ କରି ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ କୁହନ୍ତି । ଅର୍ଥର ଅଭାବ ଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ, ମାଉସୀ ମତେ ଜନ୍ମଦିନରେ ହାତ ତିଆରି କାର୍ତ୍ତିକ ବା ଦୁର୍ଗାପୂଜାରେ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ବନ୍ଧା କାଁପର ସେଟ୍ ଦେବାକୁ ଭୁଲନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ମତେ ଭଲ ଭଲ ସିନେମା ଦେଖାଇ ନିଅନ୍ତି, ବଙ୍ଗଳା ଗୀତ ଓ ନାଚ ଶିଖାଇଦିଅନ୍ତି । ମୁଁ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କୁ ତାଙ୍କର ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଉଚ୍ଚାରଣ ନେଇ ଚିତାଏ । ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ସିଏ ଭୁଲରେ ମୋ ସାଙ୍ଗେ ବଙ୍ଗଳାରେ କଥା କହିପକାନ୍ତି । ସିଏ ହସନ୍ତି, ମୁଁ ହସେ । ଆମ ଘରେ ଅପର୍ଷ୍ଣ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କ ଭାରି ସମ୍ମାନ । ମୁଁ କିଛି ଖରାପ କାମ କଲେ ନାନୀ ମାନେ ଧମକ ଦିଅନ୍ତି, “ଅପର୍ଷ୍ଣ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କୁ କହିଦବୁ, ତୁ କେମିତି ଦୁଷ୍ଟ ହଉଛୁ ।”

ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କ ଘରକୁ ଯାଇ ଦେଖେ ସିଏ କାନ୍ଥର ଛିଦ୍ର । ପଚାରେ କଣ ହୋଇଛି । ମାଉସୀ ଲୁହ ପୋଛି ଦେଇ ରୋଷେଇ ଘରକୁ ଯା’ନ୍ତି ମୋ ପାଇଁ ଆଇସକ୍ରିମ୍ ବାଜି ଆଣିବାକୁ । କୁହନ୍ତି, “କିଛି ନାହିଁ, ବଡ଼ ହେଲେ ବୁଝିବି ।” ମୁଁ ଆଉ କଥା ବତାଏ ନାହିଁ । ରୋଷେଇ ଘରେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରେ । ଲୁହ ପୋଛି ପୋଛି ସିଏ ପରିବା କାଟନ୍ତି ‘ଚଟୁଚଟି’ ରାନ୍ଧିବାକୁ । ପରିବା ସବୁ ଗୋଟିଏ ବଡ଼ ଥାଳିରେ ଛବିରେ ସଜା ହେଲା ପରି ରଖିଥାନ୍ତି । ଜହ୍ନି, କଖାରୁ, ବାଇଗଣ, ସିବ, ଆଳୁ ସବୁ ସାଇଜ୍ କରି କଟା ହେଇ ଥାଳିରେ ସଜା ହେଇଥିବ ସତେ ଯେମିତି ଠାକୁରଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ପୂଜା ଥାଳି ଚିଏ ।

ଥରେ ଥରେ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କୁ ମା’ଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ କଥା ହେବାର ଶୁଣେ । ମାଉସୀଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ କଳି, ପରିବାର ଚଳାଇବା ପାଇଁ ପଇସାର ଅଭାବ, ଶାଶୁ ଘରର ଗଞ୍ଜଣା, ବା ତାଙ୍କ ଉଚ୍ଚାଭିଳାଷର ‘ସପ୍ତେସନ’ ର କଥା । ପିଲା ବେଳେ କିଛି ବୁଝିପାରେ ନାହିଁ ହେଲେ ମାଉସୀ ଯେ କାନ୍ଥର ଛିଦ୍ରରେ ଆଖିରେ ବାରମ୍ବାର ପଡ଼େ । ଆସି ତାଙ୍କୁ ଗେଲ କରିଦେଇ କହେ “ମାଉସୀ, ମୋର ବଡ଼ ହେବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା ନାହିଁ, ବଡ଼ ହେଲେ ଭାରି କଷ୍ଟ ।”

ହେଲେ ବଡ଼ ହେବାରୁ ତ ରକ୍ଷା ନାହିଁ! ବଡ଼ ହେଲି, ସ୍କୁଲ୍ ପାସ୍ କରି କଲେଜ୍, ୟୁନିଭରସିଟି ଗଲି । ଅନେକ କଥା ବଦଳି ଗଲା, ହେଲେ ଅପର୍ଷ୍ଣ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ମୋର ମର୍ଯ୍ୟାଦା ବୋଧ କେବଳ ବଢ଼ିଲା, କମିଲା ନାହିଁ । ଏମିତି କିଛି ବର୍ଷ ପରେ ମୁଁ ବାହା ହେଲି—ସେ ବି ଏକ ବଙ୍ଗଳା ପରିବାରରେ ! ଅନେକ ପାରିବାରିକ ଝଡ଼ଝଣା ମଧ୍ୟରେ, ଅପର୍ଷ୍ଣ ମାଉସୀ ମୋ ହୃଦୟରେ, ମୋ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ, ସବୁବେଳେ ରହିଥାନ୍ତି ।

ବାହାଘର ପରେ ରହିଲି ଯାଇ Delhiରେ । ସେତେବେଳେ ଆମ ସ୍ୱାମୀ-ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କର ଛାତ୍ରାବସ୍ଥା । ଅର୍ଥର ଅଭାବ । ମୁଁ ନୁଆକରି ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱରରୁ Delhi ଯାଇଥାଏ । ଯାହା ଦେଖିଲେ କିଣିବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା ହୁଏଥାଏ । ଆମେ Delhi University ଠିକାରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଛୋଟିଆ’ ଲୋ-ଇନ୍-କମ୍ପ୍ଲେକ୍ସ୍ ର ‘ଫ୍ଲାଟ୍ ବେଡ୍ ରୁମ୍’ flat ରେ ରହୁଥାଉ । ଘରର ପର୍ସ୍ଟିରର୍ କହିଲେ ତିଆରିକରି ଓ ଛଅଟି ଟ୍ରଙ୍କ୍, ଟ୍ରଙ୍କ୍ ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଏକା ମାପର । ତିନିଫୁଟ୍ରେ ଦୁଇଫୁଟ୍ରେ ଦେଇ ଫୁଟ୍ । ଦୁଇ ଧାଡ଼ିରେ ତିନୋଟିକରି ଟ୍ରଙ୍କ୍ ଲଗାଇ ରଖି ତା ଉପରେ ଦୁଇଟା ତିନିଫୁଟ୍ରେ ଛଅଫୁଟ୍ରେ ମ୍ୟାଟ୍ରେସ୍ ପକାଇ ଶୋଉଥାଉ । ଜାଣ ଉପରେ ଖଟ, ତଳେ ଆଲମାରୀ ! flatଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଛୋଟ । ଏତେ ଛୋଟ ଯେ ଆମ ଦାଣ୍ଡ କବାଟ ଖୋଲିଲେ ପଡ଼ିଶା ଘରର କବାଟରେ ବାଜେ । ପଡ଼ିଶାରେ ତିନୋଟି flat । ସେମାନଙ୍କର ପଞ୍ଚାଏ ପିଲା । ଆମକୁ ଅଙ୍କଲ୍-ଆଖି ତାକନ୍ତି । ୟୁନିଭରସିଟିରୁ ଫେରିଲେ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଘରକୁ ତାକେ । ସେମାନେ ଆସନ୍ତି , ଘର ମଇଳା କରନ୍ତି, ଟ୍ରଙ୍କ୍ ଖଟ ଉପରେ ବଢ଼ି ତିଅନ୍ତି, ମୁଁ ପେଣ୍ଡିଙ୍ଗ୍ କରୁଥିଲେ ମୋ ପାଖରେ ଠିଆ ହୋଇ ଦେଖନ୍ତି । ପ୍ରତି ରବିବାରଦିନ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ତାକି କିଛି ନା କିଛି ଖାଇବାକୁ ଦିଏ । ତାଙ୍କ ଭିତରୁ ଗୋଟିଏ ଝିଅ ଥାଏ । ତା ନାଁ ‘ତୁଗ୍ଗ’ । ଭାରି ଭଲପାଏ ସିଏ ମତେ । ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଦିନ ରାତିରେ ତା ମା’ ତାକୁ ନେବାକୁ ଆସେ ଓ ସିଏ ଦଉଡ଼ି ଯାଇ ଆମ ଘରେ କୋଣରେ ଲୁଚେ । କହେ ‘ମୈ ଆଖି କେ ଘର୍ ମୈ ରହୁଛି’ । ମୁଁ ଅଜାଣତରେ ମୋ ପିଲା ବେଳ ଓ ଅପର୍ଷ୍ଣ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କ କଥା ଭାବେ ।



ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ମୋର ସ୍ଵାମୀଙ୍କ ସହିତ ମତଭେଦ ହୁଏ । ଶାଶୁଘରର କୌଣସି କଥା ମତେ ଆଘାତ କରେ । ମନ ଭିତରେ ରାଗେ, କାନ୍ଦେ ଓ ଭାବେ ଯେ ଆଜି ବୋଧହୁଏ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କ କଥା ଅନୁସାରେ ମୁଁ ବଡ଼ ହୋଇ ଯାଇଛି ।

ଖରା ଛୁଟିରେ Delhiରୁ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ଵର ଯାଉଥାଏ ମୁଁ । ଯାହା ପଇସା ମାସିକ ଫେରାଣିପତ୍ରରୁ ଜମା କରିଥାଏ, ସେଥିରେ ଲାଜପତ୍ର ଗରରେ ବୁଲି ବୁଲି ଛୋଟିଆ ଗିଫ୍ଟ୍ସ୍ କିଣୁଥାଏ ଘରର ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ । ମା' ଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଅଳ୍ପ ଦାମର ହେଲେ ବି ଶାଢ଼ୀଟିଏ, ବାପାଙ୍କ ଲାଗି କୁର୍ତ୍ତା, ପାଇଜାମା, ଆଇଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଗରମ ମୋଜା, ଘରେ କାମ କରୁଥିବା ପିଲାଟି ପାଇଁ ସ୍ଵେଚ୍ଚର୍ ଟିଏ । ଅପର୍ତ୍ତ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଇଚ୍ଛା ହୁଏଥାଏ ସାରା ମାର୍କେଟ୍‌ଟା ଉଠାଇ ନେବାକୁ! ତାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଖୋଜି ଖୋଜି ଗୋଟିଏ table lamp ଓ ଭଲ ବହିଟିଏ କିଣିଲି । ଭୁବନେଶ୍ଵରରେ ପହଞ୍ଚି ଶାଶୁ ଘରର ସମସ୍ତ ଦାୟିତ୍ଵ ସାରି ଦେଇ ଦଉଡ଼ି ଆସିଲି ଆମ ଘରକୁ । ମା, ବାପା, ଆଇ, ଚାକରବାକର ସମସ୍ତେ ଆସିଗଲେ । ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖାକରି ମୁହେଁଇଲି ଅପର୍ତ୍ତ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କ ଘରକୁ । ଦୁଇ ବର୍ଷ ପରେ ମୋର ତାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଦେଖା ହେବ । ଏହା ଭିତରେ ମୁଁ ବଡ଼ ହୋଇଯାଇଛି, ନିଜ ଜୀବନ ନିଜେ ଯାପନ କରୁଛି, Delhiରେ ରହି ପି-ଏଚ୍‌ଟି କରୁଛି । ଛାତ୍ରୀ ଥିବା ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ମୋର ପ୍ରତିଭା ଓ ଗୁଣକୁ ପ୍ରଚାର କରିବାର ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ଯାଇଛି । ପ୍ରୋଗ୍ରାମ୍‌ରେ ଗୀତ ବୋଲିଛି, ଆର୍ଟ୍ ଏକ୍ସିକ୍ୟୁଟିଭ୍ କରୁଛି, ସ୍ଵାମୀଙ୍କର ସବୁ କଥାକୁ ସବୁବେଳେ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ନୁଆଇଁ ମାନି ନେଇ ନାହିଁ, ନିଜ ଚରିତ୍ରର ସ୍ଵତନ୍ତ୍ରତାକୁ ବଜାୟ ରଖିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରିଛି ଓ ଶେଷରେ ଅପର୍ତ୍ତ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କ ପରି ହେବାକୁ ଚାହିଁଛି ।

କବାଟ ଖୋଲିଲା । ଅପର୍ତ୍ତ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କୁ ମୁଣ୍ଡିଆ ମାରିବା ପାଇଁ ତାଙ୍କ ଗୋଡ଼ ପାଖକୁ ହାତ ବଢ଼ାଇଲି । ମାଉସୀ ଗୋଡ଼ ଦୁଇଟି କୁ ଭିତରକୁ କରିଦେଲେ । କହିଲେ “ଆରେ, ଆରେ ଗୋଡ଼ ଛୁଇଁବାକୁ ହେବନାହିଁ ।” ମୁଁ ଜୋରରେ ପାଦ ଦୁଇଟି ଗାଣି ଆଣି ଛୁଇଁଲି । ଆଖ୍ୟାୟ ହୋଇ ଦେଖିଲି ପାଦ ଦୁଇଟିରେ ପକ୍ଷୀ ଇନ୍‌ଫେକ୍ସନ୍ ହୋଇ କଳା ପଡ଼ି ଯାଇଛି । ସତେ ଯେମିତି କିଏ ପୁଳାଏ କଳା ରଙ୍ଗ ବୋଲିଦେଇଛି ତାଙ୍କ ଦୁଇ ପାଦରେ । ମାଉସୀ ମତେ ପାଖକୁ ନେଇ ଯାଇ ବସାଇଲେ, କେତେ କଣ ଖୁଆଇଲେ, ମୋର ସମସ୍ତ କୃତ୍ରିମ କଥାକୁ ମନ ଦେଇ ଶୁଣି ପ୍ରଶଂସା କଲେ । ମୁଁ ମୋର ବୈବାହିକ ଜୀବନର କଳହ ଓ ମନୋମାଳିନ୍ୟର ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ କଥା ସବୁ ତାଙ୍କୁ କହିଲି, ଠିକ୍ ଯେପରି ପିଲାଦିନେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ସବୁ କଥା କହୁଥିଲି । ଶେଷରେ କହିଲି, “ ମାଉସୀ, ଆଜି ମତେ କୁହ ତୁମେ କାହିଁକି ଲୁଚାଇ ଲୁଚାଇ କାନ୍ଦୁ । ମୁଁ ଏବେ ବଡ଼ ହୋଇଯାଇଛି, ତୁମ କଥା ବୁଝିପାରିବି ।” ଅପର୍ତ୍ତ ମାଉସୀ ହସି ଦେଇ ମୋ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ହାତ ମାରିଦେଲେ । କହିଲେ “ତୁ ତ ମୋର ଝିଅ ଠାରୁ ବଳି ମୋର ସାଙ୍ଗ । ମୁଁ ଆଜି ଖୁସି ଯେ ତୁ ପାଠ ଓ ଶାଠକୁ ଜୀବନରେ ଏକା ମହତ୍ତ୍ଵ ଦେଇପାରିବୁ । ବୈବାହିକ ଜୀବନରେ ତୋର ନିଜସ୍ଵ ନିଷ୍ଠି ନେବାର ଶକ୍ତି ଅଛି । ଆଜି ତତେ ଦେଖି ମୋର ମନେ ହେଉଛି ଯେପରି ମୋ ଜୀବନର ଅପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଅଭିଳାଷୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ମୁଁ ତୋ ଦ୍ଵାରା ପୂରଣ କରୁଛି ।”

ମନେ ପଡ଼ିଲା ମା' କହୁଥିଲେ ଯେ ଅପର୍ତ୍ତ ମାଉସୀଙ୍କୁ ଶ୍ଵାସ ରୋଗ ଧରିଛି । ଦେହ ସାରା ପକ୍ଷୀ ଇନ୍‌ଫେକ୍ସନ୍ ହୋଇ ଯାଇଛି- ସବୁ ମାନସିକ ଦୁଃଖିକାର ଲକ୍ଷଣ । ଅନେକ ପ୍ରତିଭା ଥିଲା ତାଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ, ହେଲେ ଘରୁ ବାହାରି ନପାରି ତାଙ୍କର କୌଣସି ଗୁଣର ମର୍ଯ୍ୟାଦା ରହିଲା ନାହିଁ- ସିଏ ଭାରି ଡିପ୍ରେସ୍‌ଡ୍ ରହୁଚନ୍ତି ।

ପିଲା ଦିନେ ମାଉସୀ ମତେ ଅସ୍କାର୍ ଡ୍ରାଇଭ୍‌ଟଙ୍କର ' ହ୍ୟାପି ପ୍ରିନ୍ସ' ଗପଟି ବହୁବାର ପଢ଼ି ଶୁଣାଉଥିଲେ । ' ହ୍ୟାପି ପ୍ରିନ୍ସ ଓ ସ୍ଵାଲୋ' ଚଢ଼େଇର କାହାଣୀ । କିପରି ହ୍ୟାପି ପ୍ରିନ୍ସ କୁ ନି ସ୍ଵାଲୋ ଚଢ଼େଇ ଦ୍ଵାରା ନିଜ ପ୍ରତିମୂର୍ତ୍ତିରେ ଖଟିତ ସମସ୍ତ ଅଳଙ୍କାର ଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ଗୋଟିଏ ଗୋଟିଏ କରି ଗରିବ ଦୁଃଖୀଜନ ମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ବାଣ୍ଟିଦେଇଥିଲେ । ହ୍ୟାପି ପ୍ରିନ୍ସଙ୍କର ସୁଖର ଦୂତହୋଇ ଯୁରୋପର ଶୀତ ରୁଚୁର ପ୍ରବଳ ବରଫ ଅଣ୍ଡାରେ କିପରି ସ୍ଵାଲୋ ଚଢ଼େଇର ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ଘଟିଲା ଓ ପରେ କିପରି ହ୍ୟାପି ପ୍ରିନ୍ସଙ୍କର ମୂର୍ତ୍ତିକୁ ସହରର ଲୋକମାନେ ଆବର୍ଜନା ମଧ୍ୟରେ ପକାଇଦେଲେ । ପରିଶେଷରେ ଇଶ୍ଵର, ଦେବଦୂତ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ମର୍ତ୍ତ୍ୟ ଲୋକରୁ ଦୁଇଟି ସର୍ବଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ ମୂଲ୍ୟବାନ ପଦାର୍ଥ ଆଣିବାକୁ ପଠାଇଥିଲେ । ଦେବଦୂତ ମାନେ ପୃଥିବୀ ବ୍ୟାପି ଅନୁସନ୍ଧାନ କରିବା ପରେ ଦୁଇଟି ଅମୂଲ୍ୟ ବସ୍ତୁର ସନ୍ଧାନ ପାଇଥିଲେ- ହ୍ୟାପି ପ୍ରିନ୍ସଙ୍କର ହୃଦୟ ଓ ତାଙ୍କ ' ହ୍ୟାପିନେସ୍' ର ଦୂତ ସ୍ଵାଲୋ ଚଢ଼େଇର ମୃତ ଶରୀର ।

କହିଲି, “ ମାଉସୀ! ତୁମେ ହେଲ ମୋ ପାଇଁ ସେଇ ହ୍ୟାପି ପ୍ରିନ୍ସ ଯିଏ ମତେ ସବୁବେଳେ ସୁଖ, ଉତ୍ସାହ ଓ ପ୍ରେରଣାର ଆଲୋକ



ଦେଖାଇଛି । ମୁଁ ହେଲି ତୁମର ସେଇ ଟିକି ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋ ରଢେଇ, ତୁମ ସୁଖର ଦୂତ ।”

ଅନେକ ଦିନ ହେବ **Delhi** ଛାଡି ଆମେରିକା ଚାଲିଆସିଛି । ଶୁଣିଛି ମାଉସୀ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର ଛାଡି ଶାନ୍ତିନିକେତନ ଚାଲିଯାଇଛନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କର ଦେହ ଭଲ ରହୁନାହିଁ । ସମୟ ପାଇଲେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଉତ୍ସାହ ଭରା ଚିଠି ଲେଖେ ଏବଂ ଆଜି ମଧ୍ୟ ଭଗବାନଙ୍କୁ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା କରେ—ମୋ ପିଲାଏ ତାଙ୍କ ଜୀବନରେ ଜଣେ 'ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ମାଉସୀ' ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦୟ ଖୋଜି ପା' ଆନ୍ଧୁ ।

ଡୁଲି ଆଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ରାୟ, **University of Maryland at Baltimore, School of Pharmacy** ରେ **postdoctoral fellow** ହିସାବରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରନ୍ତି । ଗୀତ ବୋଲିବା, ଯେତେକ୍ କରିବା, ଘର ସଜାଇବା ଏବଂ ନୂଆ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ମିଶିବା ତାଙ୍କର ସଭକ । ତାଙ୍କର ଦୁଇଟି ସିଅ ଅଙ୍କିତା, ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ଓ ସ୍ୱାମୀ ଅଭିଜିତଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ ସିଏ ଏଲକ୍ରିଭ୍, ମ୍ୟାଗାଜିନ୍ରେ ରୁହନ୍ତି ।



କାନପୁଲ

ବିଜ୍ଞାନୀ ଦାସ

ରାତିର ବୟସ କ୍ରମଶଃ ବଢ଼ୁଥିଲା । ଘରେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଶୋଇ ସାରିଥିଲେ । ଖଟ ଉପରେ ଘୁଙ୍ଗୁଟି ମାରୁଥିଲା ବାର ବର୍ଷର ଝିଅ ରୁନୁ । ଆଖିକୁ ନିଦ ଆସୁନ ଥିଲା ଶିଖାର

“କାନପୁଲଟା ସତରେ କଣ ହଜିଗଲା? ହେ ଭଗବାନ, କାହିଁକି ତମେ ମୋତେ କେବେ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ସୁଖ ଦିଅନି । ଏତେ ସୁନ୍ଦର କାନପୁଲଟା । ପ୍ରଭୁ ଦୟାକର । କାନପୁଲ ମିଳିଯାଉ ।”

ଏମିତି ଚିନ୍ତାକରି ଶିଖା ସବୁ ବାନ୍ଧୁ ପୁଣି ଥରେ ଲେଖାଏଁ ଖୋଲି ଯାଏକଲା ଓ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ, କ୍ୟାମେରାବ୍ୟାଗ୍ ପ୍ରଭୃତିର ସମସ୍ତ କୋଣ, ଅନୁକୋଣ ତନ୍ତତନ୍ତ କରି ଖୋଜିଗଲା । ବାନ୍ଧୁପତ୍ରର ଖୋଲାହେବା ଓ ବନ୍ଦହେବାର ଶବ୍ଦରେ ହୁଏତ ଆଉ କୋଠରିରେ ଶୋଇଥିବା ବଡ଼ମା’ଙ୍କର ନିଦ ଭାଙ୍ଗିଗଲା ।

“ଏତେ ରାତି ହେଲାଣି ଶୋଇନୁ ତୁ ? “ବଡ଼ମା” ମିନି ଅପା ଆସି କବାଟ ଖଟଖଟ କରି ପଚାରିଲେ ।

“ନିଦ ହେଉନି ।” – କହି କବାଟ ଖୋଲିଲା ଶିଖା ।

“କେଉଁଠି ଯାଉଛୁ ? ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଯାଇନି ବୋଧହୁଏ । ଲାଭଟ ବନ୍ଦ କରି ଶୋଇଯା । ବଳେ ନିଦ ଆସିଯିବ । ଏତିକି କହି ମିନି ଅପା କବାଟ ବନ୍ଦକରି ଆରଘରକୁ ଚାଲିଗଲେ ।”

ମିନି ଅପାଙ୍କ କଥା ମାନି ଲାଭଟ ଲିଭାଇ ମଶାରି ବେକି ଖଟ ଉପରେ ଯାଇ ଅବଶ ଦେହଟାକୁ ଲମ୍ବାଇଦେଲା ଶିଖା । ତଥାପି ବେଞ୍ଚ କରି ବି ନିଦ ଆସୁନଥିଲା । ହଜିଥିବା କାନପୁଲଟିର ସ୍ମୃତି ବାରମ୍ବାର ମନ ଭିତରକୁ ଆସୁଥିଲା । ନିଜ ଅଜାଣତରେ ଆଖିରେ ଲୁହ ଜଳେଇ ଆସିଲା ଶିଖାର । କେତେ ଯୋଜନା କରି ସେ କାନପୁଲ ଓ ହାର ମ୍ୟାଗ୍ କରି ଆଣିଥିଲା ଝିଆରୀ ଟୁନିର ବାହାଘରରେ ପିନ୍ଧିବ ବୋଲି । ଏବେ ଗଲା ସେ ସବୁ ସତକ । ଆଜି ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତରୁ ବାହାର କରି ଟୁନି ପାଇଁ ଆଣିଥିବା କାନପୁଲକୁ ଦେଖାଉଥିଲା ବଡ଼ମା’ଙ୍କୁ । ତାପରେ ନିଜେ କଣ ପିନ୍ଧିବ ବୋଲି ଅତି ଉଲ୍ଲାସିତ ହୋଇ ହାତବାନ୍ଧୁ ଖୋଲି ଦେଖେ ତ କାନପୁଲ ନାହିଁ । କାଳେ ଅନ୍ୟ କେଉଁଠି ରଖିଦେଇଥିବ ବୋଲି ଭାବି ସବୁ ବାନ୍ଧୁ ଖୋଲି ଚାରି ଚାରିଥର ଖୋଜି ସାରିଲାଣି, ତଥାପି କାନପୁଲର ପତା ନାହିଁ । ଏୟାରପୋର୍ଟରେ ବାରମ୍ବାର ହାତବାନ୍ଧୁ ଖୋଲିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିଥିଲା; ହୁଏତ କାନପୁଲଟି ସେଇଠି କେଉଁଠି ହଜିଗଲା ।

“ମୋ କାନପୁଲ ହଳକ ନହେଲେ ପିନ୍ଧିଦେବୁ ।” – ମିନି ଅପା କହିଥିଲେ ।

କାନପୁଲଟିକୁ ହଜାଇଦେବା ଶିଖା ପକ୍ଷରେ ଏତେ ସହଜ ଭାବେ ଗ୍ରହଣୀୟ ନଥିଲା ।

ଏ କାନପୁଲଟିର ଇତିହାସ ହିଁ ସେମିତି ଥିଲା । ଶିଖା ଜୀବନରେ କେବଳ ତିନିହଳ ସୁନା କାନପୁଲ ପିନ୍ଧିଥିଲା । ପାଞ୍ଚବର୍ଷ ବୟସରୁ ବୋହୂ ହୋଇ ଶାଶୁଘରକୁ ଯାଇ ଗୋଟିଏ ପିଲାଟି ମା’ ହେବା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସେ ଗୋଟିଏ ହଳ ସୁନା କାନପୁଲ ବ୍ୟବହାର କରି ଆସୁଥିଲା । ତାର ନିଜର ଅଳଙ୍କାର ପ୍ରତି ସତର୍କ ସେମିତି ତ କମ୍ ଥିଲା । ତା ସାଙ୍ଗକୁ ସଂସ୍କୃତ ଶିକ୍ଷକଙ୍କର ବାରମ୍ବାର ଉପଦେଶ ରହିଥିଲା,

“ନ ବୋହୂର୍ଯ୍ୟାମ୍ ନ ଚ ରାଜହୂର୍ଯ୍ୟାମ୍ ନ ଭ୍ରାତୃଭାଜ୍ୟମ୍ ନ ଚ ଭାରକାରି
ବ୍ୟୟେ କୃତେ ବର୍ଦ୍ଧତ ଏବ ନିତ୍ୟମ୍ ବିଦ୍ୟାଧନମ୍ ସର୍ବଧନପ୍ରଧାନମ୍ ।”

ଏମିତି ଉପଦେଶ ତାକୁ ଅଳଙ୍କାର ପ୍ରତି ଆହୁରି ନିର୍ଲିପ୍ତ କରିଦେଇଥିଲା । ଯଦିଓ ସେଇ ଶିକ୍ଷକ ନିଜେ ସଂସ୍କୃତ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟର ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟରେ ଉପମା ଓ ଅଳଙ୍କାର ପ୍ରାଧାନ୍ୟ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନା କରୁଥିଲେ ଓ ନାରୀ ଅଙ୍ଗର ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନାରେ ଅଳଙ୍କାରର ଗୁରୁତ୍ୱ ବିଷୟରେ ବୁଝାଉଥିଲେ । ଗୋଟିଏ ହଳ କାନପୁଲରେ ତାର ସ୍କୁଲ୍, କଲେଜ ସାରିଥିଲା । ସୁମନ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଭଲପାଇଥିବା ବେଳେ ହିଁ ସେ ସେଇ କାନପୁଲଟି ପିନ୍ଧିଥିଲା



ଓ ବୋହୂ ହୋଇ ପ୍ରଥମରାତିରେ ସେଇ କାନପୁଲ ପିନ୍ଧି ତାଙ୍କୁ ସ୍ୱାଗତ କରିଥିଲା । ତେବେ ସେ ଐତିହାସିକ କାନପୁଲରୁ ଗୋଟିଏ ବୋରି ହୋଇଗଲା ବମ୍ବେର local trainରେ । ସେଦିନ ସେ ଅନେକ କାନ୍ଦିଥିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ସ୍ୱାମୀ ବୁଝେଇଥିଲେ, “ଦେଖ ଶିଖା, ବେଳେବେଳେ ପୁରୁଣା ଜିନିଷଟି ହଜିଯିବା ହିଁ ଭଲ । ସେଇ ଆଳରେ ତମେ ନୂଆ ଜିନିଷଟିଏ ପିନ୍ଧିବାକୁ ବାଧ୍ୟ ହେବ । ଏବେ ଯେ ତମ ପୁରୁଣା କାନପୁଲଟି ହଜିଗଲା, ସେଥିପାଇଁ ତମେ ନୂଆ କାନପୁଲଟିଏ ପିନ୍ଧିବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ପାଇବ ।” ମନକୁ ବୁଝାଇ ଦେଇଥିଲା ଶିଖା ଓ ନିତ୍ୟ ବ୍ୟବହାରିକ ମୁତାବକ ଛୋଟ କାନପୁଲ ହଳେ କିଣି ପିନ୍ଧୁଥିଲା । ବର୍ଷରେ ତିନି-ଚାରି ଥର ସେ ଯେବେ କେବେ କୌଣସି ବିଶେଷ ପାର୍ଟିକୁ ଯାଉଥିଲା, ତେବେ ସେ କାନପୁଲ ବଦଳାଇ ଇମିଟେସନ୍ କାନପୁଲ ପିନ୍ଧିକରି ଯାଉଥିଲା । ନହେଲେ ସେଇ ଛୋଟ କାନପୁଲଟି ହିଁ ସବୁବେଳେ ତା କାନରେ ପଡିଥାଏ ।

ଏ ତୃତୀୟ କାନପୁଲ ହଳକ ପାଞ୍ଚବର୍ଷ ତଳେ ସୁମନ୍ତ କିଣିଦେଇଥିଲେ ପରବର୍ଷର ବିବାହ ବାର୍ଷିକୀ ପାଇଁ । ତେବେ ସେଇ ନୂଆ କାନପୁଲ ହଳକ ସିଏ ସବୁବେଳେ ପିନ୍ଧେନି; ବେଳେବେଳେ ବାହାଘର କି ଅନ୍ୟ କିଛି ଉତ୍ସବ ଥିଲେ ପିନ୍ଧେ । ଖାଲି ସେତିକି ନୁହେଁ; ଏ ନୂଆ କାନପୁଲ ପାଇବା ପଛରେ ଛୋଟ କାହାଣୀଟିଏ ବି ଅଛି ।

୨୦୦୧ ମସିହାର ମେ ୧୯ ତାରିଖ । ସେଦିନ ସେମାନେ ଯାଇଥିଲେ ମିସେସ୍ ସୁନୟା ମିଶ୍ରଙ୍କର ବିବାହ ବାର୍ଷିକୀରେ ଯୋଗଦାନ କରିବାକୁ । ସୁନୟା ଅପା ସେଦିନ ଯେଉଁ କାନପୁଲଟି ପିନ୍ଧିଥିଲେ ସେଥିରେ ଦୁଃଖି ପଡିଥିଲା ସୁମନ୍ତଙ୍କର । ସେ କାନପୁଲଟି ସୁନୟା ଅପାଙ୍କୁ ତାଙ୍କ ସ୍ୱାମୀ ରତିକାନ୍ତ ଭାଇ ଉପହାର ଦେଇ ଥିଲେ । ବନ୍ଧୁ ଗହଣରେ ନିଜ ପତ୍ନୀଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ଅତ୍ୟଧିକ ସ୍ନେହ ବିଷୟ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନା କରିବା ଛଳରେ ସୁନୟା ଅପାଙ୍କ କାନପୁଲ ଓ ତା’ ସହିତ ମ୍ୟାଟ୍ କରୁଥିବା ହାରଟି ପ୍ରତି ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ଦୁଃଖି ଆକର୍ଷଣ କରାଇଥିଲେ ରତିକାନ୍ତ ଭାଇ । ସେଇ କଥା ହିଁ ସେଦିନ ସବୁ ଅତିଥିମାନଙ୍କର ଚର୍ଚ୍ଚାର ବିଷୟ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ରତିକାନ୍ତ ବାବୁ ଏତେ ବୟସ୍କ ହେଲେ ବି କେତେ ଉତ୍ତମ ରଚିତ ଓ ନିଜ ସ୍ୱାମୀ କେତେ ବେରସିକ ବୋଲି ଅନେକ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ମାନେ ସେଦିନ ସ୍ୱାମୀ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ଭର୍ତ୍ସନା କରିବାର ଶୁଣାଯାଇଥିଲା । ଶିଖା ଯଦିଓ ସୁମନ୍ତଙ୍କୁ କିଛି କହିନଥିଲା, ତେବେ ସେଇ କଥାଟି ତାଙ୍କ ପୌରୁଷକୁ ହୁଏତ ଧକ୍କା କରୁଥିଲା । ନିଜ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀକୁ ସେ ସେମିତି କିଛି ଦାମୀ ଉପହାର କେବେ ଦେଇନଥିଲେ । ଯଦିଓ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କର ଅଳଙ୍କାର ପ୍ରତି ନିରାସକ୍ତ ଭାବ ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଅନେକାଂଶରେ ଦାୟୀ, ତଥାପି ସେଇ ବର୍ଷ ବିବାହ ବାର୍ଷିକୀରେ ସୁମନ୍ତ ମ୍ୟାଟିଙ୍ଗ୍ ହାର, କାନପୁଲ ଉପହାର ଦେଇ ଶିଖାକୁ ଚମକାଇ ଦେଇଥିଲେ । ସେଇଟି ସ୍ୱାମୀଙ୍କ ଠାରୁ ଶିଖାର ପ୍ରଥମ ଦାମୀ ଉପହାର ଥିଲା । ଯଦିଓ ଦର୍ଶନ ତତ୍ତ୍ୱ ପ୍ରୟୋଗ କରି ତିନିଟି ଝିଅ ତାଙ୍କ ତରଫରୁ ଶିଖାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଦାମୀ ଉପହାର ବୋଲି ସ୍ୱାମୀ ଘୋଷଣା କରୁଥିଲେ, ତେବେ ବଞ୍ଚୁବାଦୀ ବିଚାରରେ ସେ କାନପୁଲ ଓ ହାର ସେଟ୍ ହିଁ କେବଳ ସ୍ୱାମୀଙ୍କ ଠାରୁ କୋଟିଏ ବର୍ଷର ବାହାଘର ଭିତରେ ସର୍ବପ୍ରଥମ ଓ ସବୁଠାରୁ ଦାମୀ ଉପହାର ଥିଲା ।

ଏତେ ସୁତିଭରା କାନପୁଲଟି ହଜିଯିବାରୁ ଶିଖାର ମନ ଖରାପ ହୋଇଗଲା । ଇମିଟେସନ୍ କାନପୁଲ ଓ ହାର ପିନ୍ଧି ସେ ଝିଆରୀ ବାହାଘରରେ ଖୁସି ରହିବାର ଅଭିନୟ କରୁଥିଲା ଯଦିଓ, ଯାହାର କାନପୁଲକୁ ଦେଖୁଥିଲା, ନିଜ କାନପୁଲ କଥା ମନେ ପକାଇ ସେ ଦୁଃଖୀ ହୋଇଯାଉଥିଲା । ଓଡିଶାରେ ପରବର୍ଷ ଦିନର ରହଣି କେମିତି ଦେଖୁଦେଖୁ ସରିଗଲା । ଆମେରିକା ଫେରି ଆସିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଦିଲ୍ଲୀରେ ଦୁଇଦିନର ରହଣି ଥିଲା । ଶିଖା ଦିଲ୍ଲୀ ଆସି ମଧ୍ୟ ସେ କାନପୁଲ କଥା ଖାଲି ଭାବିଲା । ଦିଲ୍ଲୀରେ ଛାଡିଯାଇଥିବା ବାଙ୍କିକୁ ସେମିତି ତିନିଚାରିଥର ପୁଣି ଖେଳେଇଲା । କାନପୁଲର ସତ୍ତା ବି ମିଳିଲାନି ।

“ତୁ ଏ କିରଣ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ସେ ଜ୍ୟୋତିଷାଣୀଙ୍କ ପାଖକୁ ଯାଆ । ତାଙ୍କର କୁଆଡେ ଏତେ ଜ୍ଞାନ ଯେ, କିଏ କେତେଟା ରୁଚି ଖାଇଛି, ମଣିଷ ଦେଖୁ ପେଟକଥା କହିଦେଉଛନ୍ତି ।” - ବୋଉ ପରାମର୍ଶ ଦେଲା ।

ଯଦିଓ ଜ୍ୟୋତିଷୀ ଉପରେ ଶିଖାର ଏତେଟା ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ନଥିଲା, ତଥାପି କାଳେ କିଛିଟା ଶୁଭଖବର ମିଳିପାରେ ସେଇ ଭରସାରେ ଓ ଜ୍ୟୋତିଷାଣୀଙ୍କ ବିଷୟରେ ଜାଣିବାର ଆଗ୍ରହ ନେଇ ସେ ଭାଇର ଘରେ କାମ କରୁଥିବା କିରଣ ସହିତ ଯାଇ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଭେଟିବାକୁ ରାଜିହେଲା । କିରଣ ବାସନମଜା, ଘରପୋଛା ସାରିବାବେଳକୁ ଦିନ ଏରାଗଟା । ସେତେବେଳକୁ ଭାଇ, ଭାଉଜ ନିଜନିଜର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ଷେତ୍ରକୁ ଚାଲିଯାଇଥିଲେ ଓ ତାଙ୍କର ପିଲାମାନେ ବି ସ୍କୁଲ ଯାଇସାରିଥିଲେ । ରୁନୁକୁ ଘରେ ବସି ଗପବହି ପଢିବାକୁ କହି ସେ କିରଣ ସହିତ ଘରୁ ବାହାରିଗଲା ।



