



**Journal
of
ORISSA SOCIETY OF THE AMERICAS
The 36th Souvenir Issue, July 2005**

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Front Cover: Fortune Towers: On the road linking Bhubaneswar to Nandan Kanan and Cuttack lies Chandrasekharpur (often abbreviated to CSPur). The Chandrasekharpur suburb of Bhubaneswar is a vision of Orissa of the future, with National Aluminium Company of India (NALCO), Kalinga Hospital, Kalinga Institute of Industrial Technology (KIIT), Swosti Plaza, Oberoi and Mayfair hotels, a host of central research institutes, a bevy of engineering colleges, the upcoming Indian Institute of Mathematics and Applications (IIMA), and Fortune Towers. Fortune Towers has been constructed by Orissa Industrial Infrastructure Development corporation (IDCO). The building complex is host to, among others, Tata Teleservices, Tata Steel, Reliance Infocomm, State Bank of India (SBI), BHP Minerals (a subsidiary of the Australian multinational BHP Billiton), Software Technology Parks of India (STPI), Orissa Power Generation Corporation (OPGC) and Pohang Iron and Steel Company (POSCO) of South Korea.- Lalu Mansinha



Orissa Society of the Americas

bringing Oriyas together

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Dear Friends and Honored Guests:

On behalf of the Orissa Society of the Americas (OSA), I welcome you all to its 36th Annual Convention at Newport Beach, California. It is a pleasure and privilege to welcome our chief guest Sri Gajapati Dibyasingha Deb, *Puri Raja*, our keynote speaker Srimati Manorama Mohapatra, Editor, *The Samaja*, an Oriya Daily, and all other distinguished guests who, despite their busy schedules, have graciously agreed to attend this convention. We are delighted to have other visitors from Orissa, visiting their family and friends, who have found time to meet the Oriya Diaspora. This is an occasion for you to meet your old friends as well as spend some time with their children, growing with the vitality of Oriya heritage and spirit, who in turn, perhaps would be amazed to see the expansion of their cultural family gathered at one place, the OSA Convention.

The organizers of this convention have put up an outstanding program. It includes several workshops and seminars, guest lectures, and lots of attention-grabbing cultural activities. The convention, this year, is designed as “Cali Jatra” to bring back the fervor of the age-old *Jatra* culture of our beloved home state. At the same time, the convention theme: “promoting our youth and preserving our culture” is presented throughout the event through various forms of youth activities under supervision of a youth co-convenor. We look forward to their future leadership in the OSA.

Friends, time goes fast. I have completed my term as President of the OSA, and the new office bearers are ready to take over. Despite the constrained budget and limited volunteers, I have tried to promote and preserve the strength and dignity of the OSA organization in the past two years. With the help of my coordinators, we have contributed in several areas including:

Recruiting a record number of life members, patrons and benefactors for OSA, Starting of the OSA Newsletter, ‘Utkarsa’, and maintaining its regular publication, Redesigning and maintaining the OSA website with various information, Initiating several amendments to the constitution, as approved in the General Body Meeting of 2004, Undertaking various activities to improve technical education in Orissa, and help students from Orissa for higher studies abroad, Originating two new OSA Awards, one to recognize members for their developmental work in Orissa, and the other to recognize talents in art and culture among our youths (Yuva Kalashree Award), And initiating Pravasi Utkaliya Divas (NRO Day), one of our biggest achievements, that the Government of Orissa started, to be held every year around Christmas time in Bhubaneswar.

The 2004 *Pravasi Utkaliya Divas* was attended by many NROs living around the world, an entire day looked like a winter convention of the OSA. Please plan to attend if you are in Orissa in December. The Orissa Government also has opened an NRO cell to coordinate various NRO activities in Orissa. And, a Non-resident Oriya Facilitation Center (NROFC) has been established to facilitate various developmental works by the NROs (www.nrofc.org). I am very hopeful that all these efforts, started during my tenure, will flourish under the new leadership of the OSA.

But friends, while all these glorious things happened, we have lost our beloved past OSA president Dr. Amiya Patnaik, of New Jersey, this year. He was a founding member of OSA, whose contributions to the OSA and love for the Oriya community are hard to forget. We will miss him dearly, particularly during this convention. We pray his soul may rest in peace.

With this, I sincerely thank the convention organizers of California for their endeavor and appreciate relentless support and services of the OSA volunteers, committee members, and coordinators. I also thank all of you for attending the OSA convention this year, and hope you will enjoy the program.

Sincerely,

Laxmi Narayan Bhuyan, The OSA President



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Editorial: The Odyssey

The OSA Journal is the voice, soul, symphony, and a communications channel for the Oriya Diaspora in the Americas. The saga of Oriya immigration dates back the early first century A.D., even to far out places like Rome and South East Asia in the second century A.D., taking advantage of the vast coastal areas and maritime industries. Even today Oriya culture is evident in Bali, Yogyakarta, Surakarta, Rangoon, and Sri Lanka among others. Across Indonesia and Malaysia, many coastal communities have a neighborhood called “Kampung Keling” translated as “Kalinga Village” to denote the quarter first settled by traders, artisans, priests, scholars and other travelers from the Indian subcontinent. But the Oriya Diaspora has in some cases lost language, culture, and heritage in the process of assimilation, isolation, and under the influence foreign domination and hostile regime. Oriyas in the neighboring provinces of Bihar, Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh and elsewhere are deprived of their mother tongue. The study of the Oriya Diaspora and preservation of Oriya culture has been discussed in Section 1: Civilization and Character. The formulation of the present state of Orissa was possible by the single handed effort of Late Madhu Sudan Das with the stating of the *Utkal Sammelani*., Orissa Convention. Several articles are presented with characterization of the evolution and the ethos.

With the convergence of communications, computers, internet, satellite technology, mobile telephones, and globalization, the isolation of Orissa from its Diaspora is diminished. But the shadowing effect from a rich, powerful American culture and wont is prevalent. The contour of Oriya Diaspora that spans disparate places around the world from Baroda to Burma to Bali to Botswana to Brazil to Boston is expanding with vigor and vitality. Oriyas abroad can now have access to all leading Oriya newspapers and can watch Oriya TVs displaying Oriya festivals including *Rath Yatra*, *Car Festival at Puri*, *Raja Doli*, *the beginning of harvest*, *Bali Yatra*, *Holly*, *the festival of the spring*, and *Durga Puja*, Odissi dance and music in their living rooms. The preservation and promotion of Oriya culture at far away places is no more infeasible. The OSA Conventions are glaring occasion for solidarity and avenues for our youth to know the Oriya culture, language, and literature. Oriya language, one of the oldest languages with a unique script of the Indo European Group, has earned distinguished place in Indian literature winning national academic awards, enhancing the image and illumination of Oriya literature, see Sections 2 and 3. The Section 2, Language and Lyrics, is devoted to analytical essays and criticism on Fakirmohan Senapati, Gopinath Mohanty, Guruprasad Mohanty, and Sachi Rautray. The Section 3: Bouquet and Ballad, has a rare collection of beautiful poems and short stories. The state of Orissa' Economy and Environment is dealt with the Section 4. Orissa economy and development are serious matters, facing unprecedented impediments and mismanagement. The environment needs immediate infrastructures for prosperity. Orissa is devastated by floods, cyclones and the coastal areas can be ravaged by severe great tidal waves like Tsunami. Some aspects are treated here.

However, any material growth is incomplete without inner sublimity of spirit. Oriya's spirit and soul is Shri Jagannath and Srikhetra. We have covered it in Section 5: History and Heritage. We deeply mourn the recent loss of great persons who have left an indelible mark on our life. We dedicate the Section 6: Monuments and Memorials in their memory and as a tribute to the contributions of Kishen Patnaik, Sarala Devi, Kisor Charan Das, Ralph Victor, and Amiya Patnaik. The Section 7: Health and Happiness is presented with several articles on health aspects and a brief article on Hinduism. It covers coronary disorders, learning disorders, scourge of polio, and Ayurvedic treatments.

Our distinguished writers of all ages in the Americas have contributed brilliant pieces of creativity that have been treasured in separate sections Section 8: Reflections and Retrospect, Section 9a: Music and Musing, Section 9b: Symphony and Sounds and Section 10: Sky and Stars, bright, beautiful compositions of innate imaginations and imageries. The Sections, 9-10, portray of rainbow of beautiful minds and the brave the new world. In their quest and pilgrimage, one youth find the culture and tradition in a wrapped cloth with blessing at Puri and another is flabbergasted to find risqué at Bombay, the commercial capital of India. The Section 11: Letters to The Editor, deals with short articles and late articles, no reflection on quality. It has articles on important, interesting tourist places. Unfortunately, we could not include more than fifty articles for one reason and other. The last Section 12: Societies and Services covers short articles on various charity organizations, International Exchange programs, Science projects in Orissa, and is capped with relevant news including the OSA activities.

Besides, making an all-out undertaking to promote and to preserve Oriya culture and heritage, in par with other ethnic groups, we will make a sustained, strategic, structural endeavor to participate in the mainstream Americas and occupy important status in the USA. We have a long a way to go, our Odyssey.

It is a great pleasure and privilege to invite articles from our distinguished authors here and abroad and to work with the authors, and to collaborate with the editorial board members. We express our sincere thanks to all donors and patrons, reviewers and artists and photographers, see a small note on acknowledgement inside the Journal. We appreciate their help, contribution, unflinching, unrelenting support, their care and concern for the Oriya Diaspora.

Nirode Mohanty
Editor



ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସଂସ୍କୃତି – ଦେଶରେ, ବିଦେଶରେ

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ଜଣେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାବରେ କହିବାକୁ ଠିଆହେଲାବେଳେ, ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ କହିବାକୁ ମତେ ସୁଖ ଲାଗିଥାଆନ୍ତା । ବାସ୍ତବିକ, ସେମିତି କହିବାକୁ ଗଲେ, ତା’ ଅତି ସ୍ୱଭାବିକ ହୋଇଥାଆନ୍ତା । ମାତ୍ର ମତେ ସେପରି ନକରିବାକୁ କୁହାଗଲା । ଜଣେ ଇଂରେଜକୁ ଇଂରେଜ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ସଭାରେ କହିବାକୁ କୁହାଗଲେ, ସେ ଇଂରାଜୀ ଛଡ଼ା ଅନ୍ୟଭାଷାରେ କହିବାର କଥା ଉଠନ୍ତା ନାହିଁ । ଜର୍ମାନୀରେ ତଏଚ୍-ଇଣ୍ଡିକ୍-ଗେସଲ୍‌ସାଫ୍ଟ୍ ବାର୍ଷିକ ସମ୍ମିଳନୀରେ ମୁଁ ଜର୍ମାନ୍ ଭାଷାରେ କହିଲି । ମାତ୍ର, ପଇଁତିରିଶ ବର୍ଷ ତଳେ, ଉତ୍କଳ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟର ଦର୍ଶନ ବିଭାଗରେ ସେ ବର୍ଷର ବାର୍ଷିକ ବ୍ୟାଖାନ ଦେବାକୁ ମତେ ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ କରାଜାଇଥିବାବେଳେ, ବିଭାଗର ମୁଖ୍ୟଙ୍କୁ ମୁଁ ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ କହିବିକି ବୋଲି ପଚାରିଲାରୁ, ତାଙ୍କୁ ଲାଗିଲା ମୁଁ ପରିହାସରେ ଏକଥା ପଚାରୁଛି । ଏହା ହେଲା ଆମର ବିଚ୍ଛିନ୍ନ ଜୀବନାବସ୍ଥା ।

ଆଉ ଗୋଟାଏ ବାଟ ସମ୍ଭବ, ମାତ୍ର ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ବୟ । କିଛି ବର୍ଷ ତଳେ (ଆମେରିକାର) ପୋକୋନୋ ପର୍ବତାଞ୍ଚଳରେ ଏକ ହିନ୍ଦୁ ଦେଉଳକୁ ଗଲାବେଳେ ଆମେ ଦେଖିଲୁ ମାନ୍ଦ୍ରାଜରୁ ସଦ୍ୟ ଆୟତ ଜଣେ ପୁଜାରୀଙ୍କୁ ନା ଇଂରାଜୀ ନା ହିନ୍ଦୀ ପୈଶୁଥିଲା । ଏ ପରିସ୍ଥିତିରେ ମୁଁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ସହଜରେ ପଚାରିଲି, ”ଆପଣ ସଂସ୍କୃତ କହନ୍ତି ?” ମୋ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ଶୁଣି ତାଙ୍କ ଆଖି ଚମକି ଉଠିଲା । ତାଙ୍କୁ ଏପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଏମିତି କେହି ପଚାରି ନଥିଲା । ଆଉ, ସେ ଭାଷାରେ ସେ ଅନର୍ଗଳ କହିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲେ ଓ ମତେ ତାଙ୍କ ପିଛା ଧରିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିଲା । ଆମ କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା ବଡ଼ ସନ୍ତୋଷଜନକ ହେଲା

ଭାଷାର ଉପସ୍ଥାପନାର କାରଣ, ବହୁ ବର୍ଷର ବିଚାର ପରେ ମୁଁ ଏ ନିଷ୍ପତ୍ତିରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଛି ଯେ କୌଣସି ଜାତିର ସଂସ୍କୃତି ସେ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଭାଷାରେ ହିଁ ପ୍ରକୃତରେ ନିବନ୍ଧ ରହିପାରେ । କୌଣସି ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ଓ କ୍ରିୟାକର୍ମ, ତା’ର ବୈଦିକ ଦୃଷ୍ଟି, ପ୍ରକୃତି, ଦେବତା, ମାନବ, ବୃକ୍ଷ, ପ୍ରାଣୀ, ପକ୍ଷୀ, ଜଳ, ରତ୍ନ, ଶବ୍ଦ, ରଙ୍ଗ, ଗନ୍ଧ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ବିଷୟରେ ତାର ଦୃଷ୍ଟିଭଙ୍ଗୀକୁ ସେ ସବୁର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ରୂପ ଓ ଛଟା ସହିତ ଧରିପାରିବାଟା ସମ୍ଭବ ହେବ ଯଦି ଆମେ ତାଙ୍କ ଭାଷାରେ କହିପାରିବା, ସେ ଭାଷାର ତାଳ, ତା’ର ଗତି ଓ ସମାପ୍ତି ଅନୁଭବୀ ପାରିବା । ବନ୍ଧୁଗଣ, ଆପଣମାନେ ଯଦି ଆପଣଙ୍କ ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବା ଅନ୍ୟ କୌଣସି ଭାରତୀୟ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଜଣାଇବାକୁ ଚାହାନ୍ତି, ତେବେ ଆମର ସେ ବିରାଟ ଦାନ – ଆମ ଭାଷା – ତାଙ୍କୁ ପଢ଼ିବାକୁ ଓ କହିପାରିବାକୁ ଶିଖାନ୍ତୁ । ଇଂରାଜୀ ବିଷୟରେ ଚିନ୍ତା କରନ୍ତୁ ନାହିଁ – ସେମାନେ ଏଠାରେ ମନକୁ ମନ ତାହା ଶିଖିବେ ।

କେତେକ ସାଥୀ ପଚାରନ୍ତି, ଆମେ ଏ ବିଦେଶରେ ରହି ଆମ ମୂଳ ଦେଶର ସଂସ୍କୃତିକୁ କିପରି ପୁନରୁଜ୍ଜୀବିତ, ଦୃଢ଼, ଗତମାନ କରିପାରିବା । ଏ ବିଷୟରେ ମୁଁ ମୋର କେତେକ ବିଚାର ଆପଣମାନଙ୍କ ଆଗରେ ରଖୁଛି ।

ଆଧୁନିକ – ବୋଇଲେ, ଏବର ତନ୍ତ୍ରଜ୍ଞାନ, ଜାହାର ଜନ୍ମସ୍ଥାନ ହେଲା ଏ ଦେଶ, ତା ଦ୍ଵାରା ଦୁଇଟି କାମ ହେଉଛି । ଇଞ୍ଜରନେଟ୍ ସାହାଯ୍ୟରେ ଆମେ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ଵରରୁ ଶବ୍ଦ, ଦୃଶ୍ୟ, ଲେଖା, ଦଲିଲ୍ ଓ ଖବର ଦେଖିପାରିବା ଓ ପାଖରେ ରଖିପାରିବା । ଆଉ, ଆମ ଏଠାରେ କଅଣ ଘଟୁଛି ସେ କଥା ଚିଲିକା କୂଳରେ ବସି ସେମାନେ ବେ ଦେଖିପାରିବେ । ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଏଭଳି ଭାବରେ ପାଖରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିପାରିବା ଫଳରେ ଜାଗତିକରଣରେ ଆମକୁ ସନ୍ତୋଷ ମିଳୁଛି । ମାତ୍ର, ଜାଗତିକରଣର ଫଳ ବିଷୟରେ ଆମେ ସାବଧାନ ହେବା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ।

ଏ ନୂଆ ତନ୍ତ୍ରଜ୍ଞାନର ଏକ ସହଜରେ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରେ ନପଡ଼ିବା ଫଳ ହେଲା ଯେ କେତେକ କ୍ଷୁଦ୍ର ଭାଷା, ଯାହା ପ୍ରାୟ ଲୋପ ପାଇଯାଇଥିଲା ଯା ବା ପୋତି ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲା, ଏବେ ଇଞ୍ଜରନେଟ୍ ଫଳରେ ଜୀବନ୍ତ ହୋଇଉଠିଛନ୍ତି । ଦୁନିଆରେ ବିଛୁଟି ହୋଇ ରହିଥିବା ସେ ଭାଷା-ଭାଷିକ ଲୋକେ ଏବେ ଇଞ୍ଜରନେଟ୍ ପରସ୍ପରର ନିକଟ ହୋଇ ପାରିଲେଣି, ଓ ଫଳରେ ନିଜର ସ୍ଵତନ୍ତ୍ର ସ୍ଵୀକୃତି ଦାବି କଲେଣି । (ଏହା ଓଲଟ, ଏସ୍ପେରାଣ୍ଟୋକୁ ଯାହାକୁ ତା’ର ଭାଷିକ ବହୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟାରେ ବଞ୍ଚାଇ ବଢ଼ାଇ ରଖିଥିଲେ, – ଏବେ ସେ ଭାଷାର ଭାଷିକଙ୍କ ସଂଖ୍ୟା ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ) । ଜର୍ଣାଲ୍ ଅଫ୍ ମଡର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଲିଙ୍ଗୁଇଷ୍ଟିକ୍ସରେ ଏହିଭଳି ଛୋଟ ଭାଷାର ପୁନରୁଦ୍ଧୀବନ କଥାର ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ ଅଛି । ମାତ୍ର, ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ କରିବାର କଥା ଯେ ଇଞ୍ଜରନେଟ୍ ଉପରେ ହିଁ ଏ ଭାଷା ଜୀଇ ଉଠିଛନ୍ତି; କିନ୍ତୁ ତେଣେ ନିଜ ଜନ୍ମସ୍ଥାନରେ ସେସବୁ ଏବେବି ମୃତ ।

ସେଥିପାଇଁ, ମୁଁ ଆଉ ଏକ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ଶେଷରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ବିଷୟରେ କଲ୍ପନା କରି ମନେ ମନେ ଭୟଭୀତ ହୁଏ । ସିଆଡେ ଆମ ଜନ୍ମସ୍ଥାନ ଆଧୁନିକ ତନ୍ତ୍ରଜ୍ଞାନର ଅବିରତ ଆକ୍ରମଣ ଓ ଚତୁର ପାଖାତ୍ୟ ଶକ୍ତିଙ୍କ ପ୍ରଭାବରେ ପୁରାପୁରି ପାଖାତ୍ୟ ସଭ୍ୟତାକୁ ବଦଳି ଯାଇଥିବ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଏକ ଜୀବନ୍ତ ଘଟଣା ଭାବରେ ଲୋପପାଇଯାଇଥିବ । କେବଳ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ବିଭାଗର ଆନୁକୁଲ୍ୟରେ ତା’ର ସ୍ଥାନ ଥିବ ମ୍ୟୁଜିଅମ୍ରେ । ମାତ୍ର, ଇଞ୍ଜରନେଟ୍ ଉପରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଯେମିତି ଥିଲା ତାହା ଦେଖିବାକୁ ମିଳୁଥିବ ।

ଏହାସହିତ ଏକ ତଥାକଥିତ ସତ୍ୟ ଘଟଣାର ତୁଳନା କରନ୍ତୁ । ପ୍ରଥମ ମହାଯୁଦ୍ଧ ଶେଷକୁ ପେନ୍ସିଲ୍ଭାନିଆର (ଆମେରିକା) ‘ଡର୍’ ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀର ଲୋକେ ସେମାନେ କେତେ ଶହ ବର୍ଷ ତଳେ ସବୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ଚାଲିଆସିଥିବା ମୂଳ ରାଇଜକୁ ଏକ୍ ପ୍ରତିନିଧିଦଳ ପଠାଇଲେ – ଯେଉଁ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଓ ଚାଳିଚଳଣକୁ ଛାଡ଼ିଆସିଥିଲେ, ସେସବୁ ଜାଣିବା ପାଇଁ । ପ୍ରତିନିଧି ଦଳ ଫେରିଆସି ଜଣାଇଲେ ଯେ ମୂଳ ଦେଶରେ ଜାଣିବାର ଓ ଶିଖିବାର ଆଉ କିଛି ନାହିଁ । ପୁରଣା ସଂସ୍କୃତି, ପରରା ସବୁ ଲୋପ ପାଇଯାଇଛି । ବରଂ, ସେମାନେ – ପେନ୍ସିଲ୍ଭାନିଆର ଡର୍ ସୁଦାୟ – ସେ ସବୁକୁ ଧରି ରଖିଛନ୍ତି । ମୂଳ ଦେଶରୁ ତାଙ୍କର ଜାଣିବାର, ଶିଖିବାର କିଛି ନାହିଁ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବାବଦରେ ଏହା ହିଁ ହେବ କି ?

ୟୁରୋପ୍ ବଦଳିଚି, ମାତ୍ର ବଦଳ ହେଲା ଦେଶ ଭିତରୁ । କୁସେତ୍ସ୍ ସମୟରେ ବାହାରୁ ଆସିଥିବା ଅଳ୍ପ କେତେକ ପ୍ରଭାବକୁ ଛଡ଼ିଦେଲେ, ବାକି ସବୁ ଆଭ୍ୟନ୍ତରୀଣ । ଶିଳ୍ପ-ବିପ୍ଳବ ଯୁରୋପରେ ଘଟିଲା ଓ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଜୀବନ ପ୍ରଣାଳୀ ବଦଳାଇ ଦେଲା । ମାତ୍ର, ଆମ ଜୀବନ ପ୍ରଣାଳୀ ବଦଳୁଚି ଓ ବଦଳିବ ବାହ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଭାବ ଫଳରେ । ପ୍ରଥମେ ହେଲା

ଔପନିବେଶିକ ରାଜତ୍ଵ – ସ୍ଵଳ୍ପ ରାଜକୀୟ ଓ ସାମରିକ ଶକ୍ତି ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟରେ । ମାତ୍ର, ଏବେ ଆମ ଦେଶର ଆର୍ଥିକ ବିକାଶ ଓ ଅନୁକା ନାଆଁରେ ଜାଗତିକରଣ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଆଧୁନିକ ତନ୍ତ୍ରଜ୍ଞାନର ଆକ୍ରମଣ ଦ୍ଵାରା । ତନ୍ତ୍ରଜ୍ଞାନ ଶକ୍ତି ନିରପେକ୍ଷ ନୁହେଁ । ଶକ୍ତିକ୍ଷେତ୍ରଟା ସମାନ ଖେଳପତିଆ ନୁହେଁ । ଶକ୍ତି ଅଧିକ ଶକ୍ତିଶାଳୀଠାରୁ କମ୍ ଶକ୍ତିଶାଳୀ ଆଡ଼କୁ ବହେ । ତନ୍ତ୍ରଜ୍ଞାନ ସାଙ୍ଗକୁ ପାଖାତ୍ୟ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଆସେ । ଯେଉଁଦିନ ମୋ ଗାଁ ର ଚାଷୀ ତା' ଧାନ ପାଇଁ ମୋନ୍‌ସାଙ୍ଗୋ'ର ଜନ୍ମକ-ପ୍ରକ୍ରିୟା ଦ୍ଵାରା (**genetically**) ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତିତ ବିହନ କିଣିବାକୁ ବାଧ୍ୟ ହେବ, ସେଦିନ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ମୋର ଘୋର ବିତୃଷ୍ଣା ହେବ । ତା' ସାଙ୍ଗକୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ବି ଯିବ – ବାସ୍ତବରୁ ଯାଇ ଇଣ୍ଟରନେଟ୍ ଓ ମ୍ୟୁଜିଅମ୍‌ରେ ସ୍ଥାନ ପାଇବ ।

ଆମର ପୁରୁଣା ପରରାଗତ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଆଧୁନିକ ଜୀବନପ୍ରଣାଳୀ ସହ ଖାପ ପାଇପାରିବ କି ? କାହିଁକି ନ ପାରିବ ଏହାର କୌଣସି ତାତ୍ତ୍ଵିକ କାରଣ ନାହିଁ । ମାତ୍ର, ବାସ୍ତବରେ ଏହା ଲୋପ ପାଇଯିବ । ଏ ସମ୍ଭାବନା ପୂର୍ବରୁ, ଆମେ ଧର୍ମର ବାଟ ଧରେ । ଓଡ଼ିଆଏ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଧର୍ମକୁ ଧରନ୍ତି । ମୁଁ ଏ ବୁଦ୍ଧିଗତ ଅତୁଆ ବିଷୟରେ ଦିପଦ କହିବି ।

ପ୍ରଥମ କଥା ହେଲା, 'କଲ୍ଚର୍' (ଭାରତୀୟ, ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି) ର ଧାରଣା ଅତି ନୁଆ । ଆମେ 'କଲ୍ଚର୍' ର ଅନୁବାଦ ସଂସ୍କୃତି କରୁତେ । ମାତ୍ର ଦେଖନ୍ତୁ, ସଂସ୍କୃତରେ ସାହିତ୍ୟ, ସଙ୍ଗୀତ, କଳା, ନୃତ୍ୟ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ପାଇଁ ଶବ୍ଦ ଥିଲା, ମାତ୍ର ଏବର ଅର୍ଥରେ 'ସଂସ୍କୃତି' ଶବ୍ଦ ନଥିଲା । ଏହାର ଏକମାତ୍ର ବ୍ୟବହାର ଥିଲା 'କତନ କରିବା' (**conservation**) ଅର୍ଥରେ ।

ସେମିତି ଦେଖିଲେ, ଜର୍ମାନ୍ ଶବ୍ଦ '**Kultur**' ମଧ୍ୟ ଷୋଡଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଚଳଣିରେ ନଥିଲା । ଆମେ ଆଜି ଯେଉଁସବୁ କଥାକୁ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ବୋଲି କହୁତେ, ପ୍ରାଚୀନ କାଳରେ ସେସବୁ ବାସ୍ତବ ଜଗତର ବାସ୍ତବ ବିଷୟ ଥିଲା । ଏକଥା ବିଶେଷରେ ଧର୍ମ ବିଷୟରେ ପ୍ରୟୁଜ୍ୟ । ଧାର୍ମିକ କ୍ରିୟାକର୍ମ, ଗୀତ, ନାଟ, ରଚି ଏସବୁ ବାସ୍ତବ ଜୀବନର ଭାଗ ଥିଲେ । ମାତ୍ର, ଯେତେବେଳେ ଦିଅଁ, ଦେବତା, ପାରଲୌକିକ ଶକ୍ତିଙ୍କ ଉପରୁ ବିଶ୍ଵସ ଉଠିଗଲା ଓ ବିଜ୍ଞାନ ସେ ସ୍ଥାନ ସାରା ପ୍ରକୃତିରେ ଓ ଆମ ଜୀବନରେ ଅଧିକାର କଲା, ସେତେବେଳେ ଏହାସବୁ ବାସ୍ତବ ପ୍ରକୃତିଠାରୁ ଦୂରେଇଗଲେ ଏବଂ ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଓ ପବିତ୍ରତାର ବିଶ୍ଵ ଭାବରେ ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ସ୍ଥାପନା ହେଲା ।

ମୋ ବୋଉ-ବାପା ଯେତେବେଳେ ଆମ ଗାଁ ଦେଉଳକୁ ସଞ୍ଜ ଆରତି ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଯାଉଥିଲେ, ତାଙ୍କ ଆଖିରୁ ଲୁହ ବୋହୁଥିଲା । ସେ ପାରଲୌକିକକୁ ଚିକିଏ ବାଟ ପାଉଥିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ମୂର୍ତ୍ତିସବୁ ବାସ୍ତବରେ ଦେବତାଙ୍କର ଅଧିଷ୍ଠାନ ଥିଲା । ଦିଅଁମାନେ ପ୍ରକୃତରେ ପ୍ରର୍ଥନା ଓ ଭକ୍ତି ଗ୍ରହଣ କରୁଥିଲେ । ମୁଁ ମୋ ବୋଉକୁ ପୁରୀ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ମନ୍ଦିରକୁ ନେଇଗଲା ବେଳେ, ସିଏ ବାସ୍ତବରେ ଦିଅଁଙ୍କ ଆଗରେ ଠିଆହେଲା । ସେଠାର କର୍ମ, ଚିତ୍ର, ଜଣାଣରେ ସେ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଦେଖୁନଥିଲା । ଆମ ପାଇଁ ଆଜି ତାହା ସୁଣ୍ଠି ଭିନ୍ନ । ମାଲ୍ଟ୍ ଷ୍ଟେବର୍ ଠିକ୍ କହିଥିଲେ, (ସାମଜିକ) ଜ୍ୟୋତିପ୍ରକାଶ (**enlightenment**) ଫଳରେ ସମ୍ପ୍ରେତ୍ସନ (**enchantment**) ପୃଥିବୀରୁ ଲୋପପାଇଲା । ଏ

ସବୁ ଦିନେ ସମାଜକୁ ସମୃଦ୍ଧ କରୁଥିଲା, ତା'କୁ ଚିହ୍ନିଉଥିଲା । ଆଜି ସେ ସବୁ ବାସ୍ତବ ସମାଜର ନୁହନ୍ତି । ସେ ସବୁ ଏକ ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ଅଙ୍ଗ ।

”ପଞ୍ଜୀ” ଓ ”ସଂସ୍କୃତି” ଏବେ ଅଲଗା ହୋଇଗଲେଣି । ମାତ୍ର, ଥରେ ଏ ବିଭାଜନ ଘଟିଲା ପରେ, ସଂସ୍କୃତି ସମଗ୍ର ଜୀବନକୁ ବ୍ୟାପିଯାଏ । ଯେଉଁ ବିଜ୍ଞାନ ଏ ବିଭାଜନ ଘଟାଇଲା, ତା' ମଧ୍ୟ ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ଏକ ଅଙ୍ଗ ହୋଇଗଲା । ଆଜିର ଆମର ପ୍ରିୟ ଯନ୍ତ୍ର ପି.ସି. (personal computer) – ଯାହାଦ୍ୱାରା ଆମେ ବାସ୍ତବରେ ପ୍ରବେଶ କରୁଛେ – ଏହା ମଧ୍ୟ ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ଏକ ଅଂଶ ହେଲାଣି । ଆଜିର ଏକମାତ୍ର ବାସ୍ତବ ”ବାସ୍ତବ” ହେଲା ଆର୍ଥିକ ଉତ୍ପାଦନ ଓ ପଇସାର ବ୍ୟବହାର । ଏହା ସଂସ୍କୃତିଠାରୁ ଭିନ୍ନ, ମାତ୍ର କେବଳ ପ୍ରଥମରେ । ତା' ମଧ୍ୟ ଏକ ସଂସ୍କୃତି । ଆର୍ଥିକ ବିଶ୍ୱସ୍ତ୍ର ସଂସ୍କୃତିକ ବିଶ୍ୱକୁ କେମିତି ଯୋଡ଼ାଜାଇ ପାରିବ, ସେ କଥା ଅନେକ ଚିନ୍ତାଶୀଳଙ୍କୁ ଘାରିଛି । ଆମ ଦେଶରେ ଗାନ୍ଧି ଗୋଟିଏ ବାଟ ବଢେଇ ଥିଲେ । ମୁଁ ସେ ଭିତରକୁ ଏବେ ଯିବି ନାହିଁ ।

ମୁଁ ପୁଣି ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ସଂସ୍କୃତିକୁ ଫେରିଯାଏ । ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ତାହା ଭାରି ମହତ୍ତ୍ୱପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ । ତହିଁରେ ଆମେ ଆମର ଅସ୍ଥିତା ଦେଖୁ । ମାତ୍ର, ଆମେ ଗଭୀର ଭାବରେ ଚିନ୍ତା କରିବାର ଏ ବିଷୟ । ଆଗ ଆମେ ଜାଣି ରଖିବା ଦରକାର ଯେ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଏକ ଧର୍ମ ନୁହେଁ । ଧର୍ମର ଅର୍ଥ ଏକ ଦେବତା ଉପରେ ସର୍ବସ୍ୱ ନିର୍ଭର । ସେ ଭାବନା ଆଉ ଆମର ନାହିଁ । ଧର୍ମର ଘଟ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଏବେ ସଂସ୍କୃତିକୁ ହେଲାଣି । ଦିଅଁଙ୍କ ଆଗରେ ମୋ ବୋଉର ଅନୁଭବ ମୁଁ ମୋ ପାଇଁ ଫେରାଇ ଆଣି ପାରିବି ନାହିଁ, ଅନୁଭବି ପାରିବି ନାହିଁ । ସେ ରହୁଥିଲା ଦେବତାବଦ୍ଧ, ଦୈବିକ ଶକ୍ତିବଦ୍ଧ ସମାଜରେ । ମୋ ସମାଜରେ । ମୋ ସମାଜ ବୈଜ୍ଞାନିକ । ମୁଁ ବା ମୋର ନିଜର କାହାର ଦେହ ଖରାପ ହେଲେ, ମୁଁ ଦିଅଁଙ୍କୁ ଡାକେ ନାହିଁ । ମୁଁ ଭଲ ଡାକ୍ତର ଖୋଜି ବସେ । ମାତ୍ର, କେହି ଭଲ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଜଣାଣି ଗାଉଥିଲେ ବା କେହି ଭଲ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନାଚୁଥିଲେ, ତା' ମୋ ହୃଦୟକୁ ଝର୍ଣ୍ଣ କରେ । ଏ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଆପଣଙ୍କୁ ଜଣା ପଡ଼ିବଣି । ମୁଁ କାଳର ପ୍ରତିଲୋମରେ ଯାଇପାରିବି ନାହିଁ । ମତେ ଏହି ବିଚ୍ଛିନ୍ନ ସ୍ଥିତିରେ ଯେତେ ସମ୍ଭବ ଭଲଭାବରେ ରହିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ । ଆମେ ଅନେକେ ଏ କଥା ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ସୁଦ୍ଧା କରିପାରୁନେ ।

ମୋର ଅନୁଭବର କଥାଟା ଆଉ ଚିକିତ୍ସା ଆଗେଇ ନିଏ । ମୁଁ ୧୭ ବର୍ଷ ବୟସରେ ୧୯୪୫ ମସିହାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଛାଡ଼ିଲି । ସେ କାଳୁ ମୁଁ ନିୟମିତ ଭାବରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଯାଏ, ମାତ୍ର କେବେ ବି ମାସରୁ ବେଶି ରହିନାହିଁ । କଲ୍‌କାତା, ଅକ୍ସଫୋର୍ଡ୍, ବର୍ଲିନ୍, ଗର୍ଟିନ୍‌ଜେନ୍, ପ୍ୟାରିସ୍‌ରେ ପଢ଼ି, ପଢ଼ାଇ, ଗବେଷଣା କରି ମୁଁ ଏବେ ଏଠାରେ । ମାତ୍ର, ଜଗ-ପ୍ରବାସ, ଜଗ-ବିଦ୍ୱାନର ସମସ୍ତ ଉନ୍ମାଦନା ଶାନ୍ତ ହେଲାପରେ, ନିରୋଳା ରାତିରେ ଜନ୍ମ ଆଲୁଅରେ ଭାସିଯାଉଥିବା ମେଘଖଣ୍ଡକୁ ଦେଖି ମୋର ହୃଦୟର ଗଭୀରତମ ସ୍ଥାନରୁ ଉଛୁଳି ଉଠେ ବାକ୍‌ଙ୍କର ଝଙ୍କାର ନୁହେଁ, ରବି ଠାକୁରଙ୍କ କବିତାର ମଧୁର ଝରନ ନୁହେଁ, କିମ୍ବା କାଳିଦାସଙ୍କ ମେଘଦୂତମ୍‌ର ପଞ୍ଚୁକ୍ତି ନୁହେଁ – ଉଛୁଳି ଉଠେ ମୋ ଗାଁର କେଉଁ ଅଜଣା ଗାଇଜଗା ପିଲାଟି ଦୁର୍ଦ୍ଦଶାର ମୂର୍ଦ୍ଧନା, ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ଜଣାଣର ଏକ ପଞ୍ଚୁକ୍ତି ବା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଗାଁର ମାଟି କାନ୍ଥ ଉପରର ଚିତା, ବା ଗାଁ ପୋଖରିର ତୁଠ ଉପରେ କେଉଁ କିଶୋରୀର ଛବି । ଏ ସବୁର ସ୍ଥାନ ମୋର ଗଭୀରତମ ଅନ୍ତରରେ – ମୋର ଜର୍ମାନ୍ ଓ ସଂସ୍କୃତର ସବୁ ଜ୍ଞାନ ତାକୁ ପୋଛି ପାରିବ ନାହିଁ । ମୁଁ ସେଇଥିରେ ହିଁ ଗଢ଼ା ।

ପ୍ରିୟ ବନ୍ଧୁଗଣ, ଆଅପଣମାନଙ୍କ ସବୁପ୍ରକାର ବିଶେଷ ଜ୍ଞାନ, ତାନ୍ତ୍ରିକ ବିଚକ୍ଷଣତା ଓ ଆର୍ଥିକ ସମ୍ବଳ ଅଛି, ଯାହା ଆପଣମାନେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟ ଦୂର କରିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଛନ୍ତି । ମାତ୍ର, ସବା ଆଗେ ସେ ସବୁ ଭାବନାକୁ ଗଭୀର ଭାବେ ଅନୁଭବ କରନ୍ତୁ ଓ ସାଇତି ରଖନ୍ତୁ – ନିଜର ଦୋଷୀ ମଣୁଥିବା ଭାବନା ନୁହେଁ, ଆପଣଙ୍କ ନିଜ ଅସ୍ଥିତର ଭାବନା ।

ମୁଁ ମୋ ଅନୁଭବ କଥା ପୁଣି କହି ବସେ । ମୋ ବୋଉ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ଥିବା ବେଳେ ଭକ୍ତିରେ ଅଭିଭୂତ ହୋଇଯାଏ । ପ୍ରକୃତ ବିଶ୍ୱାସରେ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟବସିତ ଏ ଭକ୍ତି ମୋ ଠାରେ ନଥାଏ । ହେଲେ, ବୋଉର ଭାବବିହ୍ୱଳତା ବା ହଜାର ହଜାର ଯାତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ଭାବବିହ୍ୱଳତା ମୋତେ ସ୍ପର୍ଶ କରେ । ମୋର ଏ ଭାବନା ତାଙ୍କ ପ୍ରଥମସ୍ତରର ଭାବନ ବାବଦରେ ଏକ ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟସ୍ତରର ଭାବନା । ଛୋଟ ନାତୁଣୀଟିକୁ କଣ୍ଠେଇଟିଏ ଧରି ଆନନ୍ଦରେ ଖେଳୁଥିବାର ଦେଖି ବୁଢ଼ୀ ଆଇର ଆନନ୍ଦକୁ ଦେଖି କବି ଜଣେ ଆନନ୍ଦିତ ହେଲାଭଳି । ଏହି ଉପରସ୍ତରର ଭାବନାକୁ ଆମ ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ଲେଖକମାନେ ରସର ଭାବନା – ରସାନୁଭୂତି – ବୋଲି କହିଥିଲେ । ମୁଁ ଦେଉଳକୁ ଗଲେ ଗଭୀର ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟବୋଧ ଅନୁଭବ କରେ; ମୋ ବୋଉର ଧାର୍ମିକ ଅନୁଭବ । ମୋର ବିଚ୍ଛିନ୍ନ ପରିସ୍ଥିତିରେ ଏତିକିମାତ୍ର ମୋ ପକ୍ଷରେ ସମ୍ଭବ ।

ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଲୋକଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଗଭୀର ଭାବରେ ଅନୁଭବ କରୁଥିବା ଦି ଜଣଙ୍କର ଉଦାହରଣ ଦେଇ ମୁଁ ମୋର ବକ୍ତବ୍ୟ ଶେଷ କରେ । ଥରେ ପୁରୀ ଜିଲ୍ଲାରେ ଭୟଙ୍କର ବଢ଼ି ହୋଇଥାଏ । ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ପାଇଁ ଅର୍ଥ ଯୋଗାଡ଼ କରିବାକୁ କଟକ ଟାଉନ୍‌ହଲ୍‌ରେ ସଭା ଡକାଯାଇଥାଏ । ଉତ୍କଳମଣି ସଭାକୁ ଆସିବାର ଥିଲା, ମାତ୍ର ମଞ୍ଚ ଉପରେ ସେ ନାହାନ୍ତି । ଖୋଜୁ ଖୋଜୁ ସେ ଗୋଟିଏ କଣ୍ଠରେ ବସି କାନ୍ଦୁଥିବାର ଦିଶିଲେ । ସେ ସଭାରେ ଦି ପଦ କହି ପାରିଲେ ନାହିଁ । ଅନ୍ୟ ଉଦାହରଣଟି ହେଲେ ରମାଦେବୀ – ଆମ ପାଇଁ ବହୁ ନିକଟ ସମୟର । ଆମେ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ମନେ ରଖିବା ଓ ଆମ ହୃଦୟର ଗଭୀରତମ ପ୍ରଦେଶରୁ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ସର୍ବ ଯୋଡ଼ି ରଖିବା ।

* ବିଶିଷ୍ଟ ଦାର୍ଶନିକ ଓ ମହାଧ୍ୟାପକ, ଟେମ୍ପଲ୍ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ, ପିଲାଡେଲ୍‌ପିଆ
ସୌଜନ୍ୟ : ”ସମାଜ” / ବିଶ୍ୱଜିତ୍ ଖଣ୍ଡାୟୀ

ମିଶୁ ମୋର ଦେହ ଏ ଦେଶ ମାଟିରେ
ଦେଶବାସୀ ଚାଲି ଯାଆନ୍ତୁ ପିଠିରେ
ଦେଶର ସ୍ୱରାଜ ପଥେ ଯେତେ ଗାଡ଼
ପୁରୁ ତହିଁ ପତି ମୋର ମାଂସ ହାତ – ଗୋପବନ୍ଧୁ ଦାଶ

ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କ ଜାତୀୟ ଚରିତ୍ର

ସୌମ୍ୟରଂଜନ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ *

ଏକବିଂଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀର ପ୍ରଥମ ପାଦରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କ ଜାତୀୟ ଚରିତ୍ର ସଂପର୍କରେ ଚିନ୍ତା କଲାବେଳେ ଅନେକଗୁଡ଼ିଏ କଥା ମନକୁ ଆସୁଛି । ଜାତୀୟ ଚରିତ୍ର କ’ଣ? ତାହା କିପରି ଜାଣିବା? ବସ୍ତୁଜଗତର ଚରିତ୍ର ଜାଣିବା ପାଇଁ ବୈଜ୍ଞାନିକମାନେ ପରୀକ୍ଷାଗାରରେ ଅନେକ ପରୀକ୍ଷା ନିରୀକ୍ଷା କରନ୍ତି । ଜଳ ସଦାବେଳେ ତଳକୁ ତଳକୁ ଯାଏ । ଆଲୋକ ସରଳରେଖାରେ ଗତି କରେ । ଜଳ ଓ ଆଲୋକର ଚରିତ୍ର ଏଇଆ ବୋଲି ଆମେ ପରୀକ୍ଷା ନିରୀକ୍ଷା କରି ଜାଣିଛୁ । ଜାତୀୟ ଚରିତ୍ର ଜାଣିବା ପାଇଁ କ’ଣ ସେପରି କିଛି ପରୀକ୍ଷାଗାର ଅଛି? ଆମ ବିଚାରରେ ଜାତୀୟ ଚରିତ୍ରର ଅସଲ ପରୀକ୍ଷାଗାର ହେଲା - ଜାତିର ଇତିହାସ, ସାମାଜିକ ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା, ଅର୍ଥନୈତିକ ଅବସ୍ଥା, ପରରା ଏବଂ କିମ୍ବଦନ୍ତୀ । ଏବେ ପୁଣି ପ୍ରାକୃତିକ ବିପର୍ଯ୍ୟୟ ଜାତୀୟ ଚରିତ୍ରକୁ ଜାଣିବା ପାଇଁ ନୂଆ ଏକ ସୁଯୋଗ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିଛି । ଏସବୁକୁ ନେଇ ଜାତୀୟ ଚରିତ୍ର ସଂପର୍କରେ ଧାରଣା ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହୋଇଥାଏ । ଇସ୍ରାଏଲର ଇହୁଦୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ଗୋଟିଏ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ କଷ୍ଟସହିଷ୍ଣୁ ସ୍ଵାଭିମାନୀ, ସଂଗ୍ରାମୀ ଏବଂ ସଫଳ ଜାତି ଭାବରେ ସାରା ବିଶ୍ଵ ଜାଣିଛି । ନାଜି ଜର୍ମାନୀରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ନିଷିଦ୍ଧ କରିଦେବା ପାଇଁ ହିଟ୍ଲର କେବଳ ଉଦ୍ୟମ କରି ନ ଥିଲେ; ଅନେକାଂଶରେ ସଫଳ ମଧ୍ୟ ହୋଇଥିଲେ । ସେଇ ଜାତି ନିଜ ପାଇଁ ଏକ ନୂଆ ଦେଶ ତିଆରି କରିପାରିଲା, ଯାହାର ଆଧୁନିକ ନାମ ଇସ୍ରାଏଲ୍ । ଇହୁଦୀମାନଙ୍କର ଚରିତ୍ର କଥା କହିଲେ ଆମମାନଙ୍କ ମନକୁ ଏଇ କଥାଟି ଆସେ । ଠିକ୍ ସେହିପରି ଜାପାନୀମାନଙ୍କ କଥା ଚିନ୍ତା କଲାବେଳେ ବାରମ୍ବାର ଭୂମିକର ଅନୁଭବ ରଖିଥିବା ଛୋଟ ଆଖିଆ, ବାଙ୍ଗରା, ଗୋରା ମଣିଷମାନଙ୍କ କଥା ମନକୁ ଆସେ । ଦ୍ଵିତୀୟ ବିଶ୍ଵଯୁଦ୍ଧରେ ହିଟ୍ଲରଙ୍କ ସହିତ ହାତ ମିଳେଇଥିବାରୁ ମିତ୍ର ରାଷ୍ଟ୍ରମାନଙ୍କର କୋପ ଏବଂ ଅଶୁ ବୋମା ପ୍ରକୋପର ଶିକାର ହୋଇ ନିଷିଦ୍ଧ ହେବାକୁ ଯାଉଥିବା ଏହି ଜାତି ନିଜର ଶୃଙ୍ଖଳା, କଠୋର ପରିଶ୍ରମ ଏବଂ ଅଦ୍ଵିତୀୟ ଦେଶପ୍ରେମ ବଳରେ ଆଜି ଦ୍ଵିତୀୟ ବିଶ୍ଵଯୁଦ୍ଧ ପରର ବିକାଶଶୀଳ ରାଷ୍ଟ୍ରମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସବୁଠାରୁ ଆଗୁଆ । ଛୋଟିଆ ଗ୍ରୀନ୍‌ଜିନ୍‌ସରଠାରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରି ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ମୋଟର କାର୍ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସେମାନେ ଆଜି ନିର୍ମାଣ କରିପାରୁଛନ୍ତି । ସେହିପରି ଆମକୁ ଶାସନ କରିଥିବା ଇଂରେଜମାନଙ୍କ ବିଷୟରେ ଅନେକ କିମ୍ବଦନ୍ତୀ ଓ ଧାରଣା ଅଛି । ସମୁଦ୍ରଘେରା ଛୋଟିଆ ଦେଶଟିଏ ହେଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେମାନେ ଦରିଆପାରିକୁ ଯାଇ ବ୍ୟବସାୟ କରି ନିଜର ବ୍ୟବସାୟ କୌଶଳର ପରାକାଷ୍ଠା ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନ କରିବା ସହିତ ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧାଧିକ ବିଶ୍ଵକୁ ନିଜ ସାମ୍ରାଜ୍ୟରେ ସାମିଲ କରିପାରିଥିଲେ । ଏସବୁ ସତ୍ତ୍ଵେ ଇଂରେଜମାନଙ୍କୁ ଏକ ରକ୍ଷଣଶୀଳ ଜାତି ହିସାବରେ ସାରା ବିଶ୍ଵ ଜାଣେ । ତାଙ୍କର ଲିଖିତ ସମ୍ବିଧାନ ନାହିଁ । ସବୁ କଥା ପରରା ଉପରେ ଆଧାରିତ । ଏବେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଇଂରେଜମାନେ ତାଙ୍କର ରାଜାରାଣୀଙ୍କୁ, ଅତୀତର ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ଏବଂ ପରରାକୁ ଯେଭଳି ସମ୍ମାନ ଦିଅନ୍ତି, ତାହାର ପଟାନ୍ତର ନାହିଁ । ସେହିପରି ଭାରତର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ଓ ଭାଷାଭାଷୀ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଜାତୀୟ ଚରିତ୍ର ସମ୍ପର୍କରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆମମାନଙ୍କର ଭିନ୍ନ ଭିନ୍ନ ଧାରଣା ରହିଛି । ଜଣେ ପଞ୍ଜାବୀ ଭାଇଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖିଲେ ତାଙ୍କର ଚରିତ୍ର ସମ୍ପର୍କରେ ଆମର ଯେଉଁ ଧାରଣା ହୁଏ, ତାହା ହେଲା କଡ଼ା ପିନ୍ଧିଥିବା, ପଗଡ଼ି ଭିଡ଼ିଥିବା ଏକ ସୁସ୍ଥସବଳ ପୁରୁଷ । ଭିକ୍ଷା ନ ମାଗି, ଝାଳବୁହା ପରିଶ୍ରମ କରି ନିଜର ଭାଗ୍ୟକୁ ତିଆରି କରିବା ପାଇଁ ସଂକଳ୍ପ ନେଇଥିବା ଯୁବକ

ଆକୁମାରିହିମାଳୟ ସବୁ ସ୍ତରରେ ସଫଳକାମ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ହିସାବରେ ପରିଚିତ । ବଙ୍ଗାଳୀମାନଙ୍କ କଥା ଚିନ୍ତା କଲାବେଳେ ରବୀନ୍ଦ୍ର ସଙ୍ଗୀତ, ସାହିତ୍ୟ, ସଂସ୍କୃତି, ଭାଷା ଏବଂ ପରରା ପ୍ରତି ଅନୁରାଗ ଆଉ ସ୍ଵାଭିମାନ କଥା ଆମ ମନକୁ ଆସେ । କେରଳୀମାନଙ୍କ ବିଷୟରେ ଚିନ୍ତା କଲେ ତାଙ୍କରଜାନାର ନର୍ସ, ଅଫିସର ଚାଇପିକ୍ସ ଏବଂ ଗୀର୍ତ୍ତୀ ଘରର ପାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କର ଛବି ମନକୁ ଆସେ । ସମାଜସେବା ଓ ପ୍ରଶାସନରେ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଶୃଙ୍ଖଳିତ ଓ ଅନୁଗତ କର୍ମଚାରୀ ଭାବରେ କେରଳୀମାନେ ପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧ । ଏହି କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟନିଷ୍ଠା ଓ ସେବା ମନୋବୃତ୍ତି ଆଜି ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ମଧ୍ୟପ୍ରାଚ୍ୟରେ ଅନେକ ସୁବିଧାସୁଯୋଗର ଅଧିକାରୀ କରିଛି ଏବଂ ସେମାନେ ଏଇ ମନୋବୃତ୍ତିର ବିନିମୟରେ ପ୍ରଚୁର ବିଦେଶୀ ମୁଦ୍ରା ଅର୍ଜନ କରିପାରୁଛନ୍ତି । ରାଜସ୍ଥାନ ବିଷୟରେ ଆଲୋଚନା କଲେ ମାରୁଆଡ଼ି ଭାଇ ଯେ ଶୁଭଲଭର ଆଦର୍ଶରେ ଅନୁପ୍ରାଣିତ ଏକ ସଫଳ ବ୍ୟବସାୟୀ - ଏକଥା ସମସ୍ତେ ସ୍ଵୀକାର କରନ୍ତି । ଲୋଟା କମ୍ପାନି ଧରି, ନିଜ ଭିଟାମାଟିକୁ ଛାଡ଼ି, ଦୁର୍ଗମ ଗିରିଜଙ୍ଗଲଠାରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରି ସମୃଦ୍ଧ ସହରାଞ୍ଚଳ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସବୁ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ସଫଳ ବ୍ୟବସାୟ କୌଶଳର ଛବି ଏମାନଙ୍କ ଚରିତ୍ରରେ ପ୍ରତିଫଳିତ । ଏହି ପରିପ୍ରେକ୍ଷୀରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କ ଜାତୀୟ ଚରିତ୍ର କଥା ବିଚାର କରାଯାଉ ।

ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଇତିହାସ ଏବଂ ପରରା ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଉ-ହଜନକ । ଓଡ଼ିଆମାନେ କୋଣାର୍କ ମନ୍ଦିର ନିର୍ମାଣ କରିଥିଲେ । ଏହା ଏକ ଅପବାଦ ନ ଥିଲା । ୬୦ କିଲୋମିଟର ଦୂର ଭୁବନେଶ୍ଵରକୁ ଆସିଲେ ଓଡ଼ିଆମାନଙ୍କର କଳା, ନୈପୁଣ୍ୟର ଐତିହାସିକ ପ୍ରମାଣ ମନ୍ଦିରମାଳିନୀ ରାଜଧାନୀ ସହରରୁ ମିଳିବ । ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ହସ୍ତଶିଳ୍ପ, ପଟ୍ଟଚିତ୍ର, ପିପିଲି ଚାନ୍ଦୁଆ, ସମ୍ବଲପୁର ଶାଢ଼ି, କଟକର ତାରକସି କାମ ଆଜି ସାରା ବିଶ୍ଵରେ ଆଦୃତ । ଆମକୁ ଏହା ଏକ କଳାପ୍ରେମୀ ଜାତି ହିସାବରେ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ କରିଛି । ଓଡ଼ିଆମାନେ କେବଳ କଳାପ୍ରେମୀ ନୁହଁନ୍ତି, ବ୍ୟବସାୟ ଓ ବାଣିଜ୍ୟରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ତାଙ୍କ ନିପୁଣତାର ପ୍ରମାଣ ଆଜି ଜାଭା ସୁମାତ୍ରାର ଦ୍ଵୀପପୁଞ୍ଜ ବହନ କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସାଧବ ପୁଅମାନେ ଅତୀତରେ କିପରି ସଫଳତା ଅର୍ଜନ କରିଥିଲେ, ଆମର 'ତଅପୋଇ'ର କିମ୍ବଦନ୍ତୀରୁ ଜାଣିହେବ । ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କର ଚରିତ୍ର ଅନେକାଂଶରେ ତାଙ୍କର ଠାକୁର ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ ତିଆରି ହୋଇଛି । ଆମ ଠାକୁର ସାଧାରଣ ଜନତାର ଠାକୁର । ତାଙ୍କୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ଥଣ୍ଡାଦ୍ଵାର ହୁଏ । ସେ ପ୍ରତିବର୍ଷ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ରଥଯାତ୍ରାରେ ବାହାରନ୍ତି । ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କର ରାଜା ମଧ୍ୟ ଠାକୁର ରଜା । ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସ୍ଵାଭିମାନ ରକ୍ଷା ପାଇଁ ଧଳା କଳା ଘୋଡ଼ାରେ ଚଢ଼ି ସ୍ଵୟଂ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଏବଂ ବଳଭଦ୍ର କାଞ୍ଚି ଅଭିଯାନରେ ଯାଇଥିବାର କିମ୍ବଦନ୍ତୀ ରହିଛି । ମାଣିକପାଟଣାରେ ମୁଦି ବିନିମୟରେ ଦହି ଖାଇଥିବାର ଗପ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆଜି ଆମକୁ ଉ-ହିତ କରୁଛି । ଆମ ଠାକୁରଙ୍କର ଜାତି, ବର୍ଣ୍ଣ, ଧର୍ମ ଭେଦ କିଛି ନାହିଁ । ସାଲବେଗ ମଧ୍ୟ ତାଙ୍କର ଭକ୍ତ । ଦାସିଆ ବାଉରୀର ଗୁହାରି ଶୁଣିବା ପାଇଁ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ । ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ଚେତନାରେ ନିର୍ମିତ ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କ ଜାତୀୟ ଚରିତ୍ରର ପ୍ରମାଣ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆଜି ବହୁ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ବିଦ୍ୟମାନ । ବାଲେଶ୍ଵର ଗଲେ ଭୁଜାଖିଆ ପୀରଙ୍କଠାରେ ଏହା ଆମେ ପାଇବା । ଖୋରଧାର କାଇପଦର ଓ କଟକର କଦମରସୁଲ ହିନ୍ଦୁ ଏବଂ ମୁସଲମାନଙ୍କର ସଂପ୍ରୀତିର ଅନ୍ୟ ଏକ ପ୍ରମାଣ । ସାରା ଭାରତବର୍ଷରେ ଜାତି, ବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଓ ଧର୍ମକୁ ନେଇ ରକ୍ତାକ୍ତ ସଂଘର୍ଷ ଚାଲିଥିବାବେଳେ ଆମେ ଓଡ଼ିଆମାନେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ହରିଜନ ଓ ଗିରିଜନ, ଗୁରୁଜନ ଓ ଲଘୁଜନ ସମସ୍ତେ ସାମାଜିକ ସମରସତାର ଜୀବନ୍ତ ପ୍ରମାଣ ଦେଉଛୁ । ଏଥିପାଇଁ ଆମ ଚରିତ୍ରକୁ ବହୁ କାଳରୁ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଆଶୀର୍ବାଦ କରି ନିର୍ମାଣ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଆମକୁ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଶାନ୍ତିପ୍ରିୟ ଓ ଦରଦୀ ମଣିଷ ଭାବରେ ଗଢ଼ିଛନ୍ତି । ଏହି ମାଟିରେ ଚଣ୍ଡାଶୋକ ଧର୍ମାଶୋକରେ ପରିଣତ

ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି । ଆମେ ଶାନ୍ତିପ୍ରିୟ ବୋଲି ଯେ ସ୍ଵାଭିମାନ ଏବଂ ସ୍ଵାଧୀନତା ପାଇଁ ସଂଗ୍ରାମ କରିନାହୁଁ, ତାହା ମଧ୍ୟ ନୁହେଁ । ଇଂରେଜମାନଙ୍କୁ ତାଙ୍କର ସାମ୍ରାଜ୍ୟବାଦୀ ଅଭିଯାନରେ ୧୮୦୩ ମସିହା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପାଇକମାନେ ଅଟକାଇ ପାରିଥିଲେ । ବକ୍ସି ଜଗବନ୍ଧୁ, ବୀର ସୁରେନ୍ଦ୍ର ସାଏ ରଘୁ ଦିବାକର ଏବଂ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମଣ ନାୟକ ପ୍ରମୁଖ ଆଜି ମଧ୍ୟ ଆମକୁ ସଂଗ୍ରାମୀ ଚରିତ୍ରର ପ୍ରମାଣସ୍ଵରୂପ ପ୍ରଭାବିତ କରୁଛନ୍ତି ।

ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କ ଚରିତ୍ର ସର୍କରେ ଏଭଳି କଥା କହିଲାବେଳେ ଅନ୍ୟ ଏକ ଦିଗକୁ ଭୁଲିଗଲେ ଚଳିବ ନାହିଁ । ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କର ଆଶୀର୍ବାଦରେ ସମୃଦ୍ଧ ହୋଇଥିବା ଶାନ୍ତିପ୍ରିୟ, କଳାପ୍ରେମୀ, ସ୍ଵାଭିମାନୀ ସମୃଦ୍ଧ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତି ଆଜି ଏକବିଂଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀର ପ୍ରଥମ ପାଦରେ ହଜାର ହଜାର କୋଟି ଟଙ୍କାର ରଣଭାର ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ବୋହୁଛି । ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ଦୁଃଖିରୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ଚୋରିର ଅଭିଯୋଗ ଆସୁଛି । ଭାରତର ଅନଗ୍ରସର ରାଜ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଆମକୁ ପ୍ରଥମ ସ୍ଥାନ ମିଳିଛି । ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଆମକୁ କୌଣସି ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ତାଙ୍କ କୃପାରେ ଉଣା କରିନାହାନ୍ତି । ଭୁଲ୍ ଉପରେ ଯେତିକି ଜଙ୍ଗଲ ସଦ ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି ଭୁଲ୍ ତଳେ ତାହାଠାରୁ ଅଧିକ ଖଣିଜ ସଦ ଭରି ରଖିଛନ୍ତି । ଏ ଦୁଇ ସଦକୁ ଯେରି ରହିଛି ୫୦୦ କିଲୋମିଟର ବେଳାଭୂମିର ଅନନ୍ୟ ସଦ । ଭାରତର ଆଉ କୌଣସି ରାଜ୍ୟ ଏଭଳି ଆଶୀର୍ବାଦ ପାଇନାହିଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଆମେ କୁଳାଙ୍ଗାରମାନେ ଏହାକୁ ବିନିଯୋଗ କରି ସମୃଦ୍ଧ ହେବୁ କ’ଣ, ତଅପୋଇ ଏବଂ ସାଧବପୁଅମାନଙ୍କର ଉତ୍ତରପୁରୁଷ ହେବା ଦୂରେ ଥାଉ, ପରସ୍ପରର କୁ-ରଚନା କରି ଦୁର୍ନୀତି ଏବଂ ଲୁଣ୍ଠନର ପ୍ରତିଯୋଗିତାରେ ଅବତୀର୍ଣ ହେବା ଆମମାନଙ୍କର ପ୍ରଧାନ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହୋଇଛି । କଥାରେ ଅଛି ‘ଥିଲେ ଥାଉ ପଛେ ଗୁଣ ହଜାର, ଚରିତ୍ର ନ ଥିଲେ ସବୁ ଅସାର ।’ ଏହା ଏଭଳି ହେବାକୁ ବସିଲାଣି ଯେ, ଏ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀରେ ଆମର ଜାତୀୟ ଚରିତ୍ରର ଭିନ୍ନ ଏକ ପରିଭାଷା ଏବଂ ରୂପରେଖ ଦେବାକୁ କେତେକ ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲେଣି । ତେଣୁ ଆଜି ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କ ଜାତୀୟ ଚରିତ୍ର ସର୍କରେ ଆଲୋଚନାବେଳେ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ସଚେତନ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ନିଜ ଇତିହାସ, ପରରା ବିଷୟରେ ଚିନ୍ତା କରିବା ଉଚିତ । ସ୍ଵାଧୀନତୋତ୍ତର ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଯେଉଁମାନେ ସବୁକିଛି ଭୋଗ କରିଛନ୍ତି, ସେମାନେ ଏ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀର ପ୍ରଥମ ପାଦରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ହୃତପ୍ତାୟ ଜାତୀୟ ଚରିତ୍ରର ପୁନରୁଦ୍ଧାର ପାଇଁ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପୁନଃନିର୍ମାଣ ଯଜ୍ଞରେ ନିଜ ନିଜର ସୀମିତ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଗତ ସ୍ଵାର୍ଥକୁ ଆହୁତି ଦେଲେ ଯାଇ ଆମ ଉତ୍ତରପୁରୁଷମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଆମେ ଏକ ନୂଆ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସ୍ଵପ୍ନକୁ ସାକାର କରିପାରିବା । ଆସନ୍ତୁ, ସମସ୍ତେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଅତୀତକୁ ଜାଣିବା । ପ୍ରକୃତ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ଚିହ୍ନି ତାକୁ ଭଲ ପାଇବା ପାଇଁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରିବା । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନର ସମ୍ଭାବନାକୁ ନେଇ ଆମ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସମୃଦ୍ଧ ହେଉ । ଆମ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ଏଥିରେ ସମାନ ପରିମାଣରେ ଭାଗ ରହୁ । ଏହା ହିଁ ଆଜିର ସଙ୍କଳ୍ପ ହେଉ । (ଆକାଶବାଣୀର ସୌଜନ୍ୟରୁ)

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ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତିର ପରିଚୟ

ବିଜୟମୋହନ ମିଶ୍ର*

ସଂସାରର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ ଖାଦ୍ୟ, ବସ୍ତ୍ର, ଚଳଣି ଓ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ନେଇ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ସମାଜ ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହୋଇଅଛି । ପ୍ରଧାନତଃ କିଛି ଲୋକ କୌଣସି ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ ଦୀର୍ଘ କାଳ ବସତି ସ୍ଥାପନ କଲାପରେ ଆପଣା ଭିତରେ ପାରିବାରିକ ସଂପର୍କ ସ୍ଥାପନ କରନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ଆପଣାକୁ ସେହି ଅଞ୍ଚଳର ବାସିନ୍ଦା ବୋଲି ପରିଚିତ କରାନ୍ତି । ଗ୍ରାମ, ନଗର, ଜନପଦ, ଦେଶ - ଏ ସବୁ ବହୁ ପୁରୁଣା ଶବ୍ଦ । ବଂଶ, କୁଳ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଶବ୍ଦ ଏମାନଙ୍କଠାରୁ ନୁଆ ଏବଂ 'ଜାତି' ଶବ୍ଦ ସବୁଠାରୁ ନୁଆ । ବଂଶଗତ ବା କୁଳଗତ ସଂପର୍କ ଥିଲେ ଆମେ 'ଜାତି' ଶବ୍ଦ ବ୍ୟବହାର କରିଥାଉ । ସମଗ୍ର ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ସଂପ୍ରଦାୟକୁ 'ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ଜାତି' ବୋଲି କୁହାଯାଇପାରେ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାଭାଷୀ ସମସ୍ତେ ଏବଂ ଓଡ଼ିଆବଂଶଜ ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କୁ 'ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତି' ର ଅଙ୍ଗ ବୋଲି ଗ୍ରହଣ କରାଯାଏ । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ସମୟରେ ମୋଟାମୋଟି ଭାବରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତି ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଭାବେ ସଂଶ୍ଳିଷ୍ଟ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାଭାଷୀ ଲୋକସମାଜକୁ ନେଇ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନ ଭାରତରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପ୍ରଦେଶର ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରାହୋଇଅଛି । ଆଚାର, ବିଚାର ଓ ଶୈଳୀ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ କିଛି ପୃଥକ୍ ଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାର ଭ୍ରାତୃତ୍ୱ ଏ ପ୍ରଦେଶକୁ ବାନ୍ଧିରଖିଅଛି । ଏ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ଆଗରୁ ଓଡ୍ର, କଳିଙ୍ଗ ଓ କୋଶଳର ସମାହାର ବୋଲି ପ୍ରମାଣିତ ହୁଏ ।

ପର୍ବତ ଓ ସମୁଦ୍ର ଭିତରେ ଥିବା ଭାରତବର୍ଷ ପୃଥିବୀ ବନ୍ଧରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଦେଶ ଓ ଭୌଗୋଳିକ ବିଭାଗ । ଏ ଭୂମିର ଚଳଣି ଓ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ନିଜସ୍ୱ ଓ ଏହାକୁ ଆମେ 'ଭାରତୀୟତ୍ୱ' କହିଥାଉ । ଭାରତବର୍ଷରେ ମନୁଷ୍ୟର ଅବସ୍ଥାନ କେବେଠାରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇଛି, ତା'ର ସଠିକ୍ ସମ୍ଭାନ ମିଳିନାହିଁ । ତେଣୁ 'ଭାରତୀୟତ୍ୱ'ର ବୟସ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଧାରଣ କରିହୁଏନାହିଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏହା ଅନୁମାନ କରାଯାଇପାରେ ଯେ 'ଭାରତବର୍ଷର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଅଞ୍ଚଳର ବସତି 'ଭାରତୀୟତ୍ୱ' ଠାରୁ ପୁରୁଣା । ବସତିମାନଙ୍କର ସମ୍ପର୍କଗତ ଚଳଣିରେ 'ଭାରତୀୟତ୍ୱ'ର ଉତ୍ପତ୍ତି । ଏ ଚଳଣିମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଗୋଟିଏ । ଏ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଗୋଟିଏ ସାମାଜିକ ରୀତି । କାଳକ୍ରମେ ଆମେ ଏହାକୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ବୋଲି କହିଥାଉ । ଏ ସଂସ୍କୃତିରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆତ୍ୱ ନିହିତ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଏ ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ପ୍ରତିବିମ୍ବ । ଏଥିରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତିର ପରିଚୟ ।

ଓଡ଼ିଆ ରୀତିକୁ ବୁଝିବାକୁ ହେଲେ ପୁରାକାଳର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଅଞ୍ଚଳର ବାସିନ୍ଦାମାନଙ୍କର ଜୀବନପ୍ରଣାଳୀ ବୁଝିବାକୁ ହେବ । ପୁରାକାଳରେ ଲୋକମାନେ ନଦୀକୂଳରେ ରହୁଥିଲେ । ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ମହାନଦୀ, ବ୍ରାହ୍ମଣୀ, ବୈତରଣୀ, ସୁବର୍ଣ୍ଣରେଖା ଓ ରକ୍ଷିକୁଲ୍ୟା ନଦୀକୂଳରେ ପୁରୁଣା ଅଧିବାସୀ ବସତିସ୍ଥାପନ କରିଥିବା ଅନୁମାନ କରାଯାଏ । ପ୍ରତ୍ନତାତ୍ତ୍ୱିକ ଗବେଷଣାରୁ ଏ ନଦୀମାନଙ୍କର ପାରିପାର୍ଶ୍ୱିକ ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ ପୁରୁଣା ବସତିର ନମୁନା ମିଳୁଅଛି । ଏ ଲୋକମାନେ କୃଷିକର୍ମ କରୁଥିଲେ ବୋଲି ମଧ୍ୟ ନଜିର ମିଳୁଅଛି । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଏ କୃଷକ ପରମ୍ପରା କିଛି ହିଁ ପଟାନ୍ତର । କୃଷକର ଜୀବନ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନ, ତେଣୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନଚେତା ହେବା ସ୍ୱାଭାବିକ । ପୁରୁଣା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବାସିନ୍ଦାମାନେ ସୁସ୍ଥ ଓ ବଳଶାଳୀ ଥିଲେ ବୋଲି ପୁରାଣ ଓ ଇତିହାସରୁ ଜଣାପଡ଼ୁଛି । ଭାବନାସ୍ତରରେ ନୃତନ ଚିନ୍ତାଧାରାକୁ ପ୍ରଣୟ ଦେବା ଓଡ଼ିଆର ରୀତି ବୋଲି ଇତିହାସର ମତ ।

ଭୂମି ଓ ପ୍ରକୃତି ସହ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବାସିନ୍ଦାଙ୍କର ସଂପର୍କରୁ ପରକାଳରେ ମନ୍ଦ ଓ ତନ୍ଦ୍ର ପ୍ରକାଶ ହୋଇଛି । ପ୍ରକୃତି ନିୟନ୍ତ୍ରଣ ଲାଗି ମନ୍ଦ ଓ ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ଜୀବନ ନିୟନ୍ତ୍ରଣ ଲାଗି ତନ୍ଦ୍ର ଆବିଷ୍କାର ହୋଇଥାଇପାରେ ବୋଲି ଅନୁମାନ କରାଯାଏ । ଐତିହାସିକ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ଏ ଚିନ୍ତାଧାରାର ଉଦ୍ଭାବନ ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟରକ୍ଷା ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ହୋଇଥାଇପାରେ । ଅଧର୍ବବେଦର ପିପ୍ପଲାଇଦା ଶାଖା ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ହିଁ ସମିତ । ଅଧର୍ବବେଦ ତନ୍ଦ୍ରବେଦ । ଯୋଗସିଦ୍ଧିରୁ ପଳାପଳ ସିଦ୍ଧି ବୋଲି ଯୋଗଶାସ୍ତ୍ର କହେ । ଯୋଗର ପ୍ରଚଳନରୁ ତନ୍ଦ୍ର, କି ତନ୍ଦ୍ରର ପ୍ରଚଳନରୁ ଯୋଗ - ଏ ନିମିତ୍ତ ଉଚ୍ଚଦରର ଗବେଷଣା ନିହାତି ଆବଶ୍ୟକ । ତାତ୍ତ୍ୱିକ ସାଧନା ବଳରେ ପ୍ରକୃତିସହ ମନୁଷ୍ୟର ଯୋଗାଯୋଗ ଏକ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସଂସ୍କାର ।

ତନ୍ଦ୍ରର ପ୍ରଭାବରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଲୋକମାନେ ଶକ୍ତିପୂଜକ । ଶକ୍ତିର ଅସଂଖ୍ୟ ରୂପ - ଗଛ, ଲତା, ପାଣି, ପବନ, ପାହାଡ଼, ନଈ, କ୍ଷେତ, ବିଲ - ଏ ସବୁ ଶକ୍ତିର କରଣୀ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ରୀତିରେ ଏମାନେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଜୀବିତ ଓ ସମସ୍ତେ ଠାକୁରାଣୀ । ଠାକୁରାଣୀ ପ୍ରସାଦ ନ ହେଲେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟସିଦ୍ଧି ଅସମ୍ଭବ । ଠାକୁରାଣୀ ମଣିଷକୁ ପରୀକ୍ଷା କରେ, ତା' ମନ ଚିହ୍ନେ । ଠାକୁରାଣୀ ଆଗରେ ସତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିବା ମନୁଷ୍ୟର କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ । ଠାକୁରାଣୀ କରାଳ ରୂପ ଧରି ବଢ଼ି, ବନ୍ୟା, ବାତ୍ୟା ସୃଷ୍ଟି

କରି ଛାରିଖାର କରିପାରେ । ମହାମାରୀ, ବସନ୍ତ ଆଦି ରୋଗ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରି ବଂଶନିପାତ କରିପାରେ । ଠାକୁରାଣୀ ପ୍ରତି ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ସାବଧାନ ରହିବା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ । ଠାକୁରାଣୀର ରୂପ ନାହିଁ, ତେବେ ବି ସିଏ ଦେଖୁଥାଏ । ଠାକୁରାଣୀ ତା' ଇଚ୍ଛାରେ ବୁଲୁଥାଏ ।

ଏ ଠାକୁରାଣୀ ନଇକୁଳରେ କୌଣସି ଗଛରେ ବା ଗଛତଳେ ନିବାସ କରେ ବୋଲି ଓଡ଼ିଶାଦେଶରେ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ରହିଆସିଛି । ତେଣୁ ଠାକୁରାଣୀର ପ୍ରଥମ ମୂର୍ତ୍ତି ଗୋଟିଏ ଖମ୍ବ ବୋଲି କେହି ଐତିହାସିକ ସିଦ୍ଧାନ୍ତ କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ଖମ୍ବ ମନୁଷ୍ୟଠାରୁ ଉଚ୍ଚ ଏବଂ ଖମ୍ବର ମନୁଷ୍ୟରୂପ ଆଦିମ ସଭ୍ୟତାର ପ୍ରତୀକ । ଆଫିକାର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ ଓ ଆଦିବାସୀ ସଭ୍ୟତାରେ ଖମ୍ବାକୃତି ମନୁଷ୍ୟମୂର୍ତ୍ତି ଏବେ ମଧ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ଥିବାର ଦେଖାଯାଏ । ଏହି ଠାକୁରାଣୀ ପଞ୍ଜିମ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଖମ୍ବେଶ୍ୱରୀ ନାମରେ ପୂଜିତ ହେଉଛନ୍ତି । କୌଣସି ଆନୁଷ୍ଠାନିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟରେ ବା କ୍ଷେତ୍ର ଖମ୍ବାରରେ ଖମ୍ବ ସ୍ଥାପନା କରାଯାଏ । ମନୁଷ୍ୟର ମର୍ଯ୍ୟାଦା ବା ବୟସରେ ଖମ୍ବେଶ୍ୱରୀର ବିବେଚନା ନାହିଁ । ଯିଏ ତା'କୁ ଆଦର କରେ, ଖମ୍ବେଶ୍ୱରୀ ତା'କୁ ପ୍ରସନ୍ନ ହୁଏ । ଖମ୍ବେଶ୍ୱରୀ ପ୍ରସାଦରେ ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ଜମିଗାଣ କରେ, ପଳପାତ୍ର ହୁଏ ଏବଂ ଖମ୍ବେଶ୍ୱରୀର ଉତ୍ସବ କରେ । ଖମ୍ବେଶ୍ୱରୀ ଖୁସି ରହେ ।

ଖମ୍ବେଶ୍ୱରୀ କାଠରୁ ତିଆରି । ଖମ୍ବେଶ୍ୱରୀର ପରିବେଶ ଜଙ୍ଗଲ ଓ କାଠ । କାଳକ୍ରମେ ଖମ୍ବେଶ୍ୱରୀର ଯାତ୍ରା ନିମିତ୍ତ କାଠର ରଥ ତିଆରି ହୋଇଥିବାର ଅନୁମାନ କରାଯାଇପାରେ । ରଥ ଗୋଟିଏ ବୈଜ୍ଞାନିକ ଉଦ୍ଭାବନ । ଏହାର ଉତ୍ପତ୍ତି ପୃଥିବୀରେ କେଉଁଠି, ତା'ର ବିଶ୍ଳେଷଣ ଆମ ପାଖରେ ନାହିଁ । ତେବେ ରଥକୁ ମଣିଷ ଚାଣିବାର ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ଅନ୍ୟତ୍ର ଦେଖିବାକୁ ମିଳେ ନାହିଁ । ବିଗ୍ରହମାନଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ କାଠନିର୍ମିତ ରଥକୁ ମଣିଷମାନେ ଚାଣିବାର ଉତ୍ସବକୁ ଆମେ ରଥଯାତ୍ରା କହିଥାଉ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ କଳ୍ପନାରେ ଖମ୍ବେଶ୍ୱରୀଠାରୁ ଆକାଶର ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଦୃତଗାମୀ । ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟର ରଥରେ ଅଶ୍ୱର ନିଯୁକ୍ତି । ଏପରି ରଥାକାରରେ କୋଣାର୍କ ମନ୍ଦିରର ଯୋଜନା । ଯେତେ ବଡ଼ ରଥ, ସେତେ ବେଶୀ ଚକ । ରଥର ପ୍ରଚଳନ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସର୍ବତ୍ର ଦେଖିବାକୁ ମିଳିଥାଏ ।