ନେତାଜୀ ସୁଭାଷ ଇନ୍‌ଷ୍ଟିଚ୍ୟୁଟ୍ ଅଫ୍ ଟେକ୍‌ନୋଲୋଜି (ଏନ୍‌ଏସ୍‌ଆଇ‌ଟି) କ୍ୟାମ୍ପସ୍‌ରୁ ମେନ‌ଗେଟ୍ ଦେଇ ବାହାରିଗଲେ ମେନ୍‌ରୋଡ୍‌ଟିକୁ ପାର କରିବାକୁ ପଡିବ । ତାପରେ ଆସିବ ଏକ ଛୋଟ ଗଳି । ଦିନ ମନ୍ତୁରିଆ, ଅଟୋଟାଳକ ଓ ଟ୍ୟାକ୍ସିଟାଳକ ମାନଙ୍କର ବସ୍ତି ସିଏ । ଯଦିଓ ତା ଭିତରେ କେତୋଟି ଘର ସୁଛଳ ପରିବାରର ଅବସ୍ଥିତି ବିଷୟରେ ଲଙ୍ଘିତ ଦେଉଥିଲେ, ତଥାପି ଜ୍ୟୋତିଷାଣୀ ଯେ ଏମିତି ଏକ ବସ୍ତିଘରେ ରହୁଥିବେ ଭାବି ତାଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖା କରିବାକୁ ଯିବାକୁ କୁଣ୍ଠା ଲାଗୁଥିଲା ଶିଖାକୁ । ଧୂଳି ଧୂସର ଖଣ୍ଡିଆ ରାସ୍ତା ଅତିକ୍ରମ କରି ତାହାଣ କଡକୁ ବାଙ୍କିଲା କିରଣ । ଶିଖା ତାକୁ ଅନୁସରଣ କଲା । ଦିଲ୍‌ଲୀରେ ଏମିତି ବସ୍ତି ଅଞ୍ଚଳକୁ କେବେ ଯାଇନଥିଲା ଶିଖା । କଟକର ଦୁଇକଡ ନାମ ଭଳି ଏଠି ବି ଦୁଇପଟେ ଖୋଲା ନାମ ସବୁ ଥିଲା । ରାସ୍ତାର କଡେକଡେ ନର୍ଦ୍ଦମା ଠୁଲ ହୋଇ ରହିଥିଲା । ଅଧାଲଙ୍ଗଳା ପିଲାମାନେ ସେ ଧୂଳିରେ ଖେଳୁଥିଲେ । ବାହାରେ କୋଇଲା ଆଖରେ ରୁଟି ସେକୁଥିଲା କାହାର ମା ତ, ଆଉ କାହାର ମା’ ରାସ୍ତାପାଖ ପାଣି ଖୋଲି ଲୁଗା କାଟୁଥିଲା ।

“ଜ୍ୟୋତିଷଙ୍କ ଘର ଆଉ କେତେ ଦୂରରେ ?” - ପଚାରିଲା ଶିଖା ।

“ଏଇ ତ ପାଖେଇ ଆସିଲାଣି । ଏଇ ଯେଉଁ ଆଗ public school ଘର ଦେଖା ହେଉଛି, ସେଇଠି ତାହାଣପଟକୁ ବାଙ୍କିଲେ, ତାଙ୍କ ଘର ପଡିବ ।”

ଏମିତି ଏକ ବସ୍ତି ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ ପର୍ବିକ୍ ସ୍କୁଲ ଘରଟି ମରୁଭୂମିରେ ଓଏସିଏ ସଦୃଶ ମନେ ହେଉଥିଲା । ଶେଷରେ ଜ୍ୟୋତିଷାଣୀଙ୍କ ଘରେ ନେଇ ପହଞ୍ଚାଇଥିଲା କିରଣ । ଜ୍ୟୋତିଷାଣୀଜୀ ଘର ଅନ୍ଧାର କରି ବସିଥିଲେ । କିରଣକୁ ଓ ଶିଖାକୁ ଦେଖି ଉଠିବସିଲେ ଏବଂ ନିଜ ସ୍ଵାମୀଙ୍କୁ ଲାଲଟ୍ ଜଳାଇଦେବାକୁ କହିଲେ । କିରଣ ପରିଚୟ କରାଇଦେଲା ।

“ଯେଉଁ ଦିଦିଙ୍କ ବିଷୟ ମୁଁ ଆପଣଙ୍କୁ କହିଥିଲି, ଏ ହେଲେ ସେଇ ଦିଦି । ଇଏ ଆମେରିକାରେ ରହନ୍ତି ।

ତାଙ୍କର କାନପୁଲ ହଜିଯାଇଛି ।”

ଜ୍ୟୋତିଷାଣୀ ସ୍ଵାଗତ କଲେ ଓ ପାଖରେ ପଡିଥିବା ଚେୟାର ଉପରେ ଶିଖାକୁ ବସିବାକୁ କହିଲେ ।

“କେଉଁ ତାରିଖରେ ଓ କେତେବେଳେ ହଜିଲା କାନପୁଲ ?” - ଜ୍ୟୋତିଷାଣୀ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ କଲେ ।

“ସେ କଥା ତ କହିହେବନି । ମୁଁ ତାକୁ ଜାନୁୟାରୀ ୨୨ ତାରିଖରେ ମୋ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଭିତରେ ରଖୁଥିଲି ଆମେରିକାରେ । ତାପରେ ଦିଲ୍‌ଲୀରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଦିନ ଅଟକି କଟକ ଯାଇଥିଲି । ଜାନୁୟାରୀ ୨୪ ତାରିଖରେ କଟକରେ ହିଁ କାନପୁଲଟି ଖୋଜିଥିଲି ପିକିବି ବୋଲି ଓ ସେଇଠାରେ ଜାଣିଲି ଯେ ସେଇଟା ହଜିଯାଇଛି ।”

ଜ୍ୟୋତିଷାଣୀ ଏକ ବଡ ପୁସ୍ତକ ବାହାରକଲେ ଓ ସେଥିରୁ କିଛି ନମ୍ବର ଟିପି ଅଙ୍କ କଷାକଷି କଲେ । ସେ ଅଙ୍କ କଷିବା ଭିତରେ ସେ ନିଜ ଜୀବନ କାହାଣୀ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନା କରୁଥିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କର heart problem ଓ diabetes । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ସେ ଆଉ ବେଶୀ କାମ କରିପାରୁନାହାନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କ କହିବା ମୁତାବକ ଜଣକର ଜ୍ୟୋତିଷୀ ଦ୍ଵାରା ଜମିଜମା କେସ୍ ଠିକ୍ କରାଇ ସେ ପଚାଶହଜାର ଟଙ୍କା କମିଶନ୍ ପାଇଥିଲେ । ଆଉ ଜଣେ ଶେଠ୍‌ଙ୍କର ଝିଅ ବାହାଘର ଠିକ୍ କରାଇ ପଞ୍ଚଷଠି ହଜାର ଟଙ୍କା ଓ ଏକ ସୁନାହାର ପୁରସ୍କାର ପାଇଥିଲେ ।

ଗପଛଳରେ ସେ ଶିଖାର ପରିବାର ବିଷୟରେ ବି ତଥ୍ୟ ସଂଗ୍ରହ କଲେ ଓ ତାଙ୍କ ବଡ଼ଝିଅକୁ ଚାହା ଆଣି ଦେବାକୁ କହିଲେ ।

“ଦିଦିଙ୍କର ଚିନିଟି ଝିଅ । ଆମ୍ଭଙ୍କର ସେଥିପାଇଁ ମନ ଖରାପ । ଦିଦିଙ୍କର ପୁଅ ହେବକି ନା ଟିକେ ଗଣନା କରି କହନ୍ତୁ ।” - କିରଣ ଅନୁରୋଧ କଲା ।

ଜ୍ୟୋତିଷାଣୀ ହସିଲେ ।

“ମୋର ପୁଅ ଦରକାର ନାହିଁ । ତେବେ ଆପଣ କଣ ସତରେ ହାତ ଦେଖି ଏମିତି ଗଣନା କରିପାରିବେ ?” - ଶିଖା କୌତୁହଳ ନେଇ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ କରିଥିଲା ।

ଜ୍ୟୋତିଷାଣୀ ସେଇଠୁ ଉପଦେଶ ଦେଲେ ଯେ କାହାକୁ ହାତ ଦେଖାଇବା ଉଚିତ ନୁହେଁ । କାରଣ ଭଲ ଜ୍ୟୋତିଷ ମାନେ ହାତ ଦେଖି ସବୁପ୍ରକାର ତଥ୍ୟ ସଂଗ୍ରହ କରିପାରନ୍ତି । ଯେହେତୁ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ମଣିଷର ଜୀବନରେ କିଛି ନା କିଛି ଖରାପ ରହସ୍ୟ ଛୁପିକରି ରହିଥାଏ, ହାତ



ଦେଖିବା ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଜ୍ୟୋତିଷ ସେ ସବୁ ଜାଣିଯାଏ । ଏଇ ସମୟରେ ଜ୍ୟୋତିଷାଣୀଙ୍କ ଝିଅ ଆଣି ଚାହାଦେଲା । ଜ୍ୟୋତିଷାଣୀ କିଛି ସମୟ ନୀରବ ହୋଇ ବସିରହିଲେ ଓ ଗଣନା କରିଚାଲିଲେ । ଶେଷରେ ଜଣାଇଲେ ଯେ କାନପୁଲ ମିଳିବାର ସମ୍ଭାବନା ଶତକଡ଼ା ଏକ ଭାଗ । ତାଙ୍କ ଗଣନା ଅନୁଯାୟୀ ଏୟାରପୋର୍ଟର ସିକ୍ୟୁରିଟି ଚେକ୍ ସମୟରେ ବ୍ୟାଗରୁ କେତେବେଳେ କାନପୁଲଟି ପଡ଼ିଯାଇଛି ।

ଜ୍ୟୋତିଷାଣୀଙ୍କୁ ପଚାରିବି ଚଙ୍କା ଦେଇ ଶିଖା ଘରକୁ ଫେରିଲା ଓ କାନପୁଲ ମିଳିବାର ସମସ୍ତ ଆଶା ଲୁହ ହୋଇଥିବାରୁ ଖଟ ଉପରେ ବିଡ଼ ହୋଇ ଶୋଇ କାନ୍ଦିଲା ।

“ମୁଁ ତମ କାନ୍ଦୁ ଶୁଣି ଶୁଣି ତମ ଉପରେ ବହୁତ ଚାୟା ପାମା । ଜଷ୍ଟ୍ କାନପୁଲଟା ପାଇଁ ତମେ ଏତେ କାନ୍ଦୁଛୁ ?” - ଚିତ୍ତକରି କହିଲା ରୁନୁ ।

“ତୁ କଣ ବୁଝିବୁରେ ରୁନୁ ? ସେ କାନପୁଲ ସହିତ ମୋର ସ୍ମୃତି ଜଡ଼ିତ ।” - ଶିଖା ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଲା ।

“ବର୍ତ୍ତ ମାମା । ସେଇଟା ଜଷ୍ଟ୍ କାନପୁଲ ଯେଉଁଠାକୁ ତମେ କିଣିପାରିବ । ଚିକେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ କଥା ଭାବିଲ ଯେଉଁମାନେ ତାଙ୍କ ଲଭ୍‌ଡ୍ରାମ୍‌କୁ ହରାଇଛନ୍ତି । ଚିକେ କାଳିଆ ଆଉ ଚିକିନାଙ୍କ କଥା ଭାବିଲ, ସେମାନେ ତାଙ୍କ ମା ରଶ୍ମୀ ମାଇଙ୍କୁ ହରାଇଛନ୍ତି ।”

ରୁନୁ ସାନ ପିଲାଟିଏ ହେଲେବି ଅତି ତତ୍ତ୍ୱର କଥାଟିଏ କହିଲା । ଚିକିନା ଓ କାଳିଆଙ୍କର ମୁହଁ ଭାସିଆସିଲା ଶିଖାର ସ୍ମୃତିପତ୍ରରେ । ତାଙ୍କର ଜନ୍ମଦାତ୍ରୀ ଜନନୀ ଆତ୍ମହତ୍ୟା କରିଥିଲା ତିନିବର୍ଷ ତଳେ । ଆତ୍ମହତ୍ୟା କଲାବେଳେ ପୁଅ, ଝିଅଙ୍କ ମୋହ ତାକୁ ଅଟକାଇ ପାରିନଥିଲା । ସେତେବେଳେ କାଳିଆ ତିନିବର୍ଷର ଥିଲା ଓ ଚିକିନା ପାଞ୍ଚବର୍ଷର । ଏବେ କାଳିଆ ଛଅ ବର୍ଷର ହେଲାଣି । ଗାଁକୁ ଯାଇଥିବା ବେଳେ ସେଇ କାଳିଆକୁ ଉଲ୍ଲୀସିତ ହୋଇ ବାପାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ମାଙ୍କଟ ଗୋଡ଼ାଘର ଦେଖୁଥିଲା ଶିଖା । ହସକଥା ପଡ଼ିଲେ ହସିହସି ଗତିଯାଉଥିଲା ସେ ଓ ପିଉସୀକୁ କୁଣ୍ଡଳ ଧରି ଖାଇବାକୁ ମାଗୁଥିଲା, “ଦେଇ, ଭୋକ କଲାଣି ଖାଇବାକୁ ଦେଲୁ ।”

କାଳିଆ ଓ ଚିକିନାର “ବୋଉ” ଡାକଟି ଚିରଦିନ ପାଇଁ ଲିଭିଯାଇଥିଲା । ତଥାପି ଅନ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କ ସ୍ନେହକୁ ଆଶ୍ରୟ କରି, ଜୀବନର ଅନ୍ୟ ସବୁ ଖୁସିର ଆଶାରେ ସେମାନେ ପ୍ରତି ଆଗତଦିନକୁ ନୂଆ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନରେ ଓ ନୂଆ ଉନ୍ମାଦନାରେ ଆମତ୍ସ୍ୟ ଜଣାଉଥିଲେ । ଆଉ ସାମାନ୍ୟ କାନପୁଲଟିକୁ ହରାଇଛି ବୋଲି ଶିଖା ଝୁରୁଝୁରି ଦୁଃଖ କରି ଏତେଦିନ ବରବାଦ କଲାଣି ।

ସେଇ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତରେ ନିଜ ଉପରେ ଆକ୍ରୋଶ ଆସିଲା ଶିଖାର । “ହେ ଭଗବାନ, ସତରେ କଣ ମୁଁ ଏତେ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦୋଷ ହେଲି । ସାମାନ୍ୟ କାନପୁଲଟି ଉପରେ ଏତେ ମୋହ ରଖି ମୋର କେବଳ ଅଢେଇ ସପ୍ତାହର ଭାରତ ଯାତ୍ରାର ଖୁସିକୁ ମୁଁ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣରୂପେ ଅନୁଭବ କରିପାରିଲିନି ।” ଆଖିରୁ ଲୁହ ପୋଛି ସେ ଦୃଢ଼ନିଶ୍ଚୟ କଲା ଯେ ଆମେରିକା ଫେରିଯିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଦିଲ୍ଲୀରହଣିର ସମସ୍ତ ସୁଖ ସେ ଅନୁଭବ କରିବ । ସଂସ୍କୃତ ଶିକ୍ଷକଙ୍କର ବାଣୀ ହୃଦପତ୍ରରେ ପୁଣି ଥରେ ପ୍ରତିଧ୍ୱନିତ ହେଲା -

“ନ ଚୋରହାର୍ଯ୍ୟମ୍ ନ ଚ ରାଜହାର୍ଯ୍ୟମ୍ ନ ଭ୍ରାତୃଭାଜ୍ୟମ୍ ନ ଚ ଭାରକାରି
ବ୍ୟୟେ କୃତେ ବର୍ଷତ ଏବ ନିତ୍ୟମ୍ ବିଦ୍ୟାଧନମ୍ ସର୍ବଧନପ୍ରଧାନମ୍ ।”

ଶିଖା ପାଖରେ ବିଦ୍ୟାଧନ ଭଳି ମହାଧନ ରହିଛି, କଳାକୃତିର ଅନେକ ଅଳଙ୍କାର ରହିଛି । ସାମାନ୍ୟ କାନପୁଲର ମୋହ ଆଉ ତାକୁ ଆନନ୍ଦ ପ୍ରାପ୍ତିରେ ବାଧା ଦେଇ ପାରିବନି ।

ବିଛଣାରୁ ଉଠି ନିଜକୁ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ କରିବାରେ ଲାଗିଗଲା ଶିଖା ଓ ରୁନୁକୁ କହିଲା, “ରୁନୁ, ଜଲଦି ତ୍ରେସ୍‌ଟା ବଦଳାଇ ପକା । ଆମେ ଆଜି Delhi ବୁଲିବାକୁ ଯିବା ମେଟ୍ରୋରେ ।”

ଚକ୍ରର୍ ବିଜ୍ଞାନୀ ଦାସ କଳମ୍ପିଆ, ମେଘାଲୀଖରେ ରହନ୍ତି ଓ ନାସା, ଗଡ଼ାଚ୍ ସେକ୍ଟରରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକରନ୍ତି । ସଦିଏ ଏକ ଗାଣିତିକା ହିସାବରେ ସେ ଉଚ୍ଚଶିକ୍ଷା ଓ ତାଲିମ୍ ପ୍ରାପ୍ତ, ତେବେ ମନରେ ଉତ୍ତୁଧ୍ୱା ଭାବନାର ତରଙ୍ଗକୁ ଲେଖାଲେଖି ଓ ଅଭିନୟ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିବାକୁ ସେ ସର୍ବଦା ଚେଷ୍ଟିତ । ଏତଦ୍ ବ୍ୟତୀତ ନୃତ୍ୟ, ଗୀତ ଓ ବହୁମିଳନରେ ତାଙ୍କର ବିଶେଷ ଆଗ୍ରହ ।



ଦୋଳ ଯାତ୍ରା

ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସୁଲକ୍ଷଣା ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ

ଆମେରିକାକୁ ଆସିବାର ଅନେକ ବର୍ଷ ହୋଇଗଲାଣି ସୁରଭିଙ୍କର । ହୁଏତ କୋଟିଏ ଏକୋଇଶି ବର୍ଷ । କିନ୍ତୁ ମନେହେଉଛି ଏଇ ଯେମିତି ଘର ଛାଡ଼ୁଛନ୍ତି । ବୋଉ ଦାଣ୍ଡ ଦୁଆରେ ଠିଆହୋଇ ତାଙ୍କୁ ବିଦାୟ ଦେଉଛି । ଦାଣ୍ଡ ପାହାଚରେ ଠିଆ ହୋଇଛି । ତା'ର ଧଳା ଲୁଗା, ଶୀର୍ଷକାୟା, ଧାର ଗୋରା ମୁହଁରେ ଝିଅକୁ ବିଦା କରିବାର କାରୁଣ୍ୟ ଏବେବି ଜଳ ଜଳ ହୋଇ ଦେଖା ଯାଉଛି । ଛାତି କରତି ହୋଇ ଆଖିକୁ ବାରମ୍ବାର ଭିଜେଇ ଦେଉଛି । ବନ୍ଧୁ ବାନ୍ଧବ ଗଦା ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି ସମସ୍ତେ ଆଖି ଲୁହରେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ମେଲାଣି ଦେବାକୁ । ବୋଉ ବାଲି ଗଲାଣି, ବାପା ବାଲିଗଲାଣି ଅନେକ ଦିନରୁ……। କିନ୍ତୁ ଭୁଲି ହେଉନି ସେ ଭିଜିଲା ଅତୀତକୁ ଏଯାଏ ।

ଘରେ କେହି ନାହାନ୍ତି । ଝିଅ ଯାଇଛି ସ୍କୁଲ୍ । ସ୍ୱାମୀ ସୁବ୍ରତ ଯାଇଛନ୍ତି ଅଫିସକୁ । ନିରୋଳା ଖରାବେଳ । ସୁରଭିଙ୍କ ଆଖିରେ ଘର ଭାସି ଆସିଲା । ପଛ ସ୍ତୁତିମାନେ ଧାଡ଼ିବାନ୍ଧି ସୁରଭିଙ୍କ ମନର ଆଇନାରେ ଉଙ୍କି ମାରିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲେ । ଯେଉଁ closetରେ ସେ ଝିଅର ଖେଳଣା ଲୁଚାନ୍ତି, ଓ ଯେଉଁ closetରେ ପୁରୁଣା suitcase ଗୁଡ଼ା ଜମା ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି, ସୁରଭି ସେଇ closetଖୋଲିଲେ । କୋଟିଏ ବର୍ଷ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଘର ଛାଡ଼ିଲା ବେଳେ ହାତରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ମାତ୍ର suitcase ଧରି ସୁରଭି ଘର ଛାଡ଼ିଥିଲେ । ଫିକା ସବୁଜ ରଙ୍ଗର ଭି-ଆଇ-ପି suitcase ଟିଏ । ମ୍ୟାଗିଜ୍ ସାୟା, ବାଉଁଶ ସହ ଶାଢ଼ୀ ତିନୋଟି ମାତ୍ର, ଆଉ ତାଙ୍କର ଡିଗ୍ରୀ ସାର୍ଟିଫିକେଟ, ପୁରୁଣା ଫଟୋ ଆଲବମ୍ ଓ ବାପା ଦେଇଥିବା ଜମି କାଗଜ ସହ ଗୋଟିଏ ଲମ୍ବା ଖାତା ଥିଲା suitcase ଭିତରେ । ଜାଗ୍ରତରେ ବାବି ଦେଇ ଧରି ଆସିଥିଲେ suitcaseକୁ, ଜୀବନର ଏକ ନୂତନ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟାୟ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିବାକୁ ସୁରଭି ଏକ ନୂତନ ପୃଥିବୀରେ । କାହିଁ କେତେ ଦିନ କରିଗଲାଣି ଏ ଭିତରେ । ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ବହୁଳ ଜୀବନର ଅପରିଚିତ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତତା ମାନଙ୍କୁ ପରିଚିତ କରିବା ଭିତରେ ସମୟ କରିଗଲାଣି । ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ଅଶନିଃଶ୍ୱାସୀ ଲାଗେ । ଜୀବନର ଖେଳରେ ସୁରଭିଙ୍କୁ ଅନିଶ୍ଚିତ ଗତିରେ ଧାଇଁବାକୁ ପଡ଼େ ତଥାପି ………।

ସୁରଭି ଚାହିଁଲେ closet ଭିତରକୁ । ତିନି-ଚାରିଟା ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ suitcase, ସେଇ ଛୋଟ ଭି-ଆଇ-ପି suitcaseଟା ଉପରେ ଯେମିତି ନିଜର ପରାକ୍ରମ ସାବ୍ୟସ୍ତ କରି ହାଲିଆ ମାରୁଛନ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ସବୁ ସୁଟକେସ ଭିତରେ ଛୋଟ ହେଲେବି ତାର ସାଉଁଳିଆ ବେହେରା ଉଙ୍କି ମାରୁଛି ତଳୁ । ଗୋଟିଏ ମିନିଟ୍ ସୁରଭି ଚାହିଁ ରହିଲେ ତାକୁ ଅନ୍ୟ suitcaseମାନଙ୍କର ଫାଙ୍କର । ଉପରୁ ବଡ଼ suitcaseଟି ଟେକିବାକୁ ବେଞ୍ଚ କରୁକରୁ ଝିଅର ଦୁଇ ଚାରିଟା ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ଖେଳଣା କୋଉଠୁ ଧୁମ୍‌ଧାମ୍ ଖସି ପଡ଼ିଲା ତାଙ୍କ ବାଁ ଗୋଡ଼ ଆଙ୍ଗୁଠି ଉପରେ । ଉଃ ! ବିଚକାର କରି ଆଙ୍ଗୁଠିକୁ ଚାପି ଧରିଲେ ସୁରଭି । କିଛି କ୍ଷଣ ପରେ ପୁଣି ଉଠି ଆସ୍ତେ ଆସ୍ତେ suitcase ଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ଏକ ପାଖିଆକରି ଛୋଟ ସବୁଜ ଭି-ଆଇ-ପି suitcaseଟାକୁ ଟେକି ଆଣିଲେ । ଓଦା ତଉଲିଆରିରେ ପୋଛିଲେ । ଆଣି ଲେଦର ସୋଫା ଉପରେ ରଖିଲେ । ଖୋଲିଲେ suitcaseକୁ …… ଫିକା ନୀଳ ରଙ୍ଗର ଫଟୋ ଆଲବମ୍ ଉପରେ ଆଖି ପଡ଼ିଗଲା । ଖୋଲି ଫଟୋ ଗୁଡ଼ା ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲେ । ଘର ଅଗଣାରେ କୁଅ ପାଖେ ଲେଠୁ ଗଛ କଡ଼ରେ ବଡ଼ ପଥର ଉପରେ ବାପା ଗାଧୋଇବାକୁ ବସିବାର ଫଟୋ । ନାଲି ଗାମୁଛା, ତେଲ ମରା ବିକଣ୍ ଦେହ ଫଟୋରୁ ବାରି ହୋଇ ଯାଉଛି । ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ପାଣି ବାଲ୍‌ଟି ପାଖରେ । ମନେ ପଡ଼ିଲା ନୁଆ କ୍ୟାମେରାରେ ବଡ଼ ଭାଇ ସୁରଭିନ ଏ ଫଟୋଟି ନେଇଥିଲେ । ବାପାଙ୍କ ମୁହଁର ହସ ସଂକ୍ରାନ୍ତି ହେଲା ସୁରଭିଙ୍କ ଓଠରେ । ବାପା ଗାଧୁଆ ଘରେ ଗାଧାନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଶୀତ ଦିନେ ଗରମ ପାଣି ତାଙ୍କର ଦରକାର ହୁଏନା । ସକାଳ ଖରା, ଆଉ କୁଅର ଉଷ୍ମ ପାଣି ତାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ ଥିଲା । ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ଫଟୋରେ ବୋଉ ଠାକୁର ଘରେ ପୂଜାରେ ବସିଛି । ସବୁ ଠାକୁରଙ୍କ ଫଟୋ ସଙ୍ଗେ ବୋଉର ଫଟୋ । ବାପାଙ୍କ ଫଟୋ ପୁଣି କଚେରି ଘରେ ମହକିଲ ସଙ୍ଗେ । ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ଫଟୋରେ କଦଳୀ ଗଛ ପଛକୁ ସୁରଭିଙ୍କ ଫଟୋ ନାଲି ଛିଟ ଶାଢ଼ୀଟିଏ ପିନ୍ଧି । କିନ୍ତୁ ସେ ନାଲି ଛିଟ ଶାଢ଼ୀରେ, କୋଟିଏ ବାଇଶି ବର୍ଷର ଝିଅଟିକୁ ଅତିହ୍ନା ମନେ ହେଲା ସୁରଭିଙ୍କର । ମନେ ହେଲା ଯେମିତି ଆଉ କିଏ ! ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ଅବିଶ୍ୱାସର ଲୁଚକାଳି- କାନ୍ଧରେ ଲାଗିଥିବା ନିଜର ବଡ଼ ଫଟୋଟିକୁ ଚାହିଁଲେ । ବୟସର ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତା ଓ ବାପରେ ସେ ନାଲି ଛିଟ ଶାଢ଼ୀ ପିନ୍ଧା ଝିଅଟି କେମିତି କୋଉଠି ତାଙ୍କ ଅଜାଣତରେ ହଜିଯାଇଛି କେବେଠୁ, ତାଙ୍କୁ । ଚାହିଁଲେ ଫଟୋକୁ



ପୁଣି...ତାଙ୍କ ଘଷ କଳା ବେଶୀ, ଚିକ୍‌କଣ ସାର୍‌ଲିଆ କପାଳରେ ନାଲି ଚିକିଲି, ଆଉ ଦୁଇ ହାତରେ ଦୁଇ ଗୋଛା ନାଲିଚୁଡ଼ି.....କେମିତି ଅପୂର୍ବ ମନେ ହେଲା ଝିଅଟିକୁ.....ଛବିଶ ବର୍ଷ ତଳର ଅତୀତକୁ.....। କୋଡିଏ ବାଇଶି ବର୍ଷର ଝିଅ ସୁରଭିଙ୍କର ଉତ୍ତାଳ ଭରା ଯୌବନ , ରୂପର ମନ୍ଦାକିନୀ ଝରାଇ ଆଜିର ଅସ୍ତ୍ର ଅପରାହ୍‌ନର କାନ୍ଧ ସୁରଭିଙ୍କୁ ଟାଣି ନେଇଗଲା ପଛକୁ । ଛଟକରେ ଚାହିଁଲେ ନିଜକୁ, ଆଉ କାନ୍ଧରେ ଟଙ୍କା ହୋଇଥିବା ତାଙ୍କ ଏବେର ଫଟଟାକୁ ପୁଣିଥରେ । ମୁହଁରେ ଦୁନିଆଁ ଯାକର ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତାର ଛାପ.....ମୁସ ଦିଆ ବବ୍ ହେୟାର ଷ୍ଟାଇଲ୍.....ସିନେମା ଫେଟୋ ଭଳି ସମତ୍ତେ ସଜିତ ଅଧୁନୀକତାର ଜାହୀର.....କେମିତି ଫେକ୍ ମନେହେଲା ସବୁ.....ଏକା ଏକା ଏ ଏକାନ୍ତ ଶୂନ୍ୟ ମଧ୍ୟାହ୍‌ନରେ... ହଠାତ୍ ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ଫଟଟା ଉପରେ ଆଖି ପଡ଼ିଗଲା ତାଙ୍କର । ଫେକ୍ କରି ହସିଦେଲେ ସୁରଭି । ସେ ଏବଂ ତାଙ୍କ ଛୋଟ ଭଉଣୀ ରୁଚି । ବଡ଼ ଭାଇ ଉଠେଇ ଥିଲେ ଏ ଫଟଟା । ଆଠ ଦଶ ବର୍ଷ ବୟସ ସେତେବେଳେ ଦୁଇ ଜଣଙ୍କର । ରୁଚିକୁ ଦେଖି ତାଙ୍କୁ ହସ ମାଡ଼ିଲା । ଦୁଇ ଜଣଙ୍କ କାନ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବାଳ ଦୁଇ ପାଖରେ... ଛୋଟ ହାତ ଫୁଲରେ ପ୍ରିଣ୍ଟ ଦେଖା ଯାଉନି ଭଲ, କାରଣ ବ୍ଲାକ୍-ଆଣ୍ଡ୍-ହାଇଟ୍ ଫେଟୋ କେବେକାର । ରୁଚି ତାଙ୍କ କାନ୍ଧରେ ହାତ ଦେଇଛି, ସେ ତାର ଆଉ ହାତଟିକୁ କୋଳରେ ଧରିଛନ୍ତି, ଜାକିତୁକି ଦୁଇଜଣ ବସିଛନ୍ତି । ଭାରି ଭଲ ଲାଗିଲା ।

ସୁଟକେସର ସବୁଠୁ ତଳେ ଥିଲା ଲମ୍ବା ଖାତାଟି । ଉପରେ ବାପାଙ୍କ ନାଁ ତାଙ୍କ ନିଜ ହାତ ଲେଖା ଅକ୍ଷରରେ । ଖାତା ଖୋଲିଲେ... ବାପାଙ୍କ ଗନ୍ଧର ଅଧାଲେଖା ପାଖୁଲିପିଟି । ହାତରେ ଧରିଲେ...ଛାତିରେ ଜାକିଲେ । ବାପାଙ୍କ ଗନ୍ଧର ଅଧାଲେଖା ପାଖୁଲିପିଟିକୁ ପଢ଼ିବା ପାଇଁ ଭି-ଆଇ-ପି- ସୁଟକେସଟା ଘୁଞ୍ଚେଇ ଦେଲେ ଓ ସୁବିର ହୋଇ ବସି ରହିଲେ ସୋଫା ଉପରେ କିଛି କ୍ଷଣ । ଅତୀତ ଟାଣି ନେଲା ତାଙ୍କୁ କୋଉ ପଛକୁ.....। ସମୟର ସ୍ଵାତ ପ୍ରି-ଡି-ମ୍ୟୁଜିକ୍‌ସ୍‌ରେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଯେମିତି ନେଇ ଯାଉଛି ପଛକୁ... ଆହୁରି ପଛକୁ.....।

ପାଖୁଲିପିଟିରେ ବାପା ଗାଁରେ ଦୋଳଯାତ୍ରା କେମିତି ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଥିଲେ ସେଇ ବିଷୟରେ ଲେଖିଥିଲେ । ଅଧାଲେଖା ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ସେ ପ୍ରାଣତ୍ୟାଗ କରିଥିଲେ । ପଢ଼ୁ ପଢ଼ୁ ସୁରଭିଙ୍କ ପିଲାବେଳର ଦୋଳଛୁଟି ମନେ ପଡ଼ିଗଲା । ରୁଚି ପାଞ୍ଚ ଛ'ବରଷର, ଆଉ ସେ ସାତ ଆଠ ବରଷର ସେତେବେଳେ । ଦୋଳଛୁଟି ହୋଇଥାଏ । ରୁଚିର ହୁଏତ କିଛି ମନେ ନ ଥିବ , କିନ୍ତୁ ମନେ ଅଛି ସୁରଭିଙ୍କର । ଗାଁ ନା ତାଙ୍କର ପରିଛଳ । ଖୋର୍ଦ୍ଧାରୁ ୧୨ ମାଇଲ୍ ମାତ୍ର ଦୂର । ବାପା ଥିଲେ ଗାଁର ଜମିଦାର ସେତେବେଳେ । ବିଷ୍ଣୁଶ୍ୟାମ୍ ଜମି, ସାରି ସାରି ଆମ୍ବ ପ୍ରଣୟ ଚୋଟା, ଗାଁ ଠାକୁର ମନ୍ଦିର, ସୁଧା ପୋଖରୀ, ଚନ୍ଦନ ପୋଖରୀ ସବୁର ମାଲିକ ବାପା । ପ୍ରତି ବର୍ଷ, ବର୍ଷକୁ ଥରେ, ବାପା ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ନିଅନ୍ତି ଗାଁକୁ - ଦୋଳ ଯାତ୍ରାକୁ । ଝୁଲ୍ ସବୁ ଦଶ ଦିନ ପାଇଁ ବନ୍ଦ ହୋଇଥାଏ । ଗାଁରେ ଜେଜେମା, ଦାଦା ଖୁଡ଼ୀ, ତାଙ୍କ ପିଲାଏ ରାନ୍, ମାନ୍, ଝୁନ୍, ବଡ଼ ବାପା, ମାମା, ନବ ଭାଇ, ଓ ଫକ୍ ଭାଇଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ଭାଉଜ ମାନେ, ଛୋଟ ଝିଆରୀ ପୁତୁରା ମାନେ । ସୁରଭିଙ୍କୁ 'ସୁର' ଡାକନ୍ତି ସମସ୍ତେ ଘରେ ଓ ଗାଁରେ । ସୁରୁ ଦିନ ଗଣୁଥିଲେ, ରୁଚି ମଧ୍ୟ ବୁଝି ପାରୁଥିଲା ଦୋଳକୁ ଗାଁକୁ ଯିବାର ଆନନ୍ଦ । ବସ୍ରେ ଗାଁକୁ ଯିବାକୁ ୧୨ ମାଇଲ ବାଟ ପ୍ରାୟ ୪୫ ମିନିଟ୍‌ରୁ ଘଣ୍ଟାଏ ଲାଗୁଥିଲା । ତା'ପରଠୁ ପୁଣି ଚାଲିକି ଯିବାକୁ ହୁଏ ମାଇଲିଏ କି ଦେଇ ମାଇଲ ବାଟ । ବାପା ଯାଉଛନ୍ତି ବୋଲି ଦଶ-ପନ୍ଦର ଚାଣୀ, ପାଇଟିଆ ହାଜର ହୋଇ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରିଥାନ୍ତି ଗାଁ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ବସ୍ ଥକା ଯାଗାରେ । ସେଇଠି ଛୋଟ ଚାଳ ଘର- ବା, ଗୁଲୁଗୁଲା, ମିଠେଇ ଦୋକାନ । କୁଅ ଟିଏ, ଦଉଡ଼ି ବନ୍ଧା ପୁରୁଣା ବାଲଟି । ପାଖକୁ ଲାଗି ପାନ ଦୋକାନ । ଦୋକାନରେ ନାନା କିସମର ପିଲାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ବିସ୍କୁଟ୍, ନାନ୍ ଖଟେଇ, ନାଲି ନେଳୀ ମୁଢ଼ି ଲଜେନ୍‌ସ୍, କାଟ୍ ଭିତରେ ଥୁଆ ହୋଇ ଗଲା-ଆଇଲା ବସ ଯାତ୍ରୀଙ୍କୁ ଆକର୍ଷଣ କରୁଥାଏ ଗାଁ ମୁଣ୍ଡରୁ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ କିଛି ଧରି ନେଇ ଯିବାକୁ । ବାପା ଗାଡ଼ିରୁ ଓହ୍ଲାଇ କୁଅ ଧାରରେ ଥିବା ଉକା ପଥର ଉପରେ ବସନ୍ତି । ପାଇଟିଆ ବା ଚାଣୀ ଜଣେ ପାଣି ବାଲଟି ତୋଳି ବାପାଙ୍କ ଗୋଡ଼ ଧୋଇ ଦେଇ ନାଲି ଗାମୁଛାରେ ପୋଛି ଦିଅନ୍ତି । ଦୋକାନୀ ବା' ଗିଲାସ ଧରି ବଢେଇ ଦିଏ ବାପାଙ୍କୁ । ବାପା ବା' ଖାଉ ଖାଉ ଗାଁର ହାଲ୍ ବୁଝନ୍ତି । ଜମି ଜମା ନାଲିସି -ଆଦିରୁ ଅନ୍ଧ । ତା ଭିତରେ ସୁରୁ ଓ ରୁଚି ପାଖ ମହାଦେବ ମନ୍ଦିର ବେଢା ଭିତରେ ଲୁଚକାଳି ଖେଳନ୍ତି । ପାଇଟିଆ ଦୁଇ ଜଣ ଜଗି ଠିଆ ହୋଇ ଥାନ୍ତି ପାଖରେ, ବାପାଙ୍କ ବିନା ହୁକୁମରେ ମଧ୍ୟ । ବୋଉ ଚିକିଏ ଦୂରରେ ପାର୍ବତୀଙ୍କ ଦୁଆରେ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ହାତେ ଓଢ଼ଣା ଦେଇ ବସିରହେ ବାପା ତାକ ଛାଡ଼ିବା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ - 'ସୁରୁ.....ରୁଚି.....ସୁ...ରୁ...ଚି.....ବାଲ ଯିବା ଜେଜେମା ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରିଥିବ ।'

ଗାଁରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଲା ବେଳକୁ ସଞ୍ଜ-ସଞ୍ଜ । ଲଣ୍ଡନ ଆଲୁଅ ଧରି ଜେଜେମା ଆସୁଥାନ୍ତି ଦାଣ୍ଡ ପିଣ୍ଡାକୁ ଦଶ ଥର, ପିଲା ଆସୁଛନ୍ତି ବୋଲି । ପାଞ୍ଚ, ଛ ହୁକୁମିଆ, ପାଇଟିଆ ଅପେକ୍ଷାରେ ଥାନ୍ତି ଜେଜେମାଙ୍କ ହୁକୁମକୁ । କୁଲିଆ ବୋଉ, ରଜି ବୋଉ ଘର ସମ୍ପା, ରୋଷେଇ ବାସ ସବୁ



କୋଉ ପହରୁ ଶେଷ କରି ବାବୁ ଓ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ଅପେକ୍ଷାରେ ବସି ରହିଥାନ୍ତି । କୋଡିଏ ବର୍ଷରୁ ବିଧବା ହେବା ପରଠୁ କୁଳିଆ ବୋଉ, ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଛାଡି ଦେବା ଦିନୁ ଡେଇଶି ବର୍ଷ ହେଇଥିଲା ରଜିକୁ, ସେତେବେଳୁ ସେମାନେ ଜେଜେମାଙ୍କ ପାଖେ । କୁଳିଆ ଓ ରଜିକୁ ଧରି ଡାକ୍ତର ଜୀବନ ।

ଖୁସିରେ ଗୋଟ ତଳେ ଲାଗୁ ନ ଥାଏ ସୁରୁ ଆଉ ରୁଚିଙ୍କର । ଖାଇବା, ପିଇବା, ହସ ଖୁସି ରେ ଭରା ଚଉଦିଗ । ସେଇଦିନ ରାତିକୁ ସଲଟଣ ଆସିବ । ପରଦିନ ଭୋ'ରୁ ଭୋ'ରୁ ଠାକୁର ଭୋଗ ଖାଇବେ ଦୁଆରେ । ଦୋଳରେ ବସି ଝୁଲି ଝୁଲି ପାଖର ଅଠରଟି ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ ଗାଁର ଠାକୁର ମାନେ ବିମାନରେ ଆସି ଜମା ହେବେ । ଡାକ୍ତର ଘର ଖନ୍ଦା ଛ, ସାତ କୁଟୁମ୍ବ, ପରିବାରକୁ ଧରି । ସଲଟଣ ଆସିଲା ବେଳକୁ ରାତି ବାର । ବୋଉ, ଜେଜେମା ଆମଙ୍କୁ ଉଠେଇ ପକେଇଲେ - 'ଉଠ ଉଠ ସଲଟଣ ଆସିଲାଣି' । ସଲଟଣ ଆସିଲା ..ସଲଟଣ ଆସିଲା ଶୁଣି ସମସ୍ତେ ପିଣ୍ଡାକୁ ଆସିଲେ । ଦେଖିଲେ ଦଶ, ବାର ପେଟୋମାଙ୍କୁ ଲାଇଟରେ ଦାଣ୍ଡ ଦୁଆର ଆଲୁଅରେ ଆଖି ଝଲସି ଯାଉଛି...ଅଧ ମାଇଲ ଆଗକୁ ବି । ରାତି ଦିନଠୁ ଉଜୁଳ । ଆଖି ଝଲସା ଆଲୁଅରେ ସୁରୁ ଦେଖିଲେ ଶହ ଶହ ଲୋକ ପିଣ୍ଡା ଧାରଠାରୁ ଦୁଇ କଡରେ ବସିଛନ୍ତି । ଜୀବନକୁ କିଛି ସମୟ ଭୁଲି ଯିବାର ଅକ୍ଷୟ ଆନନ୍ଦରେ ଉତ୍ତୁରୁକୁ -ପିଲାଠୁ ବୁଢ଼ା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ । ବାପା ବସିଥାନ୍ତି ଆଗରେ- ଶୀତଳ ପଟିରେ, ପୁରୋହିତ କପିଳ ଭାଇନାଙ୍କ ପାଖକୁ । ବଡ ପିତଳ ଥାଳିରେ ଥାଳିଏ ଭୋଗ । ନୁଆ ଚଣା, ଶାକର, ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ କଟା ଆଖୁ ସାଙ୍କୁ ଲତୁ ଆଉ ଲବଙ୍ଗଲତା । ଚାମର ଓ ଅନେକ ପୂଜା ସରଞ୍ଜମ ପାଖକୁ କପିଳ ଭାଇନା ନୁଆ ନାଲି ଗାମୁଛା ସହ କେତୋଟି ଟଙ୍କିଆ ନୋଟ୍ ପାଖରେ ରଖିଥାନ୍ତି । ସୁନା ଭଳି ଚକଚକ ପିତଳ ଭାଲରେ ଠାକୁରଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ପାଣି ଓ ନାଲି ଚାଙ୍ଗୁଡିରେ ପୁଲ । ଜେଜେମା, ବୋଉ, ଖୁଡ଼ୀ, ବାଇଆ ଦାଦାଙ୍କ ବୋହୁ, ନୁଆ ଭାଉଜ ମାନେ, ବଡ ଲୁହା ଅଧା ଆଉଜା କବାଟ ଫାଙ୍କରେ ରୁପି ରୁପି କଥା ଓ ହସକୁ ଝରାଇ ମଗ୍ନ ହୋଇ ସଲଟଣ ଅପେକ୍ଷାରେ ଥାଆନ୍ତି । ବାଜା ଶବ୍ଦ ପାଖେଇ ଆସୁଛି... ହେଇ ଆସିଗଲା.....ହୋ ହୋ..... ସଲଟଣ ଆସିଲା...।

ଶବ୍ଦ ଓ ଆନନ୍ଦର ମଧୁର କୋଳାହଳରେ ସଲଟଣ ଆସିଲା ଦାଣ୍ଡ ମଝିକୁ । ପ୍ରଥମେ କଳ ଘୋଡ଼ା, ନାଗ-ନାଗୁଣୀ, ବୁଢ଼ା- ବୁଢ଼ୀ, ହର- ପାର୍ବତୀ ନାଟିବେ, ଶେଷକୁ ପରୀ ନାଟରେ ଶେଷ ହେବ ସଲଟଣ । ଧଳା ବିରାଟ ଲମ୍ବା କଳ ଘୋଡ଼ା, ହି ହି ହୋଇ ଧସି ଆସିଲେ ଆମ ଦାଣ୍ଡ ପିଣ୍ଡା ଉଜା ଚାଳକୁ, ଆଉ ଚାଳରୁ କିଛି ପାଟିରେ ଭିତ ନେଇ ପଛୁଆ ପଛୁଆ ନାଟ ମାରି ଫେରିଗଲେ । ସୁରୁ ଓ ରୁଚି ବାପାଙ୍କ ପାଖେ ଦେହକୁ ଦେହ ଲଗେଇ ବସିଥାନ୍ତି, ପାଟିରୁ କଥା ବାହାରୁନି । ରୁଚିର ଦୁଃଖୀ ନାହିଁ । ଦାଣ୍ଡ ଭରା ଲୋକ ସମସ୍ତେ ଯେମିତି ବର୍ଷକ ଯାକର ଅପେକ୍ଷାକୁ ମନ ଭରି ଅବାକ୍ ମୁହଁରେ ପିଇ ଯାଉ ଥାଆନ୍ତି ତାପରେ ନାଗ-ନାଗୁଣୀ, ନାଗ ବେଶରେ ଅନେକ କାଠ ମାଲିର ଗହଣା ଓ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ନାଗ ମୁକୁଟ ପିନ୍ଧି ଚକ୍ଷୁର କାଟି କାଟି ନାଟିଲେ । ବୁଢ଼ା- ବୁଢ଼ୀ ହାତ ଧରି ଧରି ହୋଇ, ପାନ ଖିଆ ପାକୁଆ ପାଟିରେ ହସି ହସି ଘେରାଏ ବୁଲିଗଲେ । ତାପରେ ଆସିଲେ ହର-ପାର୍ବତୀ—୮/୧୦ ଫୁଟ ଲମ୍ବା, ଆଖି ଝଲସା ରୁପ । ହର ମହାଦେବଙ୍କର ବଡ ବଡ ଆଖି ଓ କଳା କୁଞ୍ଚୁ କୁଞ୍ଚିଆ ବାଳ ସାଙ୍କୁ ନୀଳ ରଂଗର ଦେହ ଉପରେ ଲମ୍ବା ଲମ୍ବା କଳା ସାପ ଗୁଡେଇ ହୋଇ ରହିଥାନ୍ତି । ବାପରେ.....ରୁଚି ପାଟିରୁ ବାହାରି ପଡିଲା ସାପ ଦେଖି । ଆଉ ପାର୍ବତୀ, ନିରୀହ, ନିର୍ମାୟା, ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମା ଭକ୍ତ ରୂପସୀଙ୍କ ହଳଦୀ ଗଣ୍ଡି ଗୋରା ଦେହରେ ନାଲି ଜରି ଧରି ଥିବା ସବୁଜ ଶାଢ଼ୀ ଉପରେ ଚକ୍ ଚକିଆ ସୁନା ମାଳ ହାର ସବୁ ଦୋହଲୁ ଥାଏ । ସୁରୁ ଆଉ ରୁଚି ଅବାକ୍ ଆଖିରେ ପିଇ ଯାଉ ଥାଆନ୍ତି । ସୁରଭି ଜାଣିଥିଲେ, ହର-ପାର୍ବତୀ, ଓ ଠାକୁର ମାନେ ସମସ୍ତେ ସ୍ଵର୍ଗରେ ରହନ୍ତି । ଆଜି ଆସିଛନ୍ତି ମର୍ତ୍ତ୍ୟକୁ ଅଳ୍ପ ସମୟ ପାଇଁ...ପୁଣି ଚାଲିଯିବେ । ତାପରେ ଆସିଲା ପରୀ ନାଟ, ଦୁଇ ଜଣ ପରୀ, ପୁରୁଷ ଓ ନାରୀ - ଦୁଇ କଡରେ ବିରାଟ ବିରାଟ ଜରି ଝଲମଲ ତେଣା । ଦୁଇ ହାତରେ ରୁମାଲ ଟଣା ଟଣି ହୋଇ ନାଟି ନାଟି ଗଲେ ସଲଟଣ ଶେଷ କରି । ପଛକୁ ଆସିଲେ ଠାକୁର ମାନେ ସୁନ୍ଦର ସୁନ୍ଦର ବିମାନରେ ବସି । ଜଣେ ଚହଲିଆ ପାଟି କରି ଜଣାଉଥାଏ... 'ଆସିଲେ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ-ନାରାୟଣ...ଆସିଲେ ରାଧା-କୃଷ୍ଣ...ଆସିଲେ ହଟ-କିଶୋର...'. ମୃଦଙ୍ଗ, ଘଣ୍ଟ, ଗିନି ବାଜି ଗାଁ ଦାଣ୍ଡ କଂପୁଥାଏ । କପିଳ ଭାଇନାଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ବାପା ପିଣ୍ଡାରୁ ଓହ୍ଲାଇ ଚାମର ଭାଲିଲେ ଠାକୁର ମାନଙ୍କୁ ଆଉ କପିଳ ଭାଇନା ଠାକୁରମାନଙ୍କୁ ଭୋଗ ଲଗେଇ ଶେଷ କଲା ବେଳକୁ ରାତି ଫିକା ପଡିଆସିଲାଣି ।

କୋଡିଏ, ପଟିଶ ବାଷୀ ପାଇଟିଆ ବାପାଙ୍କ ପଛେପଛେ ଚାଲିଲେ ଗାଁ ମୁଣ୍ଡକୁ ମେଳା ଆଡେ । ସୁରୁ କେଶବା କାନ୍ଦରେ, ଆଉ ରୁଚି ଶଙ୍କରା କାନ୍ଦରେ କହୁଅ ହୋଇ ମେଳଣ ପଡିଆ ଆଡକୁ ବାପାଙ୍କ ପଛେ ପଛେ ଚାଲିଲେ । ସୁରଭି ତଥାପି ମୋହଗ୍ରସ୍ତ । ଗତ ରାତିର ସଲଟଣ



ଆଉ ଠାକୁର ମାନଙ୍କ ଆବିର୍ଭାବ ତାଙ୍କ ଛୋଟ ମନରେ ରୋମଛନ୍ଦ ହୋଇ ଚାଲିଯାଏ । ମେଳଣ ପଡ଼ିଆ ପାଖ ହୋଇ ଆସୁଥାଏ, କେଶବା କାନ୍ଧରେ ଥାଇ ହଠାତ୍ ସୁରଭିଙ୍କ ଆଖି ପଡ଼ିଗଲା ନିଛାଟିଆ ଆମ୍ବଗଛ ପାଖକୁ । ଦେଖିଲେ ହର-ପାର୍ବତୀ ଅଖଠୁ ଅଧା ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଆରେ ବସିଛନ୍ତି କି ଥୁଆ ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି ? ତାଙ୍କ ଗୋତ କାଇଁ ? ସୁରଭି ଯେମିତି ନିରଘାତ କବତା ଖାଇଲେ— ମନରେ ସତ-ମିଛର ପୃଥିବୀକୁ ଅଲଗା କରି । ଛାତି ଭିତରେ ଅକୁହା ପ୍ରଶ୍ନକୁ ମଛନ୍ଦ କରି । ମିଛ କରି ପାରୁ ନ ଥିଲେ , ଗାଁ ଦାଣ୍ଡରେ ଶହ ଶହ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ପେଟୋମାଟ୍ଟର ଭରା ଉଜ୍ଜ୍ୱଳ ଆଲୁଅରେ ଦେଖିଥିବା ହର-ପାର୍ବତୀଙ୍କୁ । ସୁରୁ ଦେଖିଲେ, ସମସ୍ତେ ଚାଲିଥାନ୍ତି ହର-ପାର୍ବତୀଙ୍କୁ ପାର ହୋଇ ଆମ୍ବଗଛ କଡେ କଡେ । କାହା ମନରେ କିଛି ନାହିଁ, ସମସ୍ତେ ଚାଲିଛନ୍ତି ମେଳଣ ପଡ଼ିଆ ଆଡକୁ । ସୁରଭି ମଧ୍ୟ, ଏ ସତ ମିଛର ଲୁଚକାଳିକୁ ତାଙ୍କ ଛୋଟ ମନଟିର ଏକୃଷିଆ ପରିଧିରେ ଅନେକ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନବାଚୀ ସହ ବନ୍ଦନ କରି ଚାଲିଲେ ପଡ଼ିଆ ଆଡକୁ ।

ମେଳଣ ପଡ଼ିଆ । ପରାଶ ଖଣ୍ଡେ ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ ଦୋକାନ । ଚା, ଜଳଖିଆ ଦୋକାନ ବୋଧେ ସବୁଠୁ ବେଶୀ । ରାଜ୍ ଉପରୁ ତଳକୁ ଥାକ ଥାକ ଲବଙ୍ଗ ଲତା, ଫେଣୀ, ଲଡୁ, ଶାକର, ଖିରଗଜା । ବଡ଼ ଲୁହା କରେଇରେ ଗରମ ତେଲରେ ଗୁଲୁଗୁଲା ଛଣା ଚାଲିଥାଏ । ବିରାଟ ବଡ଼ ଟିଣ କେଟିଲିରେ ଚା ବସିଥାଏ । ବାପା ବସିଲେ ଦୋକାନ ଆଗରେ ଥିବା କାଠ ବେଞ୍ଚରେ । ଦୋକାନୀ ଜଡସତ ହୋଇ ସମ୍ମାନରେ କାଟ ଗିଲାସରେ ଧରେଇ ଦେଲା ବାପାଙ୍କୁ ଗରମ ଚା । ସୁରୁ ଓ ରୁଚି ଓହ୍ଲାଇଲେ କେଶବା ଓ ଶଙ୍କରାଙ୍କ କାନ୍ଧରୁ । ଖରା ପଡ଼ିଲାଣି । ଦୋକାନୀ ଖାଲି ପତର ଠୁଙ୍ଗାରେ ବଢେଇ ଦେଲା 'ଖିରଗଜା' ବାବୁଙ୍କ ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ—ସୁରୁ ଓ ରୁଚି ଦାନ୍ତ ନ ଘଷି ମଧ୍ୟ ସେଦିନ ସକାଳେ ଖାଇଥିଲେ । ସୁରଭି ତଥାପି ପ୍ରକୃତିସ୍ଥ ହୋଇ ପାରୁ ନ ଥାନ୍ତି । ଗଲା ରାତିର ସ୍ୱର୍ଗରୁ ସଦ୍ୟ ଓହ୍ଲାଇ ଆସିଥିବା ହର-ପାର୍ବତୀ, ଆଉ ଦିନର ପଡ଼ିଆ ଉପର ଆମ୍ବଗଛ ତଳେ ପଡ଼ିଥିବା ଅଲୋଡା ଅଖୋଡା ଅଖଞ୍ଜ ହର-ପାର୍ବତୀ ଯେମିତି ତାଙ୍କ ମନଗଢା ସ୍ୱର୍ଗକୁ ବୁନାକରି ଗୋଳମାଳ କରୁଥାନ୍ତି । ସତ ମିଛର ଲୁଚକାଳି ଖେଳରେ 'ମିଛ' ଖାଲି ହାରୁଥାଏ, କବତା ଖାଉଥାଏ । କାହାକୁ ପଚାରିବେ... ବାପାଙ୍କୁ ??? ବାପା ଗାଁ ମାମଲା ଓ ହାନି ଲାଭ ନେଇ କଥାରେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ । ଛୋଟ ଗୋଟିଏ ସଭା ସେତେବେଳକୁ ସରଗରମ, ସମସ୍ତେ ଶୁଣୁଥାନ୍ତି । ରୁଚି ଛୋଟ । ତାକୁ କିଏ ଗୋଟିଏ ବେଲୁନ୍ ଧରେଇ ଦେଇଛି । ତା ନିର୍ମଳ ମନରେ ବେଲୁନ୍ ଉତାର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ । ଖିରଗଜାରୁ ଫାଳେ ଶେଷ କରି ଧରିଥାଏ ଯାତରା ମଉଛବକୁ ବେଲୁନ୍ ଭିତରେ ବୋଧେ । ସୁରଭିଙ୍କ ଆଖି ଚାଣି ହୋଇଗଲା ଦୁଇ ତିନୋଟି ଦୋକାନ ଆଗକୁ । ପରୀ ନାଚର ପରୀ । ତେଣା କଟା । ଶାଢ଼ି ପିନ୍ଧା ପୁରୁଷଟିଏ । ସୁରଭି ଭୁଲ୍ ଦେଖୁ ନାହାନ୍ତି ? ନାଁ...ପୁରୁଷ ସ୍ୱର, ପୁରୁଷ ହସ , ଛୋଟ ବାଳ— ସେ ଲମ୍ବା ଜରିଫୁଲ ଦିଆ ବେଶୀ ନାହିଁ । ତା ଛାତି ପୁରୁଷ ପିଲାର ଛାତି । ହାତରେ ଧରିଛି ଦୁଇଟି ସଢେଇ -କନାବିଣ୍ଡା ଭିତରେ । ସୁରଭିଙ୍କ ଭୁଲ୍ ହେଲାଣି ଏ ଧର । ସୁରଭି 'ସତ' ଦେଖିଲେ, ମିଛକୁ ବି ଦେଖିଲେ । ରାତିରେ 'ମିଛ' ଭଲ ଲାଗିଥିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ 'ସତ' ସକାଳେ ଠିକ୍ ହିଁ ଲାଗିଲା । ରାତିକ ଭିତରେ ସେଇ ଛୋଟ ସୁରୁ ଯେମିତି ବଡ଼ ହୋଇ ସୁରଭି ହୋଇ ଗଲେ । ଚାହିଁଲେ ରୁଚିକୁ । ତା ନାଲି ବେଲୁନ୍ ଭିତରେ ସେ ମିଛ ଗୁଡା ଦେଖୁଛି ଏଇନା । ବେଲୁନ୍ ଫଟିଯିବ, ରୁଚି ବି ବଡ଼ ହୋଇଯିବ ହଠାତ ଦିନେ- ସକାଳେ, ଠିକ୍ ସୁରୁଙ୍କ ଭଳି । ଆଉ ଦୋଳ ଯାତ୍ରା ଗଲେ ବେଲୁନରେ ଖେଳିବନି ।

ଯାତ୍ରାରେ ନାନା ରକମର ଦୋକାନ । କାଚ କର୍ପୋର୍ଟର ଦୋକାନ, କାଁପ୍, ରୀବନ୍, କାଚ ଛୋଟ ଦର୍ପଣ, ବାଳ ଖୋସା ମାଲି ସବୁର ଦୋକାନ, କାଚ ରୁଚିର ଦୋକାନ, ଛୋଟ ବହି ଖନାବନ୍ଦନ, ହନୁମାନ ଚାଲିଶା, ଗାୟତ୍ରୀ ମନ୍ତ୍ର, ଖୁରୁରୁକୁଣୀ, ସନ୍ତୋଷୀ ମା, ସହଜ ଇଙ୍ଗାଜୀ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ସବୁ ରକମର ବହି ଦୋକାନ, କୁଲା, ବାଉଁଶିଆ, ତାଟିର ଦୋକାନ , ଶୀଳ, ଶୀଳପୁଆ, ଘଣୀର ଦୋକାନ, କନ୍ଧା ଶାଢ଼ୀ, ନାଲି ଗାମୁଛାଠୁ ଛୋଟ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ଜାମା ପେଣ୍ଟ, ଖେଳଣା ସଙ୍ଗେ ବେଙ୍ଗ ବାଜାର ଦୋକାନ । ବାଣ ଦୋକାନ...ତାଳ ଫେଟକା, ଝୁରୁଝୁରୀ, କୁମ୍ପା ବାଣର ଦୋକାନ । ଆଉ ବଡ଼ ଠେଲଗାଡ଼ି ଉପରେ କାଚ ବାକସ୍ ଭିତରେ ବମ୍ବେଇ ମିଠେଇର ଦୋକାନ । ଆଉ ସୁରଭି ଦେଖିଥିଲେ ସବୁଠୁ ବେଶୀ ଓ ସବୁଆଡେ 'ଆନନ୍ଦ' ର ଦୋକାନ, 'ଦୁଃଖ ଭୁଲିବାର' ଦୋକାନ ଆଗରେ ହସ ଫୁରୁଟିର କିଶାବିକାକୁ । ଦିନର କୋଳାହଳ ବଢୁଥାଏ । ବାପା ଉଠିଲେ । ସୁରୁ ଓ ରୁଚି ବାପାଙ୍କ ହାତ ଧରି ଘରକୁ ଫେରିଲେ । ଆସି ଦାନ୍ତ ଘଷି ଗେଲି ମା'ର ନଡ଼ିଆ ପୁର ଦିଆ ବରା ଖାଇଲେ । ଦେଖିଲେ ଜେଜେମାଙ୍କ ହସ, ବୋଉର ନସର ପସର ଖୁସି । ଆଉ ସୁରୁ ଅନୁଭବ କଲେ 'ବଡ଼' ହୋଇ ଯିବାର ଘାଟ ପାରିକୁ, ଚାପି ଚାପି - ଅ କୁହା ଭାବନାର ପେଡ଼ିରେ ଚାବି ତାଲା ଦେଇ ।



ଦୋଳ ଯାତରା ମାତ୍ର ଦୁଇ ଦିନ ରହିବ । ଦୋକାନ ବଜାର ସବୁ ପୁଣି ଦୋଳପତିଆରୁ ଉଠିଯିବେ । ଜେଜେମା ରଙ୍ଗ 1କୁ ପଇସା ଦେଉଥାନ୍ତି ନୁଆ କୁଲା, ଦୁଇଟି ବାଉଁଶିଆ (ବଉଳ ପାଛୁଡ଼ା, ମାଛ ଧୁଆ) ଲାଗି । ବୋଉକୁ ସୁରୁ ଦେଖିଲେ । ହଳଦିଆ ରଙ୍ଗ ଶାଢ଼ୀରେ ନାଲି blouseଟିଏ ପିନ୍ଧି ସେ ଅପୂର୍ବ ଦେଖା ଯାଉଥାଏ । ଗହଳି ଘରେ, ବାହାରେ । ରାତିରେ ବୋଉ ଯିବ ଜେଜେମାଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗେ, ମେଳଣ ପଡ଼ିଆକୁ । ରାନ୍ଧୁ ଖୁଡ଼ି ଓ ଦୁଇ ଭାଉଜ ମଧ୍ୟ ଯିବେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଏକାଠି । ସମସ୍ତେ ଟ୍ରଙ୍କ ଭିତରୁ ସଯତନେ ଚଉଟା ଶାଢ଼ୀ ମାନ ବାହାର କଲେ । ବାହା ବେଳର ଗହଣା ସବୁ ବାହାର କଲେ । ବେଶ ହୋଇ ବାହାରିଲେ । ସୁରୁଙ୍କୁ ଫଙ୍କୁ ଭାଇଙ୍କ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ବୀଣା ଭାଉଜ ଭାରି ସୁନ୍ଦର ଲାଗନ୍ତି । ନବ ଭାଇ ଓ ଫଙ୍କୁଭାଇ ବୋଧେ ସବୁବେଳେ ସେଇ ମେଳଣ ପଡ଼ିଆରେ । ଭାତ ଖାଇବାକୁ ଯାହା ରାତିରେ ଆସନ୍ତି । ସୁରୁ ଓ ରୁଟି ଶୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଥାନ୍ତି । ଜେଜେମାଙ୍କ ପାଟି ଶୁଭିଲା...ବାଲ ବାଲ ବାହାର, ତେରି ହୋଇଯିବ । ଜେଜେମାଙ୍କର ହୁକୁମାଟି ସବୁବେଳେ । ହେଲେ ସିଏ ଯେ ସବୁଠୁ ବଡ଼... ବାପାଙ୍କୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ଗାଳି ଦିଅନ୍ତି । ବାପା ଗାଧୋଇବାକୁ ଡେରି କଲେ, ଦାଣ୍ଡରେ ଗାଁ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ହାନ୍ତି ଲାଭ ବୁଝୁ ବୁଝୁ ଖାଇବାକୁ ଆସିବାକୁ ଡେରି କରିଲେ ଜେଜେମାଙ୍କ ପାଟି ସମସ୍ତେ ଶୁଣନ୍ତି ।

ସଞ୍ଜ ଦେଇ ସମସ୍ତେ ମାଇପି ଲୋକ ବାହାରିଲେ ମେଳଣ ପଡ଼ିଆ ଆଡ଼େ । ଜେଜେମାଙ୍କ ପଛ ଧରି ଏ ଧର ରାନ୍ଧୁ ଦାଦା ଝିଅ ଭଉଣୀ ସଙ୍ଗେ ସୁରୁ ଓ ରୁଟି ପୁଣି ବାହାରିଲେ । ଦୋଳ ଯାତରା ସରି ଯିବ, ମନଭରି ଆନନ୍ଦ କରି ନେବାକୁ ସୁରୁ ଆଉ ରୁଟିଙ୍କର ଇଚ୍ଛା । ରାତିରେ ପୁଣି ଦୋଳ ପଡ଼ିଆରେ ହା ହୁଲାଇ ଆଲୁଅ, ପେଟୋମାଙ୍କୁର ଆଲୁଅ ସବୁଆଡ଼େ । ରାତିଟା ଦିନ ଭଳି ଲାଗୁଥାଏ । ଦୁଇ ଜଣ ପାଇଟିଆଙ୍କୁ ବାପା ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ପଠେଇଥାନ୍ତି, ସୁରୁ ଆଉ ରୁଟିଙ୍କୁ ସବୁ ଜଗିବା ଲାଗି । ବହୁ ମାଇପି ଲୋକ ରାତିରେ । ଗୋଟେ ବଡ଼ କାହାଳୀ ଲାଗି କଳ ଗାଉଣା ବାଜୁଥାଏ ...ରଙ୍ଗଲତା...ରଙ୍ଗଲତା... କନକଲତା... ସୁରୁକୁ ଦୋହରେଇଲେ ସୁରଭି ଆଜି ଚାଲିଗି ବର୍ଷ ପରେ, ଯେମିତି ଶୁଭୁଥିଲା ସେ ମେଳଣ ଯାତରାରେ -ସେଇ ଅଭୁଲ ସଞ୍ଜକୁ ଦୋହରେଇ, ଦୋହରେଇ । ରଙ୍ଗି ବୋଉ ଓ କୁଳିଆ ବୋଉ କୁଲା, ବାଉଁଶିଆ ଧରିଲେ । ଯାତରା ଭିତରକୁ ଢୁକୁ ଢୁକୁ ଗହଳି ଭିତରେ ସୁରୁ ହଠାତ୍ ଦେଖିଲେ ଦୂରରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଡାକିଦିଆ ବା' ଦୋକାନ ପଛକୁ ରଙ୍ଗ ପଶିଗଲା । ବେଶ ହୋଇ ଆସିଛି, ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଖୋସାରେ ଅଁଲେଇ ଫୁଲ ଓ ମଝିରେ ବଉଳ କଣ୍ଠ, ନାକରେ ସୁନା ଟିକି ଫୁଲଟିଏ । ଆଖି ବୁଲେଇଲା ବେଳକୁ ଗହଳି ଭିତରେ ସେ କୁଆଡ଼େ ହଜିଗଲା । ସୁରୁ ପଚାରିଥିଲେ ରଙ୍ଗିବୋଉକୁ ରଙ୍ଗି କୁଆଡ଼େ ଗଲା । ସେ ତା ସାଙ୍ଗ 'କନକ' ପାଖକୁ ଗଲା ବୋଲି ରଙ୍ଗିବୋଉ ଜବାବ ଦେଇଥିଲା । ଯାତରାରେ ଘଣ୍ଟା ଖଣ୍ଡେ ବୁଲି ଗୋଟିଏ କାଚ କୁଣ୍ଡେଇ, ରିବନ ଆଉ କାଁପ କିଣିଥିଲେ ସୁରୁ, ରୁଟି ବେଙ୍ଗ ବାଜା, ନାଲି ପାଁଝିକ୍ ଚଷମା କିଣି ମନ ଖୁସିରେ ଗୋଟ ଘୋଷାରି ଘୋଷାରି ଚାଲୁଥାଏ । ଫେରିଲା ବେଳକୁ ହଠାତ୍ ଜେଜେମାଙ୍କ ଗୋତରେ କଣ୍ଠଟିଏ ପଶିଗଲା, ତାଙ୍କ ହାତୀଇ ଚପଲ୍ ପଟିକିଆ ହୋଇ ଭଇଷ କୋଳି ବୁଦା ପାଖେ କେମିତି ଓଲଟି ଯିବାରୁ । ସମସ୍ତେ ଅ ଟକିଲେ । ପାଖ ଦୋକାନଟି ପରିବା ଦୋକାନ । ତା ବେଞ୍ଚରେ ବସିଗଲେ ଜେଜେମା । ସୁରଭିଙ୍କ ଆଖି କେମିତି ଚାଲିଗଲା ଟିକିଏ ଦୂରରେ ଥିବା ପରିବା ଦୋକାନ ପଛକୁ । ଦେଖିଲେ ରଙ୍ଗିକୁ କୁଳିଆ ସାଙ୍ଗେ ଜକାଜକି ହୋଇ । ଦେଖିଲେ ତାଟି ଘେରା ଦୋକାନ ପଛରେ କୁଳିଆ ରଙ୍ଗିକୁ ଜାକି ଧରି ଚୁମା ଖାଇବାର । ସୁରୁ ଜାଣି ପାରୁଥିଲେ ସେଇ ବୟସରେ ବି, ରଙ୍ଗି କୁଳିଆଠୁ ମୁକ୍ତ ହେବାକୁ ଯେମିତି ଚାହୁଁ ନ ଥିଲା ଆଦୌ । ସୁରଭି ଦେଖିଥିଲେ ରଙ୍ଗି-କୁଳିଆଙ୍କୁ ସେଇ ରାତିରେ ଏକ ଜଣା ଅଜଣା ପୃଥିବୀ ଭିତରେ । ଜୀବନର ରହସ୍ୟକୁ ଅନୁଭବ କରିଥିଲେ ପ୍ରଥମ କରି ସେଇ ବର୍ଷ ଦୋଳ ଯାତରାରେ । ଆଉ ଜୋର ସୋରରେ ସେଇ ଗୋଟିଏ ରାତିରେ ସୁରୁ ବଡ଼ ହୋଇ ଗଲେ । ଏ ସତ ଏ ଜଣା ଅଜଣା ଅନୁଭବର ହେତୁକ ଲୁଚକାଳି ଖେଳକୁ ଏକପାଖିଆ କରି ଯନ୍ତରେ ବାନ୍ଧିରଖିଲେ ।



ବାପାଙ୍କ ହାତ ଲେଖା ପାଣ୍ଡୁଲିପିଟିକୁ ଥୋଇ ଦୋଳ ଯାତରାରୁ ବାହାରି ଆସିଥିଲେ ସୁରଭି ଚରଣର ହୋଇ । ସବୁଜ ଭିଆଇ-ପି-ସୁଟ୍‌କେସ୍‌ଟି ଭିତରେ ପୁଣି ସବୁ ସଜେଇ ରଖିଲେ । ବାପାଙ୍କ ପଠାକୁ କପାଳରେ ଛୁଇଁ ଓଠରେ ଚୁମା ଦେଲେ । ସେଇ ବିଗତ ସଞ୍ଜ ର ଜଣା-ଅଜଣା ଓ ସତ-ମିଛ ଭିତରେ ବାପା ବୋଉଙ୍କୁ ସେଇ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତରେ ହଠାତ ହର-ପାର୍ବତୀ ଭଳି ଲାଗିଲା ସୁରଭିଙ୍କୁ । ଅକ୍ଷୟ ଭଙ୍ଗ ହର-ପାର୍ବତୀ ନୁହନ୍ତି ସେମାନେ । ତାଙ୍କ ମନର ଆକାଶରେ ପୂଜା ପାଉଥିବା ସତ ସତିଆ ହର-ପାର୍ବତୀ । ସୁରଭିଙ୍କର ଏକାନ୍ତ ନିଜର, ଛୋଟିଆ ପୃଥିବୀଟିରେ ଦୋଳଯାତରାର ସେଇ ଅଭୁଲ ସ୍ମୃତି ସେଦିନ ଆଉରି ଗାଢ଼ ହୋଇଥିଲା- ଆଗରୁ ବେଶୀ ।

ତତ୍କର ସୁଲକ୍ଷଣା ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ **Daytona Beach, Florida**ରେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମା ତତ୍କର ଶୁକ୍ରଦେବ ସେନ୍ ଓ ଝିଅ ସୁଜାନ ସଙ୍ଗେ ରହନ୍ତି ।



ନଡ଼ିଆ ଗଛ

ବରୁଣ ପାଣି

ସେଇ ଦୁର୍ବଳିଆ ନଡ଼ିଆ ଗଛ ସବୁବେଳେ ମୋତେ ତାକେ । ଆଜିବି ମୁଁ ଝୁଞ୍ଚ ଭାବରେ ଦେଖି ପାରେ ମୋର କାନ୍ଦନିକ ଆଖି ଢରିଆରେ ସେଇ ନିଞ୍ଜଳ ଦୁର୍ବଳିଆ ନଡ଼ିଆ ଗଛଟି ଆମ ବାଡ଼ିରେ । ଆଉ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ମାସ ଖଞ୍ଜ ହିସାବରେ ବାପା, କାକା ବା ଦଦେଇ ଲୁଣ କିଣି ଗଛ ତଳେ ଦେବା । ଫଳ ତ ଦୂରର କଥା, କେବେ ଯେ ସେ ଗଛଟି ମରିଯିବ ତାର କିଛି ଠିକଣା ନାହିଁ ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ନଡ଼ିଆ ଗଛଟି ମରେନାହିଁ ସେଇଭଳି ତାର ଦୁର୍ବଳିଆ ଅସ୍ତିତ୍ୱକୁ ଜାହିର୍ କରି ଠିଆ ହୋଇ ବାରିଶହ ବର୍ଷର କାହାଣୀ କୁହେ, କହି ଆସିଛି ସବୁ ଯୁଗରେ ସବୁ ପୁରୁଷକୁ । ବିଚ୍ଛିନ୍ନାଞ୍ଚଳରେ ବାସିନ୍ଦା ଆଠ ପୁରୁଷ ଧରି ସେଇ ଗୋଟିଏ କାହାଣୀ । ଶିବ ରାତିଆଉ ରଜ ପର୍ବ ସବୁ ମଙ୍ଗଳା ମା ପୂଜା ଆଉ ମକର ପର୍ବରେ ବଦଳି ଗଲେ । ବୋଇତି କଣାରୁ ତିଲାରେ ବଦଳି ଗଲା, କିନ୍ତୁ ନଡ଼ିଆ ଗଛ ରହିଗଲା ।

ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଯାଯାବରର କାହାଣୀରେ ଏଇ ନଡ଼ିଆ ଗଛର ଅସ୍ତିତ୍ୱ ଅଛି । ବାରିଶହ ବର୍ଷ ତଳେ ସାକ୍ଷୀଗୋପାଳରୁ ଜଣେ ଗରୀବ ବ୍ରାହ୍ମଣ ଯେତେବେଳେ ସିଂହଭୂମ୍ ପାଇଁ ବାହାରିଲା, ସେତେବେଳେ ତାର ସାମାଜିକ, ଧାର୍ମିକ, ଆଉ ଆର୍ଥିକ ସମ୍ବଳର ଚିହ୍ନ ନଡ଼ିଆ କେତୋଟି ପିଠିରେ ଲଦି ଚଲା ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଥିଲା । ଆଜିବି ସେଇ ନଡ଼ିଆ ଗଛରେ ଲୁଣ ପକା ଚାଲିଛି, ହେଲେ ସରଞ୍ଚର ଜଙ୍ଗଲରେ ନଡ଼ିଆ ବା କାହୁଁ ଫଳିବ ?