ଓଡ଼ ଦେଶର ଯୋଗା ମହାଭାରତ ଯୁଦ୍ଧରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେବାର ବିବରଣୀ ପୁରାଣରୁ ମିଳେ । ସମୁଦ୍ରତଟ ଓଡ଼ ଦେଶର କେହି କେହି ଜମିଦାରୀ ପରିବାର ସମୃଦ୍ଧିବନ୍ତ ହୋଇ ଆପଣାକୁ ସମାଜ ଆଗରେ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ କରାଇଥାଇ ପାରନ୍ତି । ପାରିବାରିକ ରାଜତ୍ୱକୁ ଚାଲୁ ରଖିବାକୁ ମଲ୍ଲ, ଯୋଗା ଓ ସୈନ୍ୟ ଲୋଡ଼ା । ତେଣୁ ମନେହୁଏ, ବ୍ୟାୟାମ ଓ ଯୁଦ୍ଧ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ପ୍ରଥମ ଚାକିରୀ । ସବଳ ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କୁ ତାଲିମ୍ ଦେଇ ମଲ୍ଲ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିବା ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଦେଶର ପରଂପରା ବୋଲି ଏବେ ବି ଜଣାପଡ଼େ । ମୁଖିୟୁଦ୍ଧ ଓ ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ କାଳରେ ଖତ୍ତଗୟୁଦ୍ଧରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆମାନେ ନିପୁଣ ଥିଲେ ବୋଲି ଇତିହାସ କହେ । ସବଳ ହୋଇଥିବା ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶାଦେଶରେ ଭୀରୁତ୍ୱ ନ ଥିଲା ।

ଇଂରେଜସାଧନ ପରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ଏ ସବଳତା ଅନେକ ପରିମାଣରେ ହ୍ରାସ ହୋଇଥିବାର ଜଣାଯାଏ । ଦେହର ଶକ୍ତି ପାଇଁ ଉତ୍ତମ ଖାଦ୍ୟ ଲୋଡ଼ା । ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଖାଦ୍ୟର ଅଭାବ ପରିଲକ୍ଷିତ ହୋଇଥାଏ ।

ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସମୃଦ୍ଧିବାନ୍ କୃଷକମାନେ ବିଦେଶରେ ବାଣିଜ୍ୟ କରିବାର ପ୍ରମାଣ ଇତିହାସରୁ ମିଳୁଛି । ଗୌତମ ବୁଦ୍ଧ ତାଙ୍କର ବାରାଣସୀ ଯାତ୍ରା ସମୟରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବଣିକମାନଙ୍କୁ ଭେଟିଥିବାର ବିବରଣୀ ବୌଦ୍ଧଜାତକରେ ଲେଖାଅଛି । ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ କାଳରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆବଣିକ ସମୁଦ୍ର ପଥରେ ଯାଇ ସୁଦୂର ଇଣ୍ଡୋନେସିଆ ଦ୍ୱୀପପୁଞ୍ଜରେ ବସତି ସ୍ଥାପନ କରିଥିବାର ପ୍ରମାଣ ଇତିହାସରୁ ମିଳେ । ବିବାହ ସଂପର୍କ, ମନ୍ଦିର ସ୍ଥାପତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରସାର ଓ ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ ଚଳଣିରେ ଏ ଦୂଳ ରାଜ୍ୟର ସାମଞ୍ଜସ୍ୟ ରହିଛି । ଏ ସମୟର ସାମାନ୍ୟ ପ୍ରତୀକ ରୂପେ ବାଲିଯାତ୍ରା ଉତ୍ସବ ଏବେ ମଧ୍ୟ କଟକରେ ମହାନଦୀ କୂଳରେ ଆଡ଼ମ୍ବରରେ ପାଳିତ ହେଉଅଛି । ନିଜର ସାଂସ୍କୃତି ଓ ଚଳଣି ଅନ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କ ଆଗରେ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରାଇବା ବୋଧହୁଏ ନିହିତ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପ୍ରକୃତି । ଏ ପ୍ରକାଶର ସାଜସଜ୍ଜା ପୂର୍ବ ତୁଳନାରେ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଉଣା ହୋଇଯାଇଛି ।

ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟପୂର୍ବ ତୃତୀୟ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀରେ ଉତ୍ତରରୁ ଅଶୋକ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଆକ୍ରମଣ କରିଥିବାର ବିବରଣୀ ଶିଳାଲେଖରୁ ଜଣାପଡ଼ିଛି । ଏ ଯୁଦ୍ଧରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ନିଧନରେ ଅଶୋକଙ୍କର ବିଶୃଙ୍ଖଳିତ ମନ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତିତ ହେଲା ବୋଲି ପ୍ରଶସ୍ତି ଲେଖାଯାଇଛି । ଏହାର କିଛିକାଳ ପରେ ପାଟଳିପୁତ୍ର ରାଜା ମହାପଦ୍ମନନ୍ଦ ଯୁଦ୍ଧକରି ଓଡ଼ିଶାରୁ ଜୀନମୂର୍ତ୍ତି ଲୁଚି କରିଥିଲେ ବୋଲି ଏବଂ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ରାଜା ଖାରବେଳ ଏ ମୂର୍ତ୍ତିକୁ ଉଦ୍ଧାର କରିଥିବା କଥା ଜୈନଶାସ୍ତ୍ରରେ ଲେଖା ଅଛି । ଆପଣାର ଭୂମି ଓ ପ୍ରତୀକ ପ୍ରତି ଅଧିକାର ସାବ୍ୟସ୍ତ କରିବାର ଏହା ଏକ ପ୍ରମାଣ । ପରେ ମୂସଲମାନ ଆକ୍ରମଣ ସମୟରେ ଭୂମିରକ୍ଷା ଓ ଠାକୁରରକ୍ଷା ମଧ୍ୟ ଏହି ଭାବଧାରା ସହ ସଂଗୃହ୍ୟ ।

ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟପୂର୍ବ ପ୍ରଥମଶତାବ୍ଦୀରେ ଖାରବେଳଙ୍କ ସମୟରେ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱରର ଖଣ୍ଡଗିରି ଓ ଉଦୟଗିରିର ସ୍ଥାପତ୍ୟ ନିର୍ମିତହୋଇଥିଲା । ଉଦୟଗିରିର ରାଣୀଗୁମ୍ଫା ନାଟ୍ୟଶାସ୍ତ୍ର ଅନୁକରଣରେ ପ୍ରଥମ ଅଭିନୟ ମଞ୍ଚ ବୋଲି ତାତ୍ତ୍ୱିକ ଗବେଷଣାରୁ ନିର୍ଣ୍ଣିତ ହୋଇଛି । ନାଟ୍ୟଶାସ୍ତ୍ରପ୍ରଣେତା ଭରତମୁନିଙ୍କର ନିବାସସ୍ଥାନ ଏ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ନିଧାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହୋଇ ନ ପାରି ଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ରସ, ଭାବ, ଭଙ୍ଗ, ଚାହାଣି ଓ ଚଳଣିରେ ଏହା ପୃଥିବୀର ପ୍ରଥମ ଗ୍ରନ୍ଥ ବୋଲି ସ୍ୱୀକୃତ ହେଉଛି । ନାଟ୍ୟଶାସ୍ତ୍ର ଅନୁକରଣରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ଭାରତବର୍ଷର ପ୍ରଥମ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ନୃତ୍ୟ । ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟର ଅଙ୍ଗସଜ୍ଜା, ବସ୍ତ୍ରପରିପାଟ , ଅଳଙ୍କାର, ପ୍ରସାଧନ ଏକ ସମୃଦ୍ଧିବାନ୍ ଦେଶର ପରିଚୟ ଦିଏ । ଏବେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀକୁ ମନ୍ଦିରନୃତ୍ୟ ବୋଲି କୁହାଯାଉଥିଲେହଁ ଏହା ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ କଳାତ୍ମକ ଓ

ରସପୁଣ୍ୟ ଧର୍ମରେ ତିଳେମାତ୍ର ସନ୍ଦେହ ନାହିଁ । ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ବନ ଅଞ୍ଚଳର ଛନ୍ଦ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀଠାର ପୁରୁଣା ବୋଲି କୁହାଯାଇପାରେ । ବାଦ୍ୟ ଓ ତାଳର ସୃଷ୍ଟି ସାମଗ୍ରିକସଙ୍କାରୁ ଉତ୍ପତ୍ତ ହୋଇଥିବାର ଅନୁମାନ କରାଯାଏ । ବିଭିନ୍ନ ତାଳବାଦ୍ୟର କାରିଗରି ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଏବେ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ମିଳେ । ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ବାଦ୍ୟସ୍ୱର ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଅଞ୍ଚଳଠାରୁ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଓ ମଧୁର ବୋଲି ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରକାରଙ୍କର ମତ । ଅଳଙ୍କାରର ଉପଯୋଗ ହେତୁ ଆଗକାଳରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଧାତୁଜ୍ଞାନର ଭଲ ପରିଚୟ ଥିଲା ବୋଲି ଅନୁମିତ ହୁଏ ।

ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଉଭୟ ବୌଦ୍ଧ ଓ ଜୈନ ଧର୍ମର ସମୃଦ୍ଧିତ ପ୍ରଚାର ହୋଇଥିବା ଫଳରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆଲୋକ ଅନ୍ୟ ମତବାଦକୁ ଖାତିର କରନ୍ତି ବୋଲି ସାମାଜିକ ମତ ରହିଆସିଛି । ପ୍ରାଚୀନକାଳରୁ ପୁରୀସହର ଭାଷା, ସଂଗୀତ ଓ ଦର୍ଶନଶାସ୍ତ୍ରର ଏକ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ପୀଠ ହିସାବରେ ଭାରତବର୍ଷରେ ପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧିଲାଭ କରିଛି । ଗୌତମବୁଦ୍ଧଙ୍କର ଦାନ୍ତ ନୀଳାଚଳରେ ସ୍ଥାପିତ ହେବା ଓ ତା’ପରେ ଖମ୍ବେଶ୍ୱରୀଯାତ୍ରା ବୁଦ୍ଧତିମୁର୍ତ୍ତିଙ୍କର ରଥଯାତ୍ରାରେ ପରିଣତ ହେବାର କିମ୍ବଦନ୍ତୀ ଅଛି । ଯୋଗୀ ଶଙ୍କରାଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ତା’ଙ୍କର ଭାରତଯାତ୍ରାରେ ପୁରୀରେ ମଠସ୍ଥାପନା କରିଥିଲେ । ଶଙ୍କରାଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟଙ୍କର ଐତିହାସିକ ସମୟ ଏ’ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଧାରିତ ହୋଇନାହିଁ । ତେବେ ସତ୍ୟ ବା ଅକ୍ଷୟଗତା ବେଳକୁ ଦକ୍ଷିଣରୁ ରାଜାମାନେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଅଧିକାରକରି ଶୈବଧର୍ମ ପ୍ରଚଳନ କରିଥିବାର ପ୍ରମାଣ ଅଛି । ଏ’ ସମୟରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାବାସୀ କଳା, ସ୍ଥାପତ୍ୟ ଓ ବାଣିଜ୍ୟରେ ମନୋନିବେଶ କରିଥିବାର ପ୍ରମାଣ ରହିଛି । ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ‘ଦେଉଳ’ ଭାସ୍କର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଏହି ସମୟର ସୃଷ୍ଟି । ମନ୍ଦିରନଗରୀ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର ଓ ସୋର ଭାସ୍କର୍ଯ୍ୟସୌକ୍ଷ୍ମ ଏହି ସମୟର ଓଡ଼ିଆ କାରିଗରର କୃତି । ଅଗଣିତ ମନ୍ଦିରମାନଙ୍କରେ ପଥରକାମ ଓ ଖୋଦେଇ ଓଡ଼ିଆ କାରିଗରର ଶିଳ୍ପନୈପୁଣ୍ୟର ପରିଚୟ ଦେଇଥାଏ । କାରିଗରିକାମର ପ୍ରଚଳନ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସର୍ବତ୍ର ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଅଛି । କାଠ, ପଥର, ଶିଳ୍ପ, ତମ୍ବା, ପିତ୍ତଳ, ରୂପା ଓ ସୁନାରେ କାରିଗର ସୁକ୍ଷ୍ମକାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରିବାର ଦେଖାଯାଏ । ଏ’ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଅନେକ ପରିମାଣରେ ମୌଳିକ । କାରିଗରିଶିକ୍ଷାର ପ୍ରସାର ଲାଗି ଓଡ଼ିଆଜାତିର ଉଦ୍ୟମ ଲୋଡା ।



ପ୍ରାୟ ଦ୍ୱାଦଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀରେ କବି ଜୟଦେବଙ୍କର ଆବିର୍ଭାବ । ଶ୍ରୀମଦ୍ ଭାଗବତରୁ ଭଗବାନବିଷ୍ଣୁଙ୍କର କୃଷ୍ଣ ଅବତାର ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତେ କେଶବଙ୍କର ବୁଦ୍ଧଶରୀର ବୋଲି କଳ୍ପନାକରି ବୌଦ୍ଧଧର୍ମର ଉପକରଣକୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସାମୁହିକ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ସହ କବି ଜୟଦେବ ମିଳାଇଦେଇଛନ୍ତି । ନୀଳାଚଳ ଶଙ୍କରସ୍ତ୍ର ଓ ସୁଦୃଶ୍ୟ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ମନ୍ଦିର ଏ’ ସମୟର ସୃଷ୍ଟି । ଏ’ ସ୍ଥାପତ୍ୟର ଚରମ ଉତ୍କର୍ଷ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଭାଗାର ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧଶତାବ୍ଦୀ । ଓଡ଼ିଆବାସୀ ଅଳଙ୍କଷି ଜ୍ୟୋତିର୍ବିଦ୍ୟାରେ ପାରଙ୍ଗମ ହୋଇ

ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟର ପ୍ରଥମ କିରଣର ପୂଜା କରିବାଲାଗି କୋଶାଳର ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟମନ୍ଦିର ସ୍ଥାପନା କରିଥିଲେ । ମନ୍ଦିର ଭାସ୍କର୍ଯ୍ୟରୁ ତତ୍ତ୍ୱୋଦ୍ଧୃତ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ରୁଚିମତ୍ତ ଓ ରୀତିଯୁକ୍ତ ବୋଲି ଧାରଣା କରାଯାଏ । ପଥରରେ ବଡ଼ ଆକାରରେ ଭାସ୍କର୍ଯ୍ୟସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିବା ନୂତନ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପକ୍ଷରେ ସମ୍ଭବହୋଇନାହିଁ ।

ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ମନ୍ଦିରନିର୍ମାଣ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ସର୍ବତ୍ର ଓ ଅସର୍ବତ୍ର ବିଭେଦ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ନ ଥିଲା ବୋଲି ଅନୁମିତ ହୁଏ । ସଂସ୍କୃତପ୍ରଚାର ଓ ଦକ୍ଷିଣପଶ୍ଚିମ ରାମାନୁଜାଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟଙ୍କର ଓଡ଼ିଶାଯାତ୍ରା ପରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ସର୍ବତ୍ର ସୃଷ୍ଟି ବୋଲି ଜଣାପଡ଼େ । ସର୍ବତ୍ରଧର୍ମର ଜାତିଆଣ ଭାବ ପକ୍ଷିମଓଡ଼ିଶାର ପକ୍ଷିତମାନଙ୍କୁ ପ୍ରଭାବିତ କରିପାରି ନ ଥିଲା ଏବଂ ବୌଦ୍ଧଧର୍ମର ଶୂନ୍ୟଦର୍ଶନ ଓ ସମଭାବ ପକ୍ଷିମଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସାମାଜିକ ଚଳଣିରେ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଜଡ଼ିତ ଥିଲା । ଅନେକ ପକ୍ଷିତ ବାହୁଣ୍ୟଧର୍ମ ଅସ୍ୱୀକାର କରି ତିବ୍ବତ ଦେଶରେ ବୌଦ୍ଧଧର୍ମ ପ୍ରଚାରକ ଭାବରେ ନିଯୁକ୍ତ ଥିବାର ନଜିର ଇତିହାସରୁ ମିଳୁଛି । ତିବ୍ବତଦେଶର ପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧ ଧର୍ମଯାଜକ ଧର୍ମକୀର୍ତ୍ତି ସୋନପୁରର ବାହୁଣ୍ୟ ଥିଲେ ବୋଲି ଏବେ ଐତିହାସିକ ମତ ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି । ବର୍ଷବିଭେଦ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ଜାତୀୟଚରିତ୍ର ନ ହେଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆର୍ଥିକ ଅଭାବର ଅହେତୁକ ଭୟ ହୋଇ ଏ’ ବିଭେଦ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ସମାଜକୁ ଅନେକ ପରିମାଣରେ ଗ୍ରାସ କରିଛି । ଏଥିରୁ ନିତାନ୍ତ ମୁକ୍ତି ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ।

ଭାରତବର୍ଷର ସମସ୍ତ ଆଞ୍ଚଳିକ ଭାଷା ପ୍ରାୟ ନବମଶତାବ୍ଦୀରେ ସମୃଦ୍ଧ ବୋଲି ଭାଷାତତ୍ତ୍ୱବିତ୍ ମାନଙ୍କର ମତ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ, ବଙ୍ଗଳା ଓ ଆସାମୀୟ - ଏ’ ତିନୋଟି ଭାଷାର ସୁତ୍ର ସମାନ ବୋଲି ପ୍ରମାଣ ହେଉଛି । ଶବ୍ଦଯୋଜନା ଓ ବ୍ୟାକରଣ ବ୍ୟବହାର ନେଇ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟାୟକ୍ରମେ ଆସାମୀୟ ପ୍ରଥମ, ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ ଓ ବଙ୍ଗଳା ତୃତୀୟଆବିର୍ଭୂତ ବୋଲି ତତ୍ତ୍ୱବିତ୍ ମାନଙ୍କର ମତ । ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଦେଶଜ କଥିତ ଭାଷା କେତେ ପୁରୁଣା ତା’ର ଗବେଷଣା ହୋଇନାହିଁ । ମୁଣ୍ଡା, ସାନ୍ତାଳୀ, ପାଲି ଓ ସଂସ୍କୃତରୁ ଶବ୍ଦ ଆହରଣକରି ଓଡ଼ିଆଭାଷାର ସୃଷ୍ଟି । ଓଡ଼ିଆଲିପିର ଆବିର୍ଭାବ ଏକାଦଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀରେ ହୁଏ ବୋଲି ଐତିହାସିକମାନଙ୍କର ଅନୁମାନ । ତାଳପତ୍ରରେ ଲେଖିବାପାଇଁ ଓଡ଼ିଆଲିପିର ଉତ୍ତମ ଉପଯୋଗିତା ଅଛି । ନେପାଳରେ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ଥିବା ବୌଦ୍ଧଧର୍ମର ‘ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟା ଗୀତି’ ଆସାମୀୟ, ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଓ ବଙ୍ଗଳା ଭାଷାର ପ୍ରଥମ ଗ୍ରନ୍ଥବୋଲି ଅନୁମିତ ହୁଏ । ବିଂଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀର ପ୍ରଥମାର୍ଦ୍ଧରେ କେହି ବଙ୍ଗଳା ସାଂପ୍ରଦାୟିକ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ରଭାଷା ନୁହେଁ ବୋଲି ପ୍ରଚାର ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଥିଲେ । ଅନେକ ଜାତୀୟତାବାଦୀ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଏ’ ପ୍ରକାର ଚିନ୍ତା ବିରୁଦ୍ଧରେ ସ୍ୱର ଉତ୍ତୋଳନ କରି ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ପ୍ରଦେଶରେ ପରିଣତ କରିଥିଲେ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଓ ସଂସ୍କୃତି

ଉପରେ ଏ ପ୍ରକାର ଆକ୍ଷେପ ଅମୂଳକ ହେଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ତା'ର ପ୍ରତିରୋଧ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଓଡ଼ିଆର କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ ।

ବୌଦ୍ଧଧର୍ମରେ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ପ୍ରବେଶ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ହୋଇଥିଲା ବୋଲି ପ୍ରମାଣ ମିଳୁଛି । ଏ ପ୍ରକାର ସମ୍ପର୍କରୁ ବଜ୍ରଯାନ ଶାଖାର ସୃଷ୍ଟି । ବଜ୍ରଯାନର ପୂଜାପଦ୍ଧତିରୁ ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟାଗୀତିର ସୃଷ୍ଟି । ଏହାସହ ନାଥପନ୍ଥୀ ଯୋଗୀମାନଙ୍କର କ'ଣ ସଂପର୍କ ଅଛି - ତା' ଗବେଷଣାସାପେକ୍ଷ । ଚତୁର୍ଦ୍ଦଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀବେଳକୁ ନାଥପନ୍ଥୀ ଯୋଗୀମାନଙ୍କର ପ୍ରଭାବ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଅନୁଭୂତ ହୁଏ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆସମାଜ ନାଥପନ୍ଥୀ ଚାହିଁକି ଦର୍ଶନର ଅନୁଗାମୀ ହୁଏ । ଏହି ଚାହିଁକି ଦାର୍ଶନିକମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆସାହିତ୍ୟର ଜନ୍ମଦାତା ଶୁଦ୍ରମୁନି ଶାରଳାଦାସଙ୍କର ଜନ୍ମ । ସଂସ୍କୃତ ସାହିତ୍ୟ, ଦର୍ଶନ ଓ ଯୋଗଶାସ୍ତ୍ର ଉପରେ ଶାରଳାଙ୍କର ଅସାଧାରଣ ପାଣ୍ଡିତ୍ୟ ଥିବାର ତା'ଙ୍କର ଲେଖାରୁ ହୃଦୟଙ୍ଗମ ହୁଏ । ଶାରଳାଙ୍କର ମହାଭାରତ ଆଞ୍ଚଳିକ ଭାଷାରେ ପ୍ରଥମ ମହାଭାରତ ଗ୍ରନ୍ଥ । ଶାରଳାଙ୍କର ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନା ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ଓ ଶାରଳାଙ୍କର ଚରିତ୍ରଚିତ୍ରଣ ଓଡ଼ିଆଭାଷାର ପ୍ରତିବିମ୍ବ । ଶାରଳାଙ୍କର ଭୃଗୋଳ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ । ଶାରଳାଙ୍କର କୃତି ମୌଳିକ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆଜାତିର ପ୍ରକୃଷ୍ଟ ପରିଚୟ ।

ଶାରଳାଙ୍କର କଳ୍ପନାରେ ପୁରୀ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ହେଲେ ଭଗବାନ୍ ବିଷ୍ଣୁଙ୍କର କଳିଯୁଗର ମର୍ତ୍ତ୍ୟରୂପ, ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଙ୍କର ପର ଅବତାର । ଶବର ଓ ବ୍ରାହ୍ମଣ ଉଭୟ ଏହାଙ୍କ ପୂଜକ । ଏ ବିଗ୍ରହ ରୋହିଣୀକୁଣ୍ଡର ଦାରୁ ନିର୍ମିତ । ଶାଳଗ୍ରହର ଅଠା ବୋଳା ହୋଇ ବିଗ୍ରହଙ୍କର ବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ନାହିଁ । ସବୁବର୍ଣ୍ଣର ମନୁଷ୍ୟଙ୍କୁ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିବାକୁ ବିଷ୍ଣୁଙ୍କର ମର୍ତ୍ତ୍ୟ ଅବତାର । ଏ ପ୍ରକାରର ସାର୍ବଜନିକ କଳ୍ପନାରେ ଶାରଳା ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଧର୍ମ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଙ୍କ ସହିତ ତା'ଙ୍କ ଭାଇ ବଳରାମ ଓ ଭଉଣୀ ସୁଭଦ୍ରା ମଧ୍ୟ ଏକା ସିଂହାସନରେ ପୂଜା ପାଇବେ ବୋଲି ନଭୋବାଣୀ ହୋଇଛି । ଝରପୁରାଣ ଲେଖାରେ ବଳରାମ ବାରାଣସୀର ବିଶ୍ୱନାଥ ଓ ସୁଭଦ୍ରା ଜଗତର ଶକ୍ତି ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱରୀ । ଏ ତିନିମୂର୍ତ୍ତିଙ୍କର ବିଗ୍ରହ ପୂର୍ବ କଳ୍ପନାରେ ଦାରୁ ନିର୍ମିତ ଓ ଖମ୍ବୁ ଆକାରର । କଳିଯୁଗରେ ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଙ୍କର ସୁଦର୍ଶନ ଲୁପ୍ତ । ତେଣୁ ସୁଦର୍ଶନ ମଧ୍ୟ ଖମ୍ବୁ ଆକାରରେ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ପଛରେ ଲୁଚିଯାଇଅଛି । ଶାରଳାଙ୍କର ଏ କିମ୍ବଦନ୍ତୀ ପୁରାଣରେ ପରିଣତ ହୋଇଛି ଏବଂ ପୁରୀନଗରୀ ଚକ୍ରତୀର୍ଥ ନାମରେ ଭାରତୀୟ ସମାଜରେ ସମ୍ମାନଯୋଗ୍ୟ ସ୍ଥାନ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିଛି ।

ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ଦିରର ପ୍ରାଧାନ୍ୟରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଶ୍ରୀଚୈତନ୍ୟ ନିବାସକରିବା ଇତିହାସର କାହାଣୀ । ଏହି କାଳର ପଞ୍ଚସଖା - ବଳରାମ, ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ, ଯଶୋବନ୍ତ, ଅଚ୍ୟୁତାନନ୍ଦ ଓ ଅନନ୍ତ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ମୂଲ୍ୟବୋଧକୁ ରୂପ ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି । ଏହା ଶୋଡ଼ଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀର କଥା । ବଳରାମ ଦାସଙ୍କର ଭକ୍ତି, ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଦାସଙ୍କର ଭାଗବତଦର୍ଶନ ଭକ୍ତି, ଯଶୋବନ୍ତଙ୍କର ଭାବ, ଅଚ୍ୟୁତାନନ୍ଦଙ୍କର ମାଳିକା ଓ ଅନନ୍ତଙ୍କର ଦର୍ଶନ

ଓଡ଼ିଆର ପ୍ରାଣପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା କରିଛି । ପଞ୍ଚସଖାଙ୍କ ପରେ ଉପେନ୍ଦ୍ର, ଦୀନକୃଷ୍ଣ, ବଳଦେବ, ଅଭିମନ୍ୟୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟସମ୍ବନ୍ଧକୁ ପୃଥିବୀର କୃତ୍ରିମଦର୍ଶନରେ ଅତୁଳନୀୟ ରୂପ ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି । ଶରଦିନାଥ, ଉପମା ଓ ଛନ୍ଦଚାତୁରୀ ଏ ସାହିତ୍ୟର ଅଳଙ୍କାର । ବିଶ୍ୱନାଥ କବିରାଜଙ୍କର 'ସାହିତ୍ୟଦର୍ପଣ' ଓ ଦାମୋଦର ମିଶ୍ରଙ୍କର 'ସଂଗୀତଦର୍ପଣ' ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସୃଷ୍ଟି । ଝାଞ୍ଜ, ମାଦଳ, ପାଲା, ଦାସକାଠିଆ, ଯାତା -ଏ' ସମସ୍ତେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟସମ୍ବନ୍ଧର ରଣୀ । ସୀତାଙ୍କ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରେ ରାମାୟଣ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଗଙ୍ଗଧରଙ୍କର ଲେଖା । କାବ୍ୟ ଅଳଙ୍କାରର ଏ ବିପୁଳ ଲେଖନୀ ଭାରତର ଅନ୍ୟ ଭାଷାରେ ବିରଳ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଅନ୍ୟ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ତୁଳନାରେ ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ।

ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଓ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧର ଭାର ନେଇ ଚାଲିବା କଷ୍ଟକର । ଶ୍ରୀଚୈତନ୍ୟଙ୍କର ବୈଷ୍ଣବଧର୍ମ ପ୍ରଚାରପରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ବଙ୍ଗଦେଶରୁ ସହଜିଆଧର୍ମ ଆମଦାନି ହୁଏ । ମନୁଷ୍ୟର ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ ହାତର ଗଢଣୀ ନ ହୋଇ ଠାକୁରର କରଣୀ ବୋଲି କହି ଆଳସ୍ୟପରାୟଣ ହେବା ସହଜିଆ ସ୍ୱଭାବର ଲକ୍ଷଣ । ଏ ଭାବ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଯେ ପ୍ରକାରେ ପ୍ରବେଶ କରିଥାଉ ନା କାହିଁକି ଅକ୍ଷୟ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀର ଶେଷବେଳକୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ମନମତାଣିଆ ହୋଇ ସହଜିଆ ଅବଲମ୍ବୀ । ପରେ ଦୁର୍ଭିକ୍ଷ ଓ ଅନାଚନ ହୋଇ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭୟାତୁର ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲା । ଭୟରୁ ଅଜ୍ଞତା, ଅଜ୍ଞତାରୁ ଆଳସ୍ୟ, ଆଳସ୍ୟରୁ ଦୁର୍ଦ୍ଦିନ - ଏହା ଶିକ୍ଷା ଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଓଡ଼ିଶାବାସୀ ହଠାତ୍ ଶିଖିପାରୁନାହିଁ । ଆପଣା ଆପଣା ଭିତରେ ଭେଦ, ଈର୍ଷା ଓ ସଂକୀର୍ଣ୍ଣତା ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ଭିଜେଇ ରଖିଲାପରି ଜଣାପଡୁଛି । ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଇତିହାସରେ ଏ ପ୍ରକାର ସମୟ ଆଗରୁ ନ ଥିଲା ବୋଲି ଆମେ ଜାଣୁ । ଏଥିରୁ ନିସ୍ତାର ନ ହେଲେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଗତି ନାହିଁ ।

ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଗୋଟିଏ ରସଶୀଳ ଓ ଭାବପ୍ରବଣ ଜାତି । ନିଜହାତରେ କାମ କରିବାକୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭଲପାଏ । କାମହାସଲ କରିବାକୁ ସାମରିକଗୋଷ୍ଠୀ ନିଯୁକ୍ତ କରି ସଫଳ ହୋଇଥିଲେହେଁ ବୁଦ୍ଧିଜନିତ ଆନୁଷ୍ଠାନିକ ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିପାରିନାହିଁ । ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଗତ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ରତା ଓଡ଼ିଆର ଏକ ଅନ୍ତର୍ନିହିତ ଭାବ । ଏିତିହାସିକ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ମଣିଷ ବହୁକୃତିସଂପନ୍ନ ହୋଇଥିଲେ ହେଁ ସହଯୋଗ ବା ସମକୃତିରେ ତା'ର ଆଗ୍ରହ ନାହିଁ । ଆପଣାର କୃତିକୁ ନ ଦେଖି ଅନ୍ୟର କୃତିରୁ ଶିକ୍ଷାଲାଭ କରିବା ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ବିସ୍ମୃତ । ରାଜଛତ୍ରରେ କଳାଚର୍ଚ୍ଚା କରିବା ବା ସମରସଜ୍ଞା କରିବାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ଆନନ୍ଦ । ସଂସାର ଭିତରେ ସାଇପତିଶାର ସହଯୋଗ ନେଇ ନିଜ ଉଦ୍ୟମରେ ନିଜର ଭରଣପୋଷଣ କରିବା ଓଡ଼ିଆପକ୍ଷରେ ଜଟିଳ । ନିଜ ଜଞ୍ଜଳ ଉପଶମ କରିବାକୁ ପରିଶ୍ରମ ନ କରି ଠାକୁରପୂଜାରେ ଆଶାୟୀ ହେବା ଓଡ଼ିଆର ଦୁର୍ବଳତା । ଏବର ସମକ୍ଷିଗତ ସମାଜରେ ନିଜର କୃତିକୁ କିପରି ସଫଳତାରେ ପରିଣତ କରିହେବ ତା'ର ନିର୍ମାଣଶୈଳୀ ଓଡ଼ିଆକୁ ଶିଖିବାକୁ ହେବ । ନୂତନପନ୍ଥା ଅବଲମ୍ବନ

କରି ନିଜମାଟିରେ କୃତିସଂପନ୍ନ ହେବା ଓଡ଼ିଆପକ୍ଷରେ ନିହାତି ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ।

ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ସମୟରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆତ୍ତୁ କେବଳ ପୂଜା ଓ ଉତ୍ସବରେ ସୀମିତପରି ମନେହୁଏ । ଓଡ଼ିଆର ସ୍ଵାତନ୍ତ୍ର୍ୟ, ବୀରତ୍ଵ, ଓ କର୍ମକୌଶଳର ପ୍ରମାଣ ସମାଜରେ ସହଜରେ ମିଳେନାହିଁ । ଇଂରାଜୀ ଓ ହିନ୍ଦୀ ଭାଷାର ବହୁଳ ପ୍ରସାର ଫଳରେ ଶାରଳା ଓ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ ଓଡ଼ିଆଭାଷାର ବ୍ୟବହାର ଅନେକ ପରିମାଣରେ ଉଣା ହୋଇଯାଇଛି । ଦେଶର ମାଟିରୁ ଫସଲ ଓ ଧାତୁ ଉତ୍ପାଦନ ନ କରିପାରି ଓଡ଼ିଶାବାସୀ ଅନ୍ୟଦେଶକୁ ନିଜ ଜୀବିକା ଉପାର୍ଜନ କରିବାକୁ ଯିବାପାଇଁ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ ହୋଇଅଛି ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆସଂସ୍କୃତିରୁ ଦୂରେଇ ଯାଉଅଛି । ଓଡ଼ିଆଜାତିର ଗାରିମାକୁ ବହୁ ସ୍ନେହଶୀଳ ଆଖିରେ ଦେଖୁଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ଉତ୍ପାନ ନିମିତ୍ତ ଓଡ଼ିଶାବାସୀର ଆନ୍ତରିକତା ଓ ସମର୍ଥନ ଉଣା ହେଉଥିବାର ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ କରାଯାଉଛି ।

ସଂସ୍କୃତିସହ ଭାଷା ନିବିଡ଼ଭାବେ ଜଡ଼ିତ । ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ପରାକାଷ୍ଠା ଭାଷାର ଭାବରେ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ ହୋଇଥାଏ । ଭାଷା ସଂଗଠନର ପ୍ରତୀକ । ଭାଷାର ବ୍ୟବହାରରେ ଆତ୍ମୀୟତା ଓ ଆତ୍ମବୋଧର ପରିଚୟ ମିଳିଥାଏ । ଅନେକ ଧନୀକ ସଂପ୍ରଦାୟର ଓଡ଼ିଶାବାସୀ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଓଡ଼ିଆଭାଷା ବ୍ୟବହାର କରିବାରେ ଅବହେଳା କରିବାର ଦେଖାଯାଏ । ଏ ପକ୍ଷର ବାରିତିକ ଦୁର୍ବଳତା ଓଡ଼ିଆଜାତିର ପରିଚୟ ନୁହେଁ । ଆପଣା ପେଟପୋଷିବା ଲାଗି ଦକ୍ଷିଣଦିଗକୁ କାମ ଚଳାଇ ନେବାର ସହଜିଆ ପ୍ରବୃତ୍ତିରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆବାସୀ ଓହ୍ଲି ଆସିବା ନିତାନ୍ତ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ । ଦୁର୍ଭିକ୍ଷର ଦେହଶୁଦ୍ଧବର୍ଷପରେ ଆତ୍ମଭୀରୁତା ଓଡ଼ିଆପ୍ରତି ଶୋଭା ପାଏନାହିଁ ।

ଭାଷା ଓ ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ପ୍ରଚାର ଓ ଉନ୍ନତିରେ ହିଁ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ପରିଚୟ । ପରିଶ୍ରମୀ ହୋଇ ନିଜପକ୍ଷରେ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ ହେବା ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଗୌରବ ।

ଓଡ଼ିଆଭାଷାର ସଂଗଠନ ନିମିତ୍ତ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆସଂସ୍କୃତିର ପରିପ୍ରସାର ନିମିତ୍ତ ବିଂଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ମନଃମାନଙ୍କର ଅବଦାନ ଅବଧାରଣଯୋଗ୍ୟ । ଭାଷା ଓ ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ପ୍ରଚାର ଓ ଉନ୍ନତିରେ ହିଁ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ପରିଚୟ । ପରିଶ୍ରମୀ ହୋଇ ନିଜପକ୍ଷରେ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ ହେବା ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଗୌରବ । ଏ ସଂକ୍ରାନ୍ତୀୟ ଆନ୍ତର୍ଯ୍ୟାମିକ ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥାରେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିବା ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଓଡ଼ିଆର କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ । ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ, ପୁସ୍ତିକାଳୟ, ତାଲିମଶିବିର ଇତ୍ୟାଦି କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ଶ୍ରମନିଷ୍ଠା ଓ ଆତ୍ମପରାକାଷ୍ଠାର ଆଦର୍ଶ ସୃଷ୍ଟିକରିବା ଜାତିର ଉତ୍ତ୍ଵାନ୍ ନିମିତ୍ତ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ । ଅନ୍ୟ ସଂସ୍କୃତିର କଳା ଓ ଆଦର୍ଶକୁ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ କରି କିପରି ନିଜର ସଂସ୍କୃତି ବଜାୟ ରହିପାରିବ, ସେ ବିଷୟରେ ଧ୍ୟାନ ଓ ଗବେଷଣା ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଓଡ଼ିଆର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ।

ଓଡ଼ିଆଜାତିର ପରିଚୟ ଗଢ଼ିବାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ନବଯୁବକର ଅବଦାନ ବାସ୍ତବୀୟ । ସାମାନ୍ୟ ଜୀବିକା ଉପାର୍ଜନରେ ଖାଦ୍ୟସଂଗ୍ରହ କରିବା ନବଯୁବକର ଆହ୍ଵାନ ନୁହେଁ । ଭାଷାର ଚାତୁରୀ ଓ ଲାଳିତ୍ୟ, ସାହିତ୍ୟର ରସ ଓ ଛନ୍ଦ, ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ସୁସ୍ମୃତା ଓ ଗାମ୍ଭୀର୍ଯ୍ୟ, କାରିଗରିର ଦର୍ଶନ ଓ ଭାସ୍କର୍ଯ୍ୟ, ପ୍ରକୃତିର ଭାବ ଓ ଐଶ୍ଵର୍ଯ୍ୟର ପରିଚୟରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆଜାତିର ପରିଚୟ । ସ୍ଵାଧୀନ ମନୋଭାବରେ ଜୀବନଯାପନ କରି ମେଳା ମହୋତ୍ସବରେ ସାମିଲ ହେବା ଓଡ଼ିଆର ଐତିହାସିକ ପ୍ରଣାଳୀ । ତେବେ ଏ ମନୋଭାବରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆତ୍ତୁର ଭାବ ରଖି ନିଜର ଐତିହ୍ୟ, ସ୍ଵାଭିମାନ, ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ଵ ଓ ଚିନ୍ତାଧାରାକୁ ପୃଥିବୀ ବକ୍ଷରେ ଉତ୍ତରୋତ୍ତର ପ୍ରକାଶ କରାଇବାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତିର ପରିଚୟ । ଆପଣାର ଭାଷା, ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଓ ଇତିହାସକୁ ଜଳାଞ୍ଜଳି ନ ଦେଇ ତା'କୁ ଆଶୁସାର କରାଇବା ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଓଡ଼ିଆର କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ । ମେଳାର ପ୍ରାଣକୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପ୍ରାଣ ସହିତ ଖାପ ଖୁଆଇବା ଓଡ଼ିଆଜାତିର ପରିଚୟ ।