ମୁଁ ବହୁତ ଦୂର ଚାଲି ଆସିଛି ସାତ ସାଗର ପାରି । ଅଠର ବର୍ଷ ପରେ ଏଇ ମିଶିସିପିରେ ଥରେ ଥରେ ଅନ୍ଧାର ରାତିରେ ଯେତେବେଳେ ଖଟରେ ପଡ଼ିରହି ଅତୀତର କଳନା କରେ, ଭୂତ ପରି ନଡ଼ିଆ ଗଛ ଉଭା ହୁଏ, ହାତ ଠାରି ତାକେ, ମୋର ନିଦ ଉଠେଇ ଯାଏ । ପିଲା ମାନଙ୍କୁ ମରିର ନେଇ ଯାଏ ପ୍ରତି ସଞ୍ଜରେ । ମହାଭାରତର କଥା, ଅବୋଲକରା କାହାଣୀ, ଆଉ ହିନ୍ଦି ସିନେମା ଡିଭିଡି ଆଣି ରେଞ୍ଜ କରି ଚାଲିଛି ନଡ଼ିଆ ଗଛରେ ଲୁଣ ଦେବାର ପରମ୍ପରାକୁ ଜୀବିତ ରଖିବାକୁ । କାପିଟେଲିସିମ୍ପର ରାଜଧାନୀରେ ନିଞ୍ଜଳ କର୍ମର ସଂବାଦ ପଢେଇ ଚାଲିଛି ମୋର ଅବୋଲକରା ମାନଙ୍କୁ ।

ନିଞ୍ଜଳ ଦୁର୍ବଳିଆ ନଡ଼ିଆ ଗଛଟିର ଅସ୍ତିତ୍ୱ ରହିଥିବ, ଯେତେଦିନ ଯାକେ ଯାଯାବର ମଣିଷ ଅର୍ଥର, ସମ୍ବଳର ସମ୍ଭାନରେ ବହି ଚାଲିଥିବ ସାକ୍ଷୀଗୋପାଳରୁ ସିଂହଭୂମ୍ ବା ଭାରତରୁ ଆମେରିକାକୁ ।

ବରୁଣ ପାଣି ଡାକ୍ତର, ମିସିସିପିରେ ସପରିବାର ରହନ୍ତି



ତନୟା

କଳ୍ପନାମୟୀ ଦାଶ

ଖପ୍ ଖପ୍ ଖପ୍ ଖପ୍ । କାହାରି ପ୍ରତି ଭୃଷେପ ନକରି ତଳକୁ ତଳକୁ ଛୁଟି ଚାଲିଛି ତନୟା । ତାର ପାଦ ପଡୁଥିବା ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଶିଳାଖଣ୍ଡ ଖସି ଯାଉଛି କିଛି ତଳକୁ । କେବେ କେବେ ସିଏ ନିଜେ ପଥର ସହ ଖସି ଯାଉଛି ତଳକୁ । ପୁଣି ଉଠି ପଡି ଦଉଡୁଛି । ଭାଇ ତାଙ୍କି ଚାଲିଛନ୍ତି “ରହ ତନୟା, ସାପ ଉପରେ ପାଦ ପଡିଯିବ” । ଭଉଣୀ ତାକୁଛି “ନାନୀ ଧୀରେ ଧୀରେ, ହାଲିଆ ହେଇଯିବୁ, ପଡିଯିବୁ” । “ନାନୀ”, “ତନୟା”, “ରହ”, “ରହ” ଶବ୍ଦରେ ଗିରି କନ୍ଦର କଂପୁ ଥାଏ । ତନୟାର କେଉଁଠି ପାଇଁ ଭୃଷେପ ନ ଥାଏ ।

ସଫଳତାପଥର ଅନତି ଦୂରରେ, ସଫଳତା ପରିବେଷିତ ଛୋଟ ଏହି ସଫଳତା ପର୍ବତ । ତା ଭିତରେ ଶୋଭା ପାଉଛି ସଫଳ ମାତୃକାଙ୍କର ସାତୋଟି ମନ୍ଦିର । ବିଷିତ ଭାବରେ ପଡିଥିବା ସାତୋଟି ସିନ୍ଦୂର ବୋଳା ପଥରଙ୍କୁ ଘେରାଇ ସାତୋଟି ସୁନ୍ଦର ଛୋଟିଆ ଛୋଟିଆ ମନ୍ଦିର ତୋଳାଇ ଦେଇଥିଲେ ସେ ସମୟର ରାଜା । ରାଜାଙ୍କର ଜାଗିରି ଖାଇ ଯେଉଁ ପୁତ୍ରକ ପୁତ୍ରା କରୁଥିଲେ, ତାଙ୍କରି ବଂଶଧର ମାନେ ଏବେ ବି ପୁତ୍ରା କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ରାଜ ଜାଗିରି ନେଇ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ଭୁଲ ବୁଝାମଣା କେବେ ହେଇନି । ବରଂ ନିଜର ସୌଭାଗ୍ୟ ବୋଲି ମନେ କରି ଯେ ଯାହାର ସୁବିଧା ମତେ ପୁତ୍ରା କାମ ଚଳାଇ ନିଅନ୍ତି ସେମାନେ । ଆଖ୍ୟାୟର କଥା ଯେ ମନ୍ଦିର ଗୁଡିକ ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ ପୁରୁଣା, କିନ୍ତୁ ରଙ୍ଗ ଅମ୍ଳାନ । ସତେ ଅବା ନବନିର୍ମିତ । ଅଞ୍ଚଳର ଲୋକେ ଖୁବ ମାନନ୍ତି ଏ ସଫଳ ମାତୃକାଙ୍କୁ । ଆଖପାଖରେ ଜନବସ୍ତି ବଢିଉଠିଲାଣି । ତେଣୁ ହିଂସ୍ରଜନ୍ତୁ ଙ୍କର ଭୟ ଆଉ ନାହିଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ସାପ ସରିସୃପଙ୍କର ଭୟ ଏ ଯାବତ୍ ରହିଛି । ଅବଜ୍ଞାପିତ ଏ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ତେଣୁ ଭ୍ରମଣକାରୀଙ୍କର ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ଆକର୍ଷଣ କରିପାରିନି । ଏଥିପାଇଁ ଜନ ସମାଗମ ମଧ୍ୟ ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ କମ ।

ଏହି କାରଣରୁ, ଏ ପରି ମନୋରମ ଜାଗାଟିଏ ଘର ପାଖରେ ଥାଇ ଥାଇ ମଧ୍ୟ, ତନୟା କେବେ ବି ଏ ମନ୍ଦିର ଗୁଡିକୁ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଆସିନଥିଲା । ସେତେବେଳେ ପିଲା ଛୋଟ ଥିଲେ, ତାଙ୍କୁ ଧରି ମା ବାପା ଚାଲିଯାଉଥିଲେ ପୁରୀ, କୋଣାର୍କ, ନନ୍ଦନକାନନ, ଧଉଳିଗିରି, ଖଣ୍ଡଗିରି ବା ବନ୍ଧୁବାସବଙ୍କ ଘରକୁ । ବହୁତ ଥର ବାପା ଏ ଜାଗାକୁ ଆଣିବା ପାଇଁ କହିଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସୁବିଧା ଓ ସମୟ ହୋଇ ନ ଥିଲା । ବାପା ଚାଲିଗଲେଣି । ପିଲାଏ ମଧ୍ୟ ବଡ ବଡ ହେଇଗଲେଣି, ଏବେ ଆଉ ତନୟା ସହିତ ଆସୁ ନାହାନ୍ତି । ବାପାଙ୍କ ଦ୍ଵାରା ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନଟିର ବାର୍ଷିକ ବଣ ଭୋଗି ସିଏ ଯିବାଦିନରୁ ହୋଇନଥିଲା । ତନୟାର ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ କ୍ରମେ ସମସ୍ତେ ସଭ୍ୟ ସଭ୍ୟା ସପରିବାର, ତନୟାର ଭାଇ ଭାଉଜ, ଭଉଣୀ ମାନେ ତାଙ୍କ ପିଲାପିଲିଙ୍କ ସହିତ ବାହାରିପଡିଲେ । ବିଷଧର ସାପଙ୍କ ଭୟରେ ଘର ଲୋକ ବାରଣ କରୁଥିଲେ । ହେଲେ ତନୟାକୁ ବାଧା ଦେବେ କିଏ? ବରଂ ଗୋକା ଟାକେଲିଆ ତା କଥାରେ ମାତି ଗଲେ । ପ୍ରଥମରୁ ତନୟା କହି ଆସୁଥିଲା ଯେ ସଫଳ ମାତୃକାଙ୍କ ମନ୍ଦିର ପୂଜା ପରେ ସିଏ ନିଷ୍କନ୍ଦ ଶିବ ମନ୍ଦିରକୁ ଯିବ । ସେ ଯାଗାଟିକୁ ହାଲିଆ ହୋଇ ଯିବା ଭୟରେ କେହି ଲୋକ ଆସନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ - ବା ବହୁତ କମ୍ ଲୋକ ଆସନ୍ତି ।

“ଏ ଜାଗାର ଅବସ୍ଥା ନାହିଁ ତନୟା, ଆସ୍ତେ ଆସ୍ତେ ଚାଲ”, ପଛରୁ ଆଇ ଜଣେ ତାକ ଦେଲେ । ପଛକୁ ଅଳ୍ପ ହସି ଚାହିଁଲା ତନୟା । ତାର ଦଉଡିବା ପୁଣି ଅବ୍ୟାହତ ରହିଲା । ସମସ୍ତେ ଠଉରେଇ ନେଲେଣି ଯେ ତନୟା ଶିବ ମନ୍ଦିର ଆଡକୁ ଧାଉଁଛି । ତେବେ ଏମିତି ଆଖି ମାଛା ହେଇ ଦଉଡିବା କଣ ଦରକାର?

ମାତୃ ମନ୍ଦିର ଗୁଡିକ ପର୍ବତର ଶିଖର ଦେଶରେ ବିଷିତ ଭାବରେ ଅବସ୍ଥିତ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଶିବଙ୍କର ମନ୍ଦିରଟି ପର୍ବତର ମଝିଆ ମଝି, ଚଳା ରାସ୍ତାରୁ ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ ଦୂରରେ ଅବସ୍ଥିତ । ବେଶି ବଡ ନ ହେଲେ ବି ମନ୍ଦିରଟି ଛୋଟ ନୁହେଁ । ସୁଦୃଶ୍ୟ, ସୁଉଜ ମନ୍ଦିରଟିଏ । ଘଣ୍ଟା ଘଣ୍ଟି ଏବଂ ଆକାଶର ଶବ୍ଦ ସେଇଠୁ ଆସୁଥିଲା । ତନୟାର ପଦଶେପ ସହ ତାକ ମିଳାଇ ସତେକି ଘଣ୍ଟି ବାଜିଚାଲିଥିଲା । ଗହଣରେ ଅନୁଧ୍ୟାବନ କରୁଥିବା ଅନ୍ୟ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରି ବୃଷଭ ପାଖରେ ମା “ଲଥ କରି ବସି ପଡିଲେ । ପାଣି ବୋତଲ ଟିଏ ମା”କୁ ବଢାଏଦେଲା ତନୟା । ଗୋଟିଏ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତ ସମୟ ନଷ୍ଟ ନ କରି ତନୟା ବୁଲି ପଡିଲା ପୁଜାରିଙ୍କ ଆଡକୁ । ତାଙ୍କ ହାତରୁ ଏକ ରକମ ଥାଳିଟି ଛତାଇ ନେଇ ନିଜେ ଆରତି କରିବା



ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲା । ସତେ ଅବା ମନ୍ଦିର କୁଆଡ଼େ ଚାଲିଯିବ-ଆଉଟି ଥାଳି କୁଆଡ଼େ ଉଭାନ୍ ହେଇ ଯିବ । ମା’ ମନେ ମନେ ବିରକ୍ତ ହେଉଥିଲେ । ତନୟର କାରବାର ସବୁଦିନେ ଏମିତି । ହେଲେ ଆଜି କଥା ନିଆରା । ବୟସ ହେଲାଣି, ପିଲାଳିଆମି ଛାଡ଼ିଗଲାଣି । କିଛି ଗୁଡ଼ ରହସ୍ୟ ଥିବା ପରି ମନେ ହଉଥିଲା ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ।

ପୂଜାରୀଙ୍କ ହାତକୁ ଥାଳିଟିକୁ ବଢ଼ାଇ ଦେଇ, ଶିବଲିଙ୍ଗ ଉପରେ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଲଗାଇ ପ୍ରଣାମ କଲା ତନୟ । ଅନ୍ୟ ମାନେ ସବୁ ମା’ ଙ୍କ ପଛକୁ ଧାଡ଼ି ଲଗେଇଲେଣି । ଆଳତି ପରେ ମଧ୍ୟାହ୍ନ ପହଞ୍ଚି ପଡ଼ିବ । ସେମିତି ଆଖୁ ଉପରେ ବସି ରହି ବହୁତ ସମୟ ପରେ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଉଠାଇଲା ତନୟ । କି ଅର୍ପୁଣ ଶୋଭା ! ସତେକି ସ୍ୱୟଂ ଇଶ୍ୱର ଗଉରୀ ଉଭା ହୋଇଚକ୍ତି ଶୂନ୍ୟରେ । ବରଭୟା ଦେବେ ତନୟକୁ । ସଦା ହସ ହସ ମୁହଁରେ କି ଭାବର ଗାମ୍ଭୀର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଇଏ? ଧାର ଧାର ଲୁହ ବୋହି ଯାଉଛି । ଯୋଡ଼ ହସ୍ତ ହୃଦୟ ଝର୍ଣ୍ଣ କରିଛି- କରିଥିବ କି ଅନନ୍ତ କାଳକୁ!! ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ନିବନ୍ଧ ହରପାର୍ବତୀଙ୍କର ଖୋଦିତ ମୂର୍ତ୍ତି ଉପରେ । ଲିଙ୍ଗ ପଛ ପାଖର ପଥର ପିଲରୁ ଚତୁରତାର ସହ ଖୋଦେଇ କାମ ହୋଇଛି । ବେଝା ବଡ଼ ଗୋଟିଏ ବୃକ୍ଷର ଉପରେ ବସିଚକ୍ତି ଇଶ୍ୱର ପାର୍ବତୀ, କି ଅପରୂପ ଶୋଭା-ଅନନ୍ୟ ଚିନ୍ତାଧାରା ସେ ରାଜାଙ୍କର ଯିଏ ଏ ମନ୍ଦିର ତୋଳାଇଥିଲେ । ଆଉ ନିପୁଣ ଶିଳ୍ପି ର କି ନିଖୁଣ ଏ ଶିଳ୍ପ କଲା । ସୁନ୍ଦର ଭାବରେ ଏଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ରଙ୍ଗ ଦିଆଯାଇଛି । ପନୁଗଭୂଷଣ ପ୍ରଭୁ ନୀଳକଣ୍ଠ ଙ୍କର ଗରଦ ଭରା ଗ୍ରୀବା ଦେଶରେ ଉଦ୍ୟତ ପକ୍ଷୀ ଅହିରାଜ ସତେ ଦଂଶିଦେବ କି!! ଆଉ କୋଳରେ ମା’ ମହାଯୋଗିନୀ ପାର୍ବତୀ ଙ୍କର ବରାଭୟ ମୁଦ୍ରା ! ତନୟ ପୁଣି ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଲଗାଇଲା-ପୁଣି ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଉଠାଇ ଠିଆହେଇଗଲା । ଆଦରରେ ସ୍ଥିତ ହସି ପାଦୁକ ଦେଲେ ପୂଜାରୀ । ପ୍ରସାଦ ପାଇ ଆଡ଼ ହେଲା ତନୟ । ଅନ୍ୟ ମାନେ ଆଳତୀ କରିବେ, ପ୍ରସାଦ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିବେ ।

ପାଦୁକ ସେବା କରି ସମସ୍ତେ ବସିଗଲେ କାନ୍ଧ ବାଡ଼କୁ ଆଉଜି । ପାଦ ଗୋଡ଼ ଆଖୁ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ଖଣ୍ଡିଆ । ବିଶାକ୍ତ ଲତା ଗୁଳୁରେ ଆସ୍ତୁଡ଼ି ହେଇ କେତେ ଜଣଙ୍କର ଚମତା ପୁଲି ଯାଇଛି । ତନୟ ର ପାଦ ତ ପୁରା କ୍ଷତ ବିକ୍ଷତ । ପୂଜାରି ମହାଶୟ କିଛି ବିଷଲ୍ୟ କରଣୀ ଦଳି ତା ପାଦରେ ଲଗେଇ ଦେଇ ପହଞ୍ଚି ପକାଇ ଦେବାକୁ ଚାଲିଗଲେ ମନ୍ଦିର ଭିତରକୁ । ସତ୍ତ୍ୱ ମାତୃକାଙ୍କର ମନ୍ଦିର ପାଖରେ ଛାଡ଼ି ଆସିଥିବା ଚପଲ ଓ ବ୍ୟାଗ କଥା ମନେ ପଡ଼ିଲା ଏବେ ତନୟର । ତାହା ସାନ ଭାଇ ଧରି ଧରି ଆସିଥିଲା । ତନୟ ପାଖରେ ବ୍ୟାଗ ଥୋଇ ଦେଇ ଲଥ କରି ବସିଗଲା ସାନ ଭାଇଟି । ବ୍ୟାଗରୁ ଟିପିଲ୍ ଅକ୍ଷିବାୟୋଟିକ୍ ଅଏକ୍ସ୍ମେକ୍ସ୍ ଓ ବ୍ୟାକ୍ସ୍ବଡ଼୍ ଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ବାହାର କରି ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ସେବାରେ ଲାଗିଗଲା ସିଏ । ଜୀବନକୁ ଭୂଷେପ ନ କରି ନୟାନ୍ତ ହେଇ ଦଉଡ଼ିବାର କାରଣ ଜାଣିବାକୁ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ଆଗ୍ରହ । କେହି ପଚାରୁନଥାନ୍ତି ତେବେବି । ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଉପରକୁ ଖରା ଉଠିଯିବ । ଗଛଗୁଳୁ, ଲତାପତ୍ର ପାଇଁ ତାପ ମାତ୍ରା ଜଣା ପଡ଼ୁନାହିଁ ସତ । ପେଟ ଉଜ୍ଜ୍ୱଳା ବଜିଗଲେ ଯାତ୍ରାକଣ୍ଠ ବେଶି ବାଧିବ । ଏଣିକି ଫେରିବା । କିଛି ଛତା ବେଲପତ୍ର ଓ ଚଂପା ଫୁଲ ପୁଟୁଳି କରି ତନୟ ହାତକୁ ବଢ଼େଇ ଦେଲେ ପୂଜାରୀ । ଦୁଇ ହାତ ବଢ଼ାଇ ପରମ ଆଗ୍ରହରେ ତାହା ଗ୍ରହଣ କଲା ତନୟ । ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ପଟୁଳି କୁ ଛୁଆଇଁ ପୂଜାରୀଙ୍କୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଣାମ କଲା । ଏ ସମୟରେ ତା ମୁହଁରେ ଯେ ପ୍ରାୟର ଝଲକ, ତାର ଭଦ୍ର ମାର୍ଜିତ ବ୍ୟବହାର କାହାରି ଆଖିରୁ ବାଦ ଯାଇନଥିଲା । ତଥାପି ସବୁରି ମନରେ କୌତୂହଳ-ବେଶ ଭୂଷା ଆତଂବର ଭିତରେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ସହିତ ସିଏ ସାମିଲ ହେଇ ଯାଉଛି । କିନ୍ତୁ ପୂଜା ପଣ୍ଡାଙ୍କର ତାକୁ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ବ୍ୟବହାର କାହିଁକି?

ପ୍ରସ୍ଥାନ କରିବାକୁ ଉଦ୍ୟତ ହେବା ବେଳେ ମା’ ପୂଜାରୀଙ୍କୁ ପଚାରିଲେ “କେତେ ଯାତ୍ରୀ ଆସନ୍ତି ଏଠାକୁ?” “ ଏତେ ବେଶି ନୁହେଁ ମା’ ପୂଜାରୀ ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଲେ । “ତେବେ ବି ଆସନ୍ତି” । ଆମ କୁରୁମ୍ ରୁ ଆମେ ୨୫ଜଣ ଲୋକ ପାଳି କରି ପୂଜାକୁ ଆସୁ । ଚାରିଆଡ଼ ସଫା ସୁତୁରା ରଖୁ । ଫୁଲ ଗଛ, ଗଦ ଆଦି ଔଷଧୀୟ ଗଛ ଗୁଡ଼ିକର ଯତ୍ନ ନେଉ । ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟା ଆଳତି ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ରହିଥାଉ । ଠାକୁରଙ୍କ ନୀତି ନିୟମ ରେ ହେଲା ହୁଏନାହିଁ । ଦିନଟି ବିଷୟ ଠାରୁ ଦୂରରେ କଟି ଜାଏ । ବିଶ୍ରାମ ନେଲା ପରି ଲାଗେ । ଭଗବତ ଚିନ୍ତା ମଧ୍ୟ ହୁଏ ନିରୋଳାରେ । ରାଜ ଜାଗିରି ତ ଖାଇ ଆସୁରୁ । ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ରୋଜଗାର ପଛା ନିଜ ନିଜର ଅଛି । ଯାତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ନିର୍ଭର କରୁନୁ ଆମେ” । ଏକ ରାହାରେ ଏତକ କଥା କହି ଦେଇ ପୂଜାରୀ ଚାହିଁଲେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ । ପୁଣି ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲେ “ଏଇ ମନ୍ଦିର ଠାରୁ ଛୋଟ ରାସ୍ତା ଟିଏ କରି ଦେଇ, ଚଲା ରାସ୍ତା ସହିତ ମିଶାଇ ଦେଲେ, ଆପଣ ମାନଙ୍କ ପରି କେତେ ଯାତ୍ରୀ ଦର୍ଶନ କରିବାକୁ ଆସି ପାରନ୍ତେ । ଭଲ ମନ୍ଦ ଦିନରେ



ଭୋଗରାଗ, ଗହଳି ଛଳି ହୁଅନ୍ତା । ଲୋକ ଯିବା ଆସିବା ନ ହେଲ, ପୁଜା ପୂଜକ ଏବଂ ଦିଅଁଙ୍କର ସ୍ଥିତି କେଉଁଠି ରହିବ? “ପୁଜାରୀଙ୍କ ର ଭଦ୍ର, ଗମ୍ଭୀର ସ୍ଵର । ସମସ୍ତେ ଲେଉଟି ଆସିଲେ । ଏ ସ୍ଵର ଚି ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଅତି ଆପଣାର ମନେ ହେଲା । ଏକ ଅବିସ୍ମୃତ ସ୍ଵର ଇଏ, ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ମନକୁ ଭେଦି ଗଲା ଅବା ? ଫେରି ଯାଉଥିବା ସମସ୍ତ ସଦସ୍ୟ, ପାହୁଣ୍ଡ ପାହୁଣ୍ଡ କରି ମନ୍ଦିର ପାଖକୁ ପୁଣି ଲାଗିଆସିଲେ । ତନ୍ମୟ ହୋଇ ତନୟ ଚାହିଁ ରହିବି ଗର୍ଭଗୃହ ଆଡ଼େ । ତାର ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ନିବନ୍ଧ ବନ୍ଧ କବାଟ ଉପରେ, ତାର ମାନସ ପଟରେ ଉକୁଟି ଉଠୁଥିଲେ ତା ଗାଁର କେହି ଅନାମଧେୟ ଶୀଘ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ-କଳାପ୍ରିୟ ଶିବ ଭକ୍ତ ସେ ରାଜାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ । ପୁଜାରୀଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ପଦ କଥା ପ୍ରତି ମଧ୍ୟ ସେ ଉତ୍କର୍ଷ । ପୁଜାରୀ କହି ଚାଲିଲେ “ରାଜା ଓ ରାଜ ପରିବାର ଜଙ୍ଗଲ କୁ ପାରିଧି କରି ଆସୁଥିଲେ । ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ଦର୍ଶନ, ଭୋଗ ରାଗ କରି, ବଣ ଭୋଜି-ମହୋତ୍ସବ ସାରି ପୁଣି ଫେରି ଯାଉଥିଲେ । ସର୍ବ ସାଧାରଣ ଲୋକ ଏଠିକୁ ନିଜର ଜୀବନ ବିପନ୍ନ କରି ଆସିପାରୁନଥିଲେ-ଏବେବି ଆସିପାରୁ ନାହାନ୍ତ” । କେତେ ନିରାଟ ସତ କଥାଟିଏ । ତନୟର ତନୁ ମନରେ ଏକ ଶୀଘ୍ରୀର ଖେଳି ଗଲା ।

“ଏ ରାସ୍ତା କିଏ କରନ୍ତା କହିଲ ପଶ୍ଚାତ୍ତପ୍ତ?” ମା ପଚାରିଲେ । “କିଏ ଆଉ କରବ ମା”, ଏଇ ଆପଣଙ୍କ ପରି ଯାତ୍ରୀ । ସର୍ବ ସାଧାରଣଙ୍କର ଯାତାୟତ ସୁବିଧା କରି ଦର୍ଶନ ବନ୍ଦୋବସ୍ତ କରାଇବା ଚିନ୍ତା କରିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ରାଜପଦ ଉଚ୍ଛେଦ ହେଇଗଲା । ବଜାର ମଝିରେ ସାଇ ସାଇରେ ଲୋକ ମନ୍ଦିର ତୋଳିଲେ । ଏଠାକୁ ଆଉ ଆସୁଛି କିଏ?” କେତେ ନିରାଟ ସତ କଥାଟିଏ କହିଲେ ପଶ୍ଚାତ୍ତପ୍ତ । ଯାହା ଭୋଳିବାବାର ଇଚ୍ଛା ।

ପର୍ଶୁରୁ ସମତୁ ରକ୍ଷିତ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀପାଟିଏ କାଢି ପୁଜାରୀଙ୍କ ହାତକୁ ବଢାଇ ଦେଲା ତନୟ । “ଆପଣ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରନ୍ତୁ, ନିଷ୍ଠା ଭୋଳାନାଥ ଶେଷ କରାଇବେ” । ହସ୍ତ ପ୍ରସାରି ସାଦରେ ଅନୁଦାନଟି ଗ୍ରହଣ କେଲେ ପୂଜକ । ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିବାରେ ଯେଉଁ ଶାଳୀନତା, ଦାନ ଦେବା ବି ସେଇ ସଂଭ୍ରମତା । ମୁଣ୍ଡ ନୁଆଇଁ ପ୍ରଣାମ କରି ଫେରିଲା ତନୟ । ତା ପଛକୁ ତା ପଛ ପୁଣି ଧାଡି ଲଂବିଲା ତନୟ ପଛରେ । ସବୁରି ମନରେ କୌତୁହଳ “କେତେ ଦେଲା ?” । “କେତେ ଦେଲୁ ତନୟ” । “ତାହାଣ ହାତ ଦବା ବାଁ ହାତ ବି ଜାଣିବା କଥା ନୁହେଁ” ସହଯାତ୍ରୀଜଣଙ୍କୁ ଏହି ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଲାବେଳେ ତାର ଥମ୍ ଥମ୍ ଭାବ କାହାରି ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ଏତାଇ ନଥିଲା । ଭାବ ଗଦ ଗଦ ମୁହଁ, ଶୋକ ଛଳ ଛଳ ଆଖି, ଗୋଟିଏ ଉଦାସ ଚିତ୍ତରେ ତଳକୁ ତଳକୁ ମାଡିଯାଉଥିଲା ଆନମନା ତନୟ । ରୋଷେୟାଟି ରୋଷେଇ ସାରି ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରିବି । ତନୟ ମୁହଁ ହାତ ଧୋଇ ଖାଲି ପକାଇଲା । ସବୁତକ ଲୁଣ, ଲଙ୍କା ଓ କଟା ଲେବୁକୁ ଦନା ଦନା କରି ଚାରି ଛଅ ଜାଗାରେ ଥୋଇ ଦେଲା । ମାଆଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ, ଆଇଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ବାଢିଦେଇ ସମସ୍ତେ ବସିଗଲେ । ଭୋକରେ ପେଟ ଜଳିଲାଣି । ଖରା ମାଡି ଆସୁଛି । ଅନ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କର ଚିତ୍କା ଚି’ଣୀ, ହସ ଖୁସିରେ ଭାଗ ନେଇ ତନୟ ଖାଉଥାଏ । ତଥାପି ମନେ ହେଉଥାଏ ଯେମିତି ତାର ଉଦାସ ଭାବଟି କଟାଇବା ପାଇଁ ଅନ୍ୟମାନେ ଲାଗି ପଡିବନ୍ତି ।

“ବଢିଆ ଜାଗାଟା” କହି ଚାରିଆଡେ ଆଖି ବୁଲାଇଲା ତନୟ । “ବଢିଆ ଖାଇବାଟା” କହି ପୁଜାରୀକୁ ଚିକିଏ ଚାହିଁ ହସି ଦେଲା ମଧ୍ୟ । ସାନ ଭାଇ କହିଲେ, “ଗାଡି ଏବଂ ହସ୍ତ ଗୁକୁଣା ଫେରାଇବାକୁ ସମୟ ଲାଗିବ । ତେଣୁ ଆମେ ତୁମକୁ ଘରେ ଛାଡିଦେବୁ । ଗାଡି ଫେରାଇ କିଛି ହାଲକା ଜଳଖିଆ ରାତି ପାଇଁ ବରାଦ କରି ଦେଇ ଆସିବୁ, ତୁମେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଆମ ଘରେ ଯଥା ବିଧି ବିଶ୍ରାମ ନେଇ ଚା’ପାନ ବନ୍ଦୋବସ୍ତ କରୁଥାଅ । ଗପ ସପ କରିବା । ସଂଗୀତ ଆସରଟା ରାତିକି ହେବ । ନାଁ କଣ କହୁତୁ ନାନୀ ?”

ସଂଗୀତ ଆସର କଥା ଶୁଣି ସମସ୍ତେ ଖୁସି ହେଇଗଲେଣି । ତନୟ ତ କୁରୁଳି ଗଲା ଏକ ପ୍ରକାର । କିଏ କେମିତି ନିଜ ନିଜ ଗାଡି ମଟର, ସାଇକଲ ଇତ୍ୟାଦିଧରି ସେଠାରୁ ବିଦାୟ ନେଲେ । ବାକି ସମସ୍ତେ ଚାଲିଲେ ମା ଓ ତନୟଙ୍କ ସହିତ । ଭାଇ, ଭଉଣୀ, ବଡ ଭାଇଜ, ସାନବୋହୁ, ସମସ୍ତେ ବସିଗଲେ ଗପ କରିବାକୁ । ତନୟ ନିଜେ ଉଠିଗଲା ଚା’ କରିବାକୁ । ସାଇଟର କଲେଜ ପଢୁଆ ଝିଆରୀମାନେ । ମା ହାଲିଆ ହୋଇ ଗଡି ପଡିଲେ । ମାଙ୍କର ପିଉସି ବସି ବଡି ପାନ ଭାଙ୍ଗିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କର ପିଠି ଦବାଉଥାଏ ନାତିଟୋକାଟେ ।

ଚା’ କରି ଚାରି ପାଞ୍ଚ ଥର ରେ ବନ୍ଧ ବନ୍ଧି କରିବାରେ କିଛି ସମୟ ଗତି ସଞ୍ଜ ହେଇଗଲା । ବାହାରୁ ରାତ୍ରୀର ଖାଇବା ଧରି, ସାନଭାଇ ଓ ଅନ୍ୟ ଚାରିଜଣ ଫେରିଲେ । ସଂଗୀତ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇଗଲାଣି । “ଜୀବନ ପାତ୍ର ମୋ ଭରିଛ କେତେ ମୋତେ” ମୁର୍ଦ୍ଧନାରେ ସମସ୍ତେ ତନ୍ମୟ ଏବଂ ମୁଁ । ତନୟର ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଗୁହିଏ ସ୍ଵର ସହ କଂପି ଉଠୁଥିଲା । ବାପାଙ୍କର ଛାତ୍ରଟିଏ ସଂଗୀତାଳୟର ପ୍ରଧାନ ଶିକ୍ଷକ ସିଏ—ସେଇ



ବୋଲୁଛନ୍ତି । ଏଇ ଗୀତଟି ବି ବାପା ତାଙ୍କୁ ଶିଖେଇଚନ୍ତି । ବାପା ନିଜେ ଖୋଦ କବିଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କ ଠାରୁ ଶିଖିଥିଲେ । “ଜୀବନ ପାତ୍ର ମୋର କେତେ ଭରିଦେଇଥିଲା, ଏବେ ଛଡ଼ାଇ ନେଇ କାହିଁକି?” ଦୁଇ ଆଖି ସନ୍ଧିରେ ମୁହଁ ଲୁଚାଇ ଅଦେଖା ହାତ ଉପରେ ଅଭିମାନ କରି ଲୁହ କିଛି ଢାଳି ଦେଲା ତନୟ । ସଂଗୀତ ବିଭୋର ସମସ୍ତ ଶୋଭା ମଣ୍ଡଳର ଆଖିରୁ ଏହା ବାଦ ଯାଇନଥିଲା । ଦୁଇ ବର୍ଷ ତଳେ ବିଦାୟ ନେଇ ଥିବା ତାର ଜନ୍ମଦାତାଙ୍କୁ ଯେ ଏଇ ପିଲାଟି ଏ ଯାବତ୍ ଭୁଲି ପାରିନାହିଁ, ତାହା ସମସ୍ତେ ଜାଣନ୍ତି । ଭାଇ, ଭଉଣୀ, ଭାଉଜ ଓ ପରିବାରର ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ସଦସ୍ୟ ଏବଂ ଅତିଥି ଅଭାଗତଙ୍କର ମନ ଉଣା ହେଇଗଲା । କେବଳ ତନୟ ନୁହେଁ ଏ ସଂସାର ର ସବୁରି ଅତି ପ୍ରିୟ ଥିଲେ ସିଏ । ମଣିଷ ର ଜୀବନ ଟା ଏମିତି ପାଣିଫେଟକା କିନ୍ତୁ ତାଙ୍କର ଜୀବନ ତ ଏକ ଶିଳାଲେଖ, ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ସ୍ମୃତିପଟ ରେ ସେ ଚୀର ଅମ୍ଳାନ ।

ଭୋଜି ଯେତେ ସାଧା ସିଧା ହେଇଥିଲେ ବି କାହାକୁ ଭୋକ ନାହିଁ । ବାହାରୁ ଆସିଥିବା ଜଳଖିଆ ହଟକେସ୍ ରେ ପଶି ଥୁଆ ହେଇଛି । ଗାଁ ପାନ ସରବତ ଚାଲିଛି । ବଡ଼ ଭାଉଜ ମା’ ପାଖରେ ଗତି ପତି ପୁଣି ଉଠି ଆସିଲେଣି । ମା’ କଣ ଶୋଇବେ କଣ ଉଠିବେ, ତାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ତ ସବୁ ଏକାକାର କରି ଦେଇ ବାପା ଚାଲିଯାଇଛନ୍ତି । ଏଇ ଗହଳି ଚହଳି ରହିଲେ ସମସ୍ତେ କିଛିଟା ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ରୁହନ୍ତି । ମା ଖୁସି ରହନ୍ତି । ମୋଟ ଉପରେ ବାପାଙ୍କର ଅନୁପସ୍ଥିତିର ଅଭାବକୁ ମିଳିମିଶି ସବୁରି ସହ ବାଞ୍ଛି ପକାଇଲା ପରି ଲାଗେ । ବାଦ୍ୟଯନ୍ତ୍ର ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ବନ୍ଦ କରି ସମସ୍ତେ ଆଲାପ ଆଲୋଚନାରେ ମାତି ଗଲେ । ହଠାତ ଜଣେ ବୟୋଜ୍ୟେଷ୍ଠ ପଚାରିଦେଲେ “ତନୟ, ଏତେ ଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ଟଙ୍କା ଯେ ତୁ ବଢେଇଦେଲୁ ସେ ପୁଜାରୀଙ୍କୁ ହାତକୁ, ସିଏ କଣ ସତରେ ରାଷ୍ଟ୍ରା କରେଇବେ? ପାଟିକୁ ପକେଇ ଦେବେ ଲୋ” । ବହୁତ ନରମ ସ୍ଵରରେ ସିଏ ଅବଶ୍ୟ ଏହା କହି ଥିଲେ ।

“ମା-ଉ-ସୀ!” ତନୟ ର ଚିତ୍କାର ରେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଚମକି ଉଠିଲେ । ଉତ୍କର୍ଷ ହୋଇ ରହିଗଲେ ସବୁ । “ତୁମେ କଣ କେହି ଶୁଣି ପାରିଲାନି ସେ ସ୍ଵର? ଯେଉଁ ସ୍ଵରରେ “ଭିକ୍ଷା” ମାଗିବାର ନୁହେଁ, ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଏକତା ବନ୍ଧ କରି ରଖିବାର ବାହାଦୁରୀ ରହି ଥିଲା । ଏତେ ଜଳଦି ଭୁଲି ଗଲ ମାଉସୀ? ତୁମେ ସମସ୍ତେ ବା! ତୁମ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ଏକତା ବନ୍ଧ କରି, ସାହିତ୍ୟ, ସଂସ୍କୃତି, ସଂଗୀତ ତଥା ଶିଳ୍ପ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ଚିଏ ଗଢ଼ିଦେଇ ଗଲେ ସିଏ । ଏ ଅଞ୍ଚଳର ନାଁ ରହିବା ପାଇଁ, ସଂସାରରେ ତୁମ ମାନଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତିଭା, ତୁମ ମାନଙ୍କର ପାରିଲା-ପଣକୁ ଟେକି ଧରିବା ପାଇଁ ଯିଏ ଜୀବନର ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତ, ଶକ୍ତିର ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ବିନ୍ଦୁ, ସଞ୍ଚୟର ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଅଂଶ ଅଜାତି ଦେଇ ଗଲେ, ତୁମେ ଭୁଲି ଭାଲି ଗଲଣି ତାଙ୍କୁ? ସେଇ ଅତି ପ୍ରିୟ ସ୍ଵର କୁ ମନେ ରଖିନାହିଁ? ଅଥଚ ଆମ ଘରେ ଆମେ ସମସ୍ତେ ତାଙ୍କର ସ୍ତ୍ରୀପକ ବୋଲି, ତାଙ୍କର ସଖା-ସହୋଧର-ସନ୍ତାନ ତୁଲ୍ୟ ଭାବି ଆସିବୁ” । ତନୟର ଆଖିରୁ ଲୁହ ଗତି ଚାଲିଯାଏ । ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ମନେରେ ପୂର୍ବ ସ୍ମୃତି-ସେଇ ହୃଦୟ ବିଗତ ଆତ୍ମାଙ୍କର ବିଦାୟ ଜନିତ ଦୁଃଖ ରେ ଭାରାକ୍ରାନ୍ତ, ଆଖିରେ ଢଳ ଢଳ ଲୁହ ।

“ପୁଜାରୀ ତାଙ୍କ ଜାଗାରେ ଠିଆହେଇଥିଲେ । ରାଷ୍ଟ୍ରା କଥାଟି କହିଲେ । ହାତ ପତାଇ ରାଷ୍ଟ୍ରା ପାଇଁ କାହାକୁ ପଇସା ମାଗି ନ ଥିଲେ । ମୋର ମନେ ହେଲା ଯେମିତି ମୋର “ବାପା” ନିଜେ ଏଇ କଥାଟି କହୁଚନ୍ତି । ବାପାଙ୍କ ଅନ୍ତେ ଯୁଆତେ ଯାଏ, ମତେ ତାଙ୍କର ନ ଥିବା ଭାବଟି ଏତେ ଗୋଡ଼ାଇ ଖାଏ ଯେ, ମୁଁ କୁଆଡେ ଯିବା କଥା ଉଠାଏ ନାହିଁ । ଆଜି ସତ୍ତ ମାତୃକାଙ୍କର ଦର୍ଶନ ସାରି ମୁଁ ଯେତେବେଳେ ଉଠିଲି, ମୋର କାହିଁକି ସେମିତି ମନେ ହେଲାନି । ରେଙ୍ଗାଳୀ, କପିଳାସ, ଭାଗିରଥିପୁର, ପର୍ଜଙ୍ଗ ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ ଆମେ ଭୋଜି କରିବାକୁ ଯାଇବେ । ପୁରୀ ସମୁଦ୍ର କୂଳରେ ବୁଲିବେ । କେତେ କେତେ ଜାଗାକୁ ନାନା କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମରେ ଆମେ ସାଙ୍ଗ ହୋଇ ଯାଇବେ । ସେତେବେଳେ ଯେମିତି ଲାଗେ, ଏଇଠି ଠିକ ସେମିତି ଲାଗିଲା । ଅନେକ ଦିନ ପରେ ମନେ ହେଲା, ମଧ୍ୟା ଉପରୁ ଘୁଞ୍ଚି ଯାଇଥିବା ଛତ୍ରଟି ପୁଣି ଫେରି ଆସିଛି । ହାତ ଧରି ବାଟ ଚଳା ଶିଖାଇଥିବାର ସେ ହାତଟି ଯେମିତି ଆଜୁଁ ଦେଖାଇ ବାଟ ଦେଖାଇ ଦଉଡ଼ି-ସେଇ ଶିବଙ୍କର ମନ୍ଦିର ଆଡେ । ପୁଜାରୀଙ୍କର ସ୍ଵରଟି ମତେ କାହିଁକି ଅବିକଳ ମୋ ବାପାଙ୍କ ସ୍ଵର ପରି ମନେ ହେଲା । କେଉଁ ଚ୍ୟାରିଟିକୁ ଦେବା ପାଇଁ ତମର ଢାଳି ମତେ କହିଥିଲେ । ସେଇ ବାବଦରେ ପଇସାଟି ଲକ୍ଷପାରେ ପୁରାଇ ପର୍ଶ୍ଵରେ ରଖିଥିଲି । ଦେଇ ଦେଲି । ତା “ଛତା, ଦବାକୁ ଏବଂ ଦିଆଇବାକୁ ତ ଭଗବାନ, ନୁହଁ କି ମାଉସୀ !”

ତନୟ କଥାରେ ଯୁକ୍ତି କରିବାର ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ଆଉ କେଉଁଠି ଉଠୁଛି? ଏ ଆଦିବାସୀ ଅଧ୍ୟୁଷିତ ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ ତ ବାପା ତାର ଥିଲେ ଏକ ମୁକୁଟବିହୀନ ସମ୍ରାଟ । ଜନତା ଠାରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରି ଜନନାୟକ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ, ଶାଶକ ଠାରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରି ଶାଶିତ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ, ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର



ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଥିଲା ତାଙ୍କର ଗଭୀର ସଂପର୍କ । ନିସ୍ୱାର୍ଥ ପର ସେବା କରି ସିଏ ସବୁରି ମନର ନାୟକ ହୋଇ ପାରି ଥିଲେ । ଏବେ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ହୁଏତ ତାଙ୍କର ଆତ୍ମା ଏଇ ଅଞ୍ଚଳର ସର୍ବାଙ୍ଗନ ଉନ୍ନତି ପାଇଁ ଚିନ୍ତା କରୁଥିବ । ପୂଜାରୀଙ୍କର ସାଧୁ ଉଦ୍ୟମଟିକୁ ବାପାଙ୍କର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକଲାପ ସହ ତୁଳନା କରି ଭାବପ୍ରବଣ ହୋଇ ପଢିବା ତନୟା ପକ୍ଷରେ ବିଚିତ୍ର କଣ?

ସେଇ ନୀରବ କୋଠରୀରେ ଥିବା ବିରାଟ ଡେକୋରଟିଭ ଅଡେଟିଭ ରହିଲେ ସମସ୍ତେ । ପ୍ରଣାମ କଲେ । ଆଶୀର୍ବାଦ ମାଗିଲେ । ଲୁହ ପୋଛିଲେ । ମା' ଉଠି ବସି ଆକାଶର ତାରା ଆଡେ ଚାହିଁଲେ ।

ମିନିଆପଲିସ୍‌ରେ ବାସ କରୁଥିବା ଏହି ଲେଖିକା କୁହନ୍ତି ଯେ, “ଜୀବନରେ ପାଇଥିବା ଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ ଉପହାରଟି ମୁଁ ଦୁଇ ବର୍ଷ ତଳେ ହରାଇ ଦେଇଛି ସବୁଦିନ ପାଇଁ, ଆଉ ମୋର କିଛି ଆକାଂକ୍ଷା ନାହିଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ, ଯଦି ମୋକ୍ଷ ବଳରେ ଭଗବାନ କେବେ ଦେଖା ଦିଅନ୍ତି, ତେବେ ତାଙ୍କ ପାଖରୁ ବରଟିଏ ମାଗିନେବି ଯେ ମତେ ପ୍ରତିଜନ୍ମ ରେ ସେଇ ବାପାଙ୍କର ସ୍ମୃତି କରି ଜନ୍ମ ଦିଅନ୍ତୁ ।”



ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ଦିରରେ ଦେବଦାସୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଓ ମହାକବି ଜୟଦେବଙ୍କ ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦ

ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ସୁଶ୍ରୀ ମିଶ୍ର (କର)

ସମଗ୍ର ଭୂଖଣ୍ଡର ପାଳନ କରତା, ଶ୍ରୀ ଶ୍ରୀ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ମହପ୍ରଭୁ ଯିଏ ସର୍ବକାଳର କାରିଗର, ଯାହାଙ୍କୁ ଆମେ ଉତ୍କଳୀୟ କଳା, ସଂସ୍କୃତି, ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଓ ସଂଗୀତର ପୁରୋଧା ରୂପେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିଆସିଛୁ, ସେ ଯେ ବିବାଦୀମାନ କାଳରୁ ରହିଛନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ରହିଥିବେ ମଧ୍ୟ । ତାଙ୍କରି ମନ୍ଦିର ଗାତ୍ରରେ ସ୍ତୁତି ହୋଇ ରହିଯାଇଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତ କଳା, ରାଗ ରାଗିଣୀ, ତାଳ, ମାନ ଓ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଯାହାର କି ଆରମ୍ଭ କଳନା କରିବା ଆମ ପକ୍ଷରେ ସମ୍ଭବ ନୁହେଁ, ତଥା ନୃତ୍ୟ, ଗାନ ବାଦନରତ ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ଦିରର ରୂପସୀ ପାଷାଣ ପ୍ରତିମାର ମୁକ ମୁଖର ଛନ୍ଦ ମୂର୍ଦ୍ଧନା ଆଦି ଯେ କୌଣସି ଦର୍ଶକର ଦୃଶ୍ୟରେ ଅପୂର୍ବ ସ୍ୱର ଝଙ୍କାର ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରୁଛି । ସେହି ହେଉଛି ଆମ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥୀୟ ଉତ୍କଳୀୟ ସଂଗୀତ ଧାରା ଯାହାକି ଏବେ ଜୀବନ୍ତ ଭାବେ ନିଜ ସମଗ୍ର ଭୂଖଣ୍ଡର ପାଳନ କରତା, ଶ୍ରୀ ଶ୍ରୀ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ମହପ୍ରଭୁ ଯିଏ ସର୍ବକାଳର କାରିଗର, ଯାହାଙ୍କୁ ଆମେ ଉତ୍କଳୀୟତାଙ୍କରି ମନ୍ଦିର ଗାତ୍ରରେ ସ୍ତୁତି ହୋଇ ରହିଯାଇଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତ କଳା, ରାଗ ରାଗିଣୀ, ତାଳ, ମାନ ଓ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଯାହାରକି ଆରମ୍ଭ କଳନା କରିବା ଆମ ପକ୍ଷରେ ସମ୍ଭବ ନୁହେଁ, ତଥା ନୃତ୍ୟ, ଗାନ ବାଦନରତ ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ଦିରର ରୂପସୀ ପାଷାଣ ପ୍ରତିମାର ମୁକ ମୁଖର ଛନ୍ଦ ମୂର୍ଦ୍ଧନା ଆଦି ଯେ କୌଣସି ଦର୍ଶକର ଦୃଶ୍ୟରେ ଅପୂର୍ବ ସ୍ୱର ଝଙ୍କାର ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରୁଛି । ସେହି ହେଉଛି ଆମ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥୀୟ ଉତ୍କଳୀୟ ସଂଗୀତ ଧାରା ଯାହାକି ଏବେ ଜୀବନ୍ତ ଭାବେ ନିଜ କାହାଣୀ କହିବାକୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସଂସ୍କୃତି କହିବାକୁ ତତ୍ପର ।

ଖ୍ରୀ: ୧୧୧୩ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ଆରମ୍ଭରୁ କଳିଙ୍ଗର ଦେବାଦେବୀଙ୍କ ମନ୍ଦିର ମାନଙ୍କର ନୃତ୍ୟ ସଂଗୀତ ପ୍ରଚଳନ ନିମନ୍ତେ ଦେବଦାସୀ ବା ସାନି ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାୟଙ୍କୁ ନିଯୁକ୍ତ କରାଯାଇଥିଲା । ସେତେବେଳେ ଗଙ୍ଗବଂଶୀୟ ରାଜାମାନେ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ନଗର (ମୁଖଲିଂଗ) ଠାରୁ ରାଜତ୍ୱ କରୁଥିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କ ରାଜ୍ୟ ଦକ୍ଷିଣରେ ଗୋଦାବରୀ ଠାରୁ ପୂର୍ବକୁ ରକ୍ଷିକୁଲ୍ୟା ନଦୀ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବିସ୍ତୃତ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସଂଗେ ଦାକ୍ଷିଣାତ୍ୟର ରାଜବଂଶର ବୈବାହିକ ସମ୍ପର୍କ ସ୍ଥାପିତ ହୋଇଥିବାରୁ ସଂସ୍କୃତିକ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ମଧ୍ୟ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ସଂଗେ ଦାକ୍ଷିଣାତ୍ୟର ସମ୍ପର୍କ ଘନିଷ୍ଠ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ସେତେବେଳେ ଅର୍ଥାତ୍ ୧୧୧୨ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟାବ୍ଦ ଉତ୍କଳର ରାଜନୀତି, ଧର୍ମନୀତି ସଂସ୍କୃତିକ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ଏକ ନବଯୁଗ ଦେଖାଦେଲା । ଶ୍ରୀକ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ (ପୁରୀ) ପୂର୍ବେ ଯେଉଁ ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ପୁରୁଷୋତ୍ତମ, ଶ୍ରୀ ବଳଭଦ୍ର ଓ ଦେବୀ ସୁଭଦ୍ରାଙ୍କ ବିଗ୍ରହମାନ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା କରି, କଳିଙ୍ଗର ପ୍ରବର୍ତ୍ତିତ ନୃତ୍ୟ ସଂଗୀତ ପାଇଁ ଦେବଦାସୀ ବା ସାନି ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାୟଙ୍କୁ ସେଥିରେ ମହାରାଜା ଚୋଳଗଙ୍ଗଦେବ ନିଯୁକ୍ତ କରିଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ଖ୍ରୀ ୧୦୭୨ରେ ଭଗବତୀ ଦୁର୍ଗାଦେବୀଙ୍କ ମନ୍ଦିର (ମୁଖଲିଙ୍ଗ)ରୁ ଅଳ୍ପ ଦୂରରେ ଅବସ୍ଥିତ ଦୀର୍ଘସୀ ଗ୍ରାମରେ) ସମ୍ମୁଖରେ ଏବଂ ନାଟ୍ୟଶାଳା ଗଠିତ କରିଥିଲେ । ସେ ମନ୍ଦିରର ଏକ ଶିଳା ଲେଖାରୁ ନିମ୍ନ ଶୈଳିରେ ଉଦ୍ଧୃତ ।

“ଦୁର୍ଗା ଦେବୀକନ୍ୟା ସ୍ୟା ଭରଣମିବ ପୁରଃ ସ୍ଥାପୟାମ ଗୂର୍ଦ୍ଧୀ”

ଶ୍ରୀମାନ ଶ୍ରୀନାଥ ବୀର୍ଯ୍ୟଃ ସ୍ଥଗିତ ଦଶଦିଶା ନାଟ୍ୟଶାଳା ଛନ୍ଦେନ ।”

ବହୁବର୍ଷ ପରେ ସେହି ମନ୍ଦିରରୁ ଦେବାଦେବୀଙ୍କ ମୂର୍ତ୍ତିମାନଙ୍କୁ ବତଦେଉଳ ନିର୍ମାଣ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ହେବା ପରେ ମହାରାଜା ଅନଙ୍ଗଭୀମଦେବ ଖ୍ରୀ ୧୨୭୦ ଯାଳରେ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା କରିବାରୁ ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ମନ୍ଦିର ସମ୍ମୁଖରେ ଥିବା ସେହି ଅସ୍ଥାୟୀ “ନାଟ୍ୟଶାଳା” ବା “ନାଟ୍ୟମଣ୍ଡପ” ଭାଙ୍ଗି ସେଠାରେ ବହୁକାଳ ପରେ “ମୁକ୍ତିମଣ୍ଡପ” ନିର୍ମିତ ହେଲା ।

ଖ୍ରୀ ୧୧୧୩ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ପୂର୍ବରୁ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ନଗର ନିକଟରେ ଥିବା ଶ୍ରୀକୂର୍ମ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ଦେବଦାସୀମାନଙ୍କର ଏକ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ବାସସ୍ଥଳୀ ଥିଲା । ସେହି ସ୍ଥାନର ନାମ ଥିଲା “କୂର୍ମପାଟ ଏବଂ “ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣକୋଟୀ” । ଶ୍ରୀ କୂର୍ମ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ଶ୍ରୀ ବୈଷ୍ଣବ ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାୟର ଗୁରୁମାନେ ରହି ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଦର୍ଶନ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରରେ ଶିକ୍ଷାମାନଙ୍କୁ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦେଉଥିଲେ । କେବଳ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ର ଓ ଦର୍ଶନ ନୁହେଁ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଓ ସଂଗୀତ କଳା ମଧ୍ୟ ସେଠାରେ ଦେବଦାସୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦିଆଯାଉଥିଲା । ତେଣୁ ସଂଗୀତ ଶିକ୍ଷା କରିବାକୁ ବହୁ ସଂଖ୍ୟାରେ ସାନି ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାୟ ସେଠାରେ ବାସ ସ୍ଥାପନ କରିଥିଲେ । ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଦେବମନ୍ଦିର ମାନଙ୍କରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ନିଯୁକ୍ତ କରାଯାଉଥିବା ପ୍ରସଙ୍ଗ ଶିଳାଲେଖା ମାନଙ୍କରୁ ପ୍ରକଟିତ ହୁଏ । ଏଥିରୁ ସ୍ପଷ୍ଟ ଜଣାଯାଉଛି ଯେ, ଭାନଦେବ(୨ୟ)ଙ୍କ ରାଜତ୍ୱ କାଳରେ “ସାନି ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାୟ” ମନ୍ଦିର ପ୍ରାଙ୍ଗଣରେ ଭାଇ, ଭଉଣୀ ପ୍ରଭୃତି ପରିବାର ସମସ୍ତେ ମିଶି ଗୋଟିଏ “ନାଟ୍ୟ ଦଳ” ବା “ନାଟ୍ୟ ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାୟ” ଗଢି ମନ୍ଦିର ମାନଙ୍କରେ ନିଯୁକ୍ତ ଲାଭ କରିଥିଲେ, ଏବଂ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଭରଣ ପୋଷଣ ପାଇଁ ରାଜାଙ୍କ ତରଫରୁ ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା ହେଉଥିଲା ।



ଅନ୍ୟ ଏକ ଶିଳା ଲେଖାରୁ ଜଣାଯାଇଛି ଯେ, ଗଙ୍ଗବଂଶୀୟ ମହାରାଜା ନରସିଂହଦେବ (୨ୟ) ୧୨୯୯ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟାବ୍ଦରେ ଅର୍ଥାତ୍ ତାଙ୍କ ୨୫ ଅଙ୍କରେ ସିଂହାଚଳ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ପରମହଂସ ବରଦାତା ମୁନୀ ଶ୍ରୀପାଦ ସିଂହାଚଳ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ “ମଂଗଳଗାନ” କରିବାକୁ ଏକ “ସାନି-ସଂପ୍ରଦାୟ” ନିଯୁକ୍ତ କରିଥିଲେ ।

ଚୋଡ଼ଗଙ୍ଗଦେବ ସେହି ରୀତିରେ କେତେକ “ସାନି-ସଂପ୍ରଦାୟ” ପରିବାରକୁ କୂର୍ମପାଟକରୁ ଅଣାଇ ପୁରୀରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ସ୍ଥାୟୀ ବସ ସ୍ଥାପନ କରି ଦେଇଥିଲେ, ଏବଂ ତାଙ୍କ ନାମରେ ସେହି ସାହି ନାମ “ରୁଡ଼ଙ୍ଗ ସାହି” ବୋଲି ନମିତ କରିଥିଲେ । ଏହି ଯୁଗକୁ ରାମାନୁଜ ଯୁଗ ବୋଲି କୁହାଯାଏ । ଏହି ରାମାନୁଜ ବୈଷ୍ଣବ ଦ୍ଵାରା ଶ୍ରୀକୂର୍ମ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ସ୍ଥାପନା ସହିତ, ଦ୍ଵିତୀୟ ନରସିଂହ ଦେବଙ୍କ ସମୟରେ ଆନନ୍ଦତୀର୍ଥ ଯିଏ କି ନରହରିତୀର୍ଥଙ୍କର ଶିଷ୍ୟ ଦେବଦାସୀ ପ୍ରଧାର ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲେ, ଯାହାକୁ କି ଆମ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ “ମାହାରୀ” ଆଖ୍ୟା ଲାଭ କଲେ ।

ଆଉ ଦକ୍ଷିଣର କୂର୍ମ ପାଟକରୁ ଅଣାଇ ଯେଉଁ ସାନି-ସଂପ୍ରଦାୟକୁ ପୁରୀରେ ସ୍ଥାପନ କରାଯାଇଥିଲେ, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ମାତୃଭାଷା ତେଲେଙ୍ଗ ହୋଇଥିବାରୁ ଦେବ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ଭକ୍ତି ସଂଗୀତ ଗାନ ସେହି ଭାଷାରେ ରଚିତ ହୋଇ ଗାନ କରାଯାଉଥିଲା, ଯାହାକି ଓଡ଼ିଆବାସୀଙ୍କୁ ଆକୃଷ୍ଟ କରିପାରିନଥିଲା । ତେଣୁ ଚୋଳଗଙ୍ଗଦେବ ସେ ନର୍ତ୍ତକୀମାନଙ୍କ ଶିକ୍ଷା ପାଇଁ ସଂସ୍କୃତ ଭାଷାରେ ଗୀତରଚନା କରିବା ସକାଶେ ତତ୍କାଳିନ ମହାକବିମାନଙ୍କୁ ଅନୁରୋଧ କରିଥିଲେ । ଚୋଳଗଙ୍ଗ ପରି ଭଦ୍ରତ ହୋଇଥିଲେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ସଂସ୍କୃତରେ ଭକ୍ତି ସଂଗୀତ ରଚନା କରିବାର ହେଲେ ଗାନ୍ଧର୍ବ ବିଦ୍ୟାରେ ପରଦର୍ଶିତା ଲାଭ କରିବା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ । ତେଣୁ ସେହି ଯୁଗରେ “ଜୟଦେବ” ହିଁ ଏକମାତ୍ର ମହାକବି ଯେ କି “ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦ” ପରି ଏକ ଭକ୍ତି ପ୍ରଧାନ କାବ୍ୟ ରଚନା କରି ଚୋଳଗଙ୍ଗଙ୍କ ପରି ଜଣେ ବିଦ୍ଵାନ ମହାରାଜାଙ୍କୁ ସନ୍ତୁଷ୍ଟ କରିପାରିଥିଲେ । କବି ଜୟଦେବ ସଂସ୍କୃତ ଭାଷାରେ ସୁବୋଧ ଲଳିତ ପଦଗୁଡ଼ିକ ସଂଯୋଗ କରିବା ସହିତ ନୃତ୍ୟଗୁରୁରୂପେ ଦେବଦାସୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଓ ସଂଗୀତ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦେଉଥିଲେ ।

ଉପରୋକ୍ତ ଆଲୋଚନାର ସତ୍ୟସତ୍ୟତା ସହ ଦେବଦାସୀଙ୍କ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ଅନ୍ୟ ଏକ ଲୋକକଥା ମଧ୍ୟ ଶୁଣିବାକୁ ମିଳେ । ଦିଆଯାଇଛି । ଏହାଙ୍କ ପରେ ଜୀବନାଥ ନାମକ ସଂଗୀତଜ୍ଞ “ତିକ୍ତିମ” ଉପାଧି ପାଇ ସମଗ୍ର ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ଭାରତରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସଂଗୀତ ଗାଇ ଜୟ କଥାଟି ହେଲା -

“ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ଭିତରନ୍ଧ୍ର ମହାପାତ୍ର ଶ୍ଵେତଗଙ୍ଗରେ ସ୍ନାନ କରନ୍ତି । ଏକଦା ସ୍ନାନ କରିବା ସମୟରେ ଭାଷିଯାଇ ଗଙ୍ଗ କୁଳରେ ଲାଗିଲେ । ସେଠାରେ ଜଣେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋକ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଉଦ୍ଧାର କରି ନିଜ ଘରେ ରଖି ତାଙ୍କ ସେବା ଯତ୍ନ କଲେ । ତାର ସେବା ଯତ୍ନରେ ସେ ସେଠାରେ ବହୁତ ଦିନ ରହିଗଲା । ଦିନେ ରାତିରେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ସ୍ଵପ୍ନରେ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଦେଖାଦେବାରୁ ତାପର ଦିନ ପୁରୀ ଚାଲି ଆସିଲେ । ଆସିବା ସମୟରେ ସନ୍ତକ ରୂପେ ପୁରୀ ଗଜପତି ଦେଇଥିବା ମୁଦିଟି ତାଙ୍କୁ ଦେଇ ଆସିଲେ ଓ ପୁରୀଗଲେ ଦେଖା ହେବ ବୋଲି କହିଦେଇ ଆସିଲେ । କିଛିଦିନ ପରେ ସେହି ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଲୋକଟି ପୁରୀ ଆସି ତାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଦେଖା ହେଲା । ମାତ୍ର ମହାପାତ୍ର ତାଙ୍କୁ ଚିହ୍ନି ନ ପାରି ଫେରାଇଦେଲେ । ତେଣୁ ସେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଲୋକଟି ପୁରୀ ମହାରାଜାଙ୍କ ପାଖକୁ ଯାଇ ଗୁହାରୀ କଲା ଓ ମହାପାତ୍ର ଦେଇଥିବା ମୁଦିଟି ଗଜପତିଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖାଇଲା । ମୁଦିଟି ଦେଖି ରାଜା ବିଶ୍ଵାସ କଲେ ଓ ତାଙ୍କୁ ମାହାରୀ ରୂପେ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ ସେବା କରିବା ପାଇଁ ନିଯୁକ୍ତି ଦେଲେ, ପରେ ସେହି ମାହାରୀ ଠାରୁ ଏକ ସଂପ୍ରଦାୟ ଓ ମାହାରୀ ସେବା ପରମ୍ପରା ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହେଲା ।”

(ଉକ୍ତ କଥାଟି କେତେଦୂର ସତ୍ୟ ତାର ପ୍ରମାଣ ମିଳି ନାହିଁ । ତେଣୁ ଏହା ଏକ ଲୋକ କଥା ଭାବରେ ରହିଛି ।)

ବାସ୍ତବରେ କହିବାକୁ ଗଲେ “ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦ” ର ଶ୍ରୁତି ମଧୁର ଶବ୍ଦ ସଂଗୀତ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଯେପରି ପାଠକକୁ ମୁଁ କରୁଛି, ତଦପେକ୍ଷା ଅଧିକ ପ୍ରଫୁଲ୍ଲତା ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିଥିବ ଦର୍ଶକ ଭକ୍ତମାନଙ୍କୁ, ଯେତେବେଳେ ସୁବେଶିତ ଦେବଦାସୀଙ୍କ ଅଭିନୟ ମିଶ୍ରିତ ଲଳିତ କଣ୍ଠ ସଂଗୀତର ଲାସ୍ୟ ଲୀଳା ଶ୍ରୀପୁରୁଷୋତ୍ତମଙ୍କ ମନ୍ଦିର ସମ୍ମୁଖରେ । ଏ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ବିଚାର କଲେ ଜଣାଯାଉଛି ଯେ, ଚୋଡ଼ଗଙ୍ଗଙ୍କ ସଭାରେ ପଣ୍ଡିତମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ “ଜୟଦେବ” ମହାକବି ରୂପେ ପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧଲାଭ କରିଥିଲେ ଏବଂ “ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦ” ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ଦିରରେ ନିତ୍ୟନୃତ୍ୟ ସଙ୍ଗୀତ ନୀତିରେ ପରିଣତ ହେଉଥିଲା ।

ମହାରାଜା ଚୋଡ଼ଗଙ୍ଗଙ୍କ ଅନୁରାଗ ହେତୁ ସର୍ବଭାରତୀୟ ସ୍ତରରେ ଜୟଦେବଙ୍କୁ ମହାକବି ରୂପେ ସମ୍ମାନିତ କରାଗଲା । କେହିକେହି



ଐତିହାସିକଙ୍କ ମତରେ ଜୟଦେବ ଏବଂ ଗୋବର୍ଦ୍ଧନାଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ବଙ୍କର ରାଜା ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମଣ ସେନଙ୍କର ମଧ୍ୟ ସଭା ପଣ୍ଡିତ ଥିଲେ ।

ତୋତଗଙ୍ଗଙ୍କ ଆଶ୍ରୟରେ ଜୟଦେବଙ୍କ “ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦ” ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ଦିରରେ ତେଲେଙ୍ଗ ସାନି- ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାୟଙ୍କ ଦ୍ଵାରା ପରିବେଷିତ ହେଉଥିଲା । ଏକମାତ୍ର ପୁରୀର ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ଦିରରେ ହିଁ ତାହା ଖ୍ରୀ ୧୧୪୨ ରୁ ଧାରାବାହିକ ଭାବେ ଅଭିନୀତ ହେଉଥିଲା । ବହୁ ଅଞ୍ଚଳରୁ ଭକ୍ତ ଓ ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନେ ଶ୍ରୀପୁରୁଷୋତ୍ତମ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରକୁ ଆସି “ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦ” ନୃତ୍ୟ ସମ୍ପାଦ ଦେଖି ମୁଁ ହେଉଥିଲେ । ଅଳ୍ପକାଳ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ତାହା ସର୍ବଭାରତୀୟରେ ପ୍ରଚାରିତ ହେଲା । ୧୨୯୧ ଖ୍ରୀ-ରେ ମହାରାଜା ସାର୍ଞସଦେବଙ୍କର ଏକ ଶିଳା ଲେଖାରେ “ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦ” ର ନିମ୍ନୋକ୍ତ ବନ୍ଦନା ଶୋକିତ ଉଦ୍ଧାର କରାଯାଇଛି -

“ବେଦାନୁଷ୍ଠରନ୍ତେ ଜଗନ୍ନିବହତେ ଭୁଗୋଳମୁଦ୍‌ବିଭ୍ରତେ
ଦୈତ୍ୟାନ୍ ଦାରୟତେ ବଳିଂ ଛଳୟତେ କ୍ଷତ୍ରିଷୟଂ କୁର୍ବତେ ।
ପୌଲସ୍ୟଂ ଜୟତେ ହଳଂ କଳୟତେ କାରୁଣ୍ୟ ମାତନ୍ତତେ
ମୌଛ୍ଵାନ ମୂର୍ଚ୍ଛୟତେ ଦଶାକୃତି କୃତେ କୃଷ୍ଣୟ ତୁଭ୍ୟଂ ନମଃ ॥

କବି ଜୟଦେବ ତାଙ୍କ ପ୍ରଥମ ଶୋକରେ ପୁରୁଷୋତ୍ତମଙ୍କ ଦଶଟି ଅବତାରଙ୍କୁ ଯେଉଁ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟାୟରେ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନା କରିଛନ୍ତି, ଠିକ୍ ସେହି ପର୍ଯ୍ୟାୟକ୍ରମେ ନୃସିଂହ ମନ୍ଦିରର ଚତୁର୍ଦ୍ଦିଗ ଭିତ୍ତି ଗାତ୍ରରେ ଅବତାର ପ୍ରତୀକାମାନଙ୍କୁ ଖୋଦିତ କରାଯାଇଛି ।

ସେ ଦଶ ଅବତାରର ଉତ୍ସ ରୂପରେ ଲୀଳା ପୁରୁଷୋତ୍ତମ ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଙ୍କୁ ହିଁ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ତେଣୁ ଦଶଅବତାର ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଙ୍କୁ ସ୍ଥାନ ନ ଦେଇ ତାଙ୍କର ଅବତାରୀତ୍ଵକୁ ହିଁ ସ୍ଵୀକୃତି ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି । କିମ୍ପଦନ୍ତି କହେ ଯେ, ଆମ୍ଭଗାଁନିରେ ଦିଗ୍‌ଧୂତ ହୋଇ କବିଙ୍କୁ ନିଜର ଲେଖନୀ ଓ ପୋଥିକୁ ସମୁଦରେ ବିସର୍ଜନ କରି ନିଜ ପ୍ରାଣ ହରାଇବାକୁ ଉଦ୍ୟତ ହେଉଥିବା ସମୟରେ, ପୋଥି ସହିତ ସ୍ଵୟଂ ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣ ଆବିର୍ଭୂତ ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି ଓ ପଦ୍ମାବତୀଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଜୟଦେବ ଦଶ ଅବତାର ନୃତ୍ୟ ଓ ସଙ୍ଗୀତ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ନିଜର ଭକ୍ତି ନିବେଦନ କରିଛନ୍ତି ।

ଜୟଦେବ ଜୀବନୀ କେତେକ ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ପଣ୍ଡିତମାନେ ଭିନ୍ନ ଭିନ୍ନ ମତରେ ଲେଖିଥିବା ଦେଖାଯାଏ । ୧୨ଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀରେ ସଂସ୍କୃତରେ ଲିଖିତ “ଭକ୍ତମାଳା” ଗ୍ରନ୍ଥକୁ ହିନ୍ଦି ଭାଷାରେ ନାଭାଜୀ ଲେଖିଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ସେଥିରେ ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ କରିଛନ୍ତି - “ଜୟଦେବ ଜଣେ ବିବାହିତ ବୈଷ୍ଣବ ସାଧୁ ” । ପରିଶତ ବୟସରେ ସେ ଗୃହ ସଂସାର ତ୍ୟାଗ କରି କୁର୍ବପାଟକରେ “ସାଧୁ ପ୍ରଧାନ” ଉପାଧି ଲାଭ କରିଥିଲେ । ସେ ତାଙ୍କ ତରୁଣ ବୟସରେ ଗାନ୍ଧର୍ବ ବିଦ୍ୟାରେ ପାରଦର୍ଶିତା ଲାଭ କରି କେତେକେ କୃଷ୍ଣଲୀଳା ଭିତ୍ତିକ ଗୀତ ସଂସ୍କୃତ ଭାଷାରେ ରଚନା କରିଥିଲେ, ଯାହାକି ପରେ ଏକ ନାଟକୀୟ ପଦ୍ଧତିରେ “ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦ” କାବ୍ୟ ରୂପେ ଧାରଣ କରିଥିଲା ଏବଂ ଶ୍ରୀକ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ସର୍ବପ୍ରଥମେ ଅଭିନୀତ ହେଲା । ଯଥା -

ବିହରତି ହରିରିହ ସରସ ବସନ୍ତେ - ପ୍ରକୃତି ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନାରେ ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦ ଉନ୍ନତ କାବ୍ୟର ପର୍ଯ୍ୟାୟକୁ ଉନ୍ନୀତ ହୋଇପାରିଛି । ରାଧାକୃଷ୍ଣଙ୍କ ମିଳନ କାଳରେ ସରସ ବସନ୍ତ କାଳ ସମାଗତ ହୋଇଛି । କନ୍ଦର୍ପର ଶର କାମାଜନଙ୍କୁ ପ୍ରୀତା ଦେଉଛି । ନୃତ୍ୟ, ସଂଗୀତ, ମୃଗମଦ, ତମାଳ ଓ ନକୂଳର ସୌରଭ ଅନୁଭାବ ଭାବରେ କାମନାକୁ ଉଦ୍‌ବିଗୀତ କରୁଛି । ରାଧାଙ୍କର ବଦନ ଅବଲୋକନ କରି ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣ ଅଙ୍ଗ ପ୍ରୀତୀରେ ଘାରି ହେଉଛନ୍ତି -

“ବଦନକମଳ ପରିଶିଳନ ମିଳିତ ମିହିର ସମ କୁଷ୍ଠଳ ଶୋଭାମ୍ ।
ସ୍ଥିତରୁଚି ରୁଚିରମୁଲ୍‌ସିତା ଧରାପଲ୍‌ବ କୃତିରିତି ଲୋଭାମ୍ ॥”

ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦର ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ପଂକ୍ତିରେ ପ୍ରକୃତି ଓ ମନୁଷ୍ୟର ଆତ୍ମିକ ଯୋଗସୂତ୍ର ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶିତ ହୋଇଛି । ପ୍ରକୃତି ଏଠାରେ ଅନୁଭବ ମାତ୍ର ନୁହେଁ ସେ ରାଧାମାଧବଙ୍କର ମିଳନ ଓ ବିରହରେ ସମଭାଗୀ ।

ସୁରଗରଳଖଣ୍ଡନଂ ମମ ଶିରସି ମଣ୍ଡନମ୍ - ଭକ୍ତ ଶିରୋମଣି ଜୟଦେବ ଯୁଗ ପ୍ରେମ ମାଧୁରୀରେ ନିମଜ୍ଜିତ ହୋଇ ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦ ରଚନା କରୁଥିବା ସମୟରେ ନୀତି ଓ ସଂସ୍କାର ଦ୍ଵାରା କବଳିତ ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି, ନିମିଷେ ଅଟକି ଯାଇଛ ଲେଖନୀ । କିଭଳି ନିଜର



କଳା, ସଂସ୍କୃତି, ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଓ ସଂଗୀତର ପୁରୋଧା ରୂପେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିଆସିଛି, ସେ ଯେ ବିବାଦୀମାନ କାଳରୁ ରହିଛନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ରହିଥିବେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆରାଧ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଭୁ ତ୍ରିଭୁବନର ଅଧିଶ୍ୱର ଜଗତକର୍ତ୍ତାଙ୍କୁ ଏଇ କାମାତୁର ପ୍ରେମିକ ଭାବେ ଚିତ୍ରଣ କରିବେ, ପୁଣି ତୁଣ୍ଡରେ ଖଞ୍ଜିଦେବେ ସଂଳାପ “ଦେହିପଦଲୀବମୁଦାର” କିଂ କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟବିମୁକ୍ତ ଭକ୍ତଙ୍କର ମନସ୍କାମନା ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ କଲେ ଭକ୍ତବତ୍ସଳ “ପ୍ରଭୁ” ନିଜେ ଜୟଦେବ ରୂପ ଧାରଣ କରି ଲେଖିଗଲେ ସେହି ନିର୍ବାଚିତ ପଦଟି ତାଳପତ୍ରରେ ଲେଖନୀ ଧରି । ଭକ୍ତପ୍ରିୟ ପଦ୍ମାବତୀଙ୍କୁ ଦେଇଗଲେ ଦର୍ଶନର ସୌଭାଗ୍ୟ । ସେ ମହାନୁଭାବ ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦର ପ୍ରାରମ୍ଭରେ ରାଗତାଳର ସୁବନା ଦେଇ କହିଛନ୍ତି -

“ମାଳବରାଗେଶ ରୂପକତାଳାଭ୍ୟାଂ ଗୀୟତେ ।
 ଦେଶ ବା ରାଗରାଗେଶ ଅଷ୍ଟକତାଳାଭ୍ୟାଂ ଗୀୟତେ ।”

ଏହିପରି ଅନେକ ଗୀତ ରାଗତାଳ ସହିତ ରହିଅଛି । ଏଥିଦ୍ୱାରା ବହୁବର୍ଷର ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ପରିଚୟ ମିଳୁଛି ।

ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ଦିରରେ ଧାରାବାହିକ ରୂପେ “ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦ” ର ଗୀତଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଦେବଦାସୀମାନେ ତଥା ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଦଳମାନେ ଗାନ କରୁଥିଲେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଖ୍ରୀ: ୧୫ଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀରେ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟବଂଶୀୟ ମହାରାଜା ପୁରୁଷୋତ୍ତମ ଦେବ ଅନ୍ୟ ଏକ “ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦ” ବା “ଅଭିନବ ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦ” ସଂସ୍କୃତରେ ଲେଖିଥିଲେ । ମହାରାଜାଙ୍କ ରଚନାର କେତେକ ସଙ୍ଗତ ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ଦିରରେ ବୈଷ୍ଣବ ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାୟମାନେ ଗାନ କରିବାକୁ ପୁରୁଷୋତ୍ତମ ଦେବଙ୍କ ପୁତ୍ର ପ୍ରତାପରୁଦ୍ର ଦେବ ସେଥିରେ ବିରୋଧ କରି ଏକ ଅଭିଲେଖ ଜୟବିଜୟ ଦ୍ୱାର ନିକଟରେ ଖୋଦିତ କରାଇଥିଲେ । ସେଥିରେ ରାଜାଙ୍କ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶ ଥିଲା ଯେ , ଶ୍ରୀ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ଜୟଦେବଙ୍କ ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦ ବିନା ଅନ୍ୟ କୌଣସି ଗୀତ ଗାନ କରାଯିବନାହିଁ । ତେଣୁ ଯେଉଁ ବୈଷ୍ଣବ ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାୟମାନେ ସେହି ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦର ଗାନ ଜାଣି ନଥିବେ , ସେମାନେ ତେଲେଙ୍ଗ ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାୟଙ୍କ ଠାରୁ ଶିକ୍ଷା କରିବାକୁ ହେବ ।

କାଳକ୍ରମେ ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ଦିରର ନୀତିରେ ବହୁ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ହେଲା । ଶ୍ରୀ ପୁରୁଷୋତ୍ତମଙ୍କ ନାମରେ ମହାରାଜା ଅନଙ୍ଗଭୀମଦେବ ତାଙ୍କ ରାଜତ୍ୱ ସମର୍ପଣ କରି ନିଜେ ତାଙ୍କର ଦାସ (ରାଉତ) ହୋଇ ରାଜ୍ୟ ଶାସନ ଚଳାଇଥିଲେ । ତେଣେ ଶ୍ରୀ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ରାଜାଧିରାଜ ରୂପେ ରତ୍ନ ସିଂହାସନରେ ବସିଥିବା ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଦୈନିକ ନୀତି ନିୟୋଗମାନ ଜଣେ ରାଜାଙ୍କ ଦୈନନ୍ଦିନ ରୀତି ସଙ୍ଗେ ସମାନ କରି ଦିଆଗଲା । ସେତିକିବେଳେ ଶ୍ରୀ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ପହୁଡ଼ ବେଳେ ଜଣେ ଦେବଦାସୀ କେବଳ ଅଭିନୟ କରି ନରୁ ଅକ୍ଷର ମୁଦ୍ରାମାନ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନ କରିବା ନୀତି ପ୍ରବର୍ତ୍ତିତ ହୋଇ ଯାଇଛି । ଦେବଦାସୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଥମେ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ସକାଳ ଧୂପ ବା ରାଜଭୋଗ ସମୟରେ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଙ୍କ ନାଟମଣ୍ଡପରେ କରାଯାଉଥିଲା ।

ଶ୍ରୀଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ସେବାୟତ ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀ ୧୧୮ ଶ୍ରେଣୀରେ ବିଭକ୍ତ । ତନ୍ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ସେବିକା ୨୮ଟି ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାୟରେ ବିଭକ୍ତ । ପ୍ରଥମଟି ଭିତର ଗାଆଣି ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟଟି ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦା ନିୟୋଗ । ଏମାନେ ମୁଖ୍ୟତ ଜାନିଯାତ୍ରା ପର୍ବପର୍ବାଣିରେ ନୃତ୍ୟ ସଙ୍ଗତ ପରିବେଷଣ କରୁଥିଲେ ।

ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଭିତର ଗାଆଣି ଓ ନାରୁଣି ସେବା ପ୍ରାୟ ବନ୍ଦ ହୋଇଗଲାଣି, କାରଣ ସେମାନେ ସେବା କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଯାହା ଖେଇ ଓ କିଛି ଜମି ଭୋଗ କରୁଥିଲେ, ତାହା ଭେଦ ହୋଇଯିବା ଦ୍ୱାରା ତାଙ୍କର ସାମ୍ପାଦିକ ଚଳଣିରେ ଅସୁବିଧା ହେଲା ଓ ସେମାନେ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଜୀବିକା ପଛା ଧରିବାକୁ ବାଧ୍ୟ ହେଲେ ଓ ଶେଷରେ ସେବା ଛାଡ଼ିଦେଲେ । ଏମାନେ ସେବା ବ୍ୟତିତ ଚନ୍ଦନ ଓ ଝୁଲଣ ଯାତ୍ରାରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ନାରୁଥିଲେ । ଏଥିରେ ଝୁଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତୀକ୍ଷାମାନ ହୁଏ ଯେ, ବୀଣା ବାଦନ , ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦ ଗାନ ଓ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ବାଦ୍ୟଯନ୍ତ୍ର ସହ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଶ୍ରୀ ମନ୍ଦିରର ପୂଜା ପ୍ରକ୍ରିୟାର ଅଂଶ ରୂପେ ବହୁ କାଳରୁ ଅନୁସୂଚିତ ହୋଇ ଆସୁଅଛି । ଜୟଦେବ ଦେବଦାସୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଓ ସଙ୍ଗତ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦେଉଥିଲେ । ଗୋଟିଏ ପ୍ରବାଦ ଅଛି ଯେ, ଯେତେବେଳେ ଜୟଦେବ “ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦ” ଲେଖିଥିଲେ, ତାଙ୍କର ଦୁଇଗୋଟି ପଦ ମନେ ନ ପଡ଼ିବାରୁ ତାଙ୍କ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କୁ ସ୍ମାନ କରି ଅସି ଲେଖିବେ ବୋଲି କହିଗଲେ । ସେ ଚାଲିଗଲାପରେ ସ୍ୱୟଂ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଜୟଦେବ ଙ୍କ ବେଶରେ ଆସି ଉକ୍ତ ପଦ ଦୁଇଟି ପୁରଣ କରି ଚାଲିଗଲା ପରେ ଜୟଦେବ ଫେରିଆସ ଦେଖନ୍ତି ପଦ ଦୁଇଟି ପୁରଣ ହୋଇ ଯାଇଛି ଏବଂ ଲେଖା ଯାଇଛି - “ଦେହି ପଲୀବମୁଦାର” ସ୍ୱୟଂ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଏହାକୁ ପୁରଣ କରିବା ଜାଣି ସେ ଭକ୍ତିରେ ଗଦ୍ ଗଦ୍ ହୋଇ ନିଜର ପତ୍ନୀ ପଦ୍ମାବତୀଙ୍କୁ ନର୍ତ୍ତକୀରୂପେ ଦାନ ଦେଇଥିଲେ । ଜୟଦେବ ନିଜେ ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତି- “ପଦ୍ମାବତୀ ! ଚରଣଚାରଣ