* ବିଜୟମୋହନ ମିଶ୍ର ଯୁବକବୟସରୁ ବିଦେଶର ଅଧିବାସୀ । ସେ ବୋଷ୍ଟନ୍ ବାସିନ୍ଦା ଓ ବିଶ୍ଵବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ମାନଙ୍କ ସହ ସଂପୃକ୍ତ । ତା'ଙ୍କର ଲେଖା ଓଏସ୍ଏ ସ୍ଵରଶିଳାମାନଙ୍କର ଆଗରୁ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ ହୋଇଛି । ସେ ଓଏସ୍ଏର ଏକ ପୂର୍ବତନ ସଂପାଦକ ।

ଉତ୍କଳ ଆକାଶେ ନବ ଦିନମଣି
ଉଠ ନିଦା ତେଜି ଭାଇ
ଅରୁଣ-ଗଗନେ ତରୁଣ ତପନ,
ଯାମିନୀ ଯାଇଛି ପାହିଁ ।
ନବୀନ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ନବ ନିମନ୍ତଣ
ଆଣିଛି ଉତ୍କଳ ପାଇଁ,
ଜଗତ ଆହ୍ଵାନ ଶୁଭଲ ଦୁଆରେ
ନ ଶୁଅ ନ ଶୁଅ ଭାଇ ।



ଗହଳ ଚହଳ କଳ କୋଳାହଳ
ଚାରିଦିଗେ ଶୁଭେ ବୋଲି,
କାଳନିଦ୍ରା ତେଜି ଆଳସ୍ୟ ବରଜି
ଆସ ଆସ ଦ୍ଵାର ଖୋଲି ।
ନବୀନ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ନବନିମନ୍ତଣ
ଆଣିଛି ଉତ୍କଳ ପାଇଁ
ଜଗତ ଆହ୍ଵାନ ଶୁଭଲ ଦୁଆରେ
ଉଠ ନିଦା ତେଜି ଭାଇ ।

(ବସନ୍ତ କୋକିଳ - ପଲ୍ଲୀକବି ନନ୍ଦକିଶୋର ବଳ)

ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବାହାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ

□ ଡକ୍ଟର ରାଜେନ୍ଦ୍ର ନାରାୟଣ ଦାସ

ଗୁଜୁରାଟ୍, କେରଳ ପ୍ରଭୃତି ରାଜ୍ୟରୁ ବାହାରେ ଯାଇ ରହୁଥିବା ନାଗରିକମାନେ ସେ ସବୁ ରାଜ୍ୟର ନବ ନିର୍ମାଣରେ ତଥା ଉନ୍ନତି ଦିଗରେ ବହୁ ପ୍ରକାର ସହଯୋଗ କରିଥିବାର ସମ୍ଭାବନା ଉପରେ ଭରସା କରିଥାନ୍ତେ ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ଅକ୍ଷରରେ ବାହାରେ । ଆମ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବାହାରେ ରହୁଥିବା ଅଧିବାସୀମାନେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଦୁର୍ଦ୍ଦିନରେ ଓ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ବେଳେ କିଛି କିଛି ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିବାର ଖବରମାନ ସମ୍ଭାବନାରେ ବାହାରି ଥାଏ । ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଏ ପ୍ରକାର ସହାୟତାକୁ ଅବଶ୍ୟ ସ୍ୱୀକାର କରିବାକୁ ହେବ ।

ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ ମହାଯୁଦ୍ଧ ପରେ ଏସିଆ ଓ ଆଫ୍ରିକା ରାଜନୀତିକ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ପାଇଲେ ସତ, କିନ୍ତୁ ପୃଥିବୀ ତମାମ ସବୁ ଯାଗାରେ ସବୁ ମଣିଷକୁ ସୁଯୋଗ ମିଳିବା ତଥାପି ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଦୁର୍ଲ୍ଲଭ ହୋଇ ଭାରତ ବର୍ଷରେ ଆମକୁ କେତେ ପର୍ବତ ଯେ ଲଂଘିବାକୁ ରହିଛି ତାହା ଜଳ ଜଳ ହୋଇ ଦେଖାଗଲା । ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ପରେ ଭାରତର ନେତୃତ୍ୱ ଯେଉଁ ଛାଞ୍ଚରେ ଦେଶକୁ ଗଢ଼ିବ ବୋଲି ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଦେଖୁଥିଲା, ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଯେ ବହୁ ବର୍ଷ ସମୟ ଲାଗିବ, ସେ କଥା ମଧ୍ୟ ସ୍ପଷ୍ଟ ଥିଲା । ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରିବାର ଧୈର୍ଯ୍ୟ ତଥା ପ୍ରୟାସଗୁଡ଼ିକରେ ସ୍ୱୟଂ ସାମିଲ ହେବାର ସାହସ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ନ ଥାଏ । ନାନା କାରଣରୁ ପାଶ୍ଚାତ୍ୟ ବିକଶିତ ଦେଶମାନଙ୍କରେ ବାହାରୁ ଲୋକବଳ ଏକ ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ଆସି ପହଞ୍ଚିଲା । ସେହି ସ୍ଥିତିର ବିନିଯୋଗ କରି ଭାରତ ବର୍ଷରୁ ବହୁ ଲୋକ ଭାଗ୍ୟ ଅନୁକ୍ରମରେ ତେଣେ ଚାଲିଗଲେ । ଓଡ଼ିଶାରୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ଗଲେ । ଏହାଦ୍ୱାରା ସେମାନେ କିଛି ଅନ୍ୟାୟ କରି ନାହାନ୍ତି । ଆମେରିକା, ବ୍ରିଟେନ୍, କାନାଡା, ଜର୍ମାନୀ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଦେଶରେ ସେମାନେ ଅନେକ ମୂଲ୍ୟବାନ ଅବଦାନ ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି । ସେହି ସବୁ ଦେଶରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖିଲେ ମନେହୁଏ ଯେ, ନିଜ ଜନ୍ମମାଟିରେ ଅନୁରୂପ ସୁଯୋଗ ପାଇଥିଲେ ସେମାନେ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଏଠାରେ ମଧ୍ୟ କେତେ କ'ଣ ଗଢ଼ି ଥୋଇ ଦେଇଥାନ୍ତେ । ସେମାନେ ସେହି ସବୁ ପ୍ରବାସରେ ସ୍ଥାୟୀଭାବରେ ରହିଲେଣି । ଅନେକ ନାଗରିକତ୍ୱ ଗ୍ରହଣ କଲେଣି, ତଥାପି ଜୀବନର ଅନ୍ତରଙ୍ଗତମ କ୍ଷଣମାନଙ୍କରେ ଖୁବ୍ ପଛକୁ ଅନାଉଛନ୍ତି । ଓଡ଼ିଶାବାସୀଙ୍କର ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଲାଗି ଗର୍ବ ଅନୁଭବ କରିବାର ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ କାରଣ ରହିଛି ।

ସେହି ପରିପ୍ରେକ୍ଷାରେ ଆମେ ଆଉ ଏକ ପ୍ରକାର ଉତ୍କଳବାସୀଙ୍କର ଦୃଷ୍ଟାନ୍ତ ଦେଇ ପାରିବା, ଯେଉଁମାନେ କି ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବାହାରେ ଅଥଚ ଭାରତ ବର୍ଷରେ ବିଭିନ୍ନ କର୍ମସ୍ଥାନର ଅନୁକ୍ରମରେ ଯାଇ ବସବାସ କରୁଛନ୍ତି, ସେମାନେ ଅନେକ ସ୍ଥାନରେ ନିଷ୍ପତ୍ତିମୁକ୍ତ ଏବଂ ଦାୟିତ୍ୱପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କରେ ଅବସ୍ଥାପିତ ହୋଇ ରହିଛନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ନିଜ ସାମର୍ଥ୍ୟର ପରିଚୟ ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି । ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ଏହି ସ୍ଥାନରେ କୃତଜ୍ଞତାର ସହିତ ସ୍ମରଣ କରିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ ।

ଜନମତ ସର୍ବେକ୍ଷଣ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବାହାରେ ରହୁଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଆମାନଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ଏକ ସାମଗ୍ରିକ ଚିତ୍ର ଅନୁମାନ କରିବା ସକାଶେ ଲେଖକ କଲିକତା, ଦିଲ୍ଲୀ, ମୁମ୍ବାଇ, ଜର୍ମାନୀ, ବ୍ରିଟେନ୍, କାନାଡା ଓ ଆମେରିକାକୁ ପ୍ରାୟ ୧୫୦୦ ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କୁ ଏକ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନାବଳୀ ପଠାଇଥିଲା । ଏହି ଜନମତ ସର୍ବେକ୍ଷଣରେ ୪୩୮ ଜଣ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଇଥିଲେ । ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବାହାରେ ଦୀର୍ଘକାଳ ରହିଯାଇଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଭାବଗତ ସ୍ତରରେ ସେମାନେ କେତେଦୂର ସଂଲଗ୍ନ କରି ରଖିଛନ୍ତି, ତାହାର ଏକ ଅନୁମାନ କରିପାରିବା ପାଇଁ ବିଶେଷ ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ରଖି ପ୍ରଶ୍ନଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ କରାଯାଇଥିଲା । ପ୍ରଶ୍ନାବଳୀର ଉତ୍ତରଗୁଡ଼ିକର ବିଶ୍ଳେଷଣରେ ସେଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ଦୁଇଟି ଶ୍ରେଣୀରେ ବିଭକ୍ତ କରାଯାଇଥିଲା – (କ) ୩୫ ବର୍ଷରୁ ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ୱ ଉତ୍ତରଦାତା, (ଖ) ୧୮ ରୁ ୩୫ ବର୍ଷ ବୟସରେ ଥିବା ଉତ୍ତରଦାତା । ଏହି ଦୁଇଶ୍ରେଣୀ ନିଜର ବୟସ ଏବଂ ବିଦେଶରେ ବସବାସର ସମୟ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ଅଲଗା ଚିନ୍ତା କରୁଥିବା ଅନୁମାନ କରାଯାଇଥିଲା । ପ୍ରାୟ ଉତ୍ତରଗୁଡ଼ିକରେ ମଧ୍ୟ କିଛି ପାର୍ଥକ୍ୟ ପରିଲକ୍ଷିତ ହୋଇଛି । ଉତ୍ତରଗୁଡ଼ିକର ସମୀକ୍ଷା ନିମ୍ନରେ ଦିଆଗଲା :-

(କ) ଭାରତ ବାହାରେ ରହୁଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଆ (Non-Resident Oriya) :

ଭାରତ ବାହାରେ ବସବାସ କରି ରହୁଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଆମାନଙ୍କ ଠାରୁ ଜନମତ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ପାଇଥିବା ଉତ୍ତରଗୁଡ଼ିକରୁ ଜଣାପଡ଼େ ଯେ, ଏମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରୁ ୫୪ ପ୍ରତିଶତ ବୟସ୍କ (୩୫ ବର୍ଷରୁ ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ୱ ବୟସର) ଉଚ୍ଚଶିକ୍ଷା ଓ ଗବେଷଣା ପାଇଁ ଯାଇଥିବା ବେଳେ ୩୩ ଭାଗ ଲୋକ ଭଲ ଚାକିରି କିମ୍ବା ସ୍ୱଚ୍ଛକ ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ ପାଇଁ ଚାଲି ଯାଇଛନ୍ତି । ତରୁଣମାନଙ୍କ (୧୮ ରୁ ୩୫ ବର୍ଷ) ଭିତରୁ ୪୦ ଭାଗ ଉଚ୍ଚଶିକ୍ଷା ଏବଂ ୩୦ ଭାଗ ଭଲ ଚାକିରି ପାଇଁ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଛାଡ଼ି ଚାଲିଯାଇଛନ୍ତି । କେବଳ ଅଧିକ ଟଙ୍କା ରୋଜଗାର ପାଇଁ ଶହେରୁ କୋଡ଼ିଏ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରୁ ଦେଶାନ୍ତରିତ ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି । ଏଠାରେ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ କରିବାକୁ ହୁଏ, ଏହି ଓଡ଼ିଆମାନେ ବିଦେଶରେ ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥିତ ହେଲା ପରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ଏବଂ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଥିବା ନିଜର ଆତ୍ମୀୟମାନଙ୍କୁ ଭୁଲିଯାଇଛନ୍ତି କି ? ଜନମତ ସର୍ବେକ୍ଷଣରୁ ଜଣାପଡ଼େ ଯେ, ଏହି ଓଡ଼ିଆମାନେ ବାପା-ମା' ବଂଚିଥିବା ଯାଏ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସହ କିଛି କିଛି ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧ ବା ସଂପର୍କ ରଖୁଛନ୍ତି । ମାତ୍ର ବାପା-ମା'ଙ୍କ ଅନ୍ତେ ସେ ବଂଧନ ଶିଥିଳ ପ୍ରାୟ ଥିବା ନ ଥିବା ସମାନ ଅବସ୍ଥାକୁ ଚାଲି ଆସିବ । ଦୀର୍ଘ ବହୁବର୍ଷ ଧରି କାନାଡ଼ାରେ ରହୁଥିବା ପ୍ରଫେସର ଲାଲୁ ମାନସିଂହ କହନ୍ତି —

" The personal penalty of my deciding to stay in Canada is severe. I was the eldest grandchild, the apple of everyone's eye. My grandfather, uncles, aunts doted on me all through my childhood. At every positive step in my life their joy & pride and happiness invariably exceeded mine. The unknown part of this equation, the hidden part, was that if I had taken up a reasonable position in India, I would have been of use to the extended family. I have been absent from important family occasions, of births, marriages, deaths. I was not at the bedside of my father or my grandfather when they passed away. I was not there to light Bapa's pyre. My children do not love Orissa. It is a name, a far away place, which they will visit someday for short vacation. My children have not formed bonds with the new generation of cousins, nephews and nieces. With the passing away of my mother and uncles my bonds with the land of my birth will cease.

— (Silver Jubilee Journal of Orissa Society of America, July 1994.)

ଏହି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବର୍ଗ ଶହେରେ ୩ ଜଣ ବିରଳ ବୟସ୍କ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସହ ସଂପର୍କ ରଖିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଥିଲା ବେଳେ ତରୁଣମାନେ ଆଦୌ ସଂପର୍କ ରଖିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁନାହାନ୍ତି । ନିଜର ବନ୍ଧୁବାନ୍ଧବ, ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜ ବା କୌଣସି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ପ୍ରତି ସେମାନଙ୍କର କୌଣସି ଆଦର ନାହିଁ । ମାତ୍ର ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରୁ ୭୫ ପ୍ରତିଶତ (ତରୁଣଙ୍କ ଭିତରୁ ୫୪ ପ୍ରତିଶତ) କେବଳ ନଷ୍ଟାଲଜିଆ (Nostalgia) ବା ଅତୀତ ଆତ୍ମଖତା । ୨୨ ଭାଗ ବୟସ୍କ ଓ ୧୦ ଭାଗ ତରୁଣ ବିଚ୍ଛିନ୍ନତାବୋଧରେ ଆକ୍ରାନ୍ତ ହୁଅନ୍ତି । ବୟସ୍କ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଭିତରୁ ବେଶ୍ କିଛି ଲୋକେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଥିବା ଜାତିକୃତ୍ତ୍ୱ ବା ବନ୍ଧୁମାନଙ୍କ ନିକଟକୁ ପତ୍ର ଲେଖନ୍ତି । ତରୁଣମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରୁ ୧୦୦ ରୁ ପ୍ରାୟ ୪୦ ଜଣ ଚିଠିପତ୍ର ଦିଅନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ କହିଲେ ଭୁଲ୍ ହେବ ନାହିଁ ।

ବୟସ୍କମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ଶହେରେ ୪୨ ଜଣ ଖବରକାଗଜ ଓ ପତ୍ର-ପତ୍ରିକା ପଢ଼ି ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବିଷୟରେ ଖବର ରଖନ୍ତି ଓ ୫୦ ଭାଗ ଲୋକ ସାଙ୍ଗସାଥୀମାନଙ୍କ ଠାରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଖବର ସଂଗ୍ରହ କରନ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ୩୦ ଭାଗ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବିଷୟରେ କୌଣସି ଖବର ରଖିବାକୁ ଆଗ୍ରହ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଏମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ୭୫ ଭାଗ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଖବରକାଗଜ ପଢ଼ନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ କି ସେଥିପାଇଁ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଆଗ୍ରହ ନ ଥାଏ । ସେମାନେ କୌଣସି ଅତି ନିକଟ ସଂପର୍କୀୟଙ୍କ ମୃତ୍ୟୁ, ବିବାହ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଛଡ଼ା ପ୍ରାୟତଃ ଆସନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଏଥିପାଇଁ ଅବଶ୍ୟ ଅନେକ ଗୁଡ଼ିଏ କାରଣ ଅଛି । ବ୍ୟୟ-ସାପେକ୍ଷ ଯାତ୍ରା, ଛୁଟି ସମୟ ସହିତ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଜୀବିକା, ଅବସର ସହିତ ଜୀବିକା ଏବଂ ଭୌଗୋଳିକ ଦୂରତ୍ୱ ମଧ୍ୟ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଗୋଟିଏ ଗୋଟିଏ କାରଣ ।

ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ କରାଯାଇପାରେ, ସେମାନେ ଭାରତ ବାହାରେ ରହିବା ଦ୍ୱାରା ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ହରେଇଲା ଭଳି ଅନୁଭବ କରନ୍ତି କି ନା ? କିମ୍ବା କୌଣସି ଏକପ୍ରକାର ଅଭାବବୋଧ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ମୁଖ୍ୟ ଟେକେ କି ? ଶହେରେ କୋଡ଼ିଏ କି ପଚାଶି ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ ଛାଡ଼ିଦେଲେ ଅନ୍ୟମାନେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସଂସ୍କୃତିକୁ ହରେଇଲା ଭଳି ଅନୁଭବ କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଏମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ୬୦ ପ୍ରତିଶତ ନିଜ ପିତାମାତା ଓ ପରିବାରକୁ ଝୁରନ୍ତି ଓ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ମନେ ପକାନ୍ତି । ମାତ୍ର ସେମାନେ ଦୃଢ଼ଭାବରେ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ କରନ୍ତି ଯେ, ବିଦେଶକୁ

Jana-gana-mana-adhinayak,jayahe
Bharata-bhagya-vidhata
Punjab-Sindhu-Gujarata-Maratha
Dravida-Utkal-Banga
Vindya-Himachala-Yamuna-Ganga
Uchala-Jaladhi-taranga
Tava subha name jage
Tava shubha asis mage
Gahe tava gatha
Jana-gana-mangala-dhayaka jaya he
Bharata-bhagya-vidhata
Jaye he ,jaya he,jaya he
Jaye he ,jaya he,jaya he

- Rabindranath Tagore

Courtesy of Drs. Umaballav and Shantilata Mishra and Devjani, Anjan, and Sombit.

Where the mind is without fear and the
head is held high;
Where the knowledge is free
Where the world has not been broken
up into fragments by narrow domestic
Walls;
Where words come out from the depth
of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms
Towards perfection;-----
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father,
let my country awake- Rabindranath Tagore

-----Sochi Routray (Konarak)

Courtesy of Dr. Santosh and Carolyn Mohanty

Thou art the ruler of the mind of all people,
dispenser of India's destiny.
Thy name rouses the hearts of Punjab, Sind,
Gujarat and Maratha,
Of the Dravida and Orissa and Bengal;
It echoes in the hills of the Vindhyas and
Himalayas,
mingles in the music of
Jamuna and Ganges and is chanted
by the waves of the Indian Sea.
They pray for thy blessing
And sing thy praise.
The saving of all people waits in thy hand,
Thogh dispenser of India's destiny.
Victory,victory, victory to thee.

A fount of joy since the dawn of time,
A treasured work of art,
An epic in stones:
For the forgotten myriads,
An ageless cenotaph.
Those that worked the chisels
And plied the hammer to please a king,
Like beasts of burden,
Those that toiled
To raise this masterpiece, inch by inch;
Sculptors, masons, countless craftsmen,
Do you know them now?
Their tears and sweat swelled the brine;
A small tribute
Of twelve hundred souls
For the glory of the jaded rich

ଯିବାଦ୍ୱାରା ତାଙ୍କ ଜୀବନଧାରଣ ମାନରେ ଉନ୍ନତି ଘଟିଛି ଓ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଅର୍ଥନୈତିକ ସ୍ଥିତିର ଅଭିବୃଦ୍ଧି ହୋଇଛି; ଯାହାକି ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଥିଲେ କେବେହେଲେ ସମ୍ଭବପର ହୋଇ ନ ଥାନ୍ତା । ୨୪ ଭାଗ ବୟସ୍କ ବା ୩୩ ଭାଗ ତରୁଣ ଭାବନ୍ତି ସେମାନେ ବିଦେଶକୁ ଯାଇ ନ ଥିଲେ ଉଚ୍ଚଶିକ୍ଷାରୁ ବଞ୍ଚିତ ହୋଇଥାନ୍ତେ । ଶହେରେ ୩୫ ଜଣ ଭାବନ୍ତି ବିଦେଶରେ ତାଙ୍କର ଯେପରି ସୁଚ୍ଛଳ ଜୀବନ ଶୈଳୀ, ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ରହିଥିଲେ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ମିଳି ନ ଥାନ୍ତା । ୧୬ ଭାଗ ବୟସ୍କ ଓ ୮ ଭାଗ ତରୁଣ ଭାବନ୍ତି ସେମାନେ ବିଦେଶକୁ ନ ଯାଇଥିଲେ ସାମାଜିକ ସମତା (Social Equality) ଓ ଏପରି ସାମାଜିକ ସ୍ୱୀକୃତି (Social Recognition) ପାଇ ନ ଥାନ୍ତେ ।

ବିଦେଶରେ ରହୁଥିବା ସଂଖ୍ୟା ଗରିଷ୍ଠ (ବୟସ୍କଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ୭୦ ଭାଗ ଓ ତରୁଣଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ୪୦ ଭାଗ) ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କ ପିଲାମାନେ ଆଉ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ଫେରିବେ ନାହିଁ ବୋଲି ସ୍ପଷ୍ଟ ମନା କରିଦେଇଛନ୍ତି । ପ୍ରାୟ ୪୦ ଭାଗ ଏବେ ଫେରିଯିବେ ବୋଲି ମତ ଦିଅନ୍ତି, ବୟସ ବଢ଼ିବା କ୍ଷଣି ସେମାନେ ମଧ୍ୟ ନିଜ ମତରୁ ଦୂରେଇ ଯିବେ ଏବଂ ଏ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ତାଙ୍କର ମତ ପ୍ରକାଶକ ମତ ଠାରୁ ଭିନ୍ନ ହେବାର କୌଣସି ସୁଦ୍ଧି ନାହିଁ । “ନିରାସନ ଫେରିଯିବୁ” ଏଭଳି ଦୃଢ଼ ସ୍ୱରରେ କୌଣସି (Non-Resident) ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସ୍ୱଦେଶକୁ ଫେରିଯିବା କଥା କହେ ନାହିଁ । ଶହେରେ ମାତ୍ର ୨୫ ଜଣ ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ବୁଲିଯିବା କଥା କହନ୍ତି ।

ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପ୍ରତି ସେମାନେ କ’ଣ କରିପାରିବେ ବା କ’ଣ କରିବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା କରନ୍ତି ବୋଲି ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ କରାଯାଇଥିଲା । ୫୦ ଭାଗ ପ୍ରକାଶ ଓ ୩୮ ଭାଗ ତରୁଣ କେବଳ “ପରାମର୍ଶ ଓ ଉପଦେଶ” (Know-how and Consultancy) ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ କିଛି କରିବାକୁ ଚାହାନ୍ତି । ଶହେରେ ୩୬ ରୁ ୪୦ ଭାଗ କିଛି ଅର୍ଥ କିମ୍ବା ବସ୍ତୁ (Money and Materials) ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା ପ୍ରକାଶ କରନ୍ତି । ୧୫ ରୁ ୧୮ ଭାଗ କ’ଣ କରିପାରିବେ ଜାଣି ନାହାନ୍ତି ବୋଲି ମତ ଦିଅନ୍ତି ଓ ୫ ଭାଗ କିଛି କରିବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛୁକ ନୁହଁନ୍ତି ବୋଲି ମତ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରନ୍ତି ।

(ଖ) ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବାହାରେ ଅଥଚ ଭାରତବର୍ଷରେ ରହୁଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଆ :

ଭାରତ ବାହାରେ ବସବାସ କରୁଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଆ (Non-Resident) ମାନଙ୍କର ଉତ୍ତର ସହିତ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବାହାରେ ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ସହରରେ (କଲିକତା, ଦିଲ୍ଲୀ, ମୁମ୍ବାଇ) ରହୁଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଆମାନଙ୍କର ମତାମତ ବା ଉତ୍ତର ବେଶୀ କିଛି ଭିନ୍ନ ନୁହେଁ ।

ସେମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ୩୦ ପ୍ରତିଶତ ଲୋକ ଅର୍ଥ ଉପାର୍ଜନ ପାଇଁ ଓ ସେତିକି ଭାଗ ଲୋକ ଭଲ ଚାକିରି ପାଇଁ ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ସହରକୁ ଚାଲି ଯାଉଛନ୍ତି ବୋଲି ମତ ଦିଅନ୍ତି । ପାଖରେ ଥିବା ଯୋଗୁଁ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରୁ ବେଶୀ ଭାଗ ଲୋକ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଥିବା ପରିବାର ଓ ବନ୍ଧୁମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ସଂପର୍କ ରଖୁଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ କ୍ରମେ କ୍ରମେ ସେମାନେ ଭାବଗ୍ରତ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଠାରୁ ଦୂରେଇ ଯାଉଛନ୍ତି, ତାହା ସ୍ୱୀକାର କରିଛନ୍ତି । କମ୍ ବୟସର ତରୁଣମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ଥିବା ଆକର୍ଷଣ କ୍ରମେ ଶିଥିଳ ହୋଇ ଯାଉଛି ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ନେଇ କୌଣସି ପ୍ରକାର ଗୌରବବୋଧ ପ୍ରାୟତଃ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଠାରେ ନାହିଁ । ଚିଠିପତ୍ର ଲେଖିବା କମି କମି ଆସୁଛି । ଦୁଇଥର ବୁଲି ଆସିବାର ବ୍ୟବଧାନ ବଢ଼ିବାରେ ଲାଗୁଛି ଏବଂ ଶହେରେ ଦଶ ଜଣ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବାହାରେ ତଥା ଭାରତରେ ରହୁଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସହିତ ପ୍ରାୟ ଆଉ କୌଣସି ସଂପର୍କ ରଖିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁ ନାହାନ୍ତି । ଦେଶ ଭିତରେ ଥିବା ଯୋଗୁଁ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସଂପର୍କରେ ଏମାନେ ଯାହା ଜାଣିବାର କଥା ସେମାନେ କେବଳ ଟେଲିଭିଜନ୍ କିମ୍ବା ଖବରକାଗଜ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଜାଣିପାରନ୍ତି । ନିଜର ପରିବାର ଓ ଜୀତିକୁଟୁମ୍ବଙ୍କ ଛଡ଼ା ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ରାଜନୀତି, ସାହିତ୍ୟ, ସଂସ୍କୃତି ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ଖବର ରଖିବାର ପ୍ରୟୋଜନୀୟତା ସେମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଖୁବ୍ କମ୍, ଶହେରେ ୧୭/୧୮ ଜଣ ଆଗ୍ରହ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିଥାନ୍ତି । ଶହେରେ ୨୫ ଜଣ ଭାବନ୍ତି ଯେ, ସେମାନେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଥିଲେ ଉପଯୁକ୍ତ ଶିକ୍ଷା ପାଇ ପାରି ନ ଥାନ୍ତେ । ବୟସ୍କଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ୨୭ ଜଣ ଓ ତରୁଣଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ଶହେରୁ ୬୦ ଜଣ ଭାବନ୍ତି ଯେ, ସେମାନେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଥିଲେ ଏଭଳି ସ୍ୱାଚ୍ଛନ୍ଦ୍ୟ ଓ ପ୍ରାକୃର୍ଯ୍ୟ ପାଇ ପାରି ନ ଥାନ୍ତେ ।

୨୫ ରୁ ୩୨ ଭାଗ ଲୋକମାନେ ମତ ଦିଅନ୍ତି ଯେ, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପିଲାମାନେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଫେରିବେ ନାହିଁ । ୪୫ ରୁ ୪୬ ଭାଗ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ଫେରିବେ ବୋଲି ମତ ଦିଅନ୍ତି । ଯାହାକି ପିଲାଙ୍କର ବୟସ ହେବା ପରେ ସେମାନେ ପିତାଙ୍କର ଦେଇଥିବା ମତରୁ

ଯେ କୌଣସି କାରଣରୁ ଦୂରେଇ ଯିବେ । ପ୍ରାୟ ୨୩ ରୁ ୨୯ ଭାଗ କୁହନ୍ତି ଯେ, ସେମାନଙ୍କର ପିଲାମାନେ ବୋଧହୁଏ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଫେରିବେ ।

“ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପାଇଁ କ’ଣ କରିପାରିବେ ?” – ଏହି ପ୍ରଶ୍ନର ଉତ୍ତରରେ ଶହେରୁ ମାତ୍ର ୬ ଜଣ ବୟସ୍କ ଓ ୧୩ ଜଣ ଡରୁଣ ଏଥିପାଇଁ ଅର୍ଥ ବ୍ୟୟ କରିବାକୁ ଆଗେଇ ଆସିଲା ବେଳେ ୩୦ କେବଳ ବୌଦ୍ଧିକ ପରାମର୍ଶ ଦେବାକୁ ବାହାରିଥାନ୍ତି । ଅବଶିଷ୍ଟ ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କର ଏ ଦିଗରେ କୌଣସି ପ୍ରକାର ଆଗ୍ରହ ନାହିଁ କହିଲେ ଭୁଲ୍ ହେବ ନାହିଁ ।

ଉପସଂହାର (ଲେଖକର ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଗତ ମତ) :-

ଭୂଗୋଳର ମାନଚିତ୍ରରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଯେତେ ସାନ ଦେଖାଗଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ବୃହତ୍ତର ପୃଥିବୀର ଏକ ଅଂଶ ହୋଇ ରହିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ । ଏପରିକି କେବଳ ଭାରତବର୍ଷର ଏକ ଅଂଶ ହୋଇ ରହିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ତଥାପି ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ ହେବ ନାହିଁ । ତେଣୁ, ପାରମ୍ପରିକ ଭାବରେ ଜାତୀୟତା କହିଲେ ଯେପରି ଅସଂଲଗ୍ନ ଦୀପତିଏ ହୋଇ ରହିବାକୁ ହେଉଥିଲା, ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ତାର ଆଉ ବିଶେଷ ପ୍ରାସଙ୍ଗିକତା ରହିବ ନାହିଁ । ଓଡ଼ିଶା ତଥାକଥିତ ସ୍ଵାଭିମାନର ପ୍ରାଚୀର ଭିତରେ ଆବଦ୍ଧ ରହିପାରିବ ନାହିଁ । ଏବେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଏତେ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିମାନେ ଯେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଡେଇଁ ଆମେରିକା, କାନାଡ଼ା, ବ୍ରିଟେନ୍ ଓ ଜର୍ମାନୀ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଦେଶକୁ ଯାଇପାରିଛନ୍ତି, କ୍ରମେ ପ୍ରୟୋଜନରେ ପଡ଼ି ସେମାନେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ଖୋଜିବେ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ମଧ୍ୟ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଖୋଜିବ । ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବାହାରେ ଅଥଚ ଭାରତବର୍ଷରେ ରହୁଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଓ ଭାରତ ବାହାରେ ରହୁଥିବା (Non-Resident) ଓଡ଼ିଆମାନେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ଆମର ବୋଲି ଆବିଷ୍କାର କରିବେ । ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଚାଲି ଯାଇଛନ୍ତି ଓ ପ୍ରବାସରେ ଏକ କର୍ମସ୍ଥାନକୁ ଆବୋରି ରହିଯାଇଛନ୍ତି, ଏକ କର୍ମସ୍ଥାନର ସଂପର୍କତା ଏବଂ ନିରାପତ୍ତା ଯେ ଏକ ସୁଖୀ ଏବଂ ସୁସ୍ଥ ଜୀବନ ପାଇଁ ଆଦୌ ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ ନୁହେଁ; ସେତେବେଳେ ସେମାନେ ମଧ୍ୟ ହୃଦୟଙ୍ଗମ କରିବେ ଏବଂ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ପୁନରାବିଷ୍କାର କରିବେ । ମୋର ମନେହୁଏ ସଂପ୍ରତି ସେହି ପ୍ରକ୍ରିୟାଟି ହୁଏତ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇଗଲାଣି । ଓଡ଼ିଶା କ୍ରମେ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଅଧିକ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଭାବରେ ଚିହ୍ନିବ, ସ୍ଵାକୃତି ଦେବ ଏବଂ ଅଧିକ ବ୍ୟାବହାରିକ ଭାବେ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶା କାର୍ଯ୍ୟରେ ଲଗାଇବାରେ ବହୁବାଟ ପାଇଯିବ । ଏକାନ୍ତ ସତ୍ୟ କଥା ଯେ, ସେମାନେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଆକାଂକ୍ଷାକୁ କଦାପି ଏଡ଼ି ଦେବେ ନାହିଁ ।



ORISSA AFTER MADHU BABU

By
Satkadi Hota*

Madhu Sudan Das, popularly known as Madhu Babu or Madhu Barrister, breathed his last before Orissa became a separate province. But spirit of Oriya nationalism did not die and sacrifices of thousands of people for the cause did not go in vain. Struggle continued with vigor to achieve the goal set before the people by Madhu Babu.

Orissa became a separate province on 1st April, 1936. But, all the Oriya speaking districts of neighboring provinces viz. Central province, Madras and Bengal presidencies were not included in the new province. The British Govt. created two new provinces i.e. Orissa and Sind (now in Pakistan) on the basis of language and culture. Civilizations never grow in isolation but get sustenance and inputs from culture, religion, language and literature. Madhu Babu was a great leader, a visionary, a patriot and a fighter who inspired lakhs of Oriya speaking people to carve out a distinct political identity in British India. He also knew that India would not remain a colony of the British Empire for long, and would get independence sooner or later under the guidance and leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhiji stayed with him when he came to Cuttack and exchanged ideas on various matters. Gandhiji wrote in Harijan about the great qualities and vision of Madhu Babu and asked other provincial leaders to follow his policy regarding industrialization and upliftment of the poor.

A separate Province was formed with the coastal districts of Balasore, Cuttack, Puri, Ganjam, Koraput and Sambalpur. The princely states remained outside the domain of the provincial administration. In other words, more Oriya speaking areas remained in Bengal, Bihar, Central Province, Madras and the princely states. This continued the British policy of Divide & Rule. Orisa remained under the Moguls and Marathas for about two hundred years. British conquered Orissa only in 1803. Therefore the Oriya speaking people who dominated the coastal regions beginning from Bengal up to coromondal coast of the South and trade routes on sea up to Indonesia for a longtime lost their glory and homogeneity. About four hundred years of separation from each other contributed substantially to weaken the process of nationalism. Madhu Babu tried to restore Oriya nationalism and succeeded greatly. This was his main achievement.

We find enough examples in history which show that religion, culture and language unite people. Having broken the Oriya ethnicity and homogeneity, Moghal, Marathas and the British, found it easy to rule Orissa. The cultural and ethnic unity was broken. Unity eluded Oriya people for about four hundred years. Therefore, many scholars are of the opinion that if Madhu Babu was alive till independence, he could have united the divided people who had a glorious past spreading from three hundred years before Christ up to sixteenth century. There was no leader of his stature, vision, sacrifice and popularity who could lead Orissa for creation of a separate province. Though after his death leaders like Krushna Chandra Gajapati, ruler of Paralakhemundi, a Princely state continued to lead the struggle and Orissa became a separate province. But after getting a separate province leaders failed to create enough enthusiasm for social reform and economic development, which would not have happened if Madhu Babu was alive to lead Orissa for a few years more. He had clear vision in this regard.

Madhu Babu was a member of the Bihar Orissa legislative Council and was minister for local self govt. The legislative council's proceedings reveal the dream of this great son of Orissa who, in 1921/22, wanted rail roads to be constructed and extended up to northern India to facilitate utilization of huge mineral resources. He conceptualized idea of developing several ports on the sea coast for import and export trade by setting up of deep sea ports at Dhamra, Paradip and other places. This even today remains unfulfilled excepting Paradip Port which came into existence due to initiative and determination

of Biju Patnaik, another illustrious son of Orissa. Madhu Babu pleaded for spread of literacy, women's education, social upliftment and reforms to uplift the socio-economic status of Harijans and removal of untouchability etc. He believed in gender equality and had the courage of conviction to say that society would not develop and economic emancipation would remain a dream if women are denied equality with men. He laid emphasis on self-government and accountability of peoples' representatives. He had tremendous will power to translate what he believed. This was not the case with the leaders of later years.

Orissa came under British rule in 1803 and it took one hundred years to organize people of Orissa under the banner of Utkal Sammilani to work for a separate political entity. The kings and elites joined the Utkal Sammilani to fight for the cause of Oriyas and for formation of a separate province. When people of India responded to the call of Congress led by Mahatma Gandhi to boycott Simon Commission and raised slogans like "Go Back Simon Commission", representatives of the Utkal Sammilani received the commission with welcome arches and submitted a memorandum for creation of a separate province. The Commission recommended this case for consideration of the British Government. Thus Madhu Babu successfully kept Orissa's interest out of all India politics which helped in formation of a linguistic state. Madhu Sudan Das was a leader who did not belong to any political party nor was he a member of any ethnic group. He loved people, made sacrifices for the public cause and set exemplary conduct to inspire others.

Even a great son and patriot of Orissa, Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das, best known for his dedicated humanitarian work to help the poor and needy, which brought Congress to Orissa, was a political leader belonging to the Congress party. Later other great leaders like Harekrushna Mahatab and Biju Pattnaik, in spite of their tremendous contribution to make Orissa unified and economically prosperous, could not inspire confidence in the people of all sections of Orissa because of their partisan politics. They initially belonged to congress and contributed substantially to the freedom struggle but later changed course and formed /new political outfits. Thus they lost the unique opportunity of showing fairness and impartiality to all sections of the people. Later Commissions of Inquiry set up to investigate allegations against them found them guilty for omissions and commissions and misuse of powers when they were Chief Ministers.