ଚକ୍ରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ “ ତେଣୁ ସେହି ଅନୁସାରେ ଗୁରୁ ପରମ୍ପରା ନେଇ ଅଦ୍ୟାବଧି ନୃତ୍ୟ- ସଂଗୀତ ଚଳିଆସୁଛି ।

ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଓ ସଙ୍ଗୀତ ଯାଗାଘରର ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତ ସର୍ବସ୍ୱନୀ ଜନବୋଧକୁ ରସୋତୀର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଓ ପ୍ରାଣବନ୍ଧ କରିଆସିଛି । ସେତେବେଳେ ସ୍ୱର୍ଗତ ରାମଦାସ ଓ ମୋହନ ମହାପାତ୍ର ନୃତ୍ୟ ଗୁରୁ ଥିଲେ । ସେହି ପରମ୍ପରା ନେଇ ପଦ୍ମଶ୍ରୀ ପଙ୍କଜଚରଣ ଦାସ ପ୍ରଥମେ ଦେବଦାସୀ ନୃତ୍ୟକ ମନ୍ଦିର ବାହାରକୁ ଆଣି ମଞ୍ଚରେ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନ କରାଇଥିଲେ । ପଦ୍ମଶ୍ରୀ ଦାସ, ମାଦେଳି ସେବାରେ ବହୁତ ଦିନ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ରତ ଥିଲେ । ତାପରେ ଗୁରୁ ପରମ୍ପରା ନେଇ ପଦ୍ମବିଭୂଷଣ କେଳୁଚରଣ ମହାପାତ୍ର, ସ୍ୱର୍ଗତ ଦେବପ୍ରସାଦ ଦାସ୍ । ଏହିପରି ଅନେକ ଗୁରୁ ଦେବଦାସୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ କୁ “ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ “ ନାମରେ ନାମିତ କରାଇ ସର୍ବଭାରତୀୟ ସ୍ତରରେ ପହଞ୍ଚାଇ ପାରିଛନ୍ତି ।

ଭୋଇ ରାଜତ୍ୱ ସମୟରେ ସଂଗୀତ ନୃତ୍ୟ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ କିଛି ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଘଟିଥିଲା । କେତେକ ରାଜା ମାହାରୀ ବା ଦେବଦାସୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ କରୁଥିବା ନର୍ତ୍ତକୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ନିଜର ଅଙ୍ଗରକ୍ଷଣୀଭାବେ ବ୍ୟବହାର କରିବାରୁ, କେତେକ ଜାନିଯାତ୍ରା ପର୍ବପର୍ବାଣୀରେ ହେଉଥିବା ମାହାରୀ ସେବାରେ ଛୋଟ ପୁଅପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ଝିଅବେଶ କରାଇ ନୃତ୍ୟ କରାଗଲା ଏବଂ ତାହାକୁ “ଗୋଟିପୁଅ “ ନୃତ୍ୟ କୁହାଗଲା । ଗୋଟିପୁଅ ନୃତ୍ୟ ପଞ୍ଚଦଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀର ଶେଷଭାଗ ବା ଷୋଡ଼ଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ଆରମ୍ଭ ଭାଗରେ ଚୈତନ୍ୟଦେବଙ୍କ କାଳରେ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇଥିବା ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଗ୍ରନ୍ଥମାନଙ୍କରେ ଆଲୋଚନା କରାଯାଇଛି । ଏମାନେ ଝୁଲଣରେ ଏବଂ ଚନ୍ଦନରେ ନୃତ୍ୟ କରୁଥିଲେ । ଚନ୍ଦନଯାତ୍ରାରେ ରାମକୃଷ୍ଣଙ୍କ ଚାପରେ ଗୋଟିପୁଅ ଏବଂ ମଦନମୋହନଙ୍କ ଚାପରେ କେବଳ ଦେବଦାସୀମାନେ ନୃତ୍ୟ କରୁଥିଲେ । ସେତେବେଳର ଗାନ ଓ ନୃତ୍ୟରେ ଭକ୍ତିର ଉତ୍ସ ଭରି ରହିଥିଲା ।

ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଓ ସଂଗୀତର ଉତ୍କର୍ଷ ପରମ୍ପରା ଏହି ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ଦିର ପରମ୍ପରାରୁ ହିଁ ସୃଷ୍ଟି । ଦେବଦାସୀ ନୃତ୍ୟର ହିଁ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟର ଜନ୍ମ । ଦେବଦାସୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଥମେ ଶ୍ରୀଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ସକାଳଧୂପ ବା ରାଜଭୋଗ ସମୟରେ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ନାଟମଣ୍ଡପରେ କରାଯାଉଥିଲା । ତା ସହିତ ମର୍ଦ୍ଦଳ ବି ବଜା ଯାଉଥିଲା । ଏହା କାଳକ୍ରମେ ଉନ୍ନତ ହୋଇ ଝରଣରେ ବିଭକ୍ତ ହେଲା ଓ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଭାବେ ପୃଥ୍ୱୀ ବିଖ୍ୟାତ ହୋଇ ପାରିଲା ।

ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ଦିରରେ “ଦେବଦାସୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ “ ଏବଂ “ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦ ଗାନ “ ଶୁଣା ନ ଗଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଜୟଦେବଙ୍କ ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ଦେହଲାଗି ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ କରୁଥିବା ଖଣ୍ଡୁଆ ପହରଣ ଓ ଶାଢ଼ିମାନଙ୍କରେ ବୁଣା ହୋଇ ପିନ୍ଧାଯାଉଛି । ଯଥା -ଦଶ ଅବତାର ଖଣ୍ଡୁଆରେ -

ପ୍ରିୟେ ଚାରୁଶିଳେ ମୁଷ୍ଟମୟି ମାନମନି ଦାନଂ ସପଦି ମଦନାନଳୋ ଦହତ୍ୱିମମ ମାନସମ୍ । ଦେହି ମୁଖକମଳ ମଧୁପାନମ୍ ॥

ଅନ୍ୟତ୍ର ସୁରଗରଳଖଣ୍ଡନଂ ମମ ଶିରସି ମଞ୍ଜନମ୍ । ଦେହିପଦ ପଲ୍ଲବି ମୁଦାରମ୍ ॥

ପହରଣରେ-ଚନ୍ଦନ ଚର୍ଚ୍ଚିତ ନୀଳ କଳେବର ପୀତ ବସନ ବନମାଳୀ । କେଳି ଚନ୍ଦନ ମଣି କୁଣ୍ଡଳ ମଣ୍ଡିତ ଗଞ୍ଜପୁର ସ୍ତୁତଶାଳୀ ॥

ଶାଢ଼ିରେ ଯମୁନାତୀର ବା ନୀର ନିକୁଞ୍ଜେ ମନ୍ଦମାଣ୍ଡିତମ୍ପାପ୍ରାହ ପ୍ରେମଭରୋଦ୍ଭାଙ୍ଗଂ ମାଧବଂ ରାଧିକା ସଖୀ ॥

ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ସୁଶ୍ରୀ ମିଶ୍ର (କର) ଏମ୍.ଏ-ସଂସ୍କୃତ,ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତ,ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ,ଏବଂ ହିନ୍ଦୁସ୍ତାନୀ ସଂଗୀତ(ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଏବଂ ସଂଗୀତର ଶିକ୍ଷକେତୁ, ଚରୋଖେ ଏବଂ ଗୁଏଲ୍‌ଫର ପରିଚାଳିତ)



ଅଜ୍ଞାନା ଚୌଧୁରୀ

ମନ୍ଦିରକୁ ଯିବା ମୋ ପାଇଁ ନୁଆ ନଥିଲା । ଗାତି ଉପରୁ ଘରଣୀଙ୍କୁ ଅଧଘଷ୍ଟ ଧରି ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରିବାରେ କିଛି ବ୍ୟତିକ୍ରମ ହୋଇ ନ ଥିଲା । ସବୁ ଠିକ୍ ଭିତରେ କେମିତି ଏକ ବିରାଟ ଭୁଲ ହୋଇଗଲା ପରି ମନେ ହେଉଥିଲା । ମୋର ବନ୍ଧୁ କଠିନ ହୃଦୟ ଗୋଟିଏ ଫୁଲ ପାଇଁ ବ୍ୟାକୁଳ ହୋଇପଡ଼ୁଥିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ମୋର ତ କିଛି ହୋଇନି ? ମୋ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ନିଳିମା ପୁଅ ଲିପୁ ଆଉ ଦୀପୁ ବେଶ ଭଲ ଅଛନ୍ତି । ମୋର ପଦବୀ, ମାନ, ସଂଭ୍ରମ କେଉଁପରି ବି ଆସି ଆସିନି । ତେବେ ମୋ ମନରେ ଶାନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ କାହିଁକି ? ମୁଁ ଆଜି ଏତେ ବିବ୍ରତ କାହିଁକି ? ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଏହି ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ପଚାରିବାରେ ଆଉ ଉତ୍ତର ପାଇବାରେ ମୋର ସବୁ ସମସ୍ୟାର ସମାଧାନ ହୋଇ ଯାଉଥିଲା । ହେଲେ ଆଜି ସବୁ କିଛି ପ୍ରଶ୍ନବାଚି ।

ପୃଥୀବି କହିଲେ ମୁଁ କେବଳ ମୋର ପାରିପାଶ୍ଵିକ ସମ୍ପର୍କୀୟ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ବୁଝୁଥିଲି । ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଲାଭ କ୍ଷତି ଭଲ ମନ୍ଦ ଥିଲା ମୋର ସୁଖ ଅଥ ବୁଝି । କର୍ମ ଉପରେ ମୋର ଥିଲା ଖୁବ ବିଶ୍ଵାସ । ପୁଜା ପାଠ, ପର୍ବ ପର୍ବାଣୀ, ହେନୁତେନ, ଇତ୍ୟାଦିକୁ ପଢ଼ାଯାଏ ଓ ସମୟର ଅପବ୍ୟୟ ଛଡ଼ା କିଛି ବି ଭାବୁ ନଥିଲି । ମୁଁ ପାଠ ପଢ଼ିଲି, ଭଲ ନମ୍ବର ରଖିଲି, ଭଲ ଚାକିରି କଲି, ଏଠି କାହାର ଦାନ ଅବଦାନର ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ଉଠିଲା କେଉଁଠି ? ସେସବୁ ବେକରିଆ କଥା । ମାଆ ଜୀବିତ ଥିବାବେଳେ, ସବୁବେଳେ ପୁଜା ପାଠରେ ଲାଗିଥାଏ, ଆଉ କୁହେ ମୋ ଭଲ ପାଇଁ ସେ ଉପବାସ କରିଛି । ଇଶ୍ଵର କିଏ ? ତାଙ୍କୁ ତ ମୁଁ କେବେ ଦେଖିନି, ସେ ସର୍ବକର୍ତ୍ତାମୟ ବୋଲି ବିଶ୍ଵାସ କିପରି କରିବି? ଯାହାକୁ ଦେଖିନି ତା ବିଷୟରେ ଏତେ ବଡ଼ ଧାରଣା କରିବା ମୋ ପକ୍ଷରେ ନିହାତି ଅସମ୍ଭବ, ସଫା ସଫା ମାକୁ ଜଣାଇଥିଲି । ମା କଣ ଭାବିଲା କେଜାଣି କିଛି ନ କହି ଚାଲିଗଲା । ହୋଇଥାଇପାରେ ଯେ ତାର ମୋପରି ବିଦ୍ୟା ବୁଝି ନଥିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ମୁଁ ଯଦି ଠିକ୍ କେ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରିଥାନ୍ତି, ମୋ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନର ଉତ୍ତର ତାର ଆଖିର ଭାଷାରୁ ପାଇପାରିଥାନ୍ତି । ଯାହାର ଚାହାଣିରେ ଯୁକ୍ତି

ଅତିକ୍ରମ କରୁଥିବା ନୈର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶିକ ଜ୍ୟୋତି ଥିଲା ତାକୁ ଏକ ଅବହେଳିତ ବୁଝିପାତକରି ଦସ୍ତୁତ ପଦକ୍ଷେପରେ ମୁଁ ସ୍ଥାନ ପରିତ୍ୟାଗ କରିଥିଲି । ମୋ ଭାଗ୍ୟ ଭଲ କି ମନ୍ଦ କେଜାଣି, ମୋ ଘରଣି ଉତ୍କଳ ବିଶ୍ଵବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରୁ ଡିଗ୍ରୀ ହାସଲକରି ମଧ୍ୟ ଦୈନିକ ଠାକୁର ପୁଜା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଖାଆନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଏଥିପାଇଁ ମୋଠାରୁ ଗାଳି ଅପମାନ ସୂଚକ ଶବ୍ଦ ଶୁଣି ମଧ୍ୟ ସିଏ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦିକାର ଥିଲେ । ସ୍କୁଲ ପିଲାଟାକୁ ବେତ ପ୍ରହାର କରିକରି ହଲିଆ ହୋଇପଡ଼ି ବେତକୁ ଫିଙ୍ଗି ଦେବା ଶିକ୍ଷକପରି, ମୁଁ ମଧ୍ୟ ତାପରେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଆଉ ବଧା ଦେଇନି । ହେଲେ ନିଜେ ମଧ୍ୟ କୌଣସି କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ରେ ସହଯୋଗ କରିନି ।

କଟକ ବଦଳି ହୋଇ ଯିବାର ଗୋଟିଏ ବର୍ଷ ହେବ । ପପକୁ ଏବେ ଛଅ ଓ ଲିପକୁ ଚା'ରି । ଗୋଟିଏ ଝିଅପାଇଁ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରିବକୁ ନିଳିମା ବହୁବାର ଅନୁରୋଧ କରିଥିଲେ । ହେଲେ ଅଜ୍ଞାନାଙ୍କର ଦରକ୍ଷାକସି ଯୌତୁକ ବଜାରରେ ଖରିଦାର ହେବା ଯେତିକି ଦୟନୀୟ, ଦୋକନ-ଦାର ହେବା ସେତିକି ଲାଭ ଦାୟକ । ଇଛାକରି ଦୁଃଖକୁ ଚାକିବାର ସ୍ଫୁହା ମୋର ନାହିଁ ତେଣୁ ମୋର ଯୁକ୍ତି ହେଉ ବା ପରିବାର ନିୟୋଜନର ହୃଦୟଙ୍ଗମତା ଯୋଗୁ ହେଉ, ନିଳିମା ଆଉ ଦିନେ ହେଲେ ସେ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ମୋ ଆଗରେ ରଖିନାହାନ୍ତି । ଏହାପରେ ସବୁ ଗତାନୁଗତିକ ଥିଲା । ବଦଳି ହେବାର ଛଅମାସ ଭିତରେ ମୁଁ ମୋର ପ୍ରଭାବ ଓ ପତିପତ୍ନି ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା କରିବା ପାଇଁ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ଥିଲାବେଳେ ନିଳିମା ଘରବାସ ସହ ଠାକୁରଘର ସଜାଡିବାରେ ଲାଗିପଡ଼ୁଥିଲେ । ଅବସର ବିନୋଦନ ପାଇଁ ମୁଁ ଭଲ ଉଦ୍ୟାନଟିଏ ଖୋଜିବାବେଳେ ସେ ମନ୍ଦିରଟିଏ ଖୋଜୁଥିଲେ ।

ଆମେ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ନିଜ ନିଜ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ନେଇ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତଥିଲୁ । କେହି କାହାକୁ ସହଯୋଗ କରୁନଥିଲୁ କି ବାଧା ବି ଦେଉନଥିଲୁ । କୌଣସି ସାଧନା ତ ବ୍ୟର୍ଥ ହୁଏନାହିଁ । ଆମେ ସଭିଏଁ ସଫଳ ହେଲୁ । ସେ ମନ୍ଦିର ଯାଆନ୍ତି, ମୁଁ ପାକ୍ ଯାଏ । କିଏ କଣ ଖୋଜେ କଣ ପାଏ କିଛି ଆଲୋଚିତ ହୁଏନାହିଁ । ସହା ସତ୍ତ୍ଵେ ବି ଆମେ ସୁଖି ଥିଲୁ ପରିବାରରେ ଶାନ୍ତି ଥିଲା ।

ଏକ ଜିବିଆ ସ୍ଵଭାବ ଭଳି ଆତ୍ମସମ୍ମାନ ପାଇଁ ମୋର ଖୁବ ଗର୍ବ ଥିଲା । ନିଳିମା ଏକା ମନ୍ଦିର ଗଲେ, କେହି ଯଦି ପାରିବାରିକ ଜୀବନ ପ୍ରତୀ ଚିପ୍ପଣୀ ଦେବେ, ଏହା ସହ୍ୟ କରିବା ମୋ ପକ୍ଷରେ ସମ୍ଭବ ନୁହେଁ । ତେଣୁ ମୁଁ ନିଜେ ଗାଡିରେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ମନ୍ଦିରକୁ ନେଇଯିବିବୋଲି ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଦେଲି । ତାଙ୍କର ରାଜି ନହେବାର ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ଉଠୁନଥିଲା, ବରଂ ଏକଥା ମତେ କହିବାକୁ ସେ ସାହାସ କରିପାରୁନଥିଲେ । ସେଦିନ ସେ ମୋତେ



ଧରଣି ଚାହିଁଥିଲେ । ମୋ ଆଖିରେ ଭଗବାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଜାଣିବା ଶୁଭା ଖୋଜୁଥିଲେ ବୋଧେ । ନିରାଶ ହେଲେ କି କଣ ସଙ୍ଗେ ସଙ୍ଗେ ଆଖି ଫେରାଇ ନେଲେ । ସେଇ ଦିନୁ ଆମ ପରିବାର ଏକ ଦୈନିକ ରୁଟିନ ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲା । ଚାରିଟା ବେଳେ ନିଳିମାଙ୍କ ଅନେକ ଧର ତାକରା ଓ ଲିପୁ ଓ ଦିପୁଙ୍କ ଅସ୍ତ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ତାତି ତାକରେ ମୁଁ ତଳକୁ ଓହ୍ଲାଇ । ଗାତି ମନ୍ଦିର ପ୍ରାଙ୍ଗଣରେ ରଖେ । ଖସିଯାଏ ହୋଇ ଗାତିରୁ ତେଇ ପତି ସେମାନେ ମନ୍ଦିର କୋଳାହଳମୟ କରିଦିଅନ୍ତି । ମୁଁ ଗାତି ଭିତରେ ବସି ଦିନଟା ଯାକର ସବୁଠାରୁ ବୋରିଙ୍ଗ୍ ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷକୁ ବିତାଏ । ମନ୍ଦିର ଭିତରକୁ ଯିବାପାଇଁ କେହି ମୋତେ ତାକନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ତାକିଲେ ଯେ ମୁଁ ଯିବି ଏ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ମୋର ନଥିଲା । ପ୍ରଥମେ ପ୍ରଥମେ ଖୁବ୍ ଅତୁଆ ଲାଗୁଥିଲା । ମନ୍ଦିର ସାମ୍ନାରେ ଦୁଇପଟେ ଧାତି କରି ବସିଥିବା ଭିକାରୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖୁ ଦେଖୁ ମୁଁ ସବୁଠାରୁ ବେଶି ବିରକ୍ତ ହେଉଥିଲି । ଏମାନେ ହେଲେ ପୁଥାବରି ଅଦରକାରି ଜୀବ । ଏମାନଙ୍କର ସମ୍ମାନ ଜ୍ଞାନ ନାହିଁ । ବିନା ଦ୍ୱିଧାରେ ହାତ ପତାଉଥିବେ । କାମ କରିବେନ, ହେଲେ ଲଜା ସଙ୍ଗେଟ ଛାତି ଚିତ୍କାରକରି ପଛରେ ଗୋଡାଇଥିବେ ।

ଜୀବନରେ କାହାକୁ କିଛି ଦେବା ତ ଦୂରର କଥା ବରଂ ବିରକ୍ତ ଗଳାରେ ଅନ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କୁ ଗାଳିଦେବା ମୋର ଅଭ୍ୟାସ ଥିଲା । ଏଥିପାଇଁ ବହୁ ମହଲରେ ଯୁକ୍ତି ଦେଖାଇ ଖୁବ୍ ପ୍ରଂଶସିତ ହେଉଥିଲି । ଗାତିଭିତରେ ବସିବସି ନିଳିମା ଉପରେ ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ବିରକ୍ତ ହେଉଥିଲି ତ କେବେ ପୁଣି ଅଖିରୁଜି ସୁନ୍ଦର ଉଦ୍ୟାନରେ ବସିଥିବାର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନରେ ମଗ୍ନହୋଇପଡୁଥିଲି । ଯଦି କେବେ କେବେ ଭିକାରି ମାନଙ୍କର ଚିତ୍କାର କାନରେ ପଡୁଥିଲା ମୋ ନିଜ କର୍ମକୁ ନିନ୍ଦୁଥିଲି ।

ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ବସ୍ତୁର ଜତତା ଥାଏ । ଆଉ ଏବେ କିଛି ଭଲ ଲାଗେନା । ରୁପ୍ତାପ୍ତ ବସେ, ଯେ କୌଣସିପତେ ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷ ଗତିଯାଏ । ଏହି ସମୟରେ ମୁଁ ଏବେ ମୋ ପତୋଶୀମାନଙ୍କ ଆଡକୁ ଚାହେଁ । ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ନିରୀକ୍ଷଣ କରେ । କାହାର ଖୋଲା ଦେହ ତ କାହାର ଛିଣ୍ଡ ପୋଶାକରେ ଲଜା ଢାଙ୍କିବାର ପ୍ରବେଶ । ତା ସଙ୍ଗେ ମୋର ନିରୀକ୍ଷଣ, ଆଉ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ହେୟଭାବର ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ମଧ୍ୟ ହୁଏନାହିଁ । ଏଇ କେତେଦିନ ହେଲା ବୁଢ଼ାଟିଏ ଆସେ, ଲୋଚା କୋଚା ବମ ଢାଙ୍କୁରିତ । ମିଞ୍ଚିମିଞ୍ଚି ଆଖିରେ ତା ଜାଗାଟିକୁ ଖୋଜେ । ଅଦିନିଆ ଝତରେ ନଇଁପଡିଥିବା ଗଛଟିଏ ପରି ବାତି ଠୁକ୍ ଠୁକ୍ କରି ଆସେ । ପଛରେ ସାନ ଝିଅଟିଏ । ସାନ ଝରଣାଟିଏ କହିଲେ ଭୁଲ୍ ହେବନି । ତାର ସାନସାନ ହାତ ଗୋତ କେବେ ହେଲେ ସ୍ଥିର ନଥାଏ । ସାନସାନ ବାଳଗୁଡାକ ଛନ୍ଦା ଛନ୍ଦି ହୋଇ ଜଟ ହୋଇଯାଇଥାଏ । ଚିରା ପ୍ରକ୍ଟି କାନ୍ଧରୁ ଗଳି ପଡୁଥାଏ । ନାକ ସୁଁସୁଁ କରୁକରୁ, ଉକୁଣି ମୁଣ୍ଡ କୁଣ୍ଡାଉକୁଣ୍ଡାଉ, ଅଧାଗଳା ପ୍ରକ୍ଟିକୁ କାନ୍ଧକୁ ଟେକିଦେଉଥାଏ । ଗୁଣ୍ଡୁଗୁଣ୍ଡୁ ହୋଇ ଛାନ୍ଦ ତାଳ ହାନ ଗୀତଟିଏ ଗାଉଥାଏ । ସେ ଗୀତରେ ଥାଏ ନା ସ୍ୱର ନା ତାଳ । ହେଲେ ତାକୁ ଥରେ ଚାହିଁଦେଲେ ଆଖି ଫେରାଇ ପାରେନାହିଁ । ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଦିନ ମୁଁ ଆସେ ଓ ସେଇ ଚକାଭଉଁରୀ ଖେଳୁଥିବା ପୁଲକୁ ଦେଖେ । ଭୋକ ହେଲେ ପୁଲ କାନ୍ଦେ ଓ ତା ବାପାର ଧଳିରୁ ପଇସା ଉଠେ । ପଇସା ପାଇଗଲେ ସ୍ୱର୍ଣ୍ଣ ପାଇଲା ପରି ଭାବେ ଓ ଧାଇଁ କରି ପଳାଏ ଦିଗା ଗୁଲୁଗୁଲୁ କିଣି ଖାଏ ପୁଣି ଖେଳେ, ପଇସା ନ ପାଇଲେ କାନ୍ଦେ । ମୋ ପକେଟ୍ରେ ନୋଟ୍ ବିତା ଅକ୍ଷତରହେ । ପୁଲ ଯେ ମୋ ଆନନ୍ଦର ଏକ ଅଂଶ ହୋଇ ଯାଇଛି ଏକଥା ଜାଣି ପାରିନଥାନ୍ତି ଯଦି ତା ଅନୁପସ୍ଥିତି ମୋତେ କଷ୍ଟ ଦେଇନଥାନ୍ତା । ଯେଉଁ ଦିନ ପୁଲକୁ ନ ଦେଖେ ବଡ଼ ଖାଲି ଖାଲି ଲାଗେ ।

ଆଜି ସକାଳୁ ବର୍ଷା ଲାଗିରହିଛି । ଛିଣ୍ଡା ଛଣଟା ଭିତରେ ବାପା ପାଖରେ ଯାକିଯୁକି ହୋଇ ବସିଥିଲା ପୁଲ । ମୁଁହଟା ଶୁଖି ଯାଇଥିଲା ତାର । ଆଖି ଦୁଇଟା ପୁଲି ଗେଣ୍ଡା ଭଳି ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲା । ରହି ରହି ଚିତ୍କାର କରୁଥିଲା “ ଭୋକ କଲାଣି, ଖାଇବି କଣ ଦେ ବା’ । ତା ବାପାର ଲୁଗା ତାନିବାରେ ଲାଗିଥାଏ ସିଏ । ପୁଲର କବଳରୁ ନିଷ୍ପତ୍ତି ପାଇବା ପାଇଁ ଖୁବ୍ ଜୋର୍ରେ ଠେଲି ଦେଲା ତା ବାପା । ଛିଟିକି ପଡିଲା ପୁଲ, ମନକୁ ମନ ଉଠି ତଳକୁ ମୁହଁକରି ବସିଲା । ତା ବାପା ଯେତେ ତାକିଲେ ବି ସେ ଶୁଣିଲନାହିଁ ବର୍ଷା ଭିଜା ମୁହଁରେ କେତେ ବିନ୍ଦୁ ଲୁହୁଥିଲା ହେଲେ ସବୁ ଏକା ଲାଗୁଥିଲା । ଆଜି ମନ୍ଦିରରୁ ଫେରିବାପାଇଁ ଇଚ୍ଛା ନଥିଲା । ମୋ ନିଜ ଭିତରେ ଏମିତି କିଛି ଭୁଲ୍ ମୁଁ ଦେଖୁଥିଲି ଯାହାକୁ ମୁଁ କ୍ଷମା କରିପାରୁନଥିଲି । ପ୍ରତିପତ୍ତି, ସମ୍ମାନର ବାଘ ଛାଲ ମୋତେ ଭିକ୍ଷଣ ଯନ୍ତ୍ରଣା ଦେଉଥିଲା । ପୂର୍ବଦିନ ଭଳି ଘରେ ଖୁବ୍ ଜୋର୍ସରେ ରୋଷେଇ ହେଲା, ସମସ୍ତେ ଖାଇଲେ, ବଳକା ସବୁ ଫେପତା ହେଲା । ହେଲେ ପୁଲ ? ମୁଁ ମୋ ଅଜାଣତରେ ଗାତି ନେଇ ମନ୍ଦିରକୁ ଚାଲିଗଲି । ବର୍ଷା ଛାଡିନଥିଲା । ପୁଲ ସେଇଠି ସେମିତି ବସିଥିଲା । ମୋ ଖାଦ୍ୟର ବାସନା ତା ଭୋକର ବାସନାକୁ ଟପି ଯାଉଥାଏ । ମୋର ଆତ୍ମସମ୍ମାନ ଓ ମାନବିକତା ମଧ୍ୟରେ



ତୁମ୍ଭେ ଦୁଇଲାଗିଥିଲୁ । ରାତିରେ ଖାଇବାରେ ହାତ ମାରି ପାରିନିଥାଏ । ପୁଲର ତୁହାଇ ତୁହାଇ ଭୋକିଲା କାନିଶା ମୋ କାନରେ ପ୍ରତିଧ୍ବନିତ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ଚାହିଁଲେ କିଛି ଦେଖୁନଥିଲି ଆଖି ବନ୍ଦକଲେ ପୁଲକୁ ହିଁ ଦେଖୁଥିଲି । ପ୍ରଥମଥର ପାଇଁ ହାର ମାନିଲି ଆଖିରେ ନ ଦେଖି ମଧ୍ୟ ଦେଖି ହୁଏ, କାନରେ ନ ଶୁଣି ମଧ୍ୟ ଶୁଣି ହୁଏ । ଯୁକ୍ତି ଦ୍ଵାରା ସବୁ କଥା ପ୍ରମାଣ କରି ହୁଏ ନାହିଁ । ତେବେ ଅଜଣା ଅଦେଖା ଅପାର୍ଥିବ ଅସୀମ ସତ୍ତାକୁ ସର୍ବଶକ୍ତିମୟ ମାନି ନେବାରେ ଦ୍ଵିଧା କାହିଁକି ? ଇଶ୍ଵରଙ୍କ ଚିନ୍ତା ମାତ୍ରକେ ମୋ ହୃଦୟରେ ଏକ ଶାନ୍ତ ଗଙ୍ଗା ଚିଏ ବହିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲା । ମୋତେ ଲାଗିଲା ସତେ ଯେମିତି ମୁଁ ଚାଳିଷି ବର୍ଷ ପରେ ନୂଆ ସୁଖର ସନ୍ଧାନ ପାଇଛି । ସକାଳେ ପୁଲ ଆସିନଥିଲା । କାହାକୁ ଅପେକ୍ଷା ନକରି ସିଧା ମନ୍ଦିର ଭିତରକୁ ଚାଲିଲି । ସେଇ ଅସୀମ ସତ୍ତା ନିକଟରେ କାତର ହୃଦୟରେ ଚିନ୍ତା କରିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲି । ପୁଲ ଯେଉଁଠାରେ ଥାଉ ଭଲରେ ଥାଉ । ଆଜି ଭୋଗକରି ସବୁ ଭିକାରି ମାନଙ୍କୁ ମୁଁ ପ୍ରସାଦ ଦେଲି । ପବିତ୍ର ହୃଦୟରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଚାହିଁଲି । କେହିକେବେ ଇଚ୍ଛାକରି ଅବହେଳିତ ହେବାକୁ ଚାହେଁନାହିଁ । ପରିବେଶ ଓ ରାଜ୍ୟର ଅବହେଳା ଏହାର କାରଣ । ହେଲେ ଏହାର ସମାଧାନ କରିବ କିଏ ? ମୁଁ, ଆମେ ନା ଦେଶ ? ମୋ ମନ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସବୁ ପୁଲଙ୍କୁ ମୋ କୋଳକୁ ଟାଣି ନେଲି ।

ଏକ ଅସୀମ ଆନନ୍ଦରେ ପରିପୁର୍ଣ୍ଣ ମୋ ଆଖି କହୁଥିଲା “ ହେ ମାନବ! ଶାନ୍ତିର ପଥ ଅଛି ……… । ଥରେ ମାତ୍ର ସେଇ ପୁଲମାନଙ୍କ ଆଡେ ଚାହିଁ । ”

ଅଜନା ଚୌଧୁରୀ, ଜର୍ମାନବାଉନ୍ , ମେରିଲାଣ୍ଡ



ନବିତା ମଞ୍ଚରୀ



OSA Archives 2008-09pp



ଦୀଗଭୂଷି

ଝୀନୁ ଛୋଟରାୟ

ଆଗ୍ନେୟ ଉଦ୍‌ଗୀରଣ ଉଠେ ହୃଦୟରେ
କଂପି ଉଠେ ସର୍ବାଙ୍ଗ ଶରୀର
ବୋହି ଯାଏ ଲାଭାସମ ଅବିରତ ଅଶ୍ରୁ
ଥରି ଉଠେ ହସ୍ତ
ପିତା କରେ ପୁଣି ପୁତ୍ରର ସକାର!
ଦୁଃଖପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଆୟୋଜନ! !

“ହେ ବସୁନ୍ଧରା!”

ମାତାର ଯୋତହସ୍ତ ଆକୂଳ ମିନତି
ଦ୍ଵିଖଣ୍ଡିତ ହେଉ ତୁମ ବସ
ଲୀନ ହେଉ ଏ ନିର୍ଲୀଙ୍ଗୀ ତୁମ ବସରେ
ତେବେ ସହିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବନି ଅସହ୍ୟ ଯନ୍ତ୍ରଣା
ଏ ଶରୀରର ପ୍ରତିଟି କୋଷରେ ।

କାଲିର ସେ ନିଷ୍ଠାଳ ମନୋରମ ସୃଷ୍ଟି
ଲାଗେ ଆଜି ବିଷତୁଲ୍ୟ
ଶୂନ୍ୟ ମହାଶୂନ୍ୟ
ମୂଲ୍ୟାୟନ କରିବାକୁ ପ୍ରସ୍ତର କରଣୀ
ଶକ୍ତି ନାହିଁ ଆଉ ଏଇ
ପଞ୍ଜୁ ପଞ୍ଚୁରିୟେ ।

ହୃଦିଗଲା ଧ୍ରୁବତାରା ଉତ୍ତର ଆକାଶେ
ଚିରାବୃତ୍ତ କଳା ବାଦଲରେ
ସୁଲିଙ୍ଗ ତା ନାହିଁ ଆଉ ଦେବାକୁ ସାହାରା
ଦିଗଭୂଷି ଯନ ତିମିରରେ
ପିତା ଖୋଜେ ମାତା ହସ୍ତ
ପହଞ୍ଚିବାକୁ ଅତିମ ସୁଲେ ।

ନିକଟରେ ନିଜ ସଂପର୍କିୟା ଭଉଣିର ଏକମାତ୍ର ସନ୍ତାନର ଶେଷକାୟା ଯୋଗଦାନରେ ପିତାମାତାଙ୍କ ଆକୂଳତାକୁ ନେଇ ଲେଖିକାଙ୍କର ଲେଖନିରୁ

Jhinu Chhotray lives in Centerville, VA with her husband Santanu and daughters, Shilti and Shriya.



ବୋଉଲୋ ମୋର ବୋଉ

ସାରଳା ତ୍ରିପାଠୀ

ବୋଉଲୋ ମୋର ବୋଉ ତୋହରି ସ୍ନେହ ଆଦର ଆଉ

କିଏ ସେ ଦେବ ଆଉ ଲୋ କିଏ ସେ ଦେବ ଆଉ (୧)

ତୋହରି ହାତ ରକ୍ଷା ପରସା ତୋ ମିଠା ମଧୁ କଥା

ଭାବିଲେ ସେହି ଅଲିଭା ସ୍ମୃତି ମନରେ ହୁଏ ବ୍ୟଥା

ମନରେ ହୁଏ ବ୍ୟଥା (୨)

ଦେହ ଖରାପ ବେଳେ ପାଖରେ ବସି ଆଉଁସୁ ଥାଉ ଔଷଧ ଦେଉ

କେତେ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କୁ ଜୁହାର କରି ଶୁଭ ମନାସୁ କେତେ

ଶୁଭ ମନାସୁ କେତେ (୩)

ବଡ଼ି ସକାଳୁ ଉଠି ଘରଯାକର କାମ କରି ରକ୍ଷାବତ୍ତା ତୁ ସାରି

ଦଶଟାବେଳେ ପିଲେ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମଣାଳ ସ୍କୁଲ୍ ଯିବେ

ଚିନ୍ତାତ ଥାଏ ଭାରି

ଚିନ୍ତାତ ଥାଏ ଭାରି (୪)

ଚାରିଟା ବେଳେ ସ୍କୁଲରୁ ଫେରି ପଖାଳ ମାଛ ଭଜା

ଭାଇ, ଭଉଣୀ ମେଳରେ ଖିଆ ତାହାକି ଆନନ୍ଦ ମଜା

ତାହାକି ଆନନ୍ଦ ମଜା (୫)

ଏକାଦଶୀରେ ସାଙ୍ଗ ହୋଇ ମନ୍ଦିର ଯିବା ମଜା

ରାତିରେ ମହାପ୍ରସାଦ ପୁଣି ସତ୍ୟନାରାୟଣ ପୂଜା

ସତ୍ୟନାରାୟଣ ପୂଜା (୬)

ବାରମାସେ ତେର ଯାତ୍ରା କେତେ ପରବ ପୂଜା

ତୋହରି ହାତ ସରୁଚକ୍ୱଳି ମଣ୍ଡା ଆରିସା ପିଠା

ମଣ୍ଡା ଆରିସା ପିଠା (୭)

ତୋହରି ସେହି ସେବା, ବ୍ରତ ପୂଜା ମନ୍ତ୍ର ଯଥା

ତୋହରି ସେହି ପାପ, ପୁଣ୍ୟ, ଧରମ ନୀତି କଥା

ଭାବିଲେ ସେହି ଅମୃତ ବାଣୀ ହୋଇଛି ମୋର ଗାଥା

ହୋଇଛି ମୋର ଗାଥା (୯)

ଯେ ଦେଶେ ଗଲୁ ଫେରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ,

ନାହିଁ ତେ ଚଲାପଥ ନେତ୍ର ମୋର ଝୁରୁଥିବ ତୋହରି ପ୍ରତିବିମ୍ବ

ତୋହରି ପ୍ରତିବିମ୍ବ (୧୦)

ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କୁ ପ୍ରଣାମ କରି ତୋ ଆତ୍ମା ମୋଷ ପାଇଁ ତାକୁପିବି ଦିବାନିଶି

ହେ ଜଗତସାଇଁହେ ଜଗତସାଇଁ (୧୧)

*Sarala Tripathy lives in Norman, OK with her husband Dr. Narayan Tripathy.



ଜଣାଣ

ଶ୍ରୀମତି ପ୍ରମିଳା ମହାପାତ୍ର

ଜଗା ଆରେ ଜଗା ଆରେ ତୁ ମହାବାହୁ
ତୋହ ପରି ଜଣେ ମୁହଁ ଦେଖୁନି ଆଉ ॥
ଦୁନିଆର ବୋଧ ଯେତେ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ବୋହୁ
ଯେତେ କଷ୍ଟ ହେଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ କିଛି ନ କହୁ ॥
କାହିଁ ପାଇଁ କହ ଜଗା ଏତିକି ସହୁ
ଯେତେ ଗାଳି ମନ୍ଦ ଦେଲେ ନୀରବ ରହୁ ॥
ନିଜ ଦୋଷ ଲାଗି ତୋତେ ଦୋଷରେ ଦେଉ
ନିନ୍ଦା କରି ତୋର ନାମେ କେତେରେ ଗାଉ ॥
ଏତିକି ସହିଷ୍ଣୁ ତୁ କିପରି ହେଲୁ
ଶୁଣି ଶୁଣି ତୋ କାନକୁ ବଧିରା କଲୁ ॥
ଜଗତ ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ ପାପୁଁ ଉଦ୍ଧାର କରୁ
ସେ ଲାଗି ପାଇଛୁ ନାମ ଜଗତ ଶୁରୁ ॥
ଲୋଭେ ପାପେ ବୁଡି ଯେତେ ଧରାରେ ରହୁ
ତୋର ନାମ ଜପିଦେଲେ ତୁ ଧୋଇ ଦେଉ ॥
ଏତେ କଷ୍ଟ କରି ଜଗା କଅଣ ପାଉ
ହସି ହସେଇ ଆମର ମନକୁ ମୋହୁ ॥
ସଂସାର ଜଂଜାଳ ମଧ୍ୟେ ବୁଡାଇ ଦେଉ
ଭୁଲାଇ ଦେଇ କି ସତେ ସୁଖ ତୁ ପାଉ ॥
ତୋହଠାରୁ ବଡ଼ ପୁଣି କେ ଅଛି ଆଉ
ତୋର ପାଦ ତଳେ ସଦା ମୋ ମଥା ଆଉ ॥

Things beyond comprehension

ପବନର ଗତି
ପୁରୁଷର ମତି
କୁବେରର ଧନ
ନୀରୀର ମନ



ସେଇଠି ମୋର ଘର

ଶାନ୍ତିଲତା ମିଶ୍ର

ସେଇଠି ମୋର ଘର, ସେତ ବଡ଼ ମନୋହର ।
ନଈ, ନାଳ,ଫୁଲ,ଫଳ ଯେଉଁଠି ବିଛାନ୍ତି ମାଧୁର୍ଯ୍ୟ ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ।
ଯେଉଁଠି ଅଛି ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ମନ୍ଦିର, ପୁଣି ସ୍ୱର୍ଗଦ୍ୱାର ।
ସେଇଠି ମୋର ଘର, ସେତ ବଡ଼ ମନୋହର । ୧ ।

ଧାନକେଣ୍ଡା ପାଣିତେଣ୍ଡା ର ସିରି ସିରି ପ୍ରକପନ ।
ପକ୍ଷୀ କଳରବ,ମଧୁପ ଗୁଞ୍ଜନ କରେ ମନକୁ ହରଣ ।
ଚାଉଳିକା କୋଶାରକ ଶୀଳା କହେ ଯେଉଁଠି ହଜାରେ ପ୍ରେମ କାହାଣୀ ।
ସୁପଥ ଦେଖାଏ ,ମନକୁ ଉଦବୋଧ କରାଏ ଯହିଁ ବୁଝ ମହାତ୍ମା ଙ୍କ ବାଣୀ ।
ସେଇଠି ମୋର ଘର , ସେତ ବଡ଼ ମନୋହର । ୨ ।

ଗୁରୁଜନଙ୍କୁ ଭକ୍ତି ସମ୍ମାନ , ସାନଙ୍କୁ ଯେ ସ୍ନେହ କରିବାରେ ଯାହାର ଅଭ୍ୟାସ ,
ଆଇ , ଜେଜେ ମାଙ୍କ କାହାଣୀରେ ଥାଏ ଯହିଁ ହଜାରେ ସୁ ଉପଦେଶ ।
ବେଶ ,ଭାଷା,ଖାଦ୍ୟର ଅସାମଞ୍ଜସ୍ୟ ସତ୍ତ୍ୱେ, ଯେଉଁଠି ଅନେକ ସାମ୍ୟତା ।
ନୀଳ ପାରାବାର ଠାରୁ ଚରଞ୍ଜୟିତ ପାହାଡ଼ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ, ମନକୁ କରେ ଯାହାର ରମ୍ୟତା ।
ସେଇଠି ମୋର ଦେଶ ,ନାହିଁ କେହି ତା ସାଦୃଶ୍ୟ । ୩ ।

ଦୁଃଖୀ ରଂକି ଭିକ୍ଷାର୍ଥୀ ଅସହାୟ ଜନ ଯେଉଁଠି ରୁହନ୍ତି ନିସଂଶୟେ ।
ଉଦାର ହୃଦୟେ ଯିଏ ଆଲିଙ୍ଗନ କରେ ସଭିଙ୍କୁ ଅଭୟେ ।
ନିତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟ ହୁଏ ସ୍ନେହାର୍ଦ୍ଧ ହୃଦୟ ପ୍ରେମ ବିନିମୟ ଯେଉଁଠି ସମ ଆଦରେ ।
ଆତ୍ମୀୟ ସ୍ୱଜନ,ବନ୍ଧୁ ପରିଜନ ଙ୍କ ଗହଣେ ଭାସୁଥାଏ ମନ ଯହିଁ ସଦା ଆନନ୍ଦ ଲହରେ ।
ସେଇଠି ମୋର ଦେଶ , ନାହିଁ କିଛି ତା ସାଦୃଶ୍ୟ । ୪ ।

ବାରବାଟୀ ଦୁର୍ଗ ଧଉଳି ପାହାଡ଼ ସାକ୍ଷୀ ଯାର ବିରତ୍ୱର ।
ବର୍ଷନାତୀତ ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଲାବଣ୍ୟ ନାହିଁ ତୁଲ୍ୟ ଗାରିମାର ।
ତା କୋଳରେ ଜନ୍ମ ଲଭିଛି, ମୋର କେଉଁ ପୂର୍ବ ପୁଣ୍ୟେ ଅବା ।
ସୌଭାଗ୍ୟ ମଣ୍ଡଳି ଯଦି ପାଆନ୍ତି ସୁଯୋଗ କରିବାକୁ ତାର ସେବା ।
ସେଇଠି ମୋର ଘର ,ଓଡ଼ିଶା ନାମ ଯାହାର । ୫ ।

ରବେଞ୍ଚର, ମିନେସୋଟା



ଶେଷ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତ

ଶଶଧର ମହାପାତ୍ର

ଆସିଥିଲି ଭେଟିବାକୁ ଅନେକ ଦୂରରୁ
ଉଡିଉଡି ସାତ ସମୁଦ୍ର, ତେର ନଈ ସେପାରିରୁ
ମନଭରି ଦେଖିବାକୁ ତୋର ଶେଷ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତକୁ
ଛାତିପାଶେ ରଖିତୋତେ କୁଣ୍ଡଳ ଦେବାକୁ
ଶୁଣିଥାନ୍ତି ଶେଷଯାଏ କାନତେରି ତୋର ହୃଦ ଝନନକୁ
ସମୟକୁ ସାକ୍ଷୀରଖି କହିଥାନ୍ତି
ରୋକିବାକୁ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତ ଗୋଟିକୁ
କିନ୍ତୁ,
ସମୟ ଦାଉ ସାଧିଲା
ରାତି ଅଧେ କୁକୁର କାନ୍ଦିଲା,
ବାଡିପଟେ ପେଟାଟି ରାବିଲା
ତାପରେ, ତାପରେ ନ କହିଲେ ଭଲ
ପହଞ୍ଚିଲା ବିଦାୟର ବେଳ
ସବୁ ହୁଏ ଶେଷ
ଶାନ୍ତପତେ ଚନ୍ଦନ ନିବାସ
ଶାନ୍ତ ଏ ପୃଥିବୀ, ଶାନ୍ତ ଏ ଆକାଶ
କାହା ମୁଖେ ନଥିଲା ହରଷ ।

ତୁ ଗଲା ପରେ
ଏଠି ଭୋକ ନାହିଁ
ଏଠି ଶୋଷ ନାହିଁ
ଏଠି ରାଗ ନାହିଁ
ଏଠି ରୋଷ ନାହିଁ
ଏଠି ଲୋଭ ନାହିଁ
ଏଠି ମୋହ ନାହିଁ
ଏଠି ମନ ନାହିଁ
ଏଠି ହସ ନାହିଁ
ନା ଏଠି କିଏ କିଛି କହେ
ନା ଏଠି କିଏ କିଛି ଶୁଣେ

ଅନ୍ଧାର ରାତିରେ ନିଃଶବ୍ଦ ସମାଧି ତଳେ
ଲାଗେ ମୋତେ
କିଏ ସତେ କାନ ପାଟିଥାଏ ।
ତୁ ଗଲା ପରେ
ଅତୀତର ସ୍ମୃତି ସବୁ
ଛାଁକୁ ଛାଁ ଏକ ପରେ ଏକ ଆସେ
ଚହଲିଯାଏ ମନ
କ୍ଷତାକ୍ତ ହୁଏ ଜୀବନ
ଏକାନ୍ତ ବେଳାରେ
ଏଠି ମନ ମରେ
ଏଠି ମନ ଝୁରେ
ଏଠି ଲୁହ ଝରେ
ଚପ୍‌ଚପ୍ ଖସୁଥିବା
ବୁନ୍ଦା ବୁନ୍ଦା ଲୁହଧାରେ
ଆଖିପତା ଓଦା ହୁଏ
ଚଷମା ମୋ ଭିଜୁଥାଏ ଧିରେ ।
ସିନା ନନାଙ୍କ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶରେ
ହରିବଂଶ ବସିଥିଲା
ଓଲଟା ଚଣ୍ଡୀ ପାଠ,
ରୁଦ୍ରଭିକ୍ଷକ ବି
ଯାତକ ବି ଦେଖାଗଲା
କେତେ ମାନସିକ
କେତେ ପୁଣି ଶୋକ
ସବୁ କିନ୍ତୁ ବୃଥାହେଲା
ପାଣିରେ ପଡିଲା ।
ବିତିଗଲା କେତେ ଦିନ
ବିତିଗଲା କେତେ ରାତି
ମନ ମୋର କହୁଥିଲା
ଆସିବା, ଯିବା



ଏ ଯେ ସଂସାରର ନୀତି
 ପଲକେ ମରନ୍ତି ଆମେ
 ପଲକେ ଜୀଅନ୍ତି ।
 ଆଖିରେ ଆଖିଏ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଭରି ବଢ଼ିଥିଲୁ
 ଆଚାର ବ୍ୟବହାରରେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ବାନ୍ଧିଥିଲୁ
 କେତେ ସ୍ନେହ ମମତା ଢାଳିଥିଲୁ
 ବହୁତ ହସିଥିଲୁ, ହସାଇଥିଲୁ
 କାନ୍ଦିଥିଲୁ, କନ୍ଦାଇଥିଲୁ
 ଏକ ପୁଲର ଆୟୁଷ ନେଇ ଜନ୍ମିଥିଲୁ
 ରାତିରେ ଫୁଟିଲୁ, କେତେ ସୁରଭି ବିଞ୍ଚିଲୁ
 ତୋ ବାସ୍ନାରେ ଚାରିଆଡ଼ ମହକେଇ ଦେଲୁ

ପୁଣି ସକାଳୁ ସକାଳୁ ଝଟିଗଲୁ
 ଗୋଟାପଣି ମାଟିରେ ମିଶିଗଲୁ ।
 ମୋହ ମାୟାରେ ଆମେ ବନ୍ଦୀ
 ଜନ୍ମ ଓ ମୃତ୍ୟୁରେ ଆମେ ଛନ୍ଦୀ
 ବିଧିର କି ବିଧାନ ସତେ ?
 ବିଚିତ୍ର ନୁହେଁକି ସଂସାର ?
 ବଞ୍ଚିଥିବା ଯାଏ ଲାଗେ
 ସବୁ ଆପଣା ନିଜର
 ଆଖି ବୁଜି ଦେଲେ ଥରେ
 ସବୁ ହୁଏ ପର ।

(ଭଣେ ବହୁଙ୍କର ଅବାନକ ମୃତ୍ୟୁପରେ ଏ ଲେଖା)

Dr. Shashadhar Mohapatra lives in Maryland with his wife Meera, daughter Sharmistha and son Sidhartha.

All about our Health

ଖାଇ ଚାଲିଲେ ବଢ଼ଇ ଆୟୁ

ଖାଇ ବସିଲେ ବଢ଼ଇ ବାୟୁ

ଖାଇ ଶୋଇଲେ ବଢ଼ଇ ପେଟ

ଖାଇ ଖାଇଲେ ଯମର ଭେଟ



ଅଭୁଳା ଗାଁ

ଗଗନ ପାଣିଗ୍ରାହୀ

ଘର ମୋ ବରୁଣସିଂହ ଜିଲ୍ଲା ବାଲେଶ୍ଵର,
ପାଖେ ବରଗଛ ଆଉ ବାସୁଳୀ ମନ୍ଦିର ।
କେଉଁଦିନୁ ବରଗଛ ରହିଛି ସେଠାରେ,
ବୟସ କେହିତାହାର ନ କହିତ ପାରେ ।
ଗାଁ ବାସୁଳୀ ଠାକୁରାଣୀ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟକ୍ଷ ଦେବତା,
ସବୁ କର୍ମେ ସିଦ୍ଧି ଲାଭ ନୁଆଁଇଲେ ମଥା ।
ମନେପଡେ ସବୁବେଳେ ସେହିମୋର ଗାଁ,
ଯେଉଁଠି ଜନମିଥିଲି ସିଏ ଅଟେ ମାଆ ।
ପଞ୍ଜିମରେ ଦେଖାଯାଏ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟରୂପ ପର୍ବତ,
ନୀଳଗିରି ରାଜବାଟୀ ତା ପାଖରେ ସ୍ଥାପିତ ।
ପଞ୍ଜିଲିଙ୍ଗେଶ୍ଵର ଦିଶେ ଆଉ ଟିକେ ଦୂରେ,
ନୀଳରଙ୍ଗେ ଶୋଭାପାଏ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟାସ୍ତ ବେଳରେ ।

ପୁରୁବକୁ ଲମ୍ବିଆଏ ଧାନ କ୍ଷେତ କିଆରୀ,
ଦକ୍ଷିଣରେ ତାଳଗଛ ଆଉ ପାଣି ପୋଖରୀ ।
ଉତ୍ତରରେ ସାନପୋଲ ମାଳ ନଇ ଉପରେ,
ତାହା ପାଖେ ଗାଆଁଟିଏ ପାଟରା ନାମରେ ।
ନୀଳଗିରି ରୋତନାମେ ରେଳଗାଡି ଷ୍ଟେସନ,
ତା ପାଖକୁ ରହିଅଛି ଅନେକ ଦୋକାନ ।
ସେହିଠାରୁ ଲମ୍ବିଅଛି ଗାଁ ଠାକୁ ସତକ,
ବାଲି ମାଟି, ନାଲି ଗୋଡ଼ି କେତେ ଆଙ୍କ ବାଙ୍କ ।
ନତା ଛପର ଆଉ ବାଲି ମାଟି କାଛରେ,
ଘର ମାନ ରହିଅଛି ରାସ୍ତା ଦୁଇ କଡରେ ।

କାକ କୋଇଲିର ଶୁନେ ହୁଅଇ ସକାଳ,
ବଷା ଭାଇ କ୍ଷେତେ ଯାଏ କାନ୍ଧରେ ଲଙ୍ଗଳ ।
ସାରା ଦିନ କାମ ପରେ ଲେଉଟେ ଘରକୁ,
ପଖାଳ ଖାଏ, ଶାଗ, ମାଛ-ଶୁଖୁଆ ସାଙ୍ଗକୁ ।

ଠନ, ଠନ ଘଣ୍ଟ ବାଜେ ଗାଁ ବାହାଳୀରେ,
ସହସା ପହଞ୍ଚୁଥିଲୁ ସାଙ୍ଗଙ୍କ ମେଳରେ ।
ହେ ଆନନ୍ଦମୟ କୋଟି ଭୁବନ ପାଳକ
ବହୁ ଦୂର ଭାସିଯାଏ ଏ ଶିଶୁଙ୍କ ଡାକ ।
ମିଶାଣ ଫେଟାଣ ବର୍ଷବୋଧ ପଣକିଆ,
ଅବଧାନ ବେତମାତ ଲାଗଇ ଛାନିଆଁ ।
ହସ୍ତକର୍ମ ଚିତ୍ରାଙ୍ଗନ ଅତୀବ ସହଜ,
ବାଗୁଡ଼ୀ ବହୁଚୋରୀ ଖେଳତ ମଉଜ ।
ଆଲିଖେଳ ଗୁଲିଦଣ୍ଡ ମଜାକେ ଭୁଲିବ,
ଦୁଃଖ ଲାଗେ କେବେ ଆଉ ସେ ଦିନ ଆସିବ ?
ବାହାଳୀ ଛୁଟି ପରେ ହାତେ ଧରି ବସ୍ତାନୀ,
ସିଧା ଯାଉ ଆମ୍ବତୋଟା ଆଉ କିଛି ଦିଶେନି ।
ମିଠା ମିଠା ଆମ୍ବ ଆଉ କଳା କଳା ଜାମୁ,
ଗଛରୁ ଗଛକୁ ଡେଉଁ କେତେ କାହିଁ ଭ୍ରମୁ ।

ପୋଖରୀ ମଧ୍ୟେ ପହଁରା ଆଉ ମାଛଧରା,
ଜାଲ ଖାଲି ହାତରେ, ପଙ୍କ ଦେହ ସାରା ।
ବାପାଙ୍କର ନାଲି ଆଖି ଭୁଲି ତ ହେବନି,
କୁଆଡେ ଗଲା ସେ ଦିନ ଆଉ ଫେରିବନି ?
ଉପର ବେଳା ପଖାଳ ବଢିଚୋରା ମଜା,
କଳମ ଶାଗ ଖରଡା ଆଉ ମାଛ ଭଜା ।
କେବେ କେବେ ସଞ୍ଜବେଳ ଅତୀବ ମଧୁର,
ସୁଲୁ ସୁଲୁ ବାଆ ବୋହି ହଲ୍ୟାଏ ପତର ।
ମଲ୍ଲୀ, ମଧୁମାଳତୀ, ଚଣ୍ଡ଼ଶୁଣ୍ଠିମାର ବାସନା,
ମହକାଏ ଚଉଦିଗ ତା ସାଙ୍ଗକୁ ହେନା ।

ରାତ୍ରୀକାଳେ ଘୋଡ଼ିଆସେ ଘୋର ଅନ୍ଧକାର,
ତୁଙ୍ଗି, ଲଣ୍ଠନ କରନ୍ତି ଅଧାରକୁ ଦୂର ।



ଆକାଶରେ ତାରାମାନେ ମିଟି ମିଟି କରନ୍ତି,
 ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରମା ଥିଲେ ଆକାଶେ ତାରା ଲୁଚିଯାନ୍ତି ।
 ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ କେବେ ଭୁକନ୍ତି କୁକୁର,
 ହେଉପଛେ ଯେତେ ରାତି ନମାତଇ ଡର ।

ଚାରିଆଡ଼ ଶୁନଶାନ ଯେତେବେଳେ ହୁଏ,
 ଗାଆଁ ଚଉକିଆ ତାକ ସଭିଙ୍କୁ ଜଗାଏ ।
 ଗୋଟିଏ ପରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଛଅ ରତ୍ନୁ ଆସେ,
 ବଦଳେ ଗାଆଁର ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ମନକୁ ହରସେ ।
 ବିଷୁବ ମିଳନ ଆସେ ବର୍ଷ ଆରମ୍ଭରେ,
 ବସନ୍ତରା ମାଠିଆଟି ଚଉରା ଉପରେ ।
 ଗୋପା ଗୋପା ପାଣି ପଡ଼େ ତୁଳସୀ ଗଛରେ,
 ଗୁଡ଼, ଛତୁଆ, ପଶା ପେଟ ଥଣ୍ଡା କରେ ।
 ସରିଲେ ବୈଶାଖ ତାତି ଜ୍ୟେଷ୍ଠ ଗୁଳୁଗୁଳି,
 ଘଡ଼ଘଡ଼ି ଚତୁର୍ଥ ମାରେକି ବିଜୁଳି ।
 ରଜ ପର୍ବ ଆସିଲା ପୃଥ୍ଵୀ ହେଲା ଶୀତଳ,
 ବେଙ୍ଗ ବେଙ୍ଗୁଲୀକୁ ତାକେ ଏ ବରଷା କାଳ ।

କେଁ କାଁ ଭେଁ ଭାଁ ରତି ଯେ ଶୁଭିଲା,
 ଜଳାଶୟ ନଦୀ ଯାକ ଜଳରେ ଭରିଲା ।
 ଘରବାଡ଼ି ପୁରିଗଲା ପନିପରିବାରେ,
 କାଗଜ ତଙ୍ଗ ଭାସିଲା ଦୁଆର ଆଗରେ ।
 ଜୁଇ, ଯାଇ, ହରଗୌରୀ, କଦମ୍ବ, କେତକୀ,
 ନାନା ପୁଷ୍ପେ ଚଉଦିଗ ଗଲାଯେ ମହକି ।
 ବିଲପାନ୍ତେ ସବୁଜିମା ଲୁଚକାଳି ଖେଳେ,
 ମାତ୍ର ଦେଖ ଯୋଖରୀରେ ପଦ୍ମି ମଉଳେ ।
 ଆସେ ପୁଣି ରଥଯାତ୍ରା ଆସାଇ ମାସରେ,
 ଭିତକ୍ତି ସଭିଏଁ ରଥ ମନ ଉଲ୍ଲାସରେ ।
 ଗଣେଶ ଚତୁର୍ଥୀ ଆଉ ଗର୍ଭଣା ସଂକ୍ରାନ୍ତି,

ପର୍ବ ପର୍ବାଣୀରେ ଦୁଃଖ ସଭିଏଁ ଭୁଲନ୍ତି ।
 ଶରତ କାଳ ହୋଇଲା ନେଳିଆ ଅକାଶ,
 କଦବା ବରଷା ଝରେ ଏ ଅଶିଶ ମାସ ।
 ଗଙ୍ଗାଶୀଉଳି ଝଡେ ଅଗଣା ଭିତରେ,
 କଇଁ ଫୁଲ ଫୁଟିଥାଏ ଗାଁ ପୋଖରୀରେ ।
 ଦୁର୍ଗାପୂଜା, ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀପୂଜା, କୁମାର ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣିମା,
 ଯିଏ ଜାଣେ ତାର ମଜା ନଭୁଲଇ ଜମା ।
 ମହିଷାମର୍ଦ୍ଦିନୀ ଦୁର୍ଗା ଖଡ୍ଗ ହସ୍ତା ହୋଇ,
 ବଧକ୍ତି ମହିଷାସୁର ଦେବରଷା ପାଇଁ ।
 କୁଆଁର ପୁନେଇଁ ଚାନ୍ଦ ପୁରୁବେ ଉଠିଲେ,
 କୁମାର କୁମାରୀ ମାନେ ଚାନ୍ଦ ଅର୍ଘ୍ୟ ଦେଲେ ।
 ତାସ୍ତଖେଳ, ପୁଟିଖେଳ ଆଉ ଲୁତୁଖେଳ,
 ପାହିଯାଏ ସାରାରାତି ହୁଅଇ ସକାଳ ।
 କାଳିପୂଜା-ଦୀପାବଳୀ ଉଆଁସ ତିଥିରେ,
 ଗରାଖଙ୍କ ଭିତଲାଗେ ଦୋକାନ ବଜାରେ ।
 ପୂର୍ବ ପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ଲାଗି ପୟ ଶ୍ରାଦ୍ଧ ହୁଏ,
 କାଉଁରିଆ କାଠି ଜାଳି ପିଣ୍ଡ ବଜାଯାଏ ।
 ଭୃତ ପ୍ରେତ ଚରିଯାନ୍ତି ଫେଟକା ମାତରେ,
 ଅନ୍ଧାର ଦୂରେଇ ଯାଏ ଦୀପ ଆଲୁଅରେ ।

ବୋଇତ ବନ୍ଦାଶ ପଡ଼େ କାହିଁକି ମାସରେ,
 ସୁଲୁପ ଭସାଶ ହୁଏ ପୋଖରୀ ଜଳରେ ।
 ଆ-କା-ମା-ବୈ ସ୍ଵରେ ସଭିଏଁ ତାକନ୍ତି,
 ପାନ ଗୁଆ ଥୋଇ କେତେ ଶୁଭ ମନାସକ୍ତି ।
 ଆସିଲେ କାଲୁଆ ପାଗ ହେଲା ଶୀତକାଳ,
 ଲୋକମାନେ ଆଦୋରିଲେ ଗୁଧୁଡ଼ି କମ୍ବଳ ।
 ସକାଳିଆ ଖରା ଲାଗେ ଅମୃତ ସମାନ,
 ପତରେ କାକର ଦିଶେ ମୁକ୍ତା ଖଣ୍ଡମାନ ।
 ଗୁରୁବାରେ ମାଣବସା ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀଙ୍କ ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା,



ସଞ୍ଜ ହେଲେ ଭାସିଆସେ ଝୁଣାର ବାସନା ।
 ଘରେ ଘରେ ପୁଷିଉଠେ ଝୁଟି ଆଳପନା,
 ଦୁବ, ଗେଣ୍ଡୁ ପୁଲ, ପୁକୁସୁଙ୍ଗାର ବାସନା ।
 ଆରିସା, କାକରା, ମଣ୍ଡା, ଚକୁଳି ସମେତ,
 ସବୁରି ଘରେ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ ଅଭାବ ନାହିଁତ ।
 ଭଳି କି ଭଳି ଧାନ ପୁଞ୍ଜି ମରାଗଲା,
 ଖଳାରେ ପତୁଳି ପତି ଧାନ ଝଡ଼ା ହେଲା ।
 ମାଘମାସ ଶୀତ ପରା ଆସେ ବାଘପରି,
 ମକର ସଂକ୍ରାନ୍ତି କେବେ ନ ଯାଅ ପାଶୋରି ।
 ମକର ଚାଉଳ ଆଉ ତିଳଉ ଉଖୁତା,
 କନ୍ଦମୂଳ, ଚିନିଆଳୁ ତା ସାଙ୍ଗକୁ ବୁଡ଼ା ।
 ସଂପ୍ରଦା ଆସନ୍ତି ଘରେ କୀର୍ତ୍ତନ କରନ୍ତି,
 ମକର ଖାଇ ଆନନ୍ଦେ ଘରକୁ ଫେରନ୍ତି ।
 ଶୀତକାଳ ଗଲାଗାଲି ବସନ୍ତ ଆସିଲା,
 ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ଦିଗୁଁ ମଳୟ ପବନ ବୋହିଲା ।
 ଆମ୍ବ, ବରଗଛମାନ ପତୁଝଡ଼ା ଦେଲେ,

ପତ୍ର ଉହାତରେ ରହି କୋକିଳ ରାବିଲେ ।
 ଦୋଳ ପୁନେଇଁ ରାଧାକୃଷ୍ଣଙ୍କ ପରବ,
 ବାତିଖେଳ ଗଉଡ଼ଙ୍କ ଆସରେ ଦେଖିବ ।
 ଦୋଳରେ ବସି ଝୁଲନ୍ତି ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣ ରାଧୀକା,
 ଏହିଦିନୁଁ ଗଣାହେଲା ନୂତନ ପଞ୍ଜିକା ।
 ନାନା ବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଅବିରକ୍ତ ରଙ୍ଗ ପିବକାରି,
 ହୋରି ଖେଳେ ମାତିଆନ୍ତି ସର୍ବେ ହାତେ ଧରି ।
 ଏହିପରି ବାରମାସେ ତେର ପର୍ବ ହୁଏ,
 ହ୍ରସ ଖୁସି ଦୁଃଖେ ସୁଖେ ମନକୁ ଭୁଲାଇ ।
 ଆମ ଗାଁ ଲୋକମାନେ ପର ଉପକାରୀ,
 କାହାର କାମ ପଡ଼ିଲେ ଆସନ୍ତି ଦଉଡ଼ି ।
 ସରଳ ଜୀବନ ତାଙ୍କ ଗରିବ ହେଲେବି,
 ଦିନ କଟିଯାଏ ସୁଖେ ଅଭାବ ଥିଲେବି ।
 ଦେଖିଲିଣି ନାନା ଦେଶ କରିକେତେ ଭ୍ରମଣ,
 ପ୍ରୀତିକର ସବୁଠାରୁ ସେହି ଗ୍ରାମ୍ୟ ଜୀବନ ।

ଗଗନ ପାଣିଗ୍ରାହୀ ଚରଣେରେ ତାଙ୍କ ପରିବାର ସହିତ ରହନ୍ତି । ନାଟକ ଅଭିନୟରେ ଓ ଚିତ୍ରାଙ୍କନରେ ତାଙ୍କର ଶରଧା ।



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In Memorium



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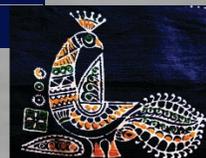


BASIAPA – THE MOTHER IN NEW YORK



Mothers are a different creed - to stand by their children in pain and laughter, in sickness and health, in despair and hope. For all on earth, the mother is a special being who is your best friend, the ever-available well-wisher, the sincere help and most importantly, the only one who has always forgiven you. While we all like our mothers and mothers love us, it's rare to find mothers who love all, irrespective of who they are and where they come from. They love to feed and love to hear your stories, they love your company. Basiapa was one of such rare individuals.

Basiapa's had the name Basantakumari, the daughter of spring. She was the daughter, ever-smiling, always affectionate and ready to nurture with her immense storehouse of nourishment and colors. To feed was her character. Having mastered the cooking recipes from Orissa, she would try them out in New York kitchens. For thousands of ethnic Oriyas, her cooking brought nostalgia, the memory of home and an opportunity to recollect childhood with their own mothers. People like me would travel two hundred miles from Boston to check out what Basiapa might have prepared. Food is an attraction for the young and Basiapa knew it. The daughter was a mother. I came to know Basiapa in 1981 when we used to go to New York to visit a temple there. Her husband (Dr.) Krishna Mohan Das was an Oriya, much older to me, and knew people whom I had known as a child. He had high respects for my family and we developed a strong friendship. Dr. K.M. Das, as he was known, was a veterinarian and was an



early immigrant to the US along with a few other veterinarians and physicians who arrived in the sixties. For employment and professional independence, (Dr.) Das would work in various locations in and out of state, and Basiapa was there to guard the house and raise the children. Dr Das had a knack of social activism in him and would get involved in various social welfare projects for the ethnic communities. He was instrumental in supporting the construction of the temple in New York and served as its trustee for many years. He was also instrumental in gathering a small nucleus of Oriyas in New York and gave them a home away from home. The Orissa Society of Americas in New York was born through his efforts and he helped mould lives and careers of hundreds of young men and women who passed by New York. Basiapa subscribed to his passion of welfare to the community and was always with a plate for the tired. She had the quietest demeanor and the largest of the hearts.

For years, it was a tradition in New York to rent a cottage on the lakeside in southern New Jersey for a gathering of Oriya families once a year. The idea had sprouted with Dr Das and Basiapa and they were always the first registrants. We did skits, plays and music, and Basiapa would enjoy with full laughter. She would lament if the children's games could not be held because of bad weather and most of all, she would ask if any one was missing in the group. We had the most pleasant experience in those years where we felt completely at home under her nurture.

Dr Das's health was failing in the nineties and he thought to return to Orissa for retirement and rest. For medical help, he returned to the US in 1999 and that is when I last met him. In a nursing home in Long Neck, New York, he was on his bed and was in some pain. Basiapa arrived and we had a small discussion. The doctors came and checked out and advised that he would be on watch. When it was time to leave, Basiapa opened her purse and got out a small picture of Sri Jagannatha trinity and touched Dr Das's forehead with a murmur. It was a momentous display of faith and prayer. While the picture represented an identity of the Oriya beliefs, connecting energy through head is an old vedic ritual. It was an overwhelming sight. The culture nurtures faith and a few have the conviction to preserve it.

Basiapa left the earth to her heavenly abode (almost a year back). She was 79. Her children and relatives would remember her as a sweet nurturing care-giver. Her friends and other children would remember her as a representative of a culture where giving is an art.

Bijoy Misra and family



ପ୍ରଫୁଲ୍ଲୀ ଦାଦାଙ୍କ ବିୟୋଗାର୍ଥେ

ପ୍ରମୋଦିନୀ ମିଶ୍ର

କେଣେ ଛାଡ଼ିଗଲ ପ୍ରଫୁଲ୍ଲୀ ଦାଦାଗୋ
ଏ ଘର ଅନ୍ଧାର କରି
ଆଖିର ଲୋତକ ରଖିହେଉନାହିଁ,
ଅବିଶାନ୍ତ ଯାଏ ଝରି
ହେ ସ୍ନେହ ଅନୁଭବ, ଉଛୁଳା ସ୍ନେହରେ
ବାନ୍ଧିଥିଲ ଜଣେ ଜଣେ
ପ୍ରତିଟି ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତ ଲୋତକ ଝରୁଛି
ଭୁଲିହେଉ ନାହିଁ କ୍ଷଣେ
ସର୍ବ ଗୁଣ ତୁମ ଲେଖିବି ବୋଲି ମୁଁ
ଲେଖିପାରୁନାହିଁ କିଛି

ବଡ଼ ଦୁଃଖେ ଲେଖା ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଛି
ନୟନରୁ ନୀର ପୋଛି
କିଛି ଦିନ ଯଦି ନ ଦେଖେ ତୁମକୁ
ଝୁରି ହେଉ ଥାଏ ମନ
ସବୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ଦେଇ ଚାଲିଯାଏ ଦାଦା,
କରିବି ବୋଲି ଦର୍ଶନ
ତାଙ୍କର ଖାନାରେ ମୋର ଗୀତ ଶୁଣି
ହରଷିତ ସେ ବଦନ
ଇହଧାମ ଛାଡ଼ି ଚାଲିଗଲ ଦାଦା
ମାନୁନାହିଁ ମୋର ମନ

କେତେ ଆନନ୍ଦରେ ମାଗୁଥିଲ ଦୁବ
ଭାଇ ଜୁଇଁଟିଆ ଦିନ
ଆଉକି ପାରିବି ଦୁବ ମଖାଇବି
ଏକଥା ଘାରୁଛି ମନ
ଛଅ ଭାଇ ମୋର ଦୁବ ମାଗୁଥିଲେ
ତିନି ଭାଇ ଚାଲିଗଲେ
କେଜାଣି କାହିଁକି ପ୍ରଭୁ ପରାଫୁର
ମୋ ପ୍ରତି ନିଷ୍ଠୁର ହେଲେ
ପିଲାଟି ଦିନରୁ ଉଜଳ ପ୍ରତିଭା
ବିକାଶ ଯେ କରିଥିଲ

ପଞ୍ଜିମ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବିକାଶରେ ତୁମେ
ସତେ ଅବା ବ୍ରତୀ ଥିଲ
ଭାବି ବସିଲେ ମୁଁ ମନେ ପଡ଼ିଯାଏ
କେତେ ପୁରାତନ କଥା
ପିତୁ ମାତୁ ହରା ଭାଇଭଗ୍ନୀ ସ୍ନେହ
ମନେ ପଡ଼ିଯାଏ ବ୍ୟଥା
ଯେଉଁଠି ଥିଲେବି ତୁମ ପ୍ରତି ଆମ
ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧା ଭକ୍ତି ଅସରନ୍ତି
ପୁଣ୍ୟ ଆତ୍ମା ତୁମ ତୁଠ ହୋଇ ରହୁ
ପାଉ ସେ ଅସୀମ ଶାନ୍ତି

IN THE MEMORY OF DR. PRAFULLA K PATI, ELDER BRROTHER OF DR. PRASANNA K PATI OF OREGON



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NRO Activities



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KALINGA HOSPITAL MARCHES ON

A super star hospital concept was conceived by NRI from Orissa in around 1989. That hospital is none other than Kalinga Hospital. It has gone through many ups and downs during the past 15 to 16 years. Out patient services at Kalinga Hospital started in February 1997 and in August 1998, the hospital with 175 beds was fully operational.

In the past year the hospital is running with full occupancy. Some of the days we are refusing patients for admission to the hospital. The Hospital Corporation of Orissa (HCO) is making its best effort for expansion of beds at Kalinga Hospital as well as keeping an eye to improve the patient care. Kalinga Hospital gets all the patients from other hospitals as well as other nursing homes in around Cuttack and Bhubaneswar area. Some of the patients come to us at the very last moment. Due to moral and ethical reasons we accept all patients and try our best to help them. Our open heart surgery and angioplasty results are as good as any hospital in the country. Neurosurgeons, orthopedic surgeons, plastic surgeons, urologist perform very complex surgical procedures with great success. Cardiology, nephrology and intensive care services are the busiest and undoubtedly the best department in the state. At Kalinga Hospital, 750 cleft lip and palate surgery has been done with collaboration of Smile Train Program of the World.

Nursing school is in the third year at Kalinga Hospital. The senior students from nursing college have been a great help for our patient care. Spiral CT scan, new cardio cath lab and MRI scan are in the final negotiation stages to be installed this year at Kalinga Hospital. Our pathology laboratory with modern equipments has been managed by pathologists of Kalinga Hospital. In the past two years the hospital has shown profitability but all the money has been put back for new equipment.

We the office bearers of HCO thank all the shareholders and donors for their help with advice, time and money in building the hospital to this stage. We seek your continued support and request all the NRO to make the best use of the hospital facility.

With Best Regards,

Dhiraj K. Panda
President, HCO



SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY (SEEDS)

SEEDS rose out of Non-Resident Oriyas' despair and the student activism in the wake of shocking news of widespread misery and deprivation in famine-afflicted KBK area in early 1990s. With the initial goal of motivating the affected people on effective self help through appropriate training, functional education, and providing seed capital for a sustainable process to guard against future natural or "man-made" calamities, SEEDS has grown significantly over the years to addressing grass-root structural issues, such as education and micro-credit. Initial experiments working through local NGOs or educational institutions such as ASRA, Baji Rout Chattrabas, BISWA, KVP, REACHD, UAA and UNNAYAN, have resulted in many successful programs such as pani-panchayat projects, water harvesting schemes, community gardening, sponsor-a-student, and bamboo plantation for income generation, etc. (Full list is available at www.seedsnet.org.) Over last 12 years, SEEDS has generated and disbursed over 60,000 US dollars towards grass-roots developmental activities, and untold number of volunteer hours, not to mention the amplifying factors.

Current Focus Areas

SEEDS is actively participating in or driving a variety of programs targeting the disadvantaged people, primarily in rural areas. In keeping with its philosophy on sustainable and equitable processes, current thrust is in the following four major activities that we hope to have a system-wide beneficial influence.

Micro-Finance Bank: SEEDS is collaborating with a Sambalpur based NGO, BISWA on starting a micro-financing bank in western Orissa, similar in line with the much acclaimed Grameen-bank. Micro-finance helps reduce poverty through increase in income, allowing the poor to build assets and reduce their vulnerability

Mahila Shanti Sena: SEEDS is extending its support to establish Mahila Shanti Sena (MSS) in Orissa. This is done in partnership with the Bihar based NGO Shrambharati and Centre for Peace Studies, McMaster University, Canada. MSS is a *Peace Brigade* formed by women that has been instrumental in uniting and raising socio-political awareness among women in Bihar and North Eastern States. The members of MSS learn to elevate their role into policy-making through gram panchayats and also form SHGs for income generation SEEDS is funding local MSS training camps organized by Unnayan. MSS is active in Orissa only for almost a year. Two training camps have been completed and one workshop



to interact with MSS members from other States was held. Within very short period, evidence suggests that some members have very effectively resolved a couple of tension-caused social issues in a peaceful manner.

Rural Mathematics Talent Search (RMTS) Examination: . SEEDS is in partnership with the Institute of Mathematics and Applications and the Vikash Educational Charitable Trust, in order to popularize mathematics in the interior parts of Orissa. This program is meant to identify and support promising youngsters in rural areas of Orissa, and financially sponsor to provide valuable mentorship to groups of budding talents. The RMTS program is running for four years including this year. Last year almost 5000 students covering all districts wrote the examination. This year it is the intention to cover almost all blocks in the State. For more information visit www.rmtsorissa.org.

Computing for Masses: SEEDS is initiating another interesting project in education very soon in cooperation with JITM (Jagannath Institute of Technology and Management) in Paralakhemundi. Rural Orissa is a perfect test bed for propagation of education through “computing for masses”. Access to internet and productivity software can easily be provided by a single server with several cheap terminals. There are dramatic advantages to this idea of computing: lower system maintenance and administration costs, reduced hardware costs by using old, donated PCs as thin clients, open-source software availability, and quite importantly, a mechanism to create linkage between technical colleges and counter-part schools for common socially-conscious projects. SEEDS is starting to drive this vision of appropriate technology and knowledge-economy preparedness for the digital have-nots.

We are also contemplating college-level distance lectures from experts around the world.

Besides these major projects, SEEDS sponsors Orissa Spelling and Vocabulary Contest and supports the scholarship scheme of Foundation for Excellence (FFE) in Orissa under which selected bright but poor students are funded for higher education. Very recently SEEDS is working on a feasibility study on “Light Up The Villages”, which is to explore the possibility of supplying affordable lights to poor people.