Another Chief Minister, Nabakrushna Choudhury, was honest and had the moral authority to lead, but he did not have charisma to unite people to fight for a good cause. Nandini Satpathy is known for her bold-ness but she did not last long in office though she was Chief Minister twice for limited duration. J. B. Pattanik, intelligent and gentle, did remarkably well during his first tenure 1980-85 by developing infrastructure like rail, road, ports, telecommunications and trained man-power etc. required to fulfill his dream for setting up one thousand industries in one thousand days. But he lost his mooring during the second phase 1985-90 due political dissensions in his own party. His third term was more inconspicuous as he faced revolt from within and strong and regional party leaders ranged against his leadership. There were several scandals which discredited his regime. Other Chief Ministers just scrapped through. Though Orissa is a predominantly agricultural economy and 87% people live in villages, no government since independence laid stress on agricultural development of Orissa. Successive Govts. made attempts to industrialize Orissa and granted several concessions to the entrepreneurs, but failed to create a mindset amongst the people to develop industry. No Chief Minister had the ability and charisma to lead all sections of the people; rather they sided with regional political satraps to remain in power. This is the difference between Madhu Babu and the post independence Oriya leaders who were more known for partisan politics, lack of leadership and courage of conviction and strong will power to get things done. They did not have the inner urge for making sacrifices, nor did they have the boldness and courage of a visionary to lead the people. Most of them belonged to different

political parties and not to all. Madhu Babu and Gopabandhu belonged to all Oriyas. Orissa is proud of them even today.

The rulers who ruled in ancient times believed in the supremacy of Lord Jagannath of Purusottam Khetra Puri. Whether in war or peace, they told the people that they were servants of the Lord and they ruled on His behalf. As the legend goes Lord Jagannath and His elder brother Balabhadra led the army of King Purusottama Deva in time of Kanchi Vijay and defeated the king of Kanchi (South India) and restored the glory of Orissa. Kapilendra Deva called himself Gajapati and son of Lord Jagannath. He proclaimed that he was working as the deputy of Lord Jagannath. Thus we see that Lord Jagannath has been accepted as the deity of Orissa and the people believe in His supremacy. Even this concept found its imprint in the writings of Utkalamani Gopabandhu who mentioned in his poem that the work of moving the nation would not stop due to lack of leadership as Lord Jagannath is Orissa's leader. The present day politicians have exploited Lord Jagannath's name to capture votes and remain in power. They take his name even to hide their misdeeds. In a democratic polity, power comes from the grassroots and elected representatives are duty bound to carry out nation building and administrative works as honestly, as possible. They must remain accountable to the people, but do not indulge in the name of God to perpetuate their hegemony. Madhu Babu, though converted to Christianity, while he was a student in Calcutta, believed that Lord Jagannath is the Supreme force. In one of his poems he wrote Oh brother! "The Chariot (Nandighosa - Chariot of Lord Jagannath) does not move if self-interests are the driving force. Similarly the hackney carriage (carriage drawn by horse) does not move if the feeding pot remains tied to the mouth of the horse).

The symbolism is clear and loud. Even at that time when corruption and misuse of authority though was not in present shape and size, he thought it proper to caution the leaders and the people. But now the wheel does not move and hands do not work unless the same are greased. Madhu Babu is no more with us, but his dream remains unfulfilled. It is, therefore, the duty of the people of Orissa to redeem the pledge he took nearly eighty years ago. Our motto should be service before self. His secular mindset was liberal and humane. When he was a Minister of Bihar and Orissa, he meticulously followed "Rajdharm" as propounded by Bhishma of Mahabharat fame to Yudhistira. When the war was over, Lord Sriksushna advised Yudhistira to seek blessings and guidance from Bhishma Pitamaha who was lying on the bed of arrows. Bhishma told Yudhistira to take care of the people and serve them as a mother takes care of the fetus growing in her womb and remains ready to sacrifice her comforts and pleasures for his/her welfare.

Rightly, therefore, Madhu Babu is remembered as Satabdi Purusha of 20th Century Orissa and lovingly called Utkal Gourab. He is still loved and admired as the tallest son of Orissa who were born since seventeenth century till today.

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Vande Mataram

Vande Mataram!
Sujalam,suphalam,
Malaya jashitalam
Shasya shyamalam,
Mataram!
Shubhrajyosthna
Pulakiyaminim
Phullakusumita drumadala
Shobhinim
Subhasinim sumadhura
Bhasinim,
Sukhadam vardam,
Mataram!

I bow to thee, Mother,
Richly –watered, richly fruited
cool with the winds of the south,
dark with the crops of the harvest,
The Mother!
Her nights rejoicing in the
glory of the moonlight
her hands clothed beautifully
with her trees in
Flowering bloom
Sweet of laughter ,sweet of
speech
The Mother giver of boons,
Giver of bliss

--Bankim Chandra

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep
And miles to go before I sleep
And miles to go before I sleep
----Robert Frost

"In the beautiful and everlasting memories of my
grand parents from whom we have learned to live
and let live"

Kalu Sabat and Satyavama Sabat, grand parents
Binayak Sabat and Annapurna Sabat, great grand
parents
Bauribandhu Sabat and Mahalaxmi Sabat
Brundaban Sabat and Satyavama Sabat

Love and Regards,

***Sunil and Munu Sabat,
San Jose, California***

Madhu Babu's Daughter Sailabala

By

Sachidananda Mohanty*

I

Among the literary women of Orissa who distinguished themselves in the field of social reforms, national freedom struggle and female education in the late 19th and early 20th century, Sailabala Das would easily rank as one of the most outstanding. Historical memory is not one of the strong areas of our national life. Nevertheless, Sailabala's name is still remembered, lending identity to one of the leading women's colleges of Orissa. Few however, know of her and of her manifold contributions to the State. In a foreword to the autobiography of Sailabala, H.K. Mahatab, the then Governor of Bombay wrote that:

Shrimati Sailababa Das's life is inextricably connected with the growth of Orissa in the course of the last 60 years or so...She was not only the daughter of Shri M.S.Das but was also his virtual secretary in all his undertakings. In that way the life of Sailabala was ultimately connected with all the activities of M.S Das. In matters of education, social reforms and political awakening, she worked directly under M.S Das for over half a century. Whatever we see today in Orissa owes its origin to M.S Das's conception and Sailabala's hand in operation. In the field of women's education in Orissa, particularly Sailabala's name will go down in history as the pioneer. Today she is an octogenarian but her energy surpasses that many of youths. (p. i; All references to the autobiography are henceforth parenthetically given in this essay).

While Dr Mahatab expresses "my gratefulness and that of my generation to her for what she has done for modern Orissa in this long period of half a century", the state of Orissa itself seems to have completely forgotten her legacy. How else does one explain the absence of her writing from the leading libraries of the state, including that at the college founded in her name (for which she generously donated her entire estate)? How does one explain the erasure of her varied achievement from public consciousness in contemporary Orissa? Reductively termed as 'Madhu babu's adopted daughter' ('Madhu Babu's Palita Kanya'), she has been relegated to a corner in the state's hall of fame.

To say that Sailabala was a Bengali and an outsider who remained distant from the mainstream Oriya population, especially because of her religion, Christianity, is partly true. There were Bengali women like Malati (Sen) Choudury who gained recognitions in Orissa. Malati's marriage into a leading political family of Gandhians: Gopabandhu and Nabakrishna Choudhury could be a factor in their better reception. On the other hand, Sailabala, although politically active, did not operate at the grass root level in the rural areas of Orissa. Her background of British education abroad, upper class style of living, political life in the company of lawyers, judges and intellectuals, shaped her personality and carved her out in a separate mould. Although she adopted Orissa as her homeland and place of work, she chose to speak Bengali for the most part, thereby unwittingly alienating herself from the ordinary Oriyas.

II

Records of Sailabala's life and career are scarce and scanty. For my purpose, I rely mostly on her autobiography, *A Look before and After*, Cuttack 1956 (self-published), as one of the main sources. It is

however, important to cross check many of the claims and statements made by Sailabala regarding their truth-value and historical veracity.

Why did Sailabala choose to write her autobiography, one of the few by women in Orissa, in English? In the introductory chapter, she declares, “Some of my friends have been asking me again and again to put down in black and white some interesting episodes of my life and experiences. So at last at the age of eighty-two, when my eye sight is getting dimmed due to cataract I have asked a dear friend of Calcutta to write as I talk.’ (p.1)

Sailabala was born in 1875 at Chuckerbir Road near Bhawanipore in Calcutta. Although she came from a Christian family background, her family, she tells us, continued a number of Hindu practices such as the making of a Horoscope at the birth of a child. She informs us that the planetary position at the time of her birth was responsible for her headache and nervousness, versatility and vivacity, the latter traits made her popular in social circles.

Sailabala’s father, it appears, lost much of his ancestral property by embracing Christianity. Her mother Prassanamayee was an invalid. Coming from a middle class family from Midinapur district, Sailabala was the eldest of five children. Her sister Sudhansubala Hazra later became a district inspectress of schools and became the principal of Ravenshaw Girls’ High School. According to Sailabala, her sister was “the first lady lawyer of India and was responsible for having amended the Legal Practitioners Act.”

In her childhood, Sailabala preferred the company of boys and was greatly attracted to the spirit of adventure, courage, and enterprise. She enjoyed games and outdoor sports. She used to “climb up the trees like a squirrel and pluck green fruits with the help of younger friends” (p.2). She loved swimming in a half a dozen tanks in the neighborhood and describes her childhood days as a golden period.

From the very beginning, Sailabala recalls, she cherished the virtue of honesty and truthfulness. Once she questioned her father tearfully as to why he spoke an untruth regarding the quality of food that she had prepared. She had the responsibility of running the entire household work. She was also a nurse to her baby brothers and sisters. The home education that she received helped her greatly in her later life. She recalls that out of the ‘five whole silver new rupees’ that she received from her father on her twelfth birthday, she deposited two rupees by opening an account book in the post office’s saving bank.

Sailabala came to know of Madhusudan Das through her father. Both her father and Mr. Das had studied at the LMS College at Bhawanipore. They lived in the same hostel and shared the same room. Their friendship brought them closer and, as Sailabala remarks, they embraced Christianity on the same day and in the same church. Mr. Das was married to a Christian lady and Sailabala was born at their house. After the death of his wife he left Calcutta and returned to Cuttack.

In 1888, after Sailabala’s family returned from Shimla, Mr. Das met them and expressed a desire to adopt Sailabala as his daughter. Although this offer was not initially accepted, her father, at the passing away of her mother in 1892, brought her to Cuttack. Her father remarried and Mr. Das, at Cuttack, brought up the children. After passing I. A. examination, Sailabala was formally adopted by Mr. Das as his daughter. For her this turned out to be a significant event. As she recalls, “I am thankful to God that his choice of a Bengali girl as a daughter was not in vain. He was criticized by many of his Oriya friends and relations in thus choosing a Bengali and not an Oriya girl. On his deathbed he expressed his satisfaction on having adopted me, for I fulfilled his expectations” (p.6).

Sailabala received her elementary education in the London Mission Girls' School and traveled to Shimla for eight months. Later she joined the Bethune School. At college, she led an active life and played a leadership role. She invariably had a broad and non-sectarian approach. Since she was a Christian, she was asked by the lady principal of her college not to mix with Brahma girls on Sundays in the hostel. She refused and maintained, "there were things I could learn from them". (p. 7)

After a bout of illness, Sailabala was put in the Loretto Convent, Middleton Street, in Calcutta. Here she found the Sisters free from sectarian influence. Unfortunately she failed in the University examination for I.A. She was then sent to the Deveton college at Freeschool Street, Calcutta and stayed in the hostel of Young Women's Institution at Park street. Years later she met one of her classmates, a Muslim named Khaja Mohammed Noor as the Vice-Chancellor of the University and President of the Legislative Assembly.

Soon, Sailabala passed her I.A. Contrary to Mr. Das's wishes, she did not wish to pursue her B.A. Her father was ill and was advised to travel to England for treatment. She came to Cuttack and at his suggestion, settled down in his company of Mr. and Mrs. Anam Chandra Das.

Mr. Das left for England in 1897. At Cuttack, Sailabala was well provided for. Co-education was not favoured. A spirited Sailabala persuaded a former classmate of hers at the Bethune College, Ms. Isabella Samuels, to seek admission at the Rameshwar Bai College. They succeeded in their mission. Although she benefited greatly from her college education, her "real education", she says, began at the library of Mr. Das, where she met a cross-section of people and had discussions on a variety of topics.

In her autobiography, Sailabala records various activities that reveal her intrepid nature and her fight against injustice and tyranny of all kinds. For instance, she tells us that in 1898, the Bengal-Nagpur Railway (BNR) began to start the railway bridges; before the train service, passengers used to come to Cuttack from Calcutta by steamer, from Chandpal Ghat to Kolaghat. At Kolaghat she boarded the train and had a tiff with the Europeans in the First Class compartment. Sailabala's response to a demand that "mehsahibs would not like to travel with a native woman", (p.12) was to insist that her ayahs too traveled by the same coach. While insisting that she was a first class passenger, Sailabala refused to take offence at being called a "native woman", saying, "I *am* a native woman and I am proud of it." (12) Later in the passage that describes this incident, she discloses that the European men who had made such a racist demand were the District Magistrate and District Judge of Cuttack.

There are several events narrated in the autobiography that bring out the qualities of the head and the heart of Sailabala. It is true that such accounts appear to exaggerate her self-image. There is a sense of self-importance and self-righteousness as well. At the same time, it is hard to compare those accounts with independent and objective sources. Moreover, several of Sailabala's distinguished contemporaries have testified to her exceptional sense of idealism and integrity.

For instance, in a section entitled "Entry into the Jagannath Temple", Sailabala tells the readers of the commotion and public outcry she caused by entering the famous Jagannath temple at Puri. The episode as seen through her eyes as participant-observer, underlines an admixture of several feelings; courting a sense of the forbidden, a desire to oppose religious orthodoxy and bigotry, and finally, an expression of regret for creating a controversy and bringing her father a bad name.

Sailabala's narrative captures some of the momentous events in the history of modern Orissa. For example, she records that in 1903, her father Mr. M.S. Das left the Congress and started the Utkal Union Conference with the help of the Maharaja of Mayurbhanj and other philanthropists and supporters. Similarly, she formed the Utkal Young Men's Association with financial support received from her father. She contrasts the earnestness of the students then vis-à-vis the students of the later generation.

Sailabala next unfolds the story of her journey to England. She accompanied two sponsored students, Ms. Saralabala Mitra and Ms. Fatima Fygee, and arrived in London on 17th September 1906.

Her initial experience at the *Maria Grey Training College* was far from reassuring. “Everything”, she tells us, “seemed dark and dull and characterless compared with the sunny land of India and we three lay down on our beds and wept like children as we entered our rooms in the *Maria Grey Training Hostel*.” (p.21)

In the training college, Sailabala passed two examinations and came back to India. She was to return for the final examination in the following year but this could not be realized.

During her stay in England Sailabala wrote a series of articles about her experience of various aspects of British life, society and culture. Some of these were published in the well-known journal, *Utkal Sahitya*, founded and edited by Bishwanath Kar. In these articles Sailabala shows an objective approach to the study of cultures alien to her, vis-à-vis her own. She gives credit to the British wherever due while critiquing them unreservedly for their colonial mentality in India. She talks about the British court, the monarchy, the House of Lords, the India Office, the Buckingham Palace and her interview with His holiness, the Pope. She complements the British for their disciplined habits, and their sense of civility and consideration for people, including those who belonged to the lower classes of society. She spends weekends in Christian homes and remarks that she liked English servants better than our own for their punctuality and sincerity.

Returning to Cuttack, Sailabala took an active interest in the promotion of female education in the state especially with regard to the improvement of the existing Ravenshaw Girls’ School. She became the Principal and honorary Secretary of the school and fought against an indifferent educational bureaucracy for its expansion. Later, her generosity led to the creation of the first women’s college in Orissa. In 1914 she was invited by the government to attend a conference on female education at Ranchi. She also worked for starting a Hindu Widows Training school for training teachers for high schools. In recognition of her contribution to education, Sir Edward Gait, the last Lieutenant Governor of Orissa and Bihar, wanted to confer the *Kaiser-e-Hind* gold medal on her, but she declined it. Sailabala also took an active part in the All-India Women’s Conference and started branches of the organization at Puri and Balasore.

Part of Sailabala’s active public life was spent at Patna, Bihar. She has chronicled this phase of her life and even compared it to her life in Orissa. She finds the people of Bihar more conservative in their attitudes than those of her home state. She writes about various activities in the state such as the Sonepur Mela, the visit of the Prince of Wales, the Purdah Party at the Government House, the Bihar and Orissa council of Women, raising funds for Lady Stevenson Hall and the Bihar and Orissa Legislative Council. She also narrates her experiences as the first woman Honorary Magistrate in India. Some incidents have a dual comic and serious dimension to them, such as the fining of the Chief Justice and the Governor’s cook, the election petition case and insolvency case. Under the heading ‘University Activities’, she lists her nomination as a fellow to the senate, the creation of the music board, her election to the syndicate, the Viceroy’s visit, the endowment of a scholarship for I.A. Women’s Students, and the creation of a *Domestic science, Economy and Hygiene Board*.

Sailabala also talks about her starting of the SPCA and about how she came to be elected a municipal commissioner. She took part in Railway and Jail activities and writes about her daring action in connection with political prisoners connected with the Civil Disobedience Movement. One interesting episode she narrates is about her demonstration, in a red sari, against the Simon Commission. She informs us that she was in favour of the reservation of seats for women and was not in favour of separate electorates in which there was no reservation of seats for women. (p.119)

Sailabala next recounts her return to Cuttack in the winter of 1927. By then it had been decided to sell her father Madhusudan Das’s house by auction. He had incurred many debts and his industrial

enterprises were in ruins. He had gone to Ahmedabad in 1924 to meet Gandhi and seek the latter's help in reviving his industries.

When Gandhi visited Cuttack, Sailabala was asked by her father to be his escort. A meeting was arranged at the Cuttack Town Hall and a paltry sum of sixty rupees was collected, which disappointed Gandhiji. At their residence that night, the Mahatma wanted Sailabala to take up the *charkha* and introduce it to the women of Orissa. Sailabala replied in the negative, saying she did not believe that the *charkha* would solve India's economic problems. It was good for farmers who could grow the cotton for spinning in their own fields and make their own saris, *dhotis* and *gamchas* with it, but not for the better-off middle and upper classes. (p. 132). Similarly, she was not prepared to promote the use of *khaddar*. She said, "I am sorry, the proposal does not tempt me. If you are so anxious not to use foreign things, why are you using motorcar, watches, etc? You should discard them. But under the present circumstances, we cannot do so." Gandhiji did not seem to be pleased, but invited her nevertheless to become a member of the Congress. She welcomed the idea and promised to visit him at his ashram at Sabarmati.

At Cuttack in 1941, Sailabala undertook many activities for the social welfare of women. These included the setting up of a unit for maternity and child welfare. She also established the *Orissa Nari Seba Sangha*. After Independence, several Congress leaders appointed in the Government of India visited Orissa. Sardar Vallabhai Patel was one of them and Sailabala was introduced to him at a tea party arranged by Dr. Katju, the then Governor of Orissa. Similarly, she met Lord and Lady Mountbatten, when they were welcomed to Orissa. She narrates the visit of the Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru to the state. In November 1947, the *Indian National Council for Women* held its biennial conference at Cuttack, under the leadership of Sailabala.

In Part V of her autobiography, Sailabala shares her impressions of Cuttack when she was a young girl and also records the images she picked up in later life. There are also the impressions of Patna, and of friends and foes. In particular, she regrets the sense of ingratitude that she experienced in life. As she remarks, "I cannot help mentioning here that in spite of all my offers to help Orissa educationally and socially I have not been appreciated by the people of Orissa. It may be due to my nationality. Here is a glaring instance which has convinced me of the ingratitude of my state." (p.161) Similarly, she also records the glaring ingratitude of one of her relations. But she hastens to add that she has also received "love, kindness and gratitude from many quarters unexpected".

By 1934, Sailabala's father Madhusudan had become very weak. Sailabala returned from Bihar in January that year, where she had been to organize relief for the victims of the earthquake. Her siblings gathered around him. At the death bed Sailabala assured her father that she would stay in Orissa till her death. "The last part of my life will be spent here. I shall sever my connections with other provinces." By 1:00 PM on the morning of the 4th of February 1934, Madhusudan passed away. Sailabala remained true to her word. She also made several efforts for the creation of a suitable memorial for Madhusudan.

After her father's death, Sailabala continued her social, political and administrative activities. Orissa became a separate province in 1936. A significant act of hers was the donation of Madhusmriti, the estate of Madhusudan Das for a women's college, later to be named after her. She and her sister Sudhanshubala gifted their father's law library to the Orissa High Court.

The correspondence between Sailabala and several leaders like Dr. Sachidananda Sinha, bar-at-law and Sardar Vallabhai Patel listed in the autobiography show Sailabala's commitment to the cause of the state of Orissa, especially with regard to the merger of Sarakela and Kharswan, two of the tribal kingdoms that merged with Bihar despite a considerable opposition from the people of Orissa.

Another milestone in the life of Sailabala took place when she became a member of the Rajya Sabha, the Council of States, in May 1952. She lists the various activities that she carried out in her

capacity as an MP. In her address to the members of the Sailabala Women's College on the occasion of its opening on 28th April 1952, Sailabala outlined the greatness of Late Madhusudan Das, her relationship with his father, the gift of Madhusmriti to the women of Orissa and finally concluded with the following words:

I hope the girls who are to be educated here and who are to be the mothers of the future generation will always bear in mind that the house belongs to the man who gave his life in the service of Orissa and they would also dedicate their lives to the service of their motherland. (Appendix. P. 20)

Education for women was a lifelong passion for Sailabala. This is demonstrated in all her writings including in an excellent essay titled "Ways of Spreading Women's Education", in Oriya, wherein she spells out her views in detail about the need to expand female education rapidly in the state. She underlines the crucial importance of teacher training, preparation of textbooks with the help of a council of local citizenry, the support of the Education Department, the need to go beyond the purdah system and caste system, and education for widows. "Lady teachers," she observes, "must assume the role of mothers. If they maintained a cordial relationship with their pupils, women's education would get the support and cooperation of the public."

In the ultimate analysis it would be for her great contribution to the cause of female education in the state that Sailabala will be remembered.

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Identity and Belonging

By

Satya Brata Das*

Speaking fluent Oriya from a bygone age, I asked the clerk at Bhubaneswar's *Kala Mandir* if I might have a look at some shirting. The two-ply cotton with a high thread count was like silk to the fingers, and in the hands of a skilled bespoke tailor would yield a fine dress shirt at a fraction of a Canadian or American price. I expressed my admiration for the quality, congratulated the shopkeeper on the range of colours and patterns, and thanked him for the help. All the while he stared more and more oddly at me. Finally, he spoke what was on his mind: "Sir, you must be living outside."

His definition of outside probably did not include my home, Canada. I might have been from Delhi or Bangalore, possibly Britain, and possibly "America" as in a generic North America that includes my country. I had treated him no differently than I would treat any other peer in a democratic civil society, yet my deference and pleasantries had set me apart. I told him I was from Bhubaneswar, had attended Stewart School, and had come to this very shop when it used to be called Burma General Stores. He was too young to remember that time, and all we really had in common now was a mutually comprehensible Oriya language, and the debris blown up against the market steps that was just as pervasive now as it had been then.

As on the past several trips, this reaffirmed my own sense of comfort and belonging as an Oriya-speaking Canadian who still thinks and communicates my most intimate feelings in Oriya. Yet I am a Canadian through and through, absolutely comfortable in my skin. The act of becoming Canadian is an evolution. There is a transitional moment when "home" becomes where you are. The other "home," the one you left behind, fades into a nostalgia: for a place as it once was, for friends and family as they once were, for tastes and smells and sensations that nurtured you and formed you and are now vanished in time.

Some never make the transition, neither emotionally nor logically, and this is the true misfortune of immigration and Diaspora. The memory of Orissa as it once was, the villages or towns or rivers and fields of a bygone age, is so vivid and compelling that it haunts us and pulls us. Yet how painful and difficult to acknowledge that it is a memory, just that, and in that recognition to affirm that this is the very nature and essence of *maya*.

Many cannot come to that transition, and continue to project and impose the values and ideals and reality of "their" time on the dynamic and fluid Oriya ethos of today. For the close observer, it is evident to perceive the profound changes in Orissa over the months and the years, some for the better and some for the worse. Yet this is the nature of life and existence, and surely there is a double frustration and disappointment in those who not only adhere to the Oriya identity in which they were formed, but seek to "protect" it against all the influences and pressures of the new country in which they have chosen to make a life and a home. In this instance it is even more painful than being caught between two worlds, unable to fit fully into either, because the world you wish to inhabit is almost entirely one of the

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imagination, fixed in a reality that no longer exists. Nostalgia becomes increasingly arid, and on the occasional returns to Orissa it is almost as though one is a time traveller come back to a place once familiar, that has changed in ways so fundamental as to make you an outsider to a place you still intimately believe to be your own.

The home left behind ceased to exist the day we left. It began to change, evolve, and develop without us. This too is the nature of *maya*. The familiar connections of daily life, once severed, cannot be restored. Go back after one, two, three, five, even ten years and there are still similarities – but the home, the place, the family left behind, is no longer as it was. If it is not evident in the growth of the cousins or nieces or nephews, of the brothers and sisters grown to an unexpected maturity, then it is manifest in more subtle ways. The emergence of the Urdu word “*qaafi*” replacing the Oriya word “*jathesta*” (enough) in every day speech, the invasion of other Urdu and Hindustani and English words into the Oriya language you spoke as a child at the original “home” and continue to speak in the new “home,” are an obvious marker. It is not just language, of course. The character of the street, the village, the town, all will have changed in ways that are evident to all but the wilfully blind.

Until we make the definitive choice to call the new place “home”, or to return to the old place with the full knowledge and expectation that the old “home” is changed irrevocably and can never be what it used to be, we continue to be exiles, moving in a circle. We move between countries, between identities, no longer quite belonging to the place we left, never quite at home in the place we come to. Becoming Canadian, or choosing to become a modern Oriya with no illusions about reclaiming our past, is a step out of the circle. It is a decision to stop roaming, to stop yearning for what might have been, to accept that this country is your present and your future, that this land is where your roots belong. Having made that decision, you come to portentous question that can have so many answers: will I ever be fully accepted as a Canadian if I choose the “new” home, and will I ever be fully accepted as an Oriya if I return to the “old” home?

Everyone’s answer and everyone’s experience might be different. Yet in becoming Canadian, I have expanded the meaning and definition of the word Canadian to include me. This possibility of inclusion, of altering the meaning of who is a Canadian, is a deeply exciting and fulfilling step. And I would argue that this is because Canada is a country based on certain shared values. Some of these are reflected in the Constitution, values such as co-operation, coexistence, and certainly amount to a recognition that there is worth to be found in every one of the world’s cultures, in every one of the world’s traditions. The important thing is to take the worthiest elements of those cultures and not to bring the hateful ones, not to bring the violent ones, not to bring the exclusive ones, but really to take the best of what exists and from it to craft a country.

This grander vision, the notion of a shared polity built by radical moderates has led our quest to define Canadian values and put them in public discourse. Today, the affirmation and acceptance that we ought to celebrate Canada’s values have become a catalyst in enabling a national consensus on the kind of country we want. This is a prime reason to celebrate my Canadian identity, without sacrificing any of the personal and emotional currents that pull me to my memories of Orissa at a certain time, to the Oriya I continue to speak as a first language, the Oriya experience that lives and evolves within my Canadian life.

My act of becoming Canadian also enabled me to contribute substantially to the national discourse of what it should mean to be Canadian. Many years ago, a group of us Canadians from diverse origins worried that official multicultural policy served to put people in ghettos, to encourage a benign

apartheid wherein cultures were separate and equal. The fundamentally hollow concept of “tolerance” only invited acceptance of something, it did not lead to sharing, discovery and ultimately celebration. We worried about the future of a cultural mosaic where every piece in the mosaic was separate and apart from the others.

We believed there could be a means of preserving seminal identities while sharing our lives and experiences with one another. This sat more comfortably in a country that did not believe in forcing assimilation into some overarching national *mythos*, as was the experience south of the border in the United States. We were working to reshape a 1970s and early 1980s milieu where “multiculturalism” was defined as giving grants to ethnic and cultural associations to propagate and perpetuate their own traditions. We believed that this would ultimately lead to an abundance of solitudes, if there were no attempt to share across cultures, across ethnicity, across religion. And in this context, we worked to shape Canada as a grand inclusion, in which one could maintain the bonds of heritage and ancestry while bringing them to reshape a dynamic and evolving Canadian identity.

In the early 1980s, I wrote an article in *The Edmonton Journal*, titled “Multiculturalism: A Kindly Apartheid?” and was roundly condemned by readers. The subject was so emotional that I could not successfully communicate my intent – to ensure the participation of all those cultural solitudes in the crafting of our collective future. Yet those thoughts of inclusion prevailed and ultimately succeeded in the following years. The future evoked by so many of us fighting for a different country, now exists in my modern Canada. My country is one of pluralism, multiple identities, cultural sharing, and a surging confidence in our young.

Having lived through that experience, I recognise that my observations in this particular essay may provoke similarly emotional response. Yet as persons of Oriya origin, ancestry and heritage, feeling a deep attachment to both the “home” we left behind and the “home” we have come to, we will enrich ourselves by reflecting on what it means to be who we are, and in doing so come closer to answering the central “why” at the core of human existence. Which is why, as I explained to the clerk at *Kala Mandir* that I am a Canadian, that I could confidently assert that Oriya is one of the many languages Canadians speak.



The Oriya Identity: A Perspective

By

Nivedita Mohanty*

The concept of identity for a nation or a people could connote and convey a variety of aspects, depending upon the perspective and time. Such studies help understand a society better, that in turn provide a means for establishing a healthy and a purposeful interrelationship between the various subgroups comprising the society and with the neighbouring societies. An analysis of the Orissan identity in the 21st century assumes importance considering the diverse ethnic groups as well as the emerging segments that together constitute the mosaic of the modern society.

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The heritage of Orissa, as in other places, acquired its current shape over a vast period. Its geographical location, geological characteristics, religions practised, languages spoken, art, nature of governance as well as economic status of the society from time to time- all these contributed to the evolution and cultural identity of Orissa. To begin the discussion, an understanding of Orissa's identity from the historical standpoint would be a necessity.

Positioned as it is almost in the middle of the eastern side of India and endowed with rich natural resources, the land experienced a large inflow of races from the early time of human settlement. Thus, it sheltered the Austric and Dravidian language groups followed by the Aryans, the latter pushing away some of the earlier settlers to deep interiors. With the highlanders in the hilly terrains and the Aryans in the delta, the land witnessed a rich tradition of natural harmony amidst a variety that underlined the character of the evolving cultural identity. The hills and the Bay of Bengal were the natural barriers to protect the land from the frequent foreign invasion that also allowed its culture to grow uninterrupted.

The earlier units of the land, viz., Odra, Utkala, Kalinga and Kosala progressed parallelly though their lines of separation were often diffused. The monarchical traditions beginning from the Asokan times in the 3rd century B.C. gained momentum and became the source of a grand unifying force for these independent administrative units and diverse cultural groups. Simultaneously, the conquering rulers who made the land their own, for example the Gangas from south assimilated much of their traditions into the existing ones.

The spheres of influence went beyond the frontiers of the kingdom, even in the 9th and 10th century A.D. to the far off lands in south East Asia through the blossoming maritime trade. Through the trade routes along with the economic prosperity possibly came in new ideas and customs as well from these distant lands.

A strong and progressive governance combined with economic advancement stimulated a sense of aesthetics and richness of mind that is reflected in all the creative achievements. Under the royal patronage grew the tradition of great temple building with sculptural extravaganza that bears testimony to unmatched creativity and finesse. Dharmapada, the child prodigy of the Konarka legend who excelled in architectural technique combining engineering skill, symbolized the artistic quality flowing through generations. The flow has not dried; the Orissan artisans still create poems on stone, carve exquisite wooden work and cast the *dhokra* artefacts of exceptional beauty.

Apart from the Vedic traditions that is exemplified by the unique *Paippalada Samhita* of the Atharvaveda, Sanskrit scholars produced their literary masterpieces including Vishnu Sarma's *Panchatantra* around 6th century A.D. and Jayadev's *Gita Govinda* in 12th century A.D. The Oriya script meanwhile has been going through a process of evolution; some branches of Prachya Prakrit that has functioned as the lingua franca of the land was getting substituted by the Oriya language. And the Oriya literature blossomed reaching a glorious height with the *Mahabharata* of Sarala Das.

Religion played a vital role in the life of the people of the land as in all Asiatic countries. Multiple religious faiths coexisted and prospered adding to the secular nature in the real sense. Jainism, Buddhism, Saivism and the Saktism, each one of them thrived for a longer period in the land than in any other region in India, contributing lasting impact on the life and faith of the people. In this liberal atmosphere, in the 12th century grew the influence of Vaishnavism. During this period the tribal deity Lord 'Jagannath' representing Vishnu emerged as the omnipotent central symbol and the icon of a unifying celestial force for the Oriyas.

On the one hand, Hinduization of 'Jagannath' led to the development of Brahmanic traditions; on the other a variety of temple services preserved the essence of tribal traditions. Rural paintings and performing art nourished and sustained the rich and varied folk culture. For example, the armed guards of the huge fortress of 'Jagannath' fetched from different areas represented the dance traditions starting

from the martial to folk style. Dance was the means of physical fitness, which they also enjoyed pursuing at their leisure perpetually adding nuances and evolving newer forms. The Odisi dance had its genesis in the great temple; the Odisi songs and the devotional lyrics *Janana* that combined unique features also developed here.

The temple and its *Mukti Mandapa* served as the platform for developing codes and values for the society. Even details of food habits and dress codes were identified as a part of the norm.

The richness of a culture is reflected in its social thoughts. It is fascinating to note that the gender bias was rejected by the *Lakshmi Purana* of Balaram Das as early as 16th century. The dialogue between Lakshmi and Jagannath dealing with issues that hold relevance even today, also underlined the freedom and dignity perceived for woman in the society. It even acknowledged and granted certain rights to the socially ostracized, thus conceiving the rudiments of an egalitarian society.

The main festival, *Ratha Yatra* upheld equality of man beyond caste and race.

Beginning with Sarala Das and then with Panchasakha the vernacular literature became the vehicle of liberalization in the society. Along with them was the woman scribe Madhavi Devi whose writings indicate that the women intellectuals of the period had also reached a high level of achievement.

Through the early period of the second millennium, with the Ganga rulers at the helm, the territories that were under the influence of the Orissan empire included the present state of Orissa; Singhbhum and Midnapore (now in Jharkhand and Bengal provinces respectively) and some regions beyond the north-western and southern outline of the present province. A large scale Brahmanic mobility from the mainland to these areas took place through the years that helped entrench the Oriya influence in a vast land. The Suryavamsis brought further glory in the fifteenth century by extending their territories to deeper south. The ancient names had finally given place to the unified territory named *Odisha* and its people as *Odia*. The king, also known as *Gajapati* ruled over a vast territory as the representative, the *Chalanti Pratima* of the Lord of the world ‘Jagannath’, the national deity of the Oriyas. By the 15th century, the Oriya culture reached such a state of refinement and permeated through the society so deep that even when the land lost her political freedom for almost four hundred years in the next century, the stamp of its uniqueness survived; it could defend its spirit of self-determination.

Although the Muslim occupation of Orissa in 1568 caused a serious dent to the architectural treasures and many intellectuals fled to the hills in the south and western Orissa for shelter due to social instability, the Muslim interference could not create any lasting cultural anarchy. On the other hand, along with the scholars the literary and cultural traditions of the coastal Orissa spread to the hinterlands and prospered there.

During the Mughals, the installation of Ramachandra Dev as the king of Oriyas at Khurda / Puri in charge of ‘Jagannath’ by Akbar’s general Mansingh was a watershed in the Orissan history. ‘Jagannath’ with his representative, the *Gajapati* king was reaffirmed as the symbol of the Oriya identity through the sanction of a powerful outsider. The succeeding Maratha rule did not pose threats to the Oriya traditions, for the Marathas being Hindus were followers of ‘Jagannath.’

The Oriya identity faced a serious challenge with the British occupation of the land in the 19th century. The British division of India into administrative zones with callous indifference to her diversities led to conflicts among the regions and to the stubborn minority problems most of which the British could not resolve during their long stay and the problem spilt over to the independent India. During the British period, Orissa was divided into many parts; the region comprising mostly the coastal areas, called *Mughalbandi* remained as the Orissa Division under Bengal; the rest of it was split between Bengal, Central Provinces and Madras. There still remained a portion of Oriya territory with a large number of ethnic populations under the jungle chiefs called *Garjats* which enjoyed semi independence under a different kind of contract with the British. With such administrative arrangement, the Oriyas

experienced acute socio-economic problems of a new kind and degree hitherto unknown and they were pushed to the brink of a cultural disaster and identity crisis. Meanwhile there were so many little masters, as intermediaries under the British rule, who were taking advantages of the situation that for them any attempt for corrective action was unacceptable. The circumstances now came to the point of eclipsing the history and the distinctiveness of the culture of the people. This eventually led to a movement by the Oriyas for affirming and enhancing their identity. This stretched for almost a hundred and fifty years.

The Oriya Identity Movement in this period could be discerned into three broad phases. The first phase constituted the over lordship of the intermediaries in the Orissa Division leading to the Oriya backlash. Due to the exploitation by the outside officials from Bengal appointed by the British, the militia in Khurda united to revolt under the symbolic leadership of 'Jagannath,' with the priests of Puri joining and the tribal people of Ghumsar extending their support. Though ruthlessly suppressed by the British, the militia uprising known as the Paik Rebellion 1817, is looked upon with great pride by the Oriyas as a courageous battle to safeguard their honour.

Fifty years later, the Oriyas rose to protest when there were serious cultural onslaughts challenging their identity. This phase known as the Language Agitation was a period of turmoil lasting from the mid-sixties to the early seventies of the 19th century. The problem here involved some qualified people from Bengal who found job opportunities in Orissa and wanted to convert the Oriya territory into an integral part of Bengal. They argued that Oriya was not an independent language that it was a dialect of Bengali and therefore it needed to be replaced by Bengali. According to them, the land owed its religions, literary and cultural excellence to Bengal and that most of the cultural advancement here took place only with Chaitanya's visit to Puri in the 16th century. The design to obliterate the Oriya language and distort the history of the land was a well planned out attempt to undermine the identity of the Oriyas.

A retaliation from the Oriyas was inevitable. However, without a knowledge base on the heritage and dissemination of the same among the common man it was not easy to highlight the uniqueness of a cultural group. Efforts to establish a sense of identity thus received urgency. Through the press and media, through numerous fraternities and associations, awareness was created among people.

The Cuttack Printing Company established in 1865, by Gaurisankar Ray, a domiciled Bengali was the leading symbol of Oriya nationalism. Its mouthpiece *Utkala Dipika* was the flag bearer of the identity in the 19th century. It waged and led a successful war against the economic exploitation by the intermediary administrator and the humiliation to their language. A clear message went out that the outside settlers that came earlier than 19th century identified themselves with that of the Oriya cause unlike their later counterpart. It succeeded to a large extent in creating a good level of political awareness in the terra irredenta as also in the *Garjats*. A close bond among the Oriyas was the first result which in itself was no mean achievement, given the handicap of a politically divided land.

Significantly, the Language Agitation provided the stimulus and spurred an all round creativity in Orissa. Emphasis was given to the enhancement of the cultural level instead of only revisiting past glory and affirming the existence of an independent identity. It was a period that saw the blossoming of literature with the trio Phakirmohan Senapati, Radhanath Roy and Madhusudan Rao making rich contributions and laying the foundation of the modern Oriya literature. Through improved communication and spread of ideas a new awakening was brought to the society that marked the renaissance in Orissa.

The external threat to the Oriyas was thwarted in the mainland. However, the menace continued in the dismembered Oriya lands. The remedy sought therefore, was to amalgamate the Oriya areas into a single unit, i.e., to provide a distinct political identity in order to safeguard its cultural identity.

The third phase of the Oriya nationalistic movement began with the formation of the *Utkala Sammilani*. Constituted as the National Assembly of the Oriyas, this organization defined the aims and objectives and formulated a clear policy for the Oriya movement. It also recommended the pink turban as a unified symbol and encouraged national hymns to be sung in its sessions. The strategy adopted was towards the regeneration of Orissan society and people before the attainment of unification and separation. A blue print for the reconstruction of the Oriya identity was cast. The formation of Orissa province in 1936 was the epitome of success of the struggle that had begun in the 19th century. The subsequent enlargement of the territories through the integration of the *Garjats* in 1948-49 gave a final shape to the province. The States Reorganization Commission's refusal to return Seraikella and Kharswan and other Oriya areas to Orissa in 1953-56 was a blow to the Oriyas. In protest, the '*Sima Andolana*' (Boundary Agitation) flared up in most parts of Orissa as well as in the outlying Oriya areas, especially in Singhbhum and Midnapore. This, however, did not bring any change in the territorial boundaries of Orissa.

II

In the 21st century the Oriya identity makes for a fascinating study. The constituents of the mosaic of the Oriya society, the features and the issues associated are as varied as they are different from the situations in the earlier times. The analysis and treatment would therefore be situation specific.

While taking up some of the key issues today, one might even begin with the terminology. In recent times, there has been an issue with the expressions of 'Orissa identity' vis-à-vis 'Oriya identity'. Those who subscribe to the view that the right terminology should be the 'Orissa identity' point out that any language based reference, i.e., 'Oriya identity' is restrictive in scope. It would exclude some of the ethnic groups who speak a non-Oriya tongue and therefore several rich traditions would be outside the fold; this description would therefore be rather divisive.

Significantly, this brings to focus the case of Sambalpur identified with the entire western Orissa that has also revived its earlier name Kosala. Here groups feel that they have not been given their due recognition and have been discriminated against, by the coastal people. While on the subject of the ethnic groups, it should be emphasized that Orissa has a sizeable population of these segments and while Oriya is the common language the culture is enriched by the other groups as well. There is a historical reason as to why these groups came under the Oriya identity. There is no doubt that the coastal Orissa led the Language Agitation and the province of Orissa was formed on a linguistic basis. However, the Oriya identity is not confined to the Oriya language alone.

Under the monarchical rule in Orissa the central authority remained in the coastal capital and ruled these jungle states, *Garjats* through administrators who were the local *rajas*. Since *Garjat* states were the Orissa states, the *Raja* himself was identified as Oriya and the subjects, who constituted mostly the ethnic groups, came under the Oriya banner. There is folklore among the Didayi group of the Munda stock in Orissa that says that the Didayi, Kandha, Bonda and Chelia are all Odias. As to when the Oriya language became the official language in these states is a matter for further research. There is no doubt however that it happened at different time periods for different states. This step, however, did not liquidate the ethnic languages though their growth was restricted.

The overall cultural distinctiveness of the ethnic groups was never ignored nor thwarted. The rulers in the tribal hinterlands clearly accepted the principle to grow along with the time honoured traditions of the regions. There was a natural and wholesome give and take between the Hindu and the local traditions. The chosen state festival was usually an amalgam of both. A process of symbiosis highlighted the life in these peripheral regions and was a source of stability to the Orissan Empire. However, in the later periods, first the Mughals and then the British as the centralized authorities created a fissure

between the rulers and the ruled; the former being identified with the Aryan culture; the latter was isolated as primitive and was exploited no end.

In any given society traditions are not immutable nor are identity fixed. The erstwhile Dhal ruling family in east Singhbhum (Dhalbhum) for example, who were kshatriyaized in the earlier period are claiming now to be of Bhumij origin belonging to an ethnic group. They also identify themselves as Oriyas; observe the Oriya rituals according to the almanac from Orissa, converse in Oriya among themselves. Sometimes however, Bengali is used, as Dhalbhum came under a strong Bengali influence with the British occupation in 1767. Similarly, the Kudmi Mahatos feel injured that they were stripped of their ethnic identity through an error of omission in the past. They are agitating now to regain their original position.

The ethnic people who were the earliest settlers of the Indian subcontinent have dispersed themselves all over. A Munda in Orissa or a Munda in the northwest may actually be working towards his common linguistic identity; he has over the years imbibed much of the local culture where he has settled and as such might represent two different cultures. To return to the Sambalpur / western Orissa / Kosala case there has been some movement in this region to establish the notion that they are different from the coastal people in language, in art and craft, in dance and music as well as in its traditions of textiles. The movement primarily challenges the over lordship of the people from the coastal region who are called 'Oriyas' as distinct from 'Sambalpuris.' As to the uniqueness in all its artistic pursuits, there has been no real confrontation between these two regions. What however is the main point of contention involves the stand on the language issue. Some scholars from Sambalpur argue that its language is not a dialect of Oriya as the 'Oriya' intellectuals have been articulating; some of the Sambalpuri words have been traced directly to Sanskrit and with a rich vocabulary and distinct style it is as strong as the Oriya language. It is also said that the root of the language is traced to the earliest ethnic settlement followed by non-ethnic people. The common language that developed between them became Sambalpuri which continued to grow in isolation because of the lack of easy communication with other parts of Orissa. This language eventually created literature of its own.

It would surprise any serious observer that Sambalpur that led the pro-Orissa amalgamation movement against the Central Provinces on the basis of language and cultural affinity around the end of the 19th century would highlight their differences with Orissa on the basis of the same attributes a hundred years later. The people of both regions worked shoulder to shoulder and the newspaper *Sambalpur Hitaishini* (1889-1923) served as one of the mouthpiece for the entire Orissa. The Raja of Bamanda, Basudev Sudhala Dev was the leading light of the Oriya movement until his death in 1903. Sambalpur produced the poetic genius of Oriya literature, Gangadhar Meher. Orissa's women take pride in draping themselves in one of the most stylised *saris* of the country that comes from Sambalpur. The moot question therefore is to what led to this rift?

After the union of Sambalpur with Orissa in 1905, the people of the coastal Orissa went to Sambalpur area and took advantage of the local people's simplicity and trust. As Sir Reginald Craddock said in the Parliament Debate of the House of Commons in 1934-35 that the Oriyas from Cuttack came up there and ousted the local 'Brahmins'. The Sambalpuri leaders feel that just as the Bengalis in the coastal Orissa formed a powerful intermediary class, the Oriyas from the coastal area constituted a similar group and perpetrated a similar wrong doings in the western Orissa. After independence and with the passing of the years the rift has widened. Clearly, the collective memory that creates the emotional base for the national unity has receded to the background.

In this scenario, one should call to mind, the efforts in the early periods of Orissan history when the cultural diversity of the land was taken into consideration and the great institution of 'Jagannath' was built. The institution was never meant to be a vast melting pot in which diverse cultures lose their

individuality; instead it became the symbol for a highly eclectic culture of Orissa. Like a tree that receives its nourishment through the various roots, the diverse cultural groups were to bring in their own distinctive features and provide their share for the growth of the main Orissan culture. Viewed in this perspective the development of the ethnic languages and the nourishing of their customs in general or the distinct Kosala language and its rich traditions in particular should be looked upon as a source of enrichment for the cultural heritage of Orissa. In today's context where on the one hand the world is fast becoming one great human family, there are also individualistic segments that intend to dominate the society and in the process, making confrontation inevitable. In one sense therefore, the gap between the 'Orissa' and the 'Oriya' identity is rather artificial and non-existent. Wherever, however it exists it is more on an emotional plane, due essentially to the stifling of aspirations of a people and their legitimate demand for recognition.

Another front where the Oriya identity needs to be freshly examined is the one relating to Oriyas living outside the province of Orissa. This includes, the Oriyas in the dismembered Oriya territories that continue to remain with the provinces of Bengal, Andhra, Chattisgarh and Jharkhand and also the Oriyas who live outside the country. As regards the dismembered Oriya territories, it has to be realized that the provincial boundaries of the country have undergone changes in the past and no one could predict that they have reached a stage of finality. Nevertheless, in the 21st century the desired focus is not on the alteration of the boundaries, as it is on the implementation of an effective minority policy. Taking the examples of Oriyas in the above provinces, it would appear strange that after long years of separation a large number of them pine for their language (the case of the Oriyas has not been assessed in Andhra) and continue to maintain most of their traditions. In Midnapore, for example, the Oriyas have identified themselves with Bengalis, read in the Bengali medium; yet follow the Oriya family rituals and traditions, sometimes reading their scriptures in the Bengali transliteration. The Oriya pockets in the Hindi belt of Chattisgarh live under a similar situation. In Jharkhand, though Hindi is the official language, the Oriya influence continues to be strong especially in its southern region of Singhbhum. There is a demand now claiming Oriya to be the second official language. In these regions, even though the upper crust of the society goes for the English medium (also in the main Orissa) the working class from the western Orissa in the Jharkhand or Chatisgarh prefer Hindi. This leaves a large number of people, from various walks of life, which prefer their mother tongue at least in the primary level. The literacy drive also fails miserably among the underprivileged when it is not offered in their mother tongue. The minority committees in the respective regions especially in Jharkhand is actively working towards strengthening the Oriya medium schools and the Orissa government is also expected to support in matters of books and teachers. Besides, a host of other organizations, particularly the *Utkala Sammilani* has pledged to help people in Singhbhum, Midnapore and in other stretches of the outlying Oriya areas in this respect.

At this point one need not conclude that Oriyas are bereft of identity without the Oriya language. The very fact that the culture survived where the language disappeared (for example in Midnapore of Bengal) is proof enough that the repositioning of the Oriya identity on the strength of the various traditions, including or excluding the language, has happened. The above situation also relates to a vast number of Oriya diaspora who have not been speaking the language yet are willing to be identified as Oriyas. Discussing about the Oriya Diaspora, one could concentrate on the educated section that chose to settle in western countries, primarily in the US. This group owe a natural allegiance to the land where they live, at the same time feel a strong bond with their Oriya roots. Here one finds an unmistakable desire to continue their cultural identity instead of getting drowned in the global cauldron. In the present world of globalization where multiple choices exist in the sphere of identity, it is this 'desire' that seems to provide the common thread that binds the Oriyas living in Orissa, in dismembered lands and also in

the Diaspora. The fulfilment of the ‘desire’ leads us into rediscovering the Oriya identity from a new perspective.

Pride in one’s identity is also a feature even in this era of globalization. It creates a consciousness to work for the growth of the community keeping the values of the inheritance intact. It would also keep the fundamentalism at bay, for the Oriya tradition is based on a strong secular concept. The priority today is thus to work for the regeneration of Orissa that was also the main aim of the founding fathers of the *Utkala Sammilani* in the beginning of the 20th century. Removing abject poverty, providing elementary health care, education and shelter to the hapless common Oriya ought to be the mission for the upper echelons of the Oriya society. This has to happen both in the main land and in the outlying areas. The economic situation of the Oriyas must also improve; this can happen through sustainable industrialization. Further, the artisans require support for preserving their craft. Similarly, dance and music centres are essential for safeguarding the cultural uniqueness.

Traditions, such as festivals need to be strengthened in order to bring people together and to that effect, some of the ritualistic practices have to be refashioned today. Another factor, which is invariably underplayed, is the introduction of the Orissa History and Culture as a formal subject in the important universities of the United States. Patronizing such a scheme and organizing a central library with collections of books and journals on Orissa, the Oriya literary works as well as documents on anthropology and archaeology perhaps in the film mode would create interest on the subject among the scholars. **The Orissa Society of the Americas (OSA) has a pivotal role to play in this regard.** In short, an all round excellence is crucial since it raises self-esteem and enhances the stature in the eyes of others.

III

While pondering over the subjects of identities, nationalities, roots in the context of globalization and universal culture, I recollect an experience I have had which has left a deep impression on me. Once I was travelling by a night train to my hometown, Bhubaneswar. I had as co-passenger, a young man travelling to Puri. After exchanging a few friendly words with him I flipped through a magazine I had picked up at the railway station before going off to sleep. The young man then asked me gently if I was from Orissa. When I replied in the affirmative, he asked me about ‘Jagannath,’ Puri and about the Oriya food. Attempting to answer to all his queries to the best of my ability I also realized that he was well informed about the Orissa History. I felt uncertain about my assumption that he was going to Puri on business trip; I asked him the reasons for his visit. He said his journey was in search of his roots. He was a Kannada Brahmin. Highly qualified, he was shortly going to the US, marry and settle there. He had a job and his fiancée lived there. His curiosity about his ancestral origin was aroused when as a young boy he noticed that his family menu often included *Pakhala* and *Dalma*. He thought it strange that he never found these two items in any of his Kannada friend’s house excepting occasionally in those of his extended family. After a thorough study of his family history he came to know that a few Brahmin families including his ancestors came from Puri and settled in a village in Karnataka during the years 1516-1519, when Krishnaevray defeated Prataparudra and took one of his queens, subsequently returned her and married Prataparudra’s daughter. In nearly five hundred years time, the Oriya family had changed into Kannada, taking on the language, customs and traditions of the land. *Pakhala* and *Dalma* however remained as the thread of continuity.

Hence was the young man’s journey to Puri for self-discovery and to experience his ancestral heritage. He was proud of his Kannada identity yet he was happy and at peace with himself for he had found his roots. It was already early hours in the morning. I blessed him for his passion that took him on a five

hundred years journey back to reach the destination. I got down, for my destination had come. The young man's search for roots made me feel that one lives with many layers of identity in one's life and that globalization is not a hindrance towards plurality of existence where one could continue with one's distinctiveness.



କେତୋଟି ପଂକ୍ତି - ସଜିଦାନନ୍ଦ ରାଉତରାୟ, ଓ ରାଧାମୋହନ ଗଡନାୟକ

ଝଡ଼ ଠାରୁ ସେ ଯେ ବଡ଼, ମେଘ ଠାରୁ ଆହୁରି ସେ କଳା
 ସାନ ଦେହେ ଖେଳେ ତାର ଜୀବନର ଅଲିଭା ଚପଳା
 ରାତି ପରି ହୁଏ ବାଟ ବଣା
 ପଥ ଭୁଲି ଏଣେ ତେଣେ ବହିଯାଏ, ସେ ପରା ଝରଣା
 ଛୋଟ ପୁଣି ଏତେ ସେ ବିରାଟ
 ଜୀବନ ପାରିଲା ନାହିଁ ରଖି ତାକୁ, ମୁତ୍ୟୁ ତାରେ ଛାଡି ଦେଲା ବାଟ
 ଲୁହାର ପଞ୍ଜର ଗଲେ ଫାଟି
 ମାଟିର ମଣିଷ ସେ ଯେ କାହିଁ ଗଲା ମାଟି ଖାଲି ମାଟି(ବୋଜି ରାଉତ)
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 କାହିଁକି ଅନଳରେ ସଲଭ ଜାଣୁ ଜାଣୁ ଝାସଇ
 ଆଖିରେ ସ୍ମୃତି ରେଖା ଜଲାଲ୍ ଦମ୍ପରେ ଭାଷଇ
 ମରଣ ମରିଯିବ ହୁଏତ ମୁଲକରେ
 ଗୋଟିଏ ପଲକରେ ଚିକିଏ ଝଲକରେ (ବିବି ଖାନୁନ୍ ଓ ଶିଳ୍ପୀ)
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କବି ହେବା ପାଇଁ ବାସନା ମୋର,
 ପ୍ରବଳ ଭାରି ରେ ପ୍ରବଳ ଭାରି,
 ନୀଳ ଆକାଶର ପକ୍ଷୀଟି ସମ
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 ସବୁରି ଲୁହ ରେ ସବୁରି ଲୁହ
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 ସେଇତକ ମୋର ବୁକୁର ଆତି
 କବି ହେବା ପାଇଁ ବାସନା ମୋର
 ଦିବସ ରାତି ରେ ଦିବସ ରାତି । (କବି
 ହେବା ପାଇଁ ବାସନା ମୋର)

In memory of
HARIHAR MAHAPATRA
 April 30th 1914-May 2nd 2000

Born near Sakhi Gopal, influenced by Pancha Sakhas. He led a simple life with a quest for learning. His advice was success comes with hard work, after many failures.

Fondly,
 Smt.Haramoni Devi,
 Prof and Dr.S.Mahapatra,Dr.Srinibas Mahapatra,
 Chandana(Rina),Saradindu,Namita,Nalinakshya(Neal),Chinmayee,
 SibSankar and Preety.
 A(robin)d,Jay(ant),Rahul,Arun,Jaganath
 Prasad(J.P),
 Deephansa(Tusar),Ameet(Tamal).



Fakir Mohan's *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* and the "View From Below"
Satya P. Mohanty*

NOTE: The world-wide publication of a new English translation of Fakir Mohan Senapati's Oriya novel *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* (serialized 1897 – 99, published in book form in 1902) is, as the prominent Indian novelist U. R., Anantha Murthy says, "an event not only for Indian literature but for world literature" (see the website of the University of California Press: <http://www.ucpress.edu/books/pages/9382.html>). The novel has been translated by Rabi Shankar Mishra, Satya P. Mohanty, Jatindra K. Nayak, and Paul St. Pierre.

This short essay is excerpted from the introduction to that edition by Satya P. Mohanty, Professor of English at Cornell University. The translation, under the title *Six Acres and a Third*, is scheduled to be published in Fall 2005. In August 2006, the University of Delhi will host an international conference on this novel: "The Literary View From Below: Fakir Mohan Senapati's *Six Acres and a Third* and Radical Social Critique in Modern South Asian Literature."

Set in colonial Indian society during the early decades of the nineteenth century, *Six Acres and a Third* tells a tale of wealth and greed, of property and theft. On one level it is the story of an evil landlord, Ramachandra Mangaraj, who exploits poor peasants and uses the new legal system to appropriate the property of others. But this is merely one of the themes in the novel; as the text unfolds it reveals several layers of meaning and implication. Toward the end of Mangaraj's story, he is punished by the law and we hear how the "Judge Sahib" ordered that his landed estate, his "zamindari," be taken away. It is sold to a lawyer, who – as rumor in the village has it – "will come with ten palanquins followed by five horses and two hundred foot -soldiers" to take possession of Mangaraj's large estate. The ordinary villagers react to this news by reminding one another of an old saying: "Oh, horse, what difference does it make to you if you are stolen by a thief? You do not get much to eat here; you will not get much to eat there. No matter who becomes the next master, we will remain his slaves. We must look after our own interests."

Fakir Mohan Senapati's novel is written from the perspective of the horse, the ordinary villager, and the foot-soldier – in other words, the laboring poor of the world. Although it contains a critique of British colonial rule, the novel offers a powerful indictment of many other forms of social and political authority as well. What makes *Six Acres* unusual is that its critical vision is embodied in its narrative style or mode, in the complex way the novel is narrated and organized as a literary text. The story of Mangaraj and his evil deeds is presented in the narrative as one among many such stories, but the thematic resonances of the other stories and histories can be appreciated only by an attentive reader. Senapati's novel (serialized in 1897 – 1899 and published as a book in 1902) is justly seen as representing the apex of the tradition of literary realism in nineteenth century Indian literature. But its realism is complex and sophisticated, not simply mimetic; the novel seeks to analyze and explain social reality instead of merely holding up a mirror to it.

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In his magisterial *History of Indian Literature, 1800 – 1910*, Sisir Kumar Das calls Senapati's novel the "culmination of the tradition of realism" in modern Indian literature, referring to its implicit links with earlier instances of realism in fiction and drama. "All these plays and novels contain elements of realism in varying degrees but none can match Fakir Mohan's novel in respect of its minute details of social life and economic undercurrents regulating human relationships and the variety of characters representing traditional occupational groups." Both the naturalist realism that builds on the accumulation of details and the analytical realism I mentioned above, which explains and delves into underlying causes, are achieved in Senapati's novel through a self-reflexive and even self-parodic narrative mode, one that reminds us more of the literary postmodernism of a Salman Rushdie than the naturalistic mode of a Mulk Raj Anand. Central to this narrative mode is a narrator who actively mediates between the reader and the subject of the novel, drawing attention away from the tale to accentuate the way it is told. Until we become comfortable with this narrator and his verbal antics, join him in witty interchange, and ponder our own implication as readers in the making and unmaking of "facts," both narrative and social, we cannot say that we have fully engaged with Senapati's sly and exhilarating text.

Indeed, the even first few lines of the novel invite such an active relationship between narrator and reader. We are given facts that are themselves partial, and at least partly fictional, and it is up to us to interrogate the authority of the teller. As storyteller, the narrator is in fact playing a variety of social roles. As readers, we are encouraged to participate in the decoding of these roles, in inhabiting a dynamic space where social meanings are being constructed and exposed almost simultaneously. The subject is Ramachandra Mangaraj, the hero of our story:

Ramachandra Mangaraj was a zamindar — a rural landlord — and a prominent money-lender as well, though his transactions in grain far exceeded those in cash. For an area of four kos around, no one else's business had much influence. He was indeed a very pious man: there are twenty-four ekadasis in a year; even if there had been forty such holy days, he would have observed every single one. This is indisputable.

The first two sentences appear to be factual unlike the next two, which contain the narrator's interpretation. But if you were inclined to dispute the narrator's emphatic conclusion about Mangaraj, or if you had doubts that the observance of ritual fasts may not be conclusive evidence of "piety," you may well begin to wonder why the discussion of Mangaraj's pious nature comes immediately after the two sentences about his property and his money-lending business. The information in the second sentence would then begin to look a little less natural and simple, and you might ask if it was merely an accident that "for ... four kos around, no one else's business had any influence." Senapati's Oriya readers may also have been placed on alert by the obvious exaggeration in the third sentence: an "ekadasi" is the eleventh day of every fifteen-day lunar cycle, and so, by definition, we cannot have forty ekadasis! One way or another, every attentive reader is introduced not so much to the virtues of the landlord Mangaraj as to the unexpected shifts in the narrator's tone. We are asked to be on our toes, to be active interpreters – not simply as literary critics but also as social beings. The Oriya word for money-lender in the text is "mahajana" (literally "noble man"); the link between money-lender and virtue is not the narrator's own creation, but is instead a social and linguistic convention, reflecting a commonly held prejudice encoded in everyday language. What the narrator urges us to do is to question this seemingly natural link. Once we begin to do that the discursive values of Senapati's narrator are a bit easier to grasp and understand.

A key feature of the narrator's discourse is *irony*. Statements do not mean what they seem to say. More generally, actions that seem to be virtuous may need to be interpreted more carefully, for appearance and reality do not always coincide, and the social world may be quite different from the one that is depicted for us by our scribes, our priests, our rulers and our teachers -- those invested with authority. The irony of the narrator can be subtle but it often swells to full-blown sarcasm, at times evoking an irreverent and explosive form of humor. This wide tonal range is what the narrator draws on to organize our critical and evaluative perspective. Here is the rest of the first paragraph, which marks major shifts in tone that represent only a part of the full tonal range that is used in the novel:

Every ekadasi [Mangaraj] fasted, taking nothing but water and a few leaves of the sacred basil plant for the entire day. Just the other afternoon, though, Mangaraj's barber, Jaga, let it slip that on the evenings of ekadasi a large pot of milk, some bananas, and a small quantity of khai and nabata are placed in the master's bedroom. Very early the next morning, Jaga removes the empty pot and washes it. Hearing this, some people exchanged knowing looks and chuckled. One blurted out, "Not even the father of Lord Mahadeva can catch a clever fellow stealing a drink when he dips under the water." We're not absolutely sure what was meant by this, but our guess is that these men were slandering Mangaraj. Ignoring their intentions for the moment, we would like to plead his case as follows: Let the eyewitness who has seen Mangaraj emptying the pot come forward, for like judges in a court of law we are absolutely unwilling to accept hearsay and conjecture as evidence. All the more so since science textbooks state unequivocally: "Liquids evaporate." Is milk not a liquid? Why should milk in a zamindar's household defy the laws of science? Besides, there were moles, rats, and bugs in his bedroom. And in whose house can mosquitoes and flies not be found? Like all base creatures of appetite, these are always on the lookout for food; such creatures are not spiritually-minded like Mangaraj, who had the benefit of listening to the holy scriptures. It would be a great sin, then, to doubt Mangaraj's piety or unwavering devotion.

Authorities are cited to defend Mangaraj, as in a law court. The aim is to draw attention, through the exaggerated tone, to the wiliness of those who are powerful, who can quote scripture to serve their own ends. But the allusion is not only to the currently dominant colonial legal system, but also an even more revered authority – the classical Indian discourse the *Nyaya Shastra* (*The Treatise on Logic*), which elaborated a complex system of syllogistic reasoning. The main effect is humor and parody; one authoritative system after another is used, with the stated goal of trouncing Mangaraj's slanderers and enemies. Illegitimate power and authority are exposed through the crucial bits of incriminating information given by the narrator, pleading on behalf of Mangaraj, (apparently unwittingly): the report from Jaga the barber, for instance. This is in fact the primary method by which Senapati's satire works. The narrator sets himself up as a witty and loquacious fellow who is seedy because of his motivations; he seems too close to the powerful, and acts like one of their henchmen. But of course that is only what he seems to be doing; in reality, he creates the world of humor, satire, and social criticism that is central to Senapati's vision.

One of the underlying concerns of the narrator's discourse is this question: who has social and political power? His parodic and humorous invocation of various forms of authority is not just a form of debunking, for it invites readers to engage in a form of moral inquiry as well. Behind the question about power lies a more radical one: what, if anything, *justifies* power? If social power derives from ownership of property and wealth, which are themselves lost (stolen) as easily as they are won, then

both property and power seem insecure possessions, vulnerable to the vagaries of luck and historical accident. Ultimately, these questions lead to the suggestion that *all* property may be theft after all, and the only true owners are those who create social value, the laboring masses. So while Mangaraj's crimes against Bhagia and Saria are real and are morally as well as legally culpable, there is a gentle reminder that even the peasant couple are not natural owners of the plot of land either. Bhagia inherits the land from his father, Gobinda Chandra, as he does the post of paramanika or headman of the community of weavers in the village. Gobinda, we are told, is a worthy, highly respected man, one who acquired his cherished plot of land not through deceit but with his own money. When one of the older zamindar families was in decline, portions of their land were sold off cheaply and Gobinda happened to be lucky. But was it just luck? The paramanika is not quite a weaver or farmer; he is a middleman of sorts. Here is how we hear about it:

Gobinda did not, himself, weave clothes for a living; he collected clothes made by weavers and sold them in the market. Or, if a middleman came to the village, he would arrange to sell clothes to him. In doing so, he made a good profit. People were under the impression that Gobinda had made thousands. But we know that villagers are in the habit of exaggerating their own age and other people's wealth. Nonetheless, it is true that Gobinda did come by some money. When the fortunes of the family of Zamindar Bagha Singh began to decline, pieces of land were sold off. One of these, close by the village of Gobindapur, was purchased by Gobinda. It measured six and a third acres and was rent-free. There is a saying which goes, "A field made fertile by drainage water from a village always ends up in the hands of the village rent collector." In other words, the rent collector gets the best land. The piece of land Gobinda bought was watered by the village drains and so was very fertile. Since water was plentiful, it produced a rich harvest of rabana rice. They say, "If you have good land, plant only rabana; it will grow cubit-long ears, and be the envy of your neighbor." Flood or drought, the land yielded eight bharanas of grain per acre. But, Bhagia was a weaver, what did he know about farming? He gave it out to sharecroppers and received only about five bharanas per acre.

The narrator's tone is gentle, but there is no mistaking the implication of the saying about the rent collector. The ownership of property, Senapati suggests, is due less to merit than to luck and to power and privilege. The moral justification of such ownership is at best very tenuous. The social and political vision underlying *Six Acres and a Third* is thus more radical than its readers have often recognized. True, Senapati tells us about the khandayats of medieval Orissa, the warriors who were given land in lieu of payment for their services to the state, and we also hear about Brahmins being given rent-free land for similar reasons. This suggests a form of justified ownership of social property, for it is payment for work done for the social good. But the pre-colonial world of the khandayats, it is suggested, was organized along lines that are radically different from what exists now. We are given hints of it in the description of generosity and openness of the older Baghasingha. It suggests a moral economy in which ownership might be considered a form of trusteeship, rather than what it is in the world of Clive, Dildar Mian, and Mangaraj. John Boulton, one of the Senapati's most insightful readers, is thus right to say that what Senapati envisioned as an alternative to Mangaraj's world was a form of "religious socialism," one inspired by dharma, or the just moral order, with its basis in punya, the merit that is the natural product of virtuous action.

The two themes of power and the ownership of property are basic to the conceptual structure of Senapati's novel, and in turn bring up questions about belief and action. The narrator's almost obsessive invocation of authority, together with his parody of some forms of authoritative discourse, encourages us to be skeptical about what and whom we must believe. Underlying the linguistic play and the self-consciously allusive style of the narrator's discourse is a similar question about justification: what justifies narrative – and ultimately – epistemic authority? If the touter-narrator who pleads Mangaraj's case is not to be believed, who is? If the scriptural and traditional authorities that are cited can be misinterpreted and misused, can we ever be justified in our use of them? Senapati's answer is not an indiscriminate skepticism, however; as we have seen, his vision is that of a radical social critic, and he is more akin to an Enlightenment *philosophe* than to a skeptic who disavows knowledge altogether. The narrator's digressions, as we have seen, often reveal crucial bits of information that allow us to sort fable from fact, and ideological posturing from genuine social virtue. But a good deal of this work is left up to the reader, who is asked to be an active participant in the process of deconstructing social truths and reimagining alternatives to them. Indeed, this activity – this process – of engagement with the social and discursive world around us emerges as an epistemic virtue in the novel. Senapati's satire arouses our anger, as good satire always does, but the narrator's parodic and self-referential discourse unsettles us with the reminder that we need to be actively involved in analyzing and evaluating. Epistemic virtues, like their moral counterparts, need to be exercised; we cannot passively possess them.

Fakir Mohan Senapati was born to a family of some distinction, but the family's fortunes had declined by the time of his birth. The young Senapati was orphaned at an early age; his grandmother, who brought him up, lost most of the family property, and so they were dirt-poor. Senapati taught himself to read and write, and eventually became a highly respected scholar in several languages. He helped John Beames, the British official in Balasore, with his research on a comparative study of Oriya, Bengali, and Assamese, and went on to serve as an administrator under several of the minor kings in the outlying areas of Orissa. He was intellectually restless and adventurous, and had the mind and temper of an inventor. Whether in his linguistic experiments or in his projects to introduce new vegetables to the rural countryside, he had the spirit of a reformer more than that of a writer in search of literary fame. He grew up in a part of colonial India that barely registered in the consciousness of the viceroys and their officials. But it is from this particular vantage point that he created a unique synthesis of the traditional and the contemporary, a synthesis whose power and example are relevant even today.

Perhaps they are relevant *especially* today, when the lure of religious chauvinism and romantic nationalism seem to obscure the need for critique – the critique of inequality, of dogma, of deep-seated social prejudice. These were Senapati's targets, and in order to attack them, he chose to fashion a voice that was both protean and self-reflexive. As we have seen, however, his critique was never merely negative. It was based on a vision of human equality and cultural diversity, of a radical humanism that was fed by a variety of religious traditions.

Fakir Mohan Senapati was born Braja Mohan Senapati, which is a traditional Hindu name. In his autobiography, he tells the story of how he came to acquire an Islamic name like "fakir." As a child, he had fallen very ill, and his devout grandmother feared that she would lose him. After praying to "every Hindu God and Goddess under the sun," writes Fakir Mohan, she turned to two Muslim pirs, or saints, who lived in Balasore. She promised to give him up to their religious order as a fakir (wandering holy man) if he recovered. He recovered, but then the dotting grandmother could not bear to give up her young grandson. So she struck a deal with the saints: she would change Braja Mohan's name to Fakir Mohan and give him up "symbolically":

For the eight days of [the Muslim holy days of] the Muharram each year...I [had] to dress up as a fakir in knee-breeches, a high-necked, multi-coloured coat, and a Muslim cap, with a variegated bag hung on my shoulder and a red-lacquered cane held in my hand. Thus attired and my face smeared in pure chalk I would roam through the village morning and afternoon begging from house to house, and in the evening I sold whatever rice I had collected and sent the money to the saints for their offerings. (*My Times*, 6)

It isn't hard to imagine the child Braja Mohan, in the process of becoming Fakir Mohan, reveling in the new role he is asked to play. Masks and disguises are wondrous things, especially to a child, and perhaps the young boy was beginning to feel the sense of power that we get from changing roles, from transforming what seems to be natural and immutable. It is certainly this power that informs the rich explorations of Senapati's marvelous first novel. It is a novel that sees the whole world as acting out its assigned roles, roles that can nonetheless be rewritten even as they are being enacted. As we read *Six Acres and a Third*, we trace the steps of the young child who is still out, wandering from house to house in the village, dressed up as a fakir, daring to see the world with new eyes.



Gopinath Mohanty's "Paraja"

By Bikram K.Das*

More than fifty years ago, as a schoolboy, I read the novel "Roots" by the African-American writer Alex Haley, which left an indelible imprint on my mind. It helped me to understand the yearning of a migrant society for the roots of its own culture. Perhaps the fact that I belonged to a quasi-migrant society myself, having been born outside my own state and isolated from my own language, helped me to identify with the protagonist of that novel.

Today, as a visitor to the American heartland, I am privileged to address the constituents of another migrant society, part of a global Diaspora. The Orissa Society of America must have on board many members who were born in this country and have no experience of the joy as well as pain of life in Orissa, except perhaps on the occasional visit to the "old country". Some of them may not even have learnt to speak the language. Yet not one of them could deny that the label "Oriya" defines a substantive part of their identity. We have roots that we are not aware of; one may try to run away from them, but there is no escaping them.

Frankly, I do not think it necessary to exhort my young Oriya-American friends to retrace their roots and get acquainted with the culture from which their parents or grandparents have sprung, for I am sure it is imprinted in their genes. But road maps are always useful, on any kind of journey. The best way to get

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to know a land, even one's own, is through exposure to the writers who were born there and lived and died there. A great writer is able to see things that escape most of us. Everything tells him (or her) its story: the dust that settles on the leaves of trees as well as the face of the ploughman; the dewdrops on the grass that disappears before the sun has arisen; the fish cavorting lazily through ancient ponds in unknown villages. No history can tell you more about a people than the poems and stories which their writers have woven out of their hopes, agonies and dreams.

It is about one of these immortal story-tellers of Orissa that I wish to speak to my young friends in America. Unfortunately, most of his writings, like those of other writers of our land, are available only in Oriya – a language that may not be fully accessible to many of you. However, a very small part of his work *has* been translated into English. Although any translation, however competent, can only be a pale shadow of the original work, translations are helpful as introductions to the culture from which the original arose.

The community of Oriya-Americans has a special claim on *Gopinath Mohanty*, for it was in California, where the 2005 convention is being held, that the final chapter of his life was written, although he was born in a small village near Cuttack more than 80 years ago. This combination of events, this spiritual journey from Cuttack to California that spanned a lifetime, may help to explain some important qualities of his work. Few writers have been as deeply rooted in the soil as *Gopinath Mohanty*; few have read the heartbeat of the common man as intimately as he; yet he remained always the traveler, surveying, god-like, the human landscape from a height, observing and recording yet refusing to be tied down, handing out his love equally to all of God's creatures, chuckling tolerantly at their failings. How else could *Gopi Babu* have written more than 30 major novels, each one a masterpiece in its own way, and over 300 short stories, apart from several travelogues and an autobiography, if he did not possess the globe-trotter's eye, his tireless capacity to explore, his endless curiosity?

But to discover the wonders of the world that he created and has left behind, I would like to invite my young friends to accompany me on a journey through just one little corner of that world. My earnest hope is that after you have returned from this excursion, you will want to know more not only about *Gopinath Mohanty* but also about that magical world of his creation.

I would like to refer you to a novel of his called "*Paraja*", which most critics consider to be his greatest work. It is available in an English translation, which, I hope, will serve as your passport to "*Gopiland*". A few other novels of his are also available in translation (which I shall be happy to tell you about, in case you are interested) ; but my long-term hope is that you will get so hooked on *Gopi Babu's* writings that you will want to read them in the original Oriya. And that, believe me, will be worth the trouble.

But to return to "*Paraja*". The novel is named after an *adivasi* or aboriginal tribe, the *Paraja* tribe, which has (or rather, *had*) its home in the mountains of what used to be *Koraput* district, in the south-western corner of the state, separating Andhra Pradesh from Orissa.

As you probably know, a large part of the population of Orissa is of tribal origin. In fact, it is the blend of cultures that makes our state unique. Orissa is the bridge between the Aryan North and the pre-Aryan south. No one is entirely sure where these ancient tribes came from, but they continue to find refuge among the forests and mountains of Orissa. Their numbers are dwindling. Many have been forced to assimilate into the mainstream, but a few still cling to their ethnic identities.

The history of the treatment of the tribal minorities by the non-tribal majority is a tragic one – in Orissa as in the United States. It is said that large parts of Central India, comprising the regions of Madhya Pradesh, *Chhatisgarh*, Orissa and *Jharkand*, were once ruled by tribal chiefs. Gradually, they were dispossessed. Their lands were taken away. The people were impoverished. Today, most of them survive as paid – or, in many cases, unpaid – laborers.

There are at least a dozen different tribes in the western and south-western parts of Orissa. Each has its own language and often, its own customs and dress. Yet they share a common culture. Their religion is best described as *animism* -- the worship of spirits that are supposed to dwell in trees and rivers in the forest, in the sky and the mountains. The spirits of dead ancestors are also worshipped.

The novel “*Paraja*” tells us mainly of the sorrows and struggles of a single *Paraja* family. The patriarch, or head, of the family is *Sukru Jani*. (Like many other tribal, he is named after a day of the week – *Sukra baar*, or Friday – which must have been the day on which he was born.) *Sukru* has two sons, *Mandia* and *Tikra*, and two daughters, *Jili* and *Bili*. His wife was killed by a man-eating tiger when his children were still very young, but *Sukru* chose not to marry again, assuming the roles of both mother and father.

Sukru Jani's family, like others, sustains itself through agriculture. Unfortunately, the tribal farmer knows nothing of the principles of environmental conservation. Tribal agriculture is entirely “*podua* cultivation”, or “slash-and-burn” farming. A farmer goes on cultivating the same patch of land until the nutrients are completely exhausted, after which he shifts to a new patch. But as he has no understanding of modern systems of ownership, he thinks all land belongs to him and he is free to go wherever he chooses. And so, after selecting another patch of forest land, he cuts down the trees and bushes growing on it, burns them and uses the rich ashes to fertilize the soil. For the next four or five years, his harvest, mainly of millets, is good; but then the cycle must be repeated.

At the start of the novel, *Sukru Jani* is a deeply contented man, fully in tune with Nature. His wants are few. His sons and he use only a small loin-cloth as covering for the body, while his daughters possess a single *sari* each, which must serve for almost their entire lives. Their food consists of *mandia* millets, cooked into a thin, watery gruel. While *Sukru Jani* toils ceaselessly to provide for his family, he makes no demands on his children, leaving them free to sing and dance with the other young people of the tribe. Life is one endless round of celebration, punctuated by a long line of festivals, each marking a new turn in the cycle of Nature.

But naturally, this idyllic existence cannot continue.