Join us to make a difference

Within SEEDS we have tried to combine our vision of an economically and educationally developed rural Orissa with our action to enable and sustain such change. We have seen small successes and faced great challenges. We recognize the fact that successful project implementation and idea dissemination requires many different kinds of help and involvement of the society at large. Some ways you can help:

- If you are working with an NGO and have a project falling within SEEDS focus area, you may



send us a proposal (See guidelines in our website). We also participate in collaborative projects.

- If you are not working with any specific project but want to be informed about SEEDS activities you can join our electronic network or look at our website periodically.

You can donate your time to SEEDS. We are always looking for volunteers for project implementation and monitoring.

- You can be a member of SEEDS and/or donate your money towards a SEEDS sponsored project.

SEEDS office bearers:

Chairperson: Priyadarshan Patra (dpatra@yahoo.com)

Secretary: Sri Gopal Mohanty (mohanty@mcmaster.ca)

Treasurer: Gopal Mohapatra (gkm@aiol.com)

Our address is SEEDS, 12688 NW Naomi LN, Portland, OR 97229, USA. Please check our www.seedsnet.org. You may join the SEEDS yahoo group: seedsnet. Let's forge ahead together for a better tomorrow.



MICRO FINANCE INSTITUTION IN ORISSA

Joyasree (Ranu) Mahanti

Micro Finance Institution (MFI) provides financial services (microfinance) to people who are excluded from the traditional financial systems because of their lower economic status. These people lack [collateral](#), steady [employment](#) and a verifiable [credit history](#) and therefore cannot meet even the minimum qualifications to gain access to traditional [credit](#). Micro credit is a part of [micro finance](#); besides providing loans, it includes [savings](#), micro insurance and other financial innovations. The availability of financial services through MFI acts as a buffer against sudden emergencies, business risk, and seasonal slumps that can push a family into destitution. MFI provides better financial services specifically to low-income groups and helps poor households to move from everyday survival to planning for the future, improved living conditions, and children's health and education.

In my last 10 years of experiences, I have eye witnessed child labor, prostitution, selling children for a few rupees, and giving away the daughters to marry in another state through unknown middleman. When the parents can not provide two meals a day to the family, what is the alternative? For emergency or for any other financial needs, poor people do not have access to the regular banks, the only choice left for them is to depend on the money lenders at an exorbitant interest rate (120% or more per year). In such a case, the burrower will never be able to pay back the principal. They can barely pay the interest every month with great difficulty with their limited income. This cripples their financial condition for the rest of their lives. The situation is common in both rural and urban areas.

In 2004 I was convinced of the importance of a Micro Finance Institution in Orissa. Mr. Khirod Chandra Malick , the chairman of BISWA (a non profit organization in Orissa) has been doing extensive ground work for establishing a MFI in Orissa for the last 12 years. He needed some financial help, support , and encouragement.

In 2005 OSA convention, I appealed to our friends to support this cause by investing any amount they could with BISWA with a simple interest of 5% for five years. The response was extremely encouraging. About 35 investors came forward with trust, kindness, and concern and committed nearly \$125,000. Orissa will now have a MFI for the first time. Currently, BISWA gets loan (to give loans to poor people through self help groups) from commercial banks with high interest rates and a short pay back period. As a result BISWA has to charge about 18% per year to the people to break even. After the establishment of the MFI, BISWA is hoping to reduce this interest rate to 10%. The MFI will be starting formally in June 1st and will provide services to the people of all the 30 districts of Orissa.



THE ORISSA FOUNDATION

(THE FIRST TEN YEARS)

Established : 1995

Objectives :

To help individuals or institutions (with a high degree of sincerity, honesty, and integrity) pursue projects emphasizing in areas of health, education, literature, and culture thus preserving Orissan heritage.

PROJECTS:

1. SAHAYA :

An institution for the mentally disabled children that houses schooling and training for 60 children located near the Red Cross Blood Bank near SCB Medical College. Received a three year grant from the foundation to screen children in the surrounding areas for mental disability. The institution needs contributions to advance the acceptance of mental disorders in the local community and society.

2. INSTITUTE OF ORISSAN CULTURE:

The late Professor K.C. Mishra energized and gathered a coterie of intellectuals including history, archeology, literature professors publishing 26 books on different Hindu religious influences in Orissa's makeup. The Orissa Foundation completed a 5 year grant to the institute in 2000.

3. SCB MEDICAL COLLEGE LIBRARY:

The foundation donated the first computer in 1997. This has helped in two ways. It helps the outlying physicians in rural areas to get up to date literature from the library. The library has also been efficiently meeting the need of undergraduate & post-graduate students.

4. BASUNDHARA:

The orphanage in Bidanasi, Cuttack remains the dream-child of the late Professor Mahamaya Pattanayak and her sister Dr. Jogamaya Pattanayak. From 1995 to 2002, only 30 OSA members, nonmembers, or students contributed \$47,500. The whole amount was mobilized over those seven years under the able guidance of Mrs. Ranu Mahanti of East Lansing, Michigan for the creation of self-help groups in coastal areas of Cuttack and Paradip area as well as the institution of tube wells to help irrigation.



5. DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, VANI VIHAR:

Professor Rita Ray and the Department of Sociology were awarded a two year research grant completed in 2003. The topic selected was "Single Women in Orissan Society".

6. JOGA, WASHINGTON D.C.:

The organization gets a major yearly support for training of secondary school teachers in Orissa.

7. RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN ORISSA (SAMBALPUR):

From 2003 Biswa (NGO) and Mrs. Ranu Mahanti have undertaken health, education, and agricultural initiatives in rural areas of Sambalpur. Many Oriya and non-Oriya citizens channel their sincere contributions to such efforts by donating through the Orissa Foundation.

8. THE ORISSA DANCE ACADEMY, KONARAK:

Located under the reflection of the famed Konarak Temple, this premier dance institute under the tutelage of Guru Gangadhar Pradhan and Mrs. Aruna Mohanty is trying to preserve not only the Odissi Dance style, but also different styles of regional dances distinct to different areas of Orissa.

The Orissa Foundation has been supporting the Academy in a major way every year since 1995 to preserve the Orissan tradition in arts and culture not just for now, but for all the future to come. The foundation is very proud to be able to continue the support and encourages others to do so to upkeep the tradition as well as the heritage.

9. RAVENSHAW COLLEGIATE SCHOOL, CUTTACK:

The foundation is supporting building an excellent library. In 2005, the foundation helped open a computer center in the school. Right now, three teachers are teaching 16 students at a time. The plan is to make 9, 10th, and 11th grade students computer literate so as to facilitate entry into job markets and higher opportunities.

10. BHARAT BHARATI:

Through this organization in Orissa, the foundation has distributed \$100 worth of selected Oriya books and treatise to ten different schools in Orissa.



11. THE EYE HOSPITAL IN DHENKANAL:

Cataracts and glaucoma are major causes of blindness in Orissa and India. Conceived in 2000, the eye hospital in Dhenkanal is going to be complete by July 2006 and should function from August 2006. Attempts will be made to cure blindness in a 75-100 mile radius.

12. PRESERVING OUR LITERATURE:

Professor Jatindra Mohanty has undertaken the monumental tasks of compiling 50 years of prose, poetry, and drama in Oriya literature. The Orissa foundation has awarded grants to Professor Mohanty to make his efforts and dreams successful.

In conclusion, even though we have settled in here, we also should be equally proud of our culture and heritage, and we should contribute at least 1% of our life's earnings for the betterment of Orissa.

Dr. Devi & Sarojini Misra
Huntsville, AL, USA
Telephone : 256-883-5499
e-mail : dmisra@bellsouth.net

So far, ten benevolent OSA members have donated RS 1.21 lakh towards a room in memory of their beloved family members. Your kindness is requested . Your contribution through the Orissa Foundation is tax deductible.



IAFF (Indo-American Friendship Foundation)

IAFF (Indo-American Friendship Foundation) is the oldest US based NGO dedicated for the development of Orissa and fostering friendship between citizens of USA and India through technological, educational and cultural exchanges. Details can be found in <http://www.iaff1.org/>

IAFF's work in the USA involves the sponsorship of the "Subrina Biswal Prize in Performing Arts" at every OSA convention since 1989. In addition IAFF sends speakers to various local schools and churches to present talks about India's history and culture.

In Orissa, IAFF conducts its work under the banner "RURAL DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT GOVERNMENT". This is not meant to minimize the all-important role of governments in a democratic society. Rather, the banner is meant to underscore the fact that there is no government in any democratic society, no matter how affluent and powerful, which can take care of every need of every individual in every community. Therefore, individuals and communities should take initiatives to meet as many of their needs as possible without waiting for government initiatives. IAFF provides this empowerment through collaboration with NGOs and educational institutions.

IAFF's working mottos are:

- It will not feed the hungry but will strive to prevent hunger
- It will not treat the ill but will strive to prevent illness
- It will strive to spread education in any form under any circumstances and at any place possible
- Because it is not possible to solve all problems everywhere, IAFF's approach is "selective development". Through these efforts it attempts to create examples of success, which can be emulated by other individuals, institutions and communities.

IAFF's work in Orissa addresses Agriculture, Education and Health Care, in the order listed.

AGRICULTURE:

Agricultural technology is provided through annual on-farm workshops on "Integrated Farming System" and "Controlled Environment Agriculture"

EDUCATION:

Educational Assistance is offered through grants for scholarships and facility development.

HEALTH CARE:

Health Care efforts limited to pediatric and post natal maternity care and emergency medical



transport.

Although IAFF's activities are listed under the different categories listed above, the work is actually done through an integrated approach so that all three components are combined to the extent possible. The latest example of such integrated approach is "Orphanage Augmentation" program. Through this program IAFF strives to make orphanages self-reliant through agricultural activities and impart education and provide health care through proceeds from the marketing of agricultural commodities.

All donations to IAFF are tax-deductible in the US. Please make checks payable to IAFF. For additional information, please visit the website given above or contact me.

Dr. Subhas C. Mohapatra
President, IAFF
iaff1@aol.com



IASF

(INDO AMERICAN SEVAKS FOUNDATION)

Who are we?

Indo American Sevaks Foundation (IASF) – a registered non-profit and charitable organization under IRS regulation operating in USA. IASF (formerly known as Oriya Sevaks) was formed soon after the devastating super cyclone of Orissa in October 1999 by a handful of enthusiastic volunteers, mostly from Northern California, to render aid to the severely affected Cyclone victims. This group of motivated people collected generous donations from individuals, corporations and various other organizations through personal contacts and fund raising events. Our initial goal was to extend all our help and support to the Cyclone victims. However, as we were very successful in our approach, we have expanded our horizon to include other projects that will improve education, economic, civic, social and spiritual well being of people.

How we operate?

The mission of this organization is to conduct and promote charitable activities in India and USA. Our Main Focus is "Education for Kids" and paying special attention to rural areas.

The volunteers execute their projects through team effort and in a cohesive manner to coordinate various activities abroad. It is a unique group working tirelessly with minimal organizational structure. The Sevaks meet once a month to discuss progress and challenges for current projects, and identify future proposals.

IASF works in collaboration with IDRF, SEEDS, VIDE, REDCROSS, Ekal Vidyalaya, FIA and NGO's to distribute funds, relief and medicines for these charitable activities. We have successfully completed more than 10 projects worth over \$200K and actively pursuing 4 projects.

What we have accomplished?

We team with enthusiastic, energetic and well-known people organization that can get the projects done with stipulated budget and time. We always seek progress of the project via electronic mail, photograph, and phone conversation and financial audit reports for sustainability of the organization. Few completed projects are highlighted here. For a list of completed and on-going projects, please visit our website. <http://www.iasf.net/>



Project Snapshot:

Projects	Beneficiaries	Purpose
Uchabali High School (\$40k)	500 High School students	Provide education to and serve as a shelter in emergency
Gunupur Health Center (\$21k)	7,000 people in rural areas	Designed to serve as a community health center
Thamulpur-Rampur School Kalahandi (\$35k)	300 students	Provided school and hostel buildings.

How can you help?

YOU are our strength- Each and every one of you. We have participated in the OSA05 convention at Long Beach, CA and extended our reach to greater community. We are very open and flexible to work with other charitable and like minded institutions to reach a shared goal. "We need your continued support to bring happiness and joy to a few innocent lives".

Giving gives solace to your spirit and direct towards spiritual path for happiness. You can help and support IASF in many ways to achieve your philanthropic idea and goal.

- Become an active member and work with us.
- Annual contributor (Pledge anything starting from \$100 – annually).
- Spread the words and give us your feedback.
- Participate and execute your favorite projects through IASF

Please help and support IASF mission in undertaking more development projects to promote and improve Education for Kids in rural areas by making generous tax deductible donations. If you want to contact us, you can visit our website www.iasf.net or write in the following address. [IASF at work - All proceeds will be used to support charitable milestone in USA and INDIA.](#)

IASF
18366 Chelmsford Dr., Cupertino, Ca 95014
Ph: 408-343-0993
Tax ID: Section 501(c)(3): 41-2050961



JOGA SCIENCE CENTER – UNIT I HIGH SCHOOL, BHUBANESWAR

Jagannath Organization for Global Awareness (JOGA) is in the process of establishing a science center at Unit I high school in Bhubaneswar. The center will be used not only by the students of Unit I high school, but also by the students of near by high schools on time share basis. The fund for the science center was raised by the JOGA members. The project advisors in Bhubaneswar are Dr. Gouri Sankar Ray, Dr. Sarat C. Das, Mr. Debraj Mishra, an alumni of the school. We have also planned to organize a high school teachers' refresher course for science at this center.

Work done so far:

The science center initial set-up is complete with gas lines, water lines and flooring. Wall almirahs(cupboards) are planned and lab counters are completed. JOGA planned to finance the project in phase wise. Besides JOGA funding for a lab set up, the school development committee also spent money for facility upgrade.

Selection of Science Center Lab. Assistant

There are about 15 applicants for the Science Center laboratory assistant position. Out of the 15 candidates, we made a short list of 8 eligible candidates. We interviewed these eight candidates for the Science Center lab. Assistant position, and finally selected a candidate who had more experience and knowledge than other candidates. The new science center laboratory assistant is Mr. Naser Mohammad from Cuttack. The PTO committee is arranging to provide free accommodation for the science center lab. assistant in proximity of the school. The plan is to hire the candidate as soon as possible and involve him in planning the lab, setting up the lab facility, and purchasing lab equipment. The lab will initially be host to experiments in physics and chemistry. Later, other subjects can be added.

Future Plans: We plan to hire the laboratory assistant during the next school year. JOGA has sanctioned money to buy the necessary equipment for the physics and chemistry experiments. We plan to monitor the use of the center by the students as well as the teachers. We also plan to organize a science league for groups of students from different schools. Also, once successful here, we would like to set up similar centers in other schools in the state. The science center and other educational project reports by JOGA are available at www.jogaworld.org. Please contact us for further details:

Dr. Naresh C. Das, nareshdas@yahoo.com

Mr. Hemant Biswal hbiswal@hotmail.com

Dr. Koneti Rao, koneti@hotmail.com



OUR VILLAGE TRUST (OVT)

Sudip Patnaik

Our Village Trust (OVT) was established in 2000 to help the state of Orissa, India - a coastal province bordering the Bay of Bengal, which was devastated by two back-to-back super-cyclones in the fall of 1999. OVT founders named their initiative as "Our Village Project" and laid out a pragmatic approach to rebuild the lives of some of the worst cyclone-affected villages in the state, so that they would have the strength to stand on their own feet and fend off such disasters in the future.

OVT played an important and active role in the rebuilding of two villages, Bhitara Sreechandan Pur (BSpur) and Digitary in Erasama District. Strongly committed to building institutions that could create an environment for fostering growth and development, OVT motivated the villagers and taught them responsibility and accountability. It built a strong village infrastructure and played a major catalytic role in an all round agricultural development of villages.

OVT started the habitat replacement at BSpur with 200 square feet cyclone proof housing as the villagers kept and rebuilt their original residences. Roads were resurfaced with stone gravel. The villagers were provided with seed money to restart agriculture. A 1,800 square feet community center, designed also to serve as a cyclone shelter for the entire village, was built at a high location, with funding from the OSA Michigan chapter (see the red building in the image.) All 46 houses in the village were completely rebuilt from ground up. Next, OVT took up the work at Digitary. The residents had received Indira Awas grants, which were grossly under funded. OVT provided an additional 40% to help the villagers complete their cyclone proof residences (54 houses in total). Funds were provided for fish farming too. The projects were completed mostly through the unskilled labor of the villagers. Habitat for Humanity (HfH) conducted the construction work at BSpur, supervised by Loka Sevak Yuba Mandal (LSYM). LSYM managed the total work at Digitary.

Additionally, OVT has collaborated with the organization, To Help Rural Indian Village Emerge (THRIVE), to complete a small school building in Sandhapali, a tribal area in the district of Nayagarh. Now OVT has taken up a challenging project of rebuilding a dilapidated school, converting it to an 8,000 square feet modern facility, to help educate children in a very poor community near Bhadrak. Project plans are currently underway, and the design work has started. OVT, again, is very optimistic about overcoming the hurdles there, and achieving its goals.



NAVA PRABHAT CHARITABLE TRUST

An Organization for Serving the Poor in Western Orissa

Sudhansu S. Misra

During one of my trips to Rishikesh, I met Bhagban Dev, a young man from Orissa who was working as an assistant to Swami Ved Bharati at Sadhana Mandir Ashram. Being able to speak Oriya in a distant place from Orissa we found a common bond which developed later to a close friendship. In one of my subsequent visits he told me that he is intent on serving the poor children near his village by establishing a school. He succeeded in getting his wish to be a reality in 2001. He established a school on a 45 acre donated land in his village Nuapali near Padmapur in Baragarh District. The school was founded with the Gurukul style of teaching, where boys from very young age study Sanskrit and other modern subjects taught in High School. To support them Bhagban Dev looked for financial help from his friends and well wishers. I was told that students were from nearby 30 villages where people are very poor, school dropout rate is high and children often grow up to be unemployed. I was sorry to learn that people in this part of Orissa have not been fortunate to get much attention from the State government and many times they become victims of drought and flooding. I wanted to help Bhagban Dev as best as I could to keep the school going. Since then I have been raising some funds in America from friends and well wishers. I try to help them who are sincerely involved in serving the poor and the needy. For monitoring the progress I visit the school and the villages when I go to India.

My first visit to the school was in October 2003. I was impressed to find a completed school building with 17 rooms where the students and staff stay, a kitchen and a small dining hall. They were farming on 15 acres of land that produced enough rice and vegetables for their daily use. Farming was done using only organic methods. There were some cows and a cowshed. I saw the boys were very regular in doing their yoga and meditation early in the morning, performing various chores around the ashram, kitchen and dining hall. They were encouraged to speak in English along with Hindi and Oriya. Sanskrit was spoken effortlessly among the teachers and the students. They had three healthy meals during the day. Sometimes the children go to collect alms from the nearby villages in Gurukul tradition. This helps them in raising funds for the ashram. The typical day at the school starts at 4:30 AM in the morning and ends at 9 PM.

Besides studies the students get enough break time for games and free time. At the time there were 33 students in 5th through 9th grades. The school bears all costs for the students including food, clothing and books. When funds are available, the Trust plans to add computer and vocational training. The goal is to train the students with a trade that will help support them and their families. Besides



education, the Trust also helps the community in various ways. Periodically camps are setup to feed the hungry, treat the sick by doctors in health camps. Health care has been a major challenge. People suffer from malnutrition and chronic diseases. There is no hospital or clinic nearby to provide adequate health care for people in these villages. A clinic with a qualified doctor is urgently needed. The Trust has set aside a site for a clinic, but is unable start the clinic due to lack of funds.

My most recent visit was in December 2005. Since my first visit in 2003, the boys looked healthier, more focused, disciplined and organized. Open air classes are held where English, Mathematics, History, Geography and other courses required for High School are taught. Students are fluent in Sanskrit vocabulary. They study Sanskrit grammar by Panini and memorize scriptures from Vedas and Upanishads. Meditation and Yoga is an intimate practice at the school. A newly built Yagnasala has space for almost 200 people to participate in fire offering (havan) or other special events. Classes are also held here during the day. What pleased me the most was a school for the girls. Since Gurukul Schools are not coeducational, classes for the girls were held separately with one part time teacher. It was encouraging to know their school will be fully functional in a separate building now being completed. The girls who came from the nearby villages were happy to come to the school. Bhagban Dev said the school will be fully functional at the new location with a full time teacher. All the students are bright kids who have the potential to shine with a little help from all who wish. A donation of \$250 will support a student for a year with room, board, clothing, books and help pay the teachers salary. Contact Sudhansu Misra, Tel. 651-631-1145, email: sudhansum@msn.com for further details. You are most welcome to visit Nava Prabhat School when you are in India. There is modern accommodation for guests in the ashram and you will be assured of loving hospitality. Contact Bhagbandev at the ashram, Tel. 06683-228367, email: bhagbandev@yahoo.com if you want to visit.

Sudhansu Misra is retired from Honeywell and lives in New Brighton, Minnesota.

The secret cove

ମନ ଜାଣେ ପାପ

ମା ଜାଣେ ବାପ



LIFECARE BIOTECH :

A NON-RESIDENT ORIYA – RESIDENT ORIYA (NRO-RO) JOINT VENTURE FOR DEVELOPMENT IN ORISSA

Amiya R. Nayak*

Lifecare Biotech (India) Private Limited is a NRO-RO joint-venture start-up biotechnology company based in Bhubaneswar, Orissa and incorporated in 2004. The concept of starting a biotech firm in Orissa was brewing in our minds since the late 1990s, however the specific bio-business idea was crystallized during late 2003. The firm's head office is in Bhubaneswar with two other offices in Chennai and USA.

Vision and Mission

The company is pursuing the following long-term missions:

- Development of the businesses, marketing, promotion, distribution and services.
- Promote private-public partnerships with the Government, Public, Private and NGO sectors, and Small Business Entrepreneurs.
- Develop a Private Foundation for social service ventures/health development projects.
- Development of Human Networks, Organizational Networks and Consultancy/Advisory to facilitate local, national and global exchanges to help in Orissa Development.
- To become a micro-multi national company with head quarters in Orissa.

Biotech Businesses, Products and Services

Lifecare's strategy, business and service models are based on how to make the expensive biotech products and services to be available to the Orissa people by cost-effective and affordable ways.

The following categories of biotech products/services are offered by LBIPL

- Medical Biotech (recombinant hepatitis B vaccine, other vaccines, insulin, other biopharmaceuticals, diagnostics, pharmaceuticals, healthcare disposables/consumables)
- Agricultural Biotech (plant biotech, seeds, agro-products)
- Veterinary Biotech (animal vaccines, vet biologics, fishery)
- Bio-products (lifesciences/bio-based consumer healthcare, bioherbals, nutraceuticals)

LBIPL has business relationships with Indian companies, MNCs, and small entrepreneurial bio-firms in India and America, who are providing products through a cost-effective system. The company has future plans to move into biotech R&D, manufacturing, and import-export business.

The j/v is promoting the idea of mass vaccinations, immunizations services for public health



development and distributing Hepatitis B Vaccine and biopharmaceuticals (insulin and other biopharma) through competitive, cost-effective, affordable and sustainable prices. Lifecare promotes the idea that immunization is an investment for life. LBIPL has expressed interests to help the Orissa Government in the proposed Biotech Park project.

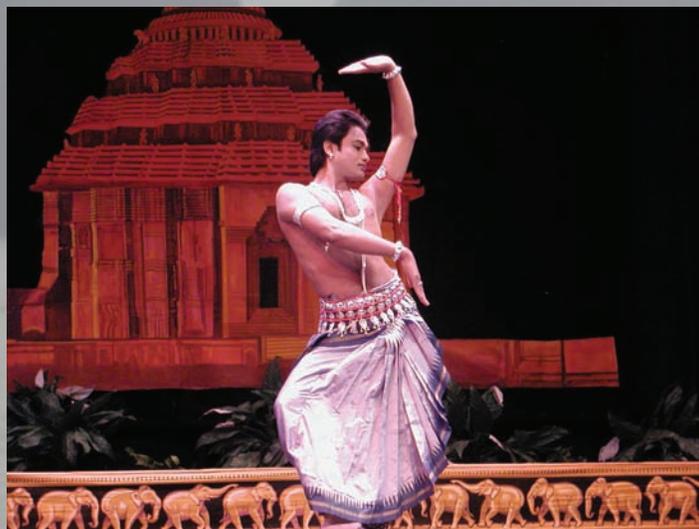
Lifecare Foundation

LBIPL is initiating a project to establish Lifecare Foundation to help in development and services. The foundation will focus on Orissa-based social impact projects, development services, biotech-education, biotech knowledge, biotech-based healthcare/vaccinations services and agriculture development projects. The foundation would like to assist the Govt of Orissa and other organizations through private-public sector partnerships.

Value Proposition and Biotech for Socio-Economic Development in Orissa

The biotech-based value propositions are: 1) To provide high quality and international standard biotech products/services at competitive, cost-effective, sustainable and affordable ways. 2) To create value for the company and its partners, clients, customers and Orissans. 3) To contribute to the bioentrepreneurship, public health development, and agriculture systems in Orissa. 4) To promote business, development, service, entrepreneurial culture and private-public partnership in Orissa. 5) To promote the use of biotech products/services for the benefit of the public.

*Dr. Nayak is based in St. Louis, MO, USA. nayakamiya@hotmail.com



KEONJHAR DRINKING WATER WELL PROJECT

FOR TRIBAL SCHOOL CHILDREN

Kirtan Behera

This is a joint project funded by Behera Family Charitable Fund, Local Rotary Club, Indian Rotary District and the matching grant from the Rotary International, USA. The project is carried out by the Keonjhar Rotary Club Well Project Committee, chaired by Kiran Sahu, Retired Air Force Wing Commander. The USA coordinators are Kirtan and Mamata Behera.

Completed Project 2002-2005: Project Cost: \$20000

22 dug wells and 5 bore wells benefiting 27 elementary, intermediate and high schools, 8-10000 children and many villagers.

Planned Project 2006: Project Cost: \$28500, Applied for the Rotary Matching Grant.

28 dug and bore wells, Number of tribal schools to be selected.

Project Funding: Behera Family: \$5000, Indian Rotary District: \$6000, Palos Verdes Peninsula Rotary: \$6000 and Matching Grant: \$11500.

MISHRA CHARITY INC.

Indu Mishra

Last year Mishra Charity (MC) helped nine families with Rs. 15,000 each. This has helped these families complete houses left half completed from money received through Indira Awas program. This fund was further provided to NGO LSYM of Cuttack who disbursed as interest free loan to these families located in a Harijan annex of a village in the Ersama area in the Jagatsinghpur district. Many families have started paying back in monthly installments. The repayment plan will last over a period of 10 years.

One Harijan female student was provided with full scholarship to study Civil engineering at the Berhampur Engineering School. The scholarship allowed her complete expense in the form of full tuition for three years, boarding, lodging, books and a small pocket money. This student will be graduating this year. She has maintained a First division in the past three years.

In order to aid the Tsunami victims, MC provided funds to build five low-income homes in Galle, Srilanka through Habitat for Humanity, Dehiwala, Srilanka. According to the wish of the donors, four houses were built in Galle and one in Trincomalle. During the visit to Galle, MC also presented gifts including books and supplies to several children affected by the natural disaster.



ORISSA'S FIRST PRIVATELY FUNDED PROFESSORSHIP

BY SRADHANANDA MISHRA

Lalu Mansingh

A Chair in Astro-Mathematics at the Institute of Mathematics and Applications, Bhubaneswar has been established by Sradhananda Mishra of CSDC Systems Inc. of Toronto, Canada.

Currently in Orissa there is a crisis in university education and research. Years of underfunding has left most university departments understaffed and with poorly equipped laboratories and libraries. In many fields there is virtually no midcareer role model to inspire the next generation of young persons. This is particularly true of mathematics. The number of students studying mathematics for a career has been dropping steadily. A number of mathematics faculty positions at Orissa Universities are vacant. Orissa needs mathematicians for solving problems in engineering, sciences, and catastrophe (cyclone, tsunami, flood) modelling and prediction. This is the time when Oriyas of means, both inside Orissa and outside, should step in and help higher education in Orissa.

A longtime resident of Toronto, Canada, Sradhananda (Dan) Mishra has taken the pioneering step and established a Professorship in Astro-Mathematics at the newly started Institute of Mathematics and Analysis (IMA) in Bhubaneswar. He has set up an endowment of Rs. 33 lakhs (USD73,000.). This will yield sufficient funds each year to attract prominent mathematicians from all over India and abroad.

Dr. Swadhin Pattanayak, Dr. Chandra Mohapatra and others have been working on the concept of a Math Institute for several years, and have been trying to address the problems of mathematics in Orissa at several levels: (1) Math talent contest in Class 6 in schools throughout Orissa; Talented students are awarded scholarships; (2) Plans for a high quality B.Sc, MSc program, in collaboration with the Institute of Physics; (3) Concentrate on research topics in applied mathematics: Wavelet Analysis; Numerical Modeling; Geometric Methods in Physics; Inverse Problems; Mathematical Finance;

Sradhananda originally hails from Athmalik After graduating from Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore in 1969, he moved to Canada for graduate studies in Electrical Engineering. After completing his Masters degree, he was intrigued by computers and joined Sears Canada as a programmer. Subsequently, he rose through the ranks of Sears, Bell Canada and Bell Canada International.

Sradhananda decided to start his own Computer Consultancy in 1985. The consultancy soon turned into a software development business as the first Enterprise Database Solution provider for the Local Government market in Canada. He discovered a lack of a master data management concept in municipalities, and started the product AMANDA, which is a metadata based master data management solution for governments. Since then AMANDA has developed into a very popular product among large municipalities, States, Provinces and Federal agencies in North America. Dan's company, CSDC



Systems Inc., employs over 80 computer professionals in Canada, US and India, where CSDC has recently started an R&D center. Sradhananda is aiming to grow CSDC into the largest business in its domain.

The institute needs help at all levels. It is hoped that similar support will be forthcoming for education and research in Orissa, by Oriyas of means, both inside and outside Orissa.



Shri Naveen Patnaik, Chief Minister of Orissa (right), Sradhananda Mishra, President, CSDC Systems Inc. (middle), and Dr. Swadhin Patnaik, Director, Institute of Mathematics and Applications (left) at the ceremony on April 22, 2006, marking the establishment of the Chair in Astro-mathematics.



FUND RAISING & SELECTING ORGANIZATIONS NEEDING HELP

Mihira K. Rath. Buffalo, NY

Over the last ten years, I have been involved with a not-for-profit organization. I am a founding member and president of AICF of WNY (Asian Indian Community Foundation of Western New York) since 2001. It is prudent to share my learning over the last few years regarding challenges and opportunities in fund raising for organizational help.

The first and foremost requirement for fund raising is to believe in yourself and your ability to raise funds. There is no particular method that will work for fund raising. It is very difficult to raise funds from first generation immigrants. Therefore, it is important to convince this group of people that they have a social obligation to fund for charitable causes. Once they are involved and realize the rewards, they will continue to contribute for the right cause.

Here are some statistics that can be used for reference when approaching potential contributors:

http://www.nptrust.org/philanthropy/philanthropy_stats.asp

Charitable Giving in the USA

- 89 percent of households give.
- The average annual contribution for contributors is \$1,620.
- Total giving reached an estimated \$248.52 billion in 2004, an increase of 5% from 2003.
- Total giving has increased in 39 out of the last 40 years.
- Charitable giving accounted for 2.1% of gross domestic product.
- It is estimated that between \$6.6 trillion to \$27.4 trillion in charitable bequests will be made between 1998-2052.
- It is estimated that total charitable contributions will total between \$21.2 to \$55.4 trillion in between 1998-2052.

It is proven that people tend to donate more for the right cause, or for natural disasters.

Therefore, it is critical to have a right cause for the raising of funds. I find that the first generation immigrants are the hardest to persuade to contribute until they are educated about their obligations. It is found that this group of people regularly contributes to causes through the work place. They have not found proper causes and authentic means in which to contribute for their birth country.

That being said, finding the right project is of key importance in getting first generation immigrants involved. Some of the key characteristics to be kept in mind for these projects are:

- 1) Small in size (US\$ 10,000 to 30,000).



- 2) Benefits higher number of humans.
- 3) Related to most underprivileged (women and children).
- 5) Related to education and health.

These projects with the right causes can be initiated by individuals or prospective donors.

Identifying prospective donors Assessing what their country has provided for their education and earning capabilities is also important. There are a few steps that every organization follows for fund-raising:

- 1) Assess the needs and goals of your non-profit organization.
- 2) Review the federal and state limitations set for non-profit fund-raising.
- 3) Review your existing fund-raising programs. Assess their strengths and weaknesses.
- 4) Brainstorm for original fund-raising ideas. One-of-a-kind ideas attract a lot of attention.
- 5) Decide if you want to solicit funds face-to-face, through mailers, by phone, online, through special events, or through a combination of these.
- 6) Begin by listing people and organizations that you know and trust, you never know who will be willing to donate.
- 7) Write your goals and purpose of the project. When writing your fund-raising letter, explain how their donation will make an impact.
- 8) You may find that asking for a specific amount of money is the most successful approach.
- 9) Please acknowledge all contributors with a thank you letter, which recognizes and praises their contribution. You will want to be as polite and thankful as possible.
- 10) Promise to reward your contributors with follow-up presentations and reports regarding the progress of the project.
- 11) Always remember to stay in contact with your contributors.
- 12) Cultivate existing relationships. A well-known saying is "fund-raising is not raising funds, it's raising friends."
- 13) Cultivate relationships with potential contributors slowly.
- 14) Face-to-face soliciting requires rock-hard dedication. Pour organization.)
- 15) There's no magic formula for effective fund-raising. The most important element is hard work.
- 16) Make sure you adhere to the law.

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**RECIPIENTS OF
SUBRINA BISWAL MEMORIAL AWARD**

1990 Nivedita Misra
1991 Sarthak Das
1992 Seema Mohapatra
1993 Sarba Das
1994 Manas Mohapatra
1995 Swaroop Mishra
1996
1997
1998 Anjali Agrawal
1999 Shibani Patnaik & Barnali Dasverma
2000 Ashutosh Sahoo
2001
2002 no award
2003
2004
2005

**RECIPIENTS OF
KALASHREE AWARD**

1990
1991 Pramod Patnaik & Pratap Das
1992 Chitrilekha Patnaik
1993 SushriSangeeta Kar
1994 Annapurna Biswal
1995 SriGopal Mohanty
1996
1997
1998 Nandita Behera
1999 Ellora Patnaik
2000 Gopa Patnaik
2001 Niranjan Mishra & Niranjan Tripathy
2002 no award
2003 no award
2004 Lata Misra & Arun Das
2005

DISTINGUISHED ORIYA AWARDS

1992 Mr.Biju Patnaik & Dr. J.N. Mohanty
1993 Dr. and Mrs. K.M. Das
1994 Dr. Gauri Das
1995 Dr. T.P. Das
1996
1997
1998 Dr. Sri Gopal Mohanty
1999
2000 Dr.Sitakantha Dash
2001 Dr. Duryodhan Mangaraj
2002 no award
2003 no award
2004 Dr. Jagannath Das
2005



PRESIDENTS OF OSA

1970	Gauri Das	1988	
1971	Bhabagrahi Misra	1989	Amiya Mohanty
1972		1990	
1973	Gauri Das	1991	Digambar Misra
1974		1992	
1975	Amiya Patnaik	1993	Sita Kantha Dash
1976		1994	
1977		1995	Hemant Senapati
1978	Pramode Patnaik	1996	
1979		1997	Gopa Patnaik
1980		1998	
1981	Ladukesh Patnaik	1999	Anadi Naik
1982		2000	
1983	Rabi Patnaik	2001	Shanak Patnaik
1984		2002	
1985		2003	Laxminarayan Bhuyan
1986	Saroj Behera	2004	
1987	Asoka Das	2005	Niranjan Tripathy

CONVENTIONS

1970	Hartford, CT	1989	Nashville, TN
1971	Hartford, CT	1990	Washington, DC
1972	Riverdale, NJ	1991	Chicago, IL
1973	Riverdale, NJ	1992	Atlanta, GA
1974	College Park, MD	1993	Troy, MI
1975	Riverdale, NJ	1994	Pomona, NJ
1976	Toronto, Canada	1995	Minneapolis, MN
1977	Riverdale, NJ	1996	Washington, DC
1978	Wheaton, MD	1997	Houston, TX
1979	New Brunswick, NJ	1998	Monterey, CA
1980	Detroit, MI	1999	Toronto, Canada
1981	Chicago, IL	2000	Nashville, TN
1982	Minneapolis, MN	2001	Chicago, IL
1983	Bowie, MD	2002	Greenbelt, MD
1984	Glassboro, NJ	2003	Princeton, NJ
1985	Kent, OH	2004	Dallas, TX
1986	Toronto, Canada	2005	Newport Beach, CA
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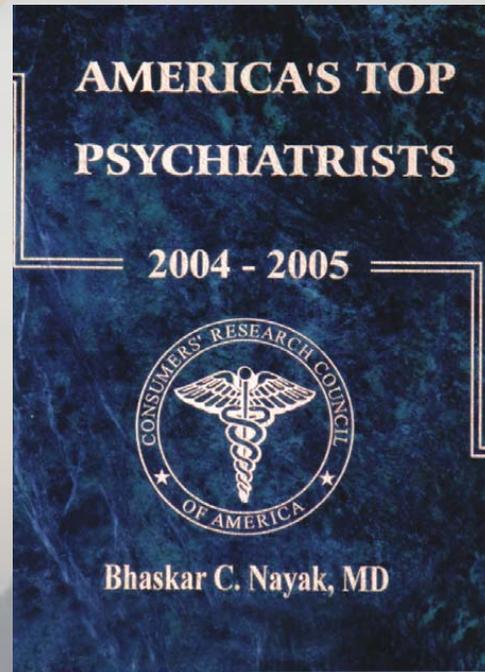
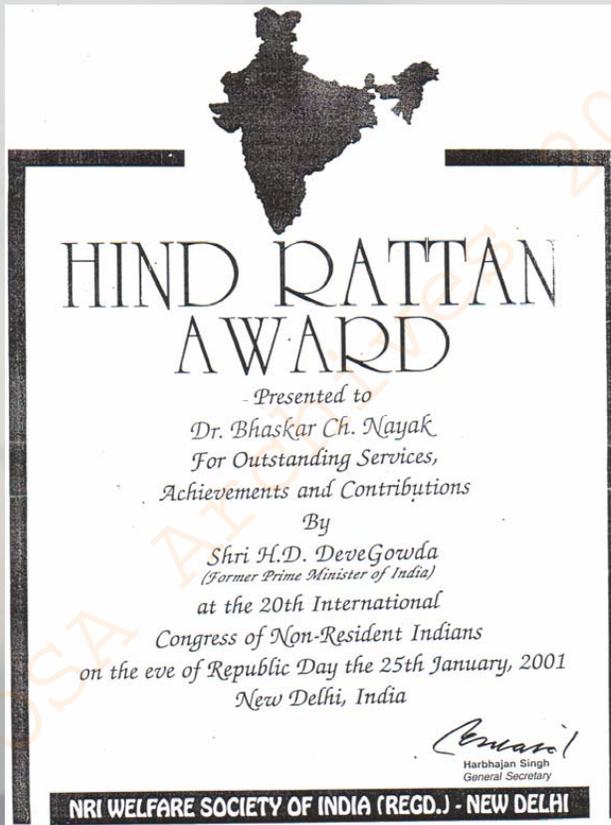


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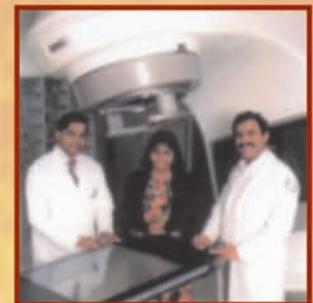
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