Sukru chooses a new patch of land to farm. Being vaguely aware that times have changed, he takes the precaution of asking the Forest Guard, or *garod*, for permission to cut down the trees, which is granted. But in the meantime, the Forest Guard has had what he imagines to be an amorous encounter with *Sukru*'s daughter *Jili*, which ends in his being rebuffed and humiliated. Smarting from the rejection, the Forest Guard vents his anger on *Sukru*. The old man is caught “red-handed”, violating the forest laws. He is dragged to court and a fine of two hundred and fifty rupees is imposed on him.

Of course, *Sukru* has no hope of ever finding such an astronomical amount. The family is in despair. Finally, *Sukru's* friends counsel him to take a loan from the local *Sahukar*, or money-lender, so that he might pay the fine.

The loan is obtained, but in return the illiterate *Sukru* has to put his thumb-print on a document drawn up by the *Sahukar*. The agreement stipulates that *Mandia Jani*, the elder son of *Sukru Jani*, must serve the *Sahukar* as a *goti*, or unpaid bonded laborer, until the loan has been repaid with interest.

And therein lays the catch.

For the rate of interest charged by the *Sahukar* works out to well over two hundred percent. There is not an earthly chance that *Sukru Jani* will be able to pay even the interest, let alone the principal. When he does manage to make some repayment, the *Sahukar's* system of accounting ensures that no record is maintained. *Mandia*, and *Sukru* along with him, is trapped for life.

Gradually, the entire family is ensnared. *Mandia's* younger brother, *Tikra*, becomes the *Sahukar's* next *goti* and lastly *Sukru Jani* himself is bonded to the *Sahukar*. And now *Jili and Bili*, with no one to feed them, join a labor gang working for a contractor, far away from home.

What happens to *Sukru Jani's* family is what has happened to countless other tribal families. The acid of a materialistic "civilization" corrodes the very fabric of their peaceful, primeval existence. *Jili* is driven to prostitution and eventually becomes the *Sahukar's* mistress. *Sukru Jani's* degradation is complete.

But flesh and blood can endure only so much. When *Sukru Jani* can stand no more, he and his two sons march on the *Sahukar* and, in the full glare of daylight, hack him down with their axes. Having obtained justice on his own terms, *Sukru* goes to the nearest police station and surrenders, asking to be tied up as he has killed a man. The police inspector, completely taken by surprise, can only gasp "Eh?"

The story of "*Paraja*", as I hope this thumb-nail sketch may have shown, is immensely powerful. It focuses on a very real social problem which has endured to this day, down the centuries. Several of *Gopinath Mohanty's* novels deal with themes of social oppression and exploitation; the generation to which he belonged, the generation which fought for and helped to realize India's freedom, had strong social ideals and commitments. But in the long run, it is *Gopi Babu's* humanism and love for the entire human race that raise him far above the ranks of other "reformist" writers. True, his sympathy goes out first to the underdog, whether he is the tribal peasant or the untouchable scavenger in the village. But soon you realize that the same affection is given to the oppressor as to the oppressed; both are equally caught up in an unending cosmic drama, in which there are no heroes and no villains. Even at its most tragic and pathetic, *Gopinath Mohanty's* writing is an assertion of life.

The highlight of "*Paraja*" for me is the marvelously cinematographic glimpse he gives us not only into the lives of a people who are doomed to disappear very soon, but also into the natural landscape in which their drama is played out. The *Koraput* that he creates is a magical world of untamed hills and dancing waterfalls. Today, *Koraput* has turned into a wasteland; its mountains have been leveled, so that the treasures underneath can be gouged out. The forests were cut down long ago; wild life has disappeared. Soon, the last *Paraja* will be gone. But as long as there are chroniclers like *Gopinath*

Mohanty to record the moments of our passing existence, the human story can be told and remembered with pride.

Sarala Das and the Bhakti Tradition

The Holism of Emptiness

BY

Prafulla Kumar Mohanty *

The theme of “Sarala Das and the Bhakti Tradition” on the one hand underscores the popular belief that the cradle of poetry always rests on the altar of a temple; on the other hand it anticipates with scholarly hindsight the cultist and devotional poetry which follows a calamitous epic war between reason and unreason, values and non-values leading to the lame surrender to the mystic powers presiding over human destiny. It happened in Greece and Rome and in India: the Bhakti tradition being a tacit acknowledgement of human limitations in the face of the inscrutable reality and the human condition naturally pervades human perceptions with a mythos-poetic universe beyond human reckoning. Sarala Das, in a sense, inspires the bhakti tradition in Oriya poetry in sixteenth century Orissa as the heroism, valour, grace and the massive structures of intellect and honour collapse into chaotic waste in his Mahabharat, choicelessly compelling the poets who followed to search for alternative essence, non-heroic and ego-effacing, in escapist cults and self-denying worship to supra-sensory powers. For, the epic of Sarala Das presented a vast human drama of tragic failure of reason and values to posterity thereby foreclosing celebration of heroism, rationality and the much-vaunted divinity of man. In Sarla’s Mahabharata, the futility of human energy has been made loud and clear, at the end of the Kurukhetra war by Belalasen, a character originally conceived by Sarala Das. There is no suggestion in Sarala’s epic that virtue triumphs over vice. Good and evil are indistinguishably trampled by a universal power. In Sarala the worldview does not have a bipolar value structure culminating in the establishment of paradise on earth. The overseeing power is value neutral. Goodness, justice or rationality is destroyed by the life-force which does not appear to have a conscience. The head of Belalasen, Bhima’s son, mischievously chopped off by Krishna as he knew that Belalasen could alone destroy all those assembled at the Kurukhetra battlefield, was anointed on the peak of the auspicious pillar of Kurukhetra on the boy’s request. When the Pandavas boasted off their exploits in the war, Krishna took the brothers to Belalasen who had observed the whole gory scene of war as a dispassionate observer, an uninvolved persona. When asked to select the most powerful and the best warrior Belalasen answered:

Hearing the words from Sri Krishna’s mouth
He said, mighty armed, listen the truth.

By your grace gained I divine sight
Saw I the Great War for eighteen nights.
Pandavas and Kauravas started the war
Shouting resolves of vengeful ire.

But I could not know who killed who

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Only one thing I saw with divine hue.
From the Pandav army raises a wheel
Like billion suns to burn and kill.

Merciless it burns the Kaurav soldiers
Rises again to cut the Pandav heads.

The fierce wheel cuts the tall and broad
I saw naught else dear my Lord!

(Gada Parva P.103)

This is evidence enough of a value-free world where man is only a victim. If the wheel or disk is accepted emblematically as a symbol of time the entire context and text is reduced to a victim-victimizer condition where existence and time are always in a fatal confrontation. The victim “struts and frets” his hours in fateful defiance, till death overpowers him unequivocally. The victim concept of man is reinforced by Sarala’s description of the destruction of the Jadu clan, including the brightest of them all, Krishna. Death for death, even in the guise of supernatural vengeance, does not justify justice, for no system of ethics or spiritual order is life-denying. The universe of Sarala Das operates in such a manner that there is no pardon, no redemption for heroic guilt or innocence. There is no moral transcendence in this universe of Sarala-Vyasa. It is a barren void. All its towers of glory are potential crematoria, the raised monuments to man’s evil and fall. Knowledge, power and truth do not save man from the blind fury of destruction. All manifest forms of life show a heroic preoccupation with death. If some one is personally humiliated, like Drona, he thinks of revenge and death. If Drupada is insulted he too thinks of revenge. Shakuni, the fat, short and jovial, lone survivor-victim of Duryodhan’s revenge for injured pride, seeks revenge. Even the blind Dhritarastra, after the loss of his children, destroys an iron statue of Bhima deceitfully. Death and revenge are the heroic ornaments of all victims. The coda of Mahabharata is sweet revenge and noble murder. Man is at best a noble victim of his own heroism. Both the Vyasa Universe and the fifteenth century Sarala universe, despite the long centuries intervening, depict man and his reality as a system of futility where the poet’s moral vision is effete.

One may pause to ask: If Sasrala knew little Sanskrit and less philosophy how could he construct an almost nihilistic vision of life so very similar to the Vyasa universe? The answer, which most scholars offer, tantamount to an unacceptable spiritual inspiration. Quoting the poet’s conventional confession it is asserted that Sarala was the scribe or stenographer to Goddess Sarala’s divine exhortations. This epic conventionality in Drona Parva is read too literally to deny the poet the eye of observation and sensitivity to the contemporary ethos which in my view are seminal to the poetic experience in the epic. Sarala experienced a self-contradictory binary situation during the reign of the Gajapati kings, Kapilendra Deb and his son Purushottam Deb, in the 15th century. The Gajapatis introduced a workable structure of administration for internal peace and indulged in adventurous wars for national pride. They also projected Lord Jagannath as the national deity to unite the people under the banner of a national Deity. But as the protracted wars in the south and sporadic skirmishes in the north drained the treasury, the ugly symptoms of caste conflicts and the inherited legacy of social exploitation made the semblance of administration look ridiculous. Consequently the rawness of rural life betrayed the indiscipline of the spirit which the genius poet has portrayed in his epic. Mayadhar Mansingh in his History of Oriya Literature rightly observes:

His world is the world of a rural peasant. The broad feet of his heroes are dirty with the common dust of the path of life; the dainty hands of his beautiful heroines are soiled with kitchen soot and roughened with daily chores. Salara's royal heroines, irrespective of their social status, are made hilariously realistic through the natural petty jealousies. (P 49).

Therefore his Ganga, Draupadi, Hidimbi even Kunti and Gandhari do not have the sophistication of their status and exhibit the passion and fury of stubborn rural folk. His heroes are verbose, pompous and often react to petty things with uncontrollable passion. His war scenes are violent, conferences vituperative and his wise men like Bidura and Bhishma are speechless before unreason. Sarala's Mahabharata is not a translation of the Vyasa original. His epic is the monumental work of a visionary poet who lived through a short cycle of glorious life and civilization and was pained at its fall. He has recreated the Vyasa Mahabharata with new structures of life, more passionately exaggerated with greater social concern. But what makes Sarala unique is the myth-maker who elaborates a national culture, inherited-contemporary and continuous to a universal vision.

Respecting the time allotted to me I would concentrate on only two of the several new visionary gleams with which the poet brightens his epic. One is the nabagunjara vision epitomizing the whole of creation and the other is the river of blood which the hapless and lonely Duryodhan tries to cross, at the end of the Kurukhetra war, to save his dear life. These two episodes like the Satya Amba (Mango of Truth), Belalasen and others are Sarala originals conceived and presented with such a mythos-poetic imagination that even Vyasa would applaud with grace.

The episode relates to Arjun's enforced violation of the agreed upon family condition that when one of the Pandav brothers would be with Draupadi, no other brother should enter. Arjun's punishment was banishment for twelve years. Arjun's banishment to the forest has been described by Sarala Das as a rigorous training programme in discipline, concentration and practice in the use of arms- the romantic interludes being the humanizing elements in the dramatic progression of Arjun's character. When Krishna learns of Arjun's fate he goes to the forest to meet his best friend. But the zestful Krishna assumes the form of a strange creature- a unique form comprising nine animals, man and bird- in short, the whole of dynamic creation in a ceremonial dance. The animal of this strange assortment is Sarala's vision of reality. The legs of this creature are of the elephant, tiger and horse. The fourth leg is a human hand. The lion body has the hunch of a bull. The snake tail and peacock head complete the form. The plumes are that of a cock. The creature relaxes its energy in a three-legged dance. The fourth leg, the human hand, holds a lotus flower in display. Krishna assumes this shape and form molded out of the world of experience, to test Arjun's friendship, for friendship is a mutuality of respect and love which involves perception of the totality of the individual being. This strange creature with a peacock head dances half seen among the forest trees, albeit the three-legged dance steps pierce Arjun's keen ears. The single minded archer, the marksman of excellence is not afeared. Arjun pauses over his research on archery somewhat excited. He alerts himself and readies his Gandiva. But immediately perceives, that is more than recognizes, the universal being: the symbolic dance eternal of the creative energy of the universe. Arjun could recognize the dance of life orchestrated by Krishna; the inevitable peacock head being the metaphor for Krishna's intellectual royalty. Krishna for Arjun was the complete manifestation of the life-force, or the vital energy or the creative principle or simply life. He bows down to Krishna in his universal form in joy, gratitude, love, friendship, wonder, surrender, that is, with all the agreeable feelings of soulful ecstasy that man longs for in life. It is a kind of spiritual orgasm that makes him throw his Gandiva and bow down in reverence – the supreme joy that man can ever attain in reality. Sarala builds up an artifact of life that dances, and displays a lotus, in spite of the massive concentration

of the strength of lion and tiger, the ceremony of zest and the celebration of life go on, harmonized by the royal peacock controlling the equipoise of the universal dance. This is life in its totality, a new viswarupa. The odd muscles, the funny steps make the dance saucy. The duality of symbolism, one for the involved protagonist of his mythic reality and another for the reader, the passive onlooker of a Lila in a language of life, however deconstructive the signifiers be, is gripping... The total life myth, the fullness of the variety of active life, the beauty, the harmony, the massive strength and the “articulate energy” appears in formal measure before us. But only Arjun can recognize this Sarala viswrupe because he is disciplined in love and war. He is an artist, a singer, a dancer, a scholar, a great archer and above all a great and dignified lover. His power of concentration is such that not a single muscle twitches in his body when he pulls the string of his bow to his ear. A man who refuses Menaka’s overtures in heavenly reception, alone, can love with dignity and can recognize love in whatever shapes it appears.

This is the Sarala universe, full of activity, harmony, drive and dance, of leisure and labor, of balance and poise. This universe is full of massive structures of order and chaos, agony and shame, all coalescing into a cosmic “consort dancing together”. Sarala has perceived the essential symbolism of the universe and the life-force. The contrastive chaos-harmony complex in this universe is almost contiguous to the present century parameters of life. This symbolism has been dramatized in both Vyasa and Sarala by two great minds in the epic; Krishna and Shakuni. Vyasa’s Krishna is almost the incarnation of the Brahmanic life force, a deified superhuman being elevated to Godhead. In fact in the Gita Krishna is god. Sarala makes Krishna the most dynamic “World spirit” displaying the binaries of chaos and order in a strange synthesis. He, therefore, almost glosses over the Gita in his epic. But he makes Shakuni a true revenge hero by giving him a tragic “motive”. In an original episode Sarala, shows that the entire family of Shakuni, that is the Gandhar king and his hundred children, is imprisoned by Duryodhan. He sends only one meal to the prison to be shared by the family. The Gandhar family decides that Shakuni alone should eat the meal and survive to take revenge on Duryodhan. It may be imagined how Shakuni lives through the slow emaciation and death of his parents and brothers to grow into a revenge hero. Shakuni and Krishna in the Mahabharata stand opposed to each other as chaos and order. Whatever Krishna creates Shakuni destroys. The best and the most significant illustration of the Krishna-Shakuni antipodal confrontation is the Rajasuya Yagna of Krishna and the dice-game of Shakuni. The Rajasuya or Rajaswa ceremony in the Mahabharata is the first attempt in the world to create a federal structure of polity where the Chakraborty is the political axis towards which all other states or kingdoms of the hundred thousand kings move centripetally for mutual fulfillment. Krishna was the architect of this political structure. He motivated Yudhistira to go in for the Rajaswa ceremony, indicated the sources of wealth and how to get those and also controlled the entire administrative machinery by his own imaginative and visionary powers. I wish I had the luxury of time and space to outline the details of the administrative arrangements for perhaps the greatest show on earth in world literature and civilization, shaming the technocratic joys available to us in contemporary times. Krishna’s eye for the particular and the beautiful, his vision of the vast and grand are narrated by Sarala with exceptional poetic ability. The propriety and protocol, the hierarchy and form have all been maintained like a well-wrought orchestra alive and progressing to a jazzy finish. Sarala’s Krishna is perfectly human and is the greatest architect of reality. The magnitude of the visual images apart what stuns us is the eye for the details. He arranges the components of the greatest event in the Mahabharata (after the war) in such a manner that even the disposal of the plates and leaves after meals has been taken care of. We encounter in Krishna a mind that plans and executes the greatest political-military

operation encompassing almost the whole of uncharted India of antiquity. The Rajaswa Yagna establishes a federal structure for peace and mutual cooperation for prosperity.

But Shakuni's mind, alert, intelligent and scheming is for absolute monarchy independent of his personal vengeance on the Kuru clan. He devises the dice game as a contrapuntal energy to check mate the emperor, and succeeds in eliminating the Pandavs from the political scene of Aryabarta, and trouncing the political triumph of Krishna. The plot and antiplot, measures and countermeasures of Krishna and Shakuni are the combative structuralism of the Mahabharata, which collapses in the Kurukhetra confrontation. Chaos returns, and with that Krishna becomes the god that failed to give a tomorrow to man. For whom and for what purpose does he save the so called "good" and one may ask braving the risk of committing sacrilege, who and what they are? Slaves and widows and silent followers of law and authority. No point in saving the world for the weak and the meek. But it may be strange to note that there is no anticipation of this question, in Sarala's epic, Vyasa's neither. All logic has been used to counter this question leading to a helpless surrender to passion.

This worldview definitely smacks of futility and gloom. Sarala Das symbolizes, like a great poet that he is, this state of the human condition, in the most poignant and dramatic manner. The second original episode of Sarala which I had promised earlier to comment on, is Duryodhan's crossing of the river of blood on the penultimate eve of the war. I wish to highlight this as a great poetic vision of the sudramuni, reiterating the victim condition of man. The war is all but over. All Kaurav heroes are dead. With the death of Karna the last hope of Duryodhan is buried under the broken chariots and twisted bones in the battle field. Duryodhan beckons his son Laxman Kumar and advises him to escape into safety. Like all tragic heroes Duryodhan has his antagonisms and sees the truth after losing everything of his personal world. Recognition of the final futility dawns on him at the dusk of his royal pride. The only person he wishes to stay alive now is his lone son, his "future", his progeny to live and perpetuate his name and clan. The man who had vowed not to yield an inch of territory to his cousins now urges his son to play the humble coward and leave the field. The reversal of the hero and the hero myth culminates in abject surrender to the fact of survival in a world, made hostile by his own passion.

The son, unable to resist his proud father's tears runs away only to be beheaded by Dhristadyumna's sword in a bloody corner of the dusky field, losing all identity under the pall of gloom. Duryodhan himself is saved by the huge bell of an elephant that tears off the neck of the animal, and covers him in its fall. He breathes the darkness inside, murkier than the night outside. At the Yogini hour, the hour of nocturnal, when the damned move freely, he comes out and wades through the mud of rotten flesh, only to encounter a River of Blood, dark and deep. By its foamy shores Duryodhan bemoans his fate for a long while. Finally, before sunlight betrays his presence, inviting the Pandav sword, he frantically tries to cross the river of blood. He invokes the revered corpses to hold his weight till he crosses the river. But none holds him for a second. Duryodhan goes down with the corpses, bloodying himself all the more. None comes to his rescue, dead, although each was of great comfort, alive. At the end he sees the body of a bright person come floating by. He jumps on it and places his mace on the body. The body holds, making Duryodhan feel light. Reaching the other shore he turns the body to pay his respects. He sees the body of Laxman Kumar, his son and future, bright in death. It is strange that Duryodhan's sides hold his bursting agony.

This episode is a complete poem in itself. The symbolism is intricate and complex. The proud hero crosses the river of blood to apparent safety on the dead body of his son. The price of his temporary

survival is his future. Advocates of Coleridge's secondary Imagination may have already noticed the basic metaphors of the vital fluid and the struggling protagonist in the murky theatre of a post-war field, a void of an earth and the quest for lonely survival. Freudians may perhaps see the river of blood as a coital flow and the attempt of the depressive protagonist to regain vitality by intercourse with the death-memory images. The ritualistic repetition of Duryodhan's request to the dead to carry him across the river may also excite the images of the fall into Hades. But all this complexity fails to explain the meaning of the scene. Is man fated to drown in his own Hades, helpless and wild? This question does not appear worth asking; for Duryodhan succeeds in crossing the river of blood. Is it man's fate then to try and take chances for survival? But what survival? Is it the survival of a hunted animal counting his last few sad hours? And how does he cross the river? These questions again reaffirm our faith in the victim state of man. To cross the river one must sacrifice his future; his only possible immortality. Man has no future, as individual or race. He simply slides on his pride to his grave, chased and tortured by powers that stem from man's passions. The Mahabharata civilization falls without finding abiding answers of moral reason; Man is victimized by existence, the great Krishna including. Sarala Das has made his universe unlivable; a tragic void. The Shama-Parwana myth, much used in Urdu poetry as the lovers' metaphor, is perhaps more appropriate to the human condition in the Mahabharata. Trying to merge in light or gain light, man is sacrificed ritually by the Principle of light. Life destroys life: No meaning grows out of it.

Before, I close, I would however, like to qualify the nihilistic vision of Sarala by referring to the Kali and Suhani episodes which suggest that it is only man who can save himself from misery and agony by using his love, kindness and sacrificial action which are built into his victim status in the world. No miracle or mysterious power can save man socially. Only dispassionate and selfless action can redeem fellow men. Man's kindness and love for man can transcend fate and extra-human machinations. In the vast world of Sarala's works, including Bilanka Ramayana and Chandi Puran, his men are messianic, women more proud and self-willed and even powerful, his imagery is both astral and terrestrial; his language ranges from the banal to the sophisticated; the crude and the courtly move towards creating a larger universe of joy, sorrow, pain, honor, dignity and glory; his descriptions of palaces, people battles, duels and wars discover the potentials of the Oriya language in all its depth and height, thereby establishing the Oriya identity with unassailable magnitude, and his verse moving from 9 to 36 letters recreates the life-rhythms of village-valley and values in breathing continuity; yet a blank emptiness unreasonably envelopes our timid souls.

Ballad Singing Tradition Of Orissa, India

Text, Texture And Ritual

By

KAILASH PATTANAİK*

Ballad singing is a rich and living tradition of India. In a multi cultural country like India, ballads are sung in varied forms. Each culture has their indigenous form of ballad singing.

In Orissa, the eastern coastal state of India, singing of ballad is an essential part of some of the rituals and is closely associated with the cultural life of Oriya people. Though it is an important part of Oriya culture, no major work has yet been done to study the tradition exclusively. However some

primary works have done by some scholars. They have collected, classified and studied ballads along with other forms of Oral literature. The pioneer folklorist of Orissa, Late Dr. Kunjabehari Das has classified ballad in five groups: a) Religious ballads, b) Ballads, of complaint (complaint of bride against her in laws is major among other complaints) c) Elegiac ballad, d) Ballads on marriages, e) Miscellaneous.¹ His contemporary scholar Late Chakradhara Mohapatra has divided ballads into three groups : a) Ballads rendering the lament of a mother or daughter on later marriage, b) Ballads of sufferings of bride, c) Religious ballads.² These classifications are based on the thematic variations. Personally I feel, these classifications are not scientific. Sometimes, suppose the emotions prevail in one group of ballad is so close to another group that it became difficult to distinguish in which group they should be classified. Suppose in some of the religious ballad, like *Ta poi*³ the suffering of the heroine, *Ta poi* brings the ballad to the category of elegiac ballad though at the same time this ballad is a religious one as well. I personally, therefore, feel that these categories are less scientific and it is better to classify the ballads from the 'form' of the genre; that is the way they are presented or observed or more reasonably the way they are sung.

The Oriya ballads are sung in two different ways; solo singing and group singing. Solo singing ballads are smaller in size, different in texture and intense in action in comparison with the group singing ballads.

Let us first discuss the solo singing category. The ballads related to Osa and Brata,⁴ the songs of Natha Yogi's⁵ song of lamentations are solo singing ballads. The devotees of Osa and Bratas, the yogis of the women folk of the songs usually are the singer of these forms of ballads. In these categories usually ethical and religious thoughts got prominence. In all the songs related to Osa and Bratas, the basic theme is to glorify a particular god or goddess by describing his or her power of punishment and generosity. Natha Yogis usually sing ethical songs narrating some examples. Among the ballads sung by the Yogi's, Baulagai (Baula, the Cow), Dui Bramhana (Two Bramhins), Duitipakshi (Two Birds) are some of the best known ballads. But the most popular among them is 'Govinda Chandra' or 'Gita Govinda Chandra'. The plot goes like this : Queen Mukutadei was barren. The king put her in the stable with out sufficient food. Mukuta Dei was very pious, used to share that scanty food with either a Brahmin bagger or with her maid. Her parents, after knowing her ill fate, send huge amount of gold out of which she build a palace, more beautiful than the king's. When the king came across the palace, he doubted her chastity as he saw the palace and the wealth. The queen had to go under various test to prove her chastity and the king accepted her lastly. The queen observed different penances and blessed with a child named Govindachandra. The queen knew that her son is destined to die on eighteen so she motivated Govindachandra to be a Yogi to overcome his fate. At the beginning Govinda Chandra was not willing to accept her mother's suggestions but at least became the disciple of a famous Nath yogi 'Hadipa'.

Interestingly, there is a taboo among the folks regarding the ballad of Govinda chandra. The folks believe that as the ballad is about the sanyasa of Prince Govindachandra, singing the ballad in front of the house may influence their sons to become yogis. Therefore, when the Nathyogis reached

¹ Das, K.B., *Odia Lokagita O Kahani* (Oriya folk songs and tales), 1958, P.66.

² Mohapatra, Chakradhara, *Utkala Gaunligitee* (Folksongs of Utkal), 1959.

³ A popular ballad based on brother, sister and siter in laws relations.

⁴ Osa and Brata's are two forms of Penance, in which the devotee worship a particular god or goddess and glorify them in course of singing the ballad and the penance is observed for a particular period.

⁵ Nath is a religious sect flourished in whole of North India and particularly in Orissa in 11th 12th century.

house to beg people offers alms as quickly as possible not to give them chance to sing the ballad in front of the house.

Some times the elderly persons, both man and woman sing solo ballads on king *Divyasing Deba* or *Deulatola* (making of the temple). The first one is based on a king of Orissa who was banished to Andaman in 19th century. The charge against him was murder. The ballad is very much sympathetic towards the king and depicted the story as a conspiracy of the British ruler against the king. Ballad *Deulatola* (Making of the temple) is the legend about building of Sri Jaganath temple of Puri district in Orissa.

One of the best know ballad in solo singing category is *Kandana* or Lam entations during marriage ceremony. In these ballads the bride her mother and sisters and relations and other kith and Keens express the sufferings they experienced at their in-laws houses. The torture by the mother in laws, the crooked role played by the sister-in-laws, the love less life in their married life are depicted in these ballads. These ballads are sorrowful and heart breaking in nature. Suffering of child bride, deprivation from her childhood, her loneliness and Lamentations described in these ballads; bring tears to the eyes of the gathering. There may not prevail a story line in these ballads, but some stray incidentals are narrated.

The ballads sung by single singers does not accompanied by any musical instruments; only exception is the songs by Nathayogis. The yogis sung the songs with the tune of one stringed instrument, called '*Kendara*'.

The second category is group singing ballads. Ballads which are sung in groups, have their own variety and attraction. '*Dasakathia*' and '*Pala*' are two main forms of this category.

Dasakathia is a indigenous form of Orissan group singing ballads, in which two singers take part; one is the primary singer and other is the secondary singer of the helper. They sing episodes from religious texts, mostly from Ramayana and Mohabharata. They play a pair of wooden clappers called, *Dasakathi*, '*Dasa*' in Oriya means servant and '*Kathi*' means stick. So, *Dasakathi* means stick of the servant. A myth is associated with the derivation of the name; that is, once Hanuman, the great mighty monkey devotee of Lord Sri Ramchandra, wanted to sing the great achievement of the lord. He did not like to sing without music. So, he brought two branches from a tree and played them; and thus the *Dasakathi* originated. As Hanuman considers himself as the servant of Lord Ramachandra, the sticks played by him is come to be known as *Dasakathi*, the stick of the servant. Usually *Dasakathi* is performed for general entertainment; but some times it also played during the naming ceremony of a new born.

In *Pala* singing, the '*Gahana*' or the main singer is accompanied by a band of four accompanists; one of them is the '*Palia*' or co-singer. The main singer narrates the story. He usually does not play any instrument, but holds a '*Chamara*' of fly whisker, which is used in worshiping, '*Mrudanga*' – an oval shaped hollow clay instrument covered by the skin of goat in its two narrow ends, '*Kansala*' – a pair of plate like brass instrument; are used in *Pala* as main instruments.

Usually these forms of ballad singing are closely associated with Post-natal rituals of Orissan society. On the 21st day of the birth of a child when the naming ceremony is observed, the head of the family invites a group of pala singers and request them to perform. Satyapir is worshiped in this occasion. Satyapir worship is developed in both Bengal and Orissa during the time of around 17th century, during Muslim reign. Satyapir is the God who is both Satyanarayan and Allaha. He is as described by Kabi Karna in his sixteen texts on Satyapir's achievements; is more powerful then the destiny itself, can bring life into a dead, can be very cruel to them who does not obey him and extremely generous to his devotees and is the master of eighty thousand tigers. So, duing naming ceremony the Satyapir is worshiped and the parents seek his blessings for their new born. The God is offered '*Sirini*'

(a kind of eatable offering; prepared out of wheat, flour, rice flour, Banana, sugar, coconut etc.) which is his favorite prasad. The prasad is usually distributed among every one present.

Sometimes during the naming ceremony of a new born, on 21st day of the birth, another kind of Pala ‘*Sathipala*’ is performed in northern part of Orissa. This pala is about the folk goddess ‘*Sathi Devi*’ of ‘*Sasthi Devi*’ and her role in the life of a child. The mother of the new born keeps the penance; the pala goes on over night and a figure of Devi Sasthi was drawn on the wall with oil, vermilion, turmeric paste and ‘*Kaudi*’, a kind of conch shell.

Now a days, the performers of pala, sing the episodes from *Ramayana* and *Mohabharata* and this trend became a special branch of pala singing.

These groups singing ballads of Orissa are very popular and all time favourite among the Orissan folk. First of all, the performance is musical. The ballad is sung using various ‘*Ragas*’ and ‘*Raginis*’ of the musical notes. These make the whole performance rhythmical and musical. Instruments are also played significant role. The co-singer plays an important role to make the performance more lively and attractive. He not only sings and plays the instrument but acts and delivers dialogues as different characters in different situations in between the progress of the story. He also creates humorous episodes parallel to the situation of the main story or through his body language. The dresses of the singers create inquisitiveness and interest among audience. The performers always dressed like royals. Their glittering clothes, bright colored turbans make an illusion in the eyes of common audience. This dress fits their narration of mythical or puranic texts.

The texture of group singing ballad is completely different from solo singing. The structure of this texts are closely influenced by the epic tradition of India. Before going to the main story, the performers sing in praise of different gods and goddess which serves as the ‘*mangalacharana*’ of the Kavyas, and then points, out the subject of the performance that is what called ‘*bastunirdesha*’ in a Kavya. At the ending, the performers seek the blessings of the god for the welfare of the family and the audience in general and for the new born in particular.

Usually the group singing ballads are composed by the main singer on religious episodes. He even frequently adds instant compositions to his singing according to the situations. Some times the main singer, while narrating the story, sings a couplet or two from other texts of other writers for depicting a similar situation of emotion. It adds charms and colour to his own text. But it is customary that the singer admits his indebtedness to that poet whose couplet he borrows. This is a common feature in the performance of ballads in groups. These borrowed texts may be called as ‘*supporting texts*’. ‘*Supporting texts*’ are chosen by the singer from Sanskrit texts or from Oriya texts, recently even from English texts. This not only shows the parallel narration of a similar situation of action but also shows the textual mastery of the singer. The skill of the performer is highly appreciated by the audience.

Repetition is the salient feature of the ballads of both the categories. A particular event of dialogue is repeated in the texts. Ballads sung in group has another kind of repetition in connexion with its expression. There are some formulaic lines of phrases like anaphora or epistrophe, repeated in the process of the performance, usually these repetitive lines are sung by the co-singer. Sometime, the last word of the line of the main singer is also taken by the co-singer for repetition. These repetitions create verbal as well as rhythmical atmosphere in the performance.

¹ Das, K.B., *Odia Lokagita O Kahani* (Oriya folk songs and tales), 1958, P.66.

² Mohapatra, Chakradhara, *Utkala Gaunligitee* (Folksongs of Utkal), 1959.

³ A popular ballad based on brother, sister and siter in laws relations.

⁴ Osa and Brata's are two forms of Penance, in which the devotee worship a particular god of goddess. and glorify them in course of singing the ballad and the penance is observed for a particular period.

⁵ Nath is a religious sect florised in whole of North India and particularly in Orissa in 11th 12th century.



Profiled in the Harvard University Gazette

During 354th Commencement of the Harvard University – fourteen out of 6000 graduating students were profiled for the Harvard Gazette. Dharitri Patnaik from Bhubaneswar is profiled as “Warrior of the Poor”. <http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2005/06.09/profiles.html>

Dharitri completed her Masters from Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University. She was Head of Shared Learning, for ActionAid International, London - a non profit organization committed to working with poor and marginalized people to eradicate poverty in Africa, Asia and Latin America. She worked with tribal Adivasis (indigenous people) in Orissa, on forest issues, land rights, women's rights, education, food security and disaster management programs. Dharitri has been privileged to work with many high government heads, dignitaries and famous people such as Prince Charles. She is a global traveler on human rights issues and currently employed at Care International.



In His Own Words - Sachi Rautroy

The bells toll....the five bells.
The sun arches over the western brow,
The soft feel of a sea-green night,
Midst mossy quiet dark...

In this earth, And creation's dust
I 'm scattered
Like verticals of light diffused.
The flood-tide of my being
Streams like ichors
In gladly veins:
Bursts in blooms
In the grass and sky:
To the colloquy of God-shapes
I harken ,
Upon the cloud-coasted airy arches;
And the eternal Ever
The moments I snatch...
The moment's mirror
Reveals the world... (**Requiem**)

In the sphere of resonance, we shall meet,
A meeting not of the eyes,
 But in aura of soulful sonorousness;
On the check board of diverse tunes,
 hemmed in by the haze of multiple notes
Where the fragrance of life –blossom

Melts into the sonata of non-life
Shouettes...only silhouettes. (**The Music of
the Spheres**)

To the shores of Chandrabhaga,
A sculptor came one day,
Dreaming of a cloud-kissed temple.
As his chisel fondled the sleeping rocks,
Centaur maidens woke and smiled;
Naiads trooped in dancing chorus,
And the heavy breasts of Urvasi heaved.(**A
Temple in Ruins**)

A fount of joy since the dawn of time,
A treasured work of art,
An epic in stones:
For the forgotten myriads,
An ageless cenotaph. (**Konark**)

But ask not for the nameless hundreds;
In a life-long mute penance,
They died at their behest.
Unhonored, unwept, unsung,
Master- toilers
Forgotten twelve hundred.,
Do you know them,
The nameless Gods? (**Konark**)



Sketch of a Poet

By
Giribala Mohanty*

Modernity came to Oriya literature in twentieth century with the rise of the paradigm maker Satchitananda Rout Roy. It is this writer- genius, who for the first time clearly defined the term ‘modernity’ and ‘modernism’ in the context of society and literature. Like all writer- geniuses of the world, Satchitananda was much misunderstood in his time, and was severely criticized by both his contemporary critics and fellow writers. The way he crossed the circumference of his time and space, and introduced himself as a predecessor of the mankind as a whole and as a citizen of the universe, it made most of his contemporaries confused, and they started viewing Whitman - Baudelaire - Eliot in him. There is no doubt that these three poets have influenced the twentieth century literary world to a great extent and Rout Roy is certainly influenced by them. But at the same time, it is true that he has a distinct poetic vision through which he has made his distinct individual identity; the distinctness which established him as a paradigm maker.

The verve and vividness of his writing, the paradigm-shift in his literary concept, the newness he brought in the deep structural level of literature, the freshness in his poetic diction etc. are certainly very refreshing, very international and modern. His compositions are always fertile with positivism and with a ray of hope. He carried the voice of the millions. No matter what the so called critics say, the spirit of his poetry is certainly different from the medieval, certainly different from Baudelaire’s alienated existence and skepticism. With full experience of the two World Wars, his concept of men is certainly not the ‘hollow men’ of Eliot. He tried to embrace the whole of mankind, irrespective of caste and race, country and continent. He shouldered the responsibility of the whole world instead of any isolated country. Like Mayakovsky’s, his poetry is the manifesto of the oppressed and the downtrodden. He is certainly the ‘people’s poet’, who sings the song of the proletariat:

I am Satchi Rout Roy
Neither Tagore, nor Shelly
I am the poet of this mortal earth
And the sky
My job is not only to paint on paper
I am not a professional singer
When you touch my printed book
Touch the heart of new men.

(The Princess)

That is why he writes, ‘Truth is poetry’, and Poetry is the portrait of men’s realization.

Temperamentally, Satchitananda was Indian and Asian and from the East he tried to spread light to the whole world. He was the harbinger from the Century’s court who announced the approach of the Future, and gave call to all the ‘*Narabrahma*’ to awaken and to arise (*Baarttaa* – The Message). He broke

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history to create it anew, and on the other hand, history has created him too, to meet the demand of the time. He knew that destruction is adorable for a new creation, and revolution is always welcome:

Oh dear, salute this approaching storm!

x x x
This Storm has introduced you to me;
United the hymns of destruction
With the immortal role of creativity.

(The Storm)

To play both the roles of destruction and creation, he prayed for two arrows: ‘revolution’ and ‘self-criticism’, the two weapons of a Marxist-communist. That is why he believed that literature has certainly a role to play for the society, and never believed in the slogan “fin de siecle”.

He was a classic writer and never fell to Nihilism. He had a positive attitude and outlook toward the future and his poems bear its reflection. Intuition and analogy played a great role in his poetry. With jewel-like symbols and images, with positive outlook towards life, he gave a classic dimension to his writings. He changed himself with the change of time to make himself fit for it and like a river’s flow, marched with time towards eternity, purging medievalism along with him. His *Pandulipi*, *Swagata*, *Bhnumatir Desh*, *Kavita 1962* up to *Kavita 2003*, are the chronicle of this journey which stopped with the end of his sojourn to this earth.

The birth of a paradigm maker is not an isolated incident. This happens with the demand of the time. And Oriya literature has earlier evidence of this incident at least thrice- with the rising of Sarala Das, Jagannath Das, and Fakirmohan Senapati. And now it is Satchitananda Rout Roy.

There are times when ‘the creation’ becomes greater than ‘the creator’. I am pointing at ‘*Pandulipi*’, the first major anthology by Satchitananda, published just before the Indian Independence in 1947. Today, when Satchitananda is no more, there is *Pandulipi*, standing high against the background of the Time, making Satchitananda greater than the Time himself. If ever Time forgets the poet-individual for many other reasons, it will be bound to remember him at least for his ‘*Pandulipi*’ – the manifesto of mankind.

With these words, I pay my deep tribute to my ancestor Satchidananda, the founding father of modernism in Oriya literature.**

** Satchi Rout Roy (May 13, 1913 -August 28, 2004) was a recipient of *Padma Shri* (1962), *Mohakavi*(1985) *Jnanapith* Award (1986) and Seroll of Honor *People’s Poet*. He has to his credit one novel, six collections of short stories, four collections of essays and criticisms, one lyrical drama ,innumerable anthology of poems, two English collections of poems, one autobiography(2 parts), one translated collection of Mayakovasky’s poem besides two books on Industrial labor welfare and one collection of poetry written originally in Bengali. He was the editor of the pioneering research journal *The Diganta* and founder of *The Diganta Museum* .Extensive research work has been done on his literary works by scholars. Further reference :*Satchi Rout Roy- A Poet Of The People(A Symposium)*(Eng.),preface by Prof. Humayun Kabir , Ed.by Basudha Chakravarty,1955, and *Konarka*, Journal of Orissa Sahitya Akademy,Jan.2005.



An original fairytale

HOW THE HIMALAYA WAS SAVED

Manoj Das*

(*"Megha Barasai Tupuru Tupuru, Keshara Maila Gaja, / Saru Gachha Mule Bengatie Basi Ape Bolauchhi Raja."*)

The valley beside a small lake, unlike the other Himalayan valleys, was tiny and obscure, but the young frog that lived under a bush at its centre was brave and ambitious. When he was a frogling, smaller than the nose of a pussy cat, his father had revealed to him that the great Himalaya, the monarch over the mountains of the world, was in fact their ancestral property.

Upon the death of the father-frog, the young one, who until then looked upon himself as the crown-prince, took position under an arum plant which he considered his court and announced his ascension to the throne of their ancestral Himalayan Empire.

Around the plant were clusters of bushes inhabited by squirrels, butterflies, crickets, grasshoppers and sparrows. They listened to the announcement with awe and attention. They gathered before the frog's court. "Is it true that you are the monarch over the Himalaya?" they asked respectfully.

"Isn't the water of the lake cool?" asked the frog, gravely.

"Cool indeed," said the smart sparrow, making an instant sortie into the lake and dipping his beak in its water and hurrying back to his compatriots in the assembly.

"Aren't the Himalayan peaks quite tall?" the frog asked again.

"They are tall – in fact much taller than I, I must admit," said the squirrel standing on his hind legs for a moment.

"Am I not the only child of my late lamented father?" the frog sniffed and sounded more serious than ever.

"Of course you are!" agreed practically all the members of the assembly. They too sounded serious and solemn.

"Then, what doubt is there that I am the monarch?" the frog asked, winking repeatedly.

The argument was so sound and solid that the assembly felt embarrassed for having raised the question at all.

Days rolled on and once every morning the frog too rolled his eyes on the entire Himalayan range from horizon to horizon and was satisfied that nobody had dared to steal any of those sublime peaks belonging to his dynasty and was reassured of the awe his authority continued to inspire over the world.

* Winner of several literary awards including the India's most prestigious Saraswati Samman for creative writing for his books including Amrutaphala

Also, he would patronizingly nod at the morning sun who he believed was one of his trusted officials, for it faithfully went on with its function on dabbing the frog's snow-clad domain with colour and dazzle.

* * *

A certain fairy who fancied moonlight to be a suitable stuff for her to swim through and who became specially frolicsome and unpredictable on full moon nights, once alighted on a rock between the frog's bush – rather his castle – and the lake. The frog hopped closer to her and felt charmed.

“I am the monarch over all your survey,” he informed her, raising both his voice and head as high as possible.

Sure that his statement had impressed the fairy, he said again, “Well, it hardly matters to me who you are, but you will surely like to know what you're going to be under my auspices.”

“Indeed, what?” asked the amused fairy?

“My queen!” replied the frog.

“Wonderful!” she remarked and then took off and was lost in the mist and moonlight. And, as was the wont of her species, she clean forgot all her experiences and encounters at the lower sphere once she reached a loftier plane of the atmosphere.

Humiliated and stunned, the frog kept sitting immobile until the moon, tired of giving him company, disappeared beyond the opposite range of hills.

“What is the use of reigning as a monarch without the lady of my choice for my queen by my side?” he put this disturbing question to the sky and to the good earth and to the Himalayan peaks which too looked shocked as he passed a hurried and moist look at them.

And before long he took the grim decision to abandon the Himalaya.

He summoned the leading members of the different genres of creatures living in the bushes around and announced, “I'm going to sell my Himalaya. Any taker?”

His listeners, no less shocked than the sky and the earth and the peaks, looked at one another.

“The price?” a squirrel managed to ask after a while.

“Ninety-nine stars only.”

The prospective buyers looked at one another once again and seemed to agree among themselves that even though the price was rather on the higher side, it was not unreasonable. Then a sparrow enquired about the time His Majesty would allow them to collect the price.

“A week,” said the frog and he retired into his bush in order to pass his time in brooding and remorse except for flicking his tongue once in a while for his royal breakfast of a few plump ants, lunch of half a

dozen bonny white-ants and dinner of a dozen cute termites, all of special varieties available only in his bush.

The assembly kept looking at the sky for long. Then the sparrows took flight in a formation and flew high indeed, but were back on the ground after half an hour and reported to their anxious friends, “The stars had the uncanny capacity to rise higher and higher. There is no other reason why we could not clamp our beaks on them.”

An elderly squirrel who had observed the phenomenon of fleeting meteors once or twice, agreed with them. “If the stars could come down, they could very well go up in order to avoid being entrapped by our smart sparrows,” he said.

They all knew that about a thousand stars, like over-ripe fruit, fell into the lake practically every night and they kept floating until the dawn when they slowly got dissolved. They decided to collect ninety-nine of them from the water while they were still fresh.

They tried, but did not succeed.

“How fragile! Even when I was so tender in lifting up one of them, it melted and slipped through my beak,” said a sparrow. The grasshopper flexed his muscles and said with a sigh, “No use my trying then, if it proved too delicate even for the sparrow’s beak.” Others agreed.

They met the frog on the seventh day.

“We could not collect the price quoted by Your Majesty,” they informed him ruefully.

The frog, after a moment’s meditative silence, said, “Very well, I’ll drag my Himalaya away along with me, or...” after a brief caressing of his head, he resumed, “I could even destroy it, should that be the inspiration to visit my heart!”

None of the citizens of the small valley had ever dreamt of such eventualities. Where could they go if the king were to drag away or destroy his Himalaya?

“Your Majesty, wouldn’t you allow us two or three weeks for us to locate some land beyond the Himalaya for our migration – even though we cannot dream of a greater king or a better kingdom than we had been blessed with till now?”

“Allowed,” said the frog as he stomached a surging sob.

They were out in search of a new land. But, lo and behold, however far they went, there was only Himalaya and Himalaya. The same peaks overlooked them and the same sun or the same stars!

They shed tears again and again at the thought of the frog dragging all this away from under their feet.

At last, one evening, the tired travelers camped under a snow-capped hill when the full moon bloomed on the horizon, giving the region the shine of *Champak* flowers.

It was by chance that the sparrow recognised the fairy that had descended on a nearby hillock.

They went near her and greeted her. Since it was the butterfly that had some resemblance with the fairy, she flew up to her knees and told her, while the others assisted and punctuated her narration with their sobs, all that had happened since the night the frog had proposed to her.

The fairy was moved at realizing the anguish of those wee creatures of the tiny valley.

“Why don’t you tell your king that it is done?” she said and the very next moment flew into the golden mist and, as usual, her mind was cleansed of all memory of the lower sphere.

The travelers jumped, danced and raised hurrahs all through their return journey.

“It is done – said the fairy herself!” they reported to the king.

“Really? Is it really done? Really, really done?” asked the frog, his voice choking. “Is that what the fairy said?”

“Indeed, you’re Majesty. It’s done, she said,” assured the delegation.

The frog was too excited to go to sleep. At last he sang a lullaby to himself and slept the soundest sleep in his life and perhaps in the life of anybody else in the valley.

The frog continues to reign in the Himalaya, seated under the arum plant. The squirrels, the crickets, the sparrows and butterflies continue to tide over the time with a profound sense of relief for having survived the greatest crisis imaginable.



Ahalya’s Voyage: From Transgression To Transcendence

By
Pratibha Ray*

The basic structure of human cognizance is story. Story is born out of story. But Ahalya’s pilgrimage from Vedic literature to Ramayan, Mahabharat, Skanda Puran, Brahmanda Puran and various Puranas is a one line story eclipsing Ahalya’s true face. The myth of Ahalya is quite a living myth in a traditional society like ours wherein chastity and virginity in marital life for women and denial of subjectivity to women are the order. In each version of Ahalya in Indian bhasa literature lies a kind of sub-version, quite meaningful for contemporary times.

The use of myth and archetypes in Indian literature is an endeavour for returning to the roots of human existence and finding solace for predicament of modern man through certain eternal values and spiritual

*Received the Sarala Award(1989), the Moorti Devi Award(1993),the Orissa Sahitya Akademy Award(1985),the Vishuv Award(1995) and the Jnanpith Award.

transcendence. Perhaps that is why poets and writers are consciously and unconsciously trying to superimpose themselves in mythical characters and even without their knowing it, are becoming those characters. To quote Levi Strauss “I therefore claim to show, not how men think in myths, but how myths operate in men’s mind without their being aware of that”.

In the ultimate analysis, we may find that myth has been used as a catalytic agent inspiring the inherent creative energies to yield something new yet rooted in the mythical soil, not destroying or damaging the fabric of eternal values. Myth has the innate potentiality to enable a sensitive and sensible writer to rediscover the much needed inner self. Therefore, ultimately we see transfer, transformation, transcendence of myth, in modern literature which keeps itself out of myth but not away from myth. Possibly, this is because myth is infinitely elastic, innately accommodative but does not yield to any distortion. Hence, modern writers cannot even recreate myth, they only create new myths of their time, rooted in the mythic soil.

In Hindu mythology, Indra is the most powerful and reverent among the spatial gods. There are nearly three hundred hymns in the Rigveda in praise of Indra. He is further eulogized in the Brahmanas and the Upanishads. There, he is demon-demolisher, a high authority and all wise. In the Rigveda, he is just Vritrasur slayer(2.20.7). In the Brahmanas, he kills Namuchi (Taittiriya 2.4.3). He kills Vishvarupa, a three-headed demon (Kaushitaki 3.1) in the Upanishads. Valmiki Ramayana adds an episode of Indra-Ahalya affairs in which the main character is Indra itself but his moral character is highly assassinated by Ahalya episode.

Nourished by the Omkar of the Vedas, the daughter of Brahma, Ahalya is not an ordinary woman. Influenced by her father, she was well-versed in the Vedas. In the reflected glory of her husband’s rank and status, Gautam’s wife Ahalya was a dignified Vedic woman. Yet she slipped into sin at the mere touch of sensualist Indra. But for a woman like Ahalya it is not easy even to indulge in such sins. It is, therefore, proper to analyze Ahalya’s rise and fall from the view point of psychology and sociology. The human being, man or woman, sinks into sin for many complexes and compulsions. Hence Ahalya’s moral fall can not simply be termed as sensuality.

Ahalya’s origin is in the Vedic literature. She is the mythical daughter of the supreme creator Brahma. She is the divine visualization, an artistic excellence, unparagoned in beauty, grace, intellect and zest for life.

Many a Vedic scholar has interpreted the mythic symbolism of Ahalya, Indra and Gautam. At times, Ahalya has been interpreted as Dawn and Indra as the cloud. Plastering the dark cloud on the forehead of dawn, Indra symbolically becomes Ahalya-raper(Ahalya-jaara). But many others have accepted Ahalya as the “uncultivated land” on which Indra rains and makes it fertile, and fructified. Hence, Gautam is only an Aryan farmer living on Indra’s bounties. Swami Dayanand has imagistic ally portrayed Ahalya as night, Indra as sun and Gautam as the moon. Here the night and moon are wife and husband, and the sun is the separator of night and moon.

In the first great epic, the Ramayana of Valmiki, Ram, the most dignified and majestic human appears. To show the transcendence of Ram from human to the divine, the achievements, fame, heroism, mercy, sacrifice, love, discipline, exalted thoughts, fair sense of judgment and integrity of character have been described in the Ramayana. In the process of Ram’s transcendence, the Ahalya-redemption episode

reveals Ram's noble character, rationality and moral judgment. It is possible that Ramayana episode of Ahalya-Indra-Goutam is derived from the "Ahalya-raper" epithet of Indra in the Vedas. In the Mahabharat too the Indra-Ahalya story is outlined in episodic form. The Puranas were written to universalize the subtle nuances of the Vedas and in this vein perhaps, the symbolization of Ahalya has been depicted in the Ramayana, Mahabharat, Skanda Puran, Brahmnda Puran etc. and the symbol has been delineated as character. The heroine of this stigmatic episode has become Ahalya, the resplendent beauty, the daughter of the creator, Brahma.

In the Valmiki-Ramayana, Ram is human, not divine. Ahalya has not turned to stone here on the sage's curse nor has she been redeemed by the touch of Rama's feet. Here Gautam too has not cursed Indra to become a person with a thousand sex organs. In the Ramayana of Valmiki, the curse on Ahalya is like this. "You will feed only on air, far away from the public eye; sleeping on ashes for years onend, and expiate for your self-willed sin by penance and asceticism. Only after that Ram will appear and redeem you". Thus, the essential reason for Ahalya's moksha is self-knowledge and divine-knowledge gained by expiation. As Ram is the manifested form of love and beauty, he is only a means to Ahalya's redemption. Here, Ram is not external to Ahalya, rather he is present in Ahalya as the unrevealed essence of divine knowledge. Ram is the discovery of Ahalya's divine quest. This delineation of the Ahalya myth by Valmiki is realistic and human. There is no supernatural or devotional exaggeration here. In the early cantoes of the Ramayana, Valmiki depicts the Ahalya theme thus : possessed by sensual passio,. Ahalya has surrendered herself to Indra consciously. This is very realistic. But in the Uttarakanda and in many other bhasa Ramayanas, it is depicted that Indra in the guise of Gautam returned from the bathing ghat and had untimely union with Ahalya at a blissful moment of the dawn. Therefore, it cannot be said that she consciously gave herself to Indra. This is not acceptable from the psychological and realistic point of view. To recognize the other man from beneath the guise of the husband is a typical feminine insight which even the most ordinary woman is instinctively endowed with. Ahalya, after all, was an intelligent woman well-versed in the Vedas and in her case such delusive surrender to passion is not beyond all reasonable doubts. Moreover, the delineation of the myth in two different perspectives in two different places in the Ramayana by Valmiki is not acceptable. It may be a glaring case of interpolation in the *Uttarakhanda* by the high priests of Indian idealistic culture.

In the Ramayana that followed Valmiki's in Sanskrit and other languages, especially in Kanbaramayana in Tamil, Balaram Das Ramayana in Oriya, the Kritibas Ramayana in Bengali, the Adhyatme Ramayana in Hindi, the Ramcharitmanas of Tulsi Das and the Bhanudev Ramayana in Nepali etc., the Ahalya redemption episode has taken different forms. But in every work the episode is condensed, discursive and never realistic. It is shown that Ahalya's transcendence is secondary, Rama's greatness is the primary focus. In every age the seducer-sinner, the harbinger of curse and even the redeemer is an Indra, Gautam and Ram that is a male. As if woman is only a mortal body. At the touch of a man the body gets slushy or turns into stone and again is rejuvenated. As if woman has no transcendence and no spiritual power. It is only the male who can do and undo a woman. Many questions arises at the thought of Ahalya in our minds. The condensed form in which Valmiki has depicted the Ahalya episode, in his Ramayana has kept Ahalya as a passionate woman for all ages, redeemed into purity by the benign touch of Ram. Where is the occasion for more analysis of Ahalya ?

The myth of Ahalya has always instigated my creative self for rethinking and delving into its roots to reassert Ahalya's true self.

As years of perseverance and ascetic contemplation is needed for salvation, to commit sin also long years of deprivation, agony, conflict, protest and resultant morbidity are responsible. Like redemption, sin too is not less dependent on practice, perseverance and circumstances.

If knowingly Ahalya loses herself to Indra in a weak moment, why at all she will be worshipped? If Indra in the guise of Gautam, had physical union with Ahalya at a blissful moment of the dawn, then why she will be held guilty? Indra, the Aryan hero, luxurious, sensualist, cheater and womanizer, did not lose his position and power but Ahalya, an innocent victim was thrown out of the society. If the mere touch of Ram redeemed Ahalya in to purity, then why Ahalya will be placed in the list of the Panchakanyas, whose names are to be chanted every morning for purification of human soul?

“Ahalya, Draupadi, Tara, Kunti, Mandodari tatha Panchakanya : *smarannitya mahapatak nasanam*”. Every time I come across these lines, there is a conflict in me between physicality and morality. The Ramayan story ends with the redemption of Ahalya by Ram and the acceptance of Ahalya by Gautam.

I tried to analyse the situation and searched for the meaning of kanya. Why Ahalya and all the four wholly kanyas who were married and had physical union with more than one man be called kanya and pure ? I got the meaning of Kanya from the Grammar of Veda i.e. Nirukta. The derivation is like this : “KANYA, KAMANIYA BHAVATI. KAMANENA NIYATE ETI, KANATERBA SHYAT KANTI KARMANAH”. This derivation in Nirukta gives a beautiful meaning of kanya. She is kanya who is beautiful. Kanya can be any time beautiful. With unconditional love and selfless feeling kanya is welcomed to a house. Kanya is kamaniya, if she adds glory to her by realization of self and the supreme power in her.

I got the idea to write a novel on Ahalya theme. But my novel Mahamoha does not try to answer the questions raised from time to time in my mind, but is a reaction to those questions.

In Mahamoha, Ahalya is not a character, it is a symbol. Indra, Gautam, Ram are also symbols. When symbols are analyzed, they are transformed into characters. When characters are unravelled, the hidden metaphysical meaning in the symbols became visible. In Mahamoha, Ahalya is symbol of beauty, or Soundarya tattwa, Indra is lustful or Kama Bhava and Gautam is high priest of learning and a strict disciplinarian, he is Aaham Bhava. Ram is Rmainya Bhava or Rama Bhava. In the story, Ahalya is shown as the wife of the saint and practising strict discipline. Due to many other reasons she is sad and deprived of her fundamental rights. Gautam was austerity and Indra was ostentation. Ahalya is in conflict by the contrary pulls of heroic romance and sacrificial holy fire. Her beauty and self love matured in this dual nature of dynamism and stillness. In the Vedic civilization, Ahalya had to marry her guru, Gautam who became her Parama Guru. Indra remained a rival of Gautam forever.

In Mahamoha, the feminine self of Ahalya is free. Married to a devout saint-husband practising self denial and austerity to be elevated from Maharshi to Devarshi have merely stilled the flight for the woman in Ahalya. But she was devoted in her role as a wife? Though Indra was attracted to Ahalya and has shown his lust for Ahalya several times, he was invited by Gautam to the Jajna performed to appease Indra for gracing with rain to save the world. It was a time of famine and drought. Ahalya, as the wife of Gautam, treated the guest according to the customs true to the Vedic culture. She opens upto Indra for fulfillment of her womanhood which was denied to her in a complex moment. She admits her transgression saying “there was no pretence in me. That moment was a guiltless unsullied moment of

love. I was not divisible then. I was wholly Indra's. That was not a moment of illusion. It was a revolt.....

“My illusory body is the redeeming land of truth. I was daughter, wife, mistress of the house, but never a woman. I am a woman now at the touch of Indra. I am complete. Who can take away fullness from fullness? Even if someone can, I shall remain complete without it”. Ahalya in my novel has sinned willfully Gautam's curse which turns her into stone symbolizes the total isolation of Ahalya from society and absolute withdrawal from life's manifestation. Ahalya declares her love not as a transgression of discipline but as an integral element fulfilling life. Love is the essence. Loveless marriage is a curse. Hence, a woman is not soiled by love, she is elevated to fulfillment. To protect his male ego, Gautam coaxed Ahalya to declare before the Ashram that not willfully but forcibly she had given herself to Indra. Ahalya boldly asks, “if my woman physique is soiled by forceful union with Indra, am I chaste or unchaste ? If my body is not me, I am the soul and my soul is not soiled, am I chaste or unchaste ? Then why this heartless curse? Then Gautam replied “In any case transgression of the social norm is a sin”. The novel debates on purity, body, mind, soul, freedom of self, human rights and many other socio-psychological issues. Ahalya had intellectual confrontation with Gautam on the issues. The urban and the post modern sensibility and the picture of contemporary life indirectly enters the novel. The past and the present meets in one point. The mythical character thus essentially protests against dogmatic and stigmatic theory of life. She was in search of meaning and mystery of life.

In the rise and fall of illusion and disillusion self- charmed Ahalya has become the cause of enchantment as well as its victim. Ahalya's physical beauty and attraction to physical charm of Indra had led Ahalya on the path of transgression and sin. The charm of Rama glowing with the inner beauty had led Ahalya on the path of transcendence to redemption. The transformation of Ahalya's love, desire to spiritual realization is due to years of perseverance and ascetic contemplation. In the ascetic path of Ahalya, although the Ram is the consummation Indra and Gautam are not peripheral. In the gross judgment of Gautam, Ahalya was a fallen woman but in the divine vision of Ram, Ahalya was purity itself. The impenetrable fortress, built by the society between sin and salvation was shattered by Ram's judgment-shaft: “The road to redemption from sin may be difficult to traverse, but it is not closed : The fall of Hellenism and the rise of spiritualism.” – This is the essence of the Ahalya episode. In all time and space there is an Ahalya in every human being, also Indra and Gautam : But Ram is one in a billion. As Ram is not common, he is godly. In the gross view of the society Ahalya is unchaste but in the subtle vision of Ram she is chaste. Therefore she is one of the five daily remembered great women : Ahalya, Draupadi, Tara, Kunti and Mandodari.

This self confessional novel with four parts **Paapa** (sin), **Tapa** (repentance), **Tapah** (transcendence) & Moksh (salvation) which combines the sexuality and psycho-socio reality of the woman protagonist; Ahalya herself was the **jajna**, **samidha**, and **swaha**. The woman protagonist was a victim of the situation rather than sinner. The novel asserts that the man and mankind are exploited by the power centers like dogmatic tradition, blind belief and seat of supreme power. Justice is denied to many. Ram's arrival symbolizes the inevitable love and justice that grant freedom and liberates the soul. In this novel, Ahalya elevates herself from biological self to ontological being. She discovered her **kamaniya bhava** (inner beauty) in her and glowing with **kamaniya kanti**, was welcomed back to the society with love and adoration.

Not to err is not human and great. But elevating oneself from sin to **swarga** (divinity) is human and great. Ahalya, therefore, is an eternal **kanya** (**kamaniya bhava – Soundarya Tattwa**) who inspires the humankind to realize the inner beauty inherent to everybody. In my novel Mohamoha, all the main characters are symbolic. Ram is the symbol of **Ramaniya Bhaba**, Indra symbolizes **Kama Bhaba**, Gautama symbolizes **Ahan Bhaba** and ultimately Ahalya is the symbol of **Soundarya Tattwa**.

Irrespective of time and age, Mahamoha is the story of Indra, Gautam and Ahalya's indulgence and the final release from it : an epic of revolution and redemption.



The Snake Ride

By

Santanu Kumar Acharya *

That evening, when the first Indian astronaut, Wing Commander Rakesh Sharma was Zooming into outer space along with his Soviet Colleagues in Soyuz-11, Sadhu Mohanta a fairly well-known figure of Rasamtola village of the Karanjia Subdivision in Orissa's Mayurbhanj district, climbed onto the back of a huge snake and disappeared into the forest.

The newspapers ran full-length features of Rakesh Sharma Bursting patriotically into the refrains of ' *Sare Jahan Se Achcha* ', every time he glimpsed the Indian sub-continent in his orbits around the globe. But the world continued to be in the dark as to Sadhu Mohanta's whereabouts and the musical strains, which took him along, on his strange journey.

The day after, Mohanta's wife and other women of the family narrated the event to the villagers, amid much sobbing and wailing. 'A huge snake came straight into the house. Mohanta stepped down from the bed and without uttering a single word got onto the serpent's back as if he were riding a horse. Then the snake vanished with him in the same direction from where it came.'

Seven days went by.

Rakesh Sharma came back from space. Even as the landing of the spacecraft was being telecast on the TV, some one rushed in to give the startling news that Sadhu Mohanta was lying unconscious in the courtyard of the Shiva temple.

The villagers rushed there to find Sadhu lying there as if in deep, undisturbed sleep. His breath was normal and there was not even a scratch on his body.

Every one was dumbfounded. If Sadhu Mohanta had gone off on the back of a serpent how did he return? Suddenly, some one pointed to distinct marks of dragging on the earth. A number of twigs and bushes lay crushed as if something very heavy had passed over them. Certainly the very snake that had taken him away had brought him back.

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Meanwhile, accolades and honors were being heaped upon Rakesh Sharma for his extra-terrestrial adventure. But when Sadhu regained consciousness, none deemed it necessary to celebrate the occasion. In fact, the news of the strange voyage did not reach the ears of the bureaucrats of Karanjia, the sub-divisional headquarters.

Even if the news had reached, none would have dared to give any credence to it. Strange things did happen in this area, but the civilized world laughed them off, when they heard about them, as drunken tales. Thus self-respecting officers were apt to maintain a tight-lipped silence. The news of the strange adventures of Sadhu Mohanta was lost to the world. Or so it seemed.

Rakesh Sharma never went to space again; but the snake returned.

A few hours before its arrival, Sadhu took his wife aside and told her, ‘Look! I have this strange feeling that the snake will come for me today!’

On hearing this, Mohanta’s wife, Jui, hurriedly closed all doors and windows. Then she tightly hugged Sadhu and started sobbing. ‘If that horrid thing comes for you, then I’m coming along too!’

Sadhu was both touched and surprised at this sudden show of affection by his middle-aged wife. After his return, he was regarded by his fellow beings with fear, suspicion and a reverence tinged with jealousy, though disbelief outweighed all other emotions. But, overnight, he had been elevated to the rank of an ascetic.

Sadhu was neither a hermit nor a saint. He was an ordinary man with all human failings. He ate, slept, laughed, cried, coveted wealth and cheated whenever he had the opportunity. But what puzzled all was the fact, that he was the one chosen by the gods to under take this strange mission.

Sadhu felt disgusted with this attitude. After all, gods were not politicians that they would send a vehicle to pick up their supporters and touts. He was worried too, for if the snake didn’t return he would be ridiculed. People would think it was a dream – the only difference being that they all saw it simultaneously.

When a family goes to sleep, each member has his own dream. Suppose one night, all of them have the same dream and discover that the next morning; surely they would be wide-eyed with wonder. But after a few days, they would accept it as a rare aberration. For an aberration, to be credible, has to manifest itself more than once. May be the serpent will never come back. But if it came once what’ll keep it from appearing again?

Suddenly, Sadhu started. A distinct slithering noise came from beyond the closed doors. ‘Listen!’ he whispered to his wife, ‘Can you hear it? Let me go and open the door; otherwise it’ll come in any way!’

His wife’s grip tightened like a vice. She was a Mohanta a people who are proficient in the art of black magic and illusions but still retain a strong sense of reality. They are a hardy breed. There is a saying, ‘if you throw a stone at a Mohanta, he will return it to you as a lump of fertile clay.’ Like so many earthworms they break up the stone-hard soil and reap plentiful harvests. They are also known as *Kurmi Kshatriyas* or the earthworm warriors. A female *Kurmi Kshatriya* can be as harsh as she can be soft and pleasing. Sadhu wasn’t surprised at all to find his wife immobilizing him.

‘If it can enter a closed room’, she hissed, ‘it’s a ghost, not a snake!’

Suddenly, the bolts of the door snapped with a sharp metallic crack. Before the terrified eyes of the couple a gigantic snake rolled in like the rushing waters of flood. A lesser mortal would have been paralyzed with fear, but the Mohantas are made of sterner stuff. They are the survivors, the true *Kshatriyas*, who can jump into the lap of unknown danger without so much as flinching. Scions of their clan have burrowed into the forests of Assam, Bihar and Bengal in their nomadic quests. For this, mental toughness is of greater avail than physical strength and Mohantas have an abundance of the former.

A strange thing happened. Till then, Mohanta's wife had been trying to hold her husband back from the snake. Now, she suddenly sprang onto its back, straddling it. The snake made an about-turn and sped away like greased lightning. Mohanta was left gaping.

By morning, the entire village was agog with the talk of the second episode. But people were skeptical. The elders of the village mused, 'the spirits are playing a prank! Once, a long time ago, the spirits took a cowherd away. People searched for days on end for him, but to no avail. At last, after fifteen days, the cowherd returned. When people asked him as to where he was all that time, he replied that the ghosts had made him invisible. He had been right there, among them, all the time. He had called out to them; but they could neither hear nor see him.'

Sadhu could have laughed it off as an oldwives' tale, but he did not. In fact the whole affair was too weird and absurd to be explained logically.

One aspect of his last voyage bothered him. When he got onto the serpent's back he had felt utterly weightless, like floating in ether. And before his startled eyes another unseen world had unraveled itself. It was a mirror image of our world, complete with forests, rivers, mountains, birds, insects and animals but with one exception. There were no human beings. The fact that he was the only human being in that world had escaped his notice till he regained consciousness.

Slowly it dawned on Sadhu that somewhere out there was a creation complete. But lacking human beings only. The creator wanted to sow the new furrow with the fruits of an older creation; and in the list of human seedlings his wife and he were the chosen pair.

As if to communicate that the Mohantas were eminently suitable to be the procreators of a new human race, the snake left Jui Mohanta in the now familiar landing-ground of the Shiva temple. Sadhu rushed there when he got the news. As he lifted her head from the ground to put it in his lap he murmured, 'She's back! Now both of us will go back together.'

Sadhu's wife took a little while longer to regain consciousness. But when she did, it became clear that the serpent had taken one and lifted another.

'Sadhu! Hey, Sadhu!' the women folk of the village were aghast when they heard the wife calling her husband's name. Until that time no woman in the village had called her husband by his name.

'Jui is possessed by spirits!' they whispered among themselves. And Jui was never the same again. Her defiant ways shocked the traditional villagers.

Jui Mohanta's husband, Sadhu, was in a fix. Their relationship had taken an entirely different turn after the serpent-ride. Jui's behavior towards him could at best be described as condescending. Though his manhood was deeply offended, he chose to hold his tongue.

What was more worrying was that the serpent showed no signs of retuning. All his hopes of returning to the pristine world to sire a new race were dwindling by the day. Any attempt to discuss the issue with Jui was futile.

‘No, I won’t come,’ she would smile, ‘You are free to go as and when you wish.’

Sadhu knew that smile and what it really meant.

‘How can you live here all alone? Won’t you be scared?’ he would ask in a feeble attempt to reassert his control over her.

‘Scared?’ Laughter cascaded from her. ‘Didn’t you see me riding that huge snake? Have you forgotten that I have been to your dream world too? In that world fear doesn’t exist. Really I never knew that such a place existed in God’s creation!’

‘It’s all the blessings of the Snake God!’ Sadhu’s eyes closed as his thoughts went back to his wondrous journey.

Then the throbbing pain in his heart that Jui would not be there beside him –obedient, understanding and bearing his sons, - got the better of him. He wanted to hurt her as she was hurting him.

‘Fine! If you don’t come along with me, then I will have to take another woman! Don’t be under impression that I will live there all alone.’

Jui’s smile didn’t falter.

‘You may take another woman, but I don’t need a man anymore. You know what I want? I want...’ Jui trailed off. She was struggling to find the exact word to express her heart’s desire. Sadhu knew what was so difficult for her to say.

‘Freedom!’ he ventured.

Jui jumped at it.

‘I’m jealous of you, Sadhu! You can even read my mind! Since my return I’ve been meaning to tell everyone about that word. ‘Freedom...freedom!’ She rolled the word around her mouth relishing it.

Sadhu suddenly flared up. ‘Freedom! What do you want freedom for? Do you want to be a witch?’

Peals of laughter ricocheted from the four walls. Jui knew Sadhu would read her thoughts. So she softened up and looked at him.

‘I’m going to be the first witch of our village! The Snake -God be praised!’

‘And eat human shit!’ Sadhu roared.

A strange sound, some thing between a sob and a giggle, escaped her throat.

It was nearly midnight. The full moon bathed the earth in an eerie glow. A koel, mistaking the brightness for the approaching dawn, shook up the still night with its shrill calls. Immediately Jui leapt off the bed and flinging the doors wide open vanished into the night.

Fear gripped Sadhu’s heart. He plucked up courage and went looking for her. After some distance, near a Mahul tree, he found a group of bears prancing around, and stopped dead in his tracks. How Jui, who had always been terrified of darkness, could go past a pack of wild bears was beyond his comprehension. He shook his head in disbelief.

Slowly he went up to the group and found out that they were not bears after all, but women, completely naked. Their heads were downcast, and their disheveled hair fell about their shoulders. Some were kneeling, some were crawling and some moved about head over heels like acrobats in a circus.

Mohanta returned home. He waited for the morning and his wife's return.

At dawn, the koel screamed again. The door cracked open. Mohanta sprang to his feet clutching a stick, ready to strike.

'Had your fill of shit?' he roared.

'Stay back! Don't you dare come near me! You'll be reduced to ashes. I am still under the spell of the serpent.' Jui kept her blouse on the cot and searched for the end of her sari to tie it around her waist.

'Don't give me that crap!' Sadhu snapped. I have seen your activities with my own eyes. By the way, who were the others? I thought you were the only one from our village.'

'All of them are from our village. Though neither of us knew, the snake had taken all those women to the world where he had taken us.'

'Rubbish,' Sadhu spat. 'There are no human beings in that world. The serpent was searching for a couple that could start a new race. We fitted the bill and hence were left at the temple court yard.'

'The point, Sadhu, is not whether the serpent left someone in the Shiva temple or at their homes. What is important is that those who rode the snake got the taste of freedom!' Jui held the sari in front of her with her teeth as she wriggled into the blouse.

'Freedom!' Sadhu's voice dripped with sarcasm, 'You've become really very free lately!'

'Shouldn't I be?' Jui's lips parted in a sweet, innocent smile. As the hold of the strange power over her lessened, she softened visibly into her sweet old self.

'You men are always free, but for a woman this begins to happen at forty. What for you is just another full moon night is for me a strange new world waiting to be discovered. Do you know what it is like to be forty and not know what a full moon night is? No, you can't. You have exhausted your appetite for experiences in this world, so you want to escape to a new world! But for me who has only known the world by the daylight only, I have the other half of my lifetime to rediscover... the world of the nights. That's why I became a witch!'

'So you won't come with me? Well, I had reckoned that, we would start a new creation there ... you and I...' Sadhu said putting away the stick.

'Go and stay there.' Jui giggled like a small girl, 'you fool! No one goes there to stay, but only to come back and start life afresh. I have already, begun. I used to wonder every full moon and every new moon night -how it would be outside, but I was terrified of the dark. The serpent has rid me of all my fears. Now, I shall freely roam the nights taking in the moon, and the darkness, the stars above, the still earth below, the wind and the rains.

Now go, wash your face while I prepare a nice, hot breakfast for you.'

(Translated from Oriya by Ramanuj Shastry, courtesy: N.B.T, India, New Delhi)



Fifty: Vignettes of my Orissa

By Sura Rath*

Three miles to the train, four to the bus,
by bullock cart on a bumpy road, an hour;
a hundred yards to Batamangala, fifty to
Chandaneswar;
in between, the west end village pond
where I once drowned, almost.
Beyond, the Karchi Bayou and the cremation ground
where old acquaintances keep vigil as deodar
trees, faces forgotten. This
is my Orissa.

Two rockers on the stone front porch,
rain drops dance on the tin roof,
play musical chairs; around, a hundred gods
goddesses
in fresco, jhotied on walls. A sea of memory,
shoreless, ebbs, revealing shells, capsules of years.
Uncle and grandpa I am to tiny strangers
on this annual sojourn. This
is my Orissa.

The antique widow, withered, bent with age,
Petticoat-less, blouse-less, bra-less, buxom as ever,
aunt to the whole village, mother to none,
ruffled hair, aching back, comes restless, her hands
soft on my face:
"Son, you came? I've waited so long! The sun comes
everyday, we talk of you, of bohu, of children. My
babies
all well? They remember me sometime, no?"
I smile, staring into the blank map of history on her
face,
clueless, searching for words in her ineffable sea of
joy.
"The mangoes are all gone," she says,
"but the juicy guava you like I saved for you; here,
eat some and pack a sack for 'em." This
is my Orissa.

The debutante twelve-year old I had spied on as a
teenager

through a second story window crack
waving her way home from the village pond in her
clinging wet sari
leaving a trail of water in the dusty track,
comes along, two tiny tots on tow:
"So you remembered us old folks, so nice of you! I
think
often of you peeking through that window," she
points up,
with a twinkle. "Bhauja and children, all well I hope,
why didn't you bring 'em?" she smiles,
with those soft seductive eyes, happy to see me
alone.

I show her my gray hair, balding spots. She
holds my face in her palms--the forbidden touch--
"We'd have been a nice pair," she whispers
in my ear. "Yes, grandma, I know,"
I tease her, mother of six and grandma to three. This
is my Orissa.

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GURUPRASAD MOHANTY (11-28-1924 to 8-27-2004)

I. The Doves Of My Eyes

The doves of my eyes strike against
the steel of the sky,
and repulsed, return to earth,
where, each day you wait alone
to discover the many meanings of life and death.

When the words, with their little palms,
touch the body of the motionless sands,
running through the grey heat of noon's
I seek ancestral memories in your flesh.

You whisper the secrets of leaf and grass,
of cliffs and woods, moss and shell,
in forlorn nights through the tatter of clouds
the myths of the moon sailing to its death.

As you retrieve the ruined body of April
drifting helplessly in the whirlpools of sand,
it seems you love me and want me to come,
but where is your soul? and where my body?

And when the doves of my eyes return,
ripping the sky's wrongs, it is time's river
that flows through the weariness of your flesh
and carries my dreams along.

Leaves fall, unheard, in the quiet noon,
and the sun respire in silence.
The pine forest pales like smoke in the sky.
And I don't remember when, the doves of my eyes
flew into Ujjain¹ or Cuttack¹¹, pursuing you.

Translation : Jayanta Mahapatra

(Courtesy, Varnamala: Contemporary Oriya Poetry,
Jayanta Mahapatra, Ramakanta Rath, Rajendra Panda, and
Rabindra Swain)

II. Landscape

How could the gulmohur¹
preserve its redness
in the unceasing traffic
of automobiles?

At some nondescript moment
of some forever-lost century
this redness began its journey
from some first stirring of blood
to the April sunlight of today.

This summer day
heaps red dust on the road
meandering across the treeless hill.
Tires of cars, buses, trucks and jeeps
and the chimneys of the steel plant
belch red dust all the time.
How then can the gulmohur²
preserve its own redness?

I look out of the window
of the superfast bus
through my sunglasses
and try to comprehend
actual problems of the red color
and its present-day motives and conduct.

Are my looks as stupid
as the look of
the superannuated old chairman
of the Enquiry-Commission
set up after the crowd
took out processions, burnt buses, and
was lathi³-charged and fired upon?

From its origin in ether
the gulmohur's redness
has descended on the road.
How could redness continue to be red
amidst all this automobile traffic?

Where does this redness go
after the annihilation of its being?
Does it travel to a sad, disarrayed,
unsure and ravaged sunset
in some horizon?

Translation: Ramakanta Rath

¹ Cities in India

² Tropical Flower

³ Police Baton



THE ORISSA FOUNDATION ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT

- **SAHAYA:** For mentally handicapped children in Cuttack completed a 3-year grant in 2000
- **INSTITUTE OF ORISSAN CULTURE:** Completed a 5-year grant in 2000
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I, the poet of labor stand
With pen for weapon held in the hand,-
I stand and dream of the day to come
When men shall rise out of martyrdom,
Rise in the dawn of freedom when
A new red sun and my poet's pen
Shall sign the charter of Man for Men!

-----Sachi Rautray

Travel Writing and the Empire

A Review

By

Arnold P. Kaminsky*

Sachidananda Mohanty(Editor, Katha: New Delhi, 2003).of Hyderabad University, has edited a timely and useful volume of essays on travelers' accounts in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The volume emerged from the proceedings of a national seminar on travel writing in 1999, with several additional articles especially commissioned for the project. The theoretical considerations framing the discussion of travel accounts are provided in an excellent introductory essay by the book's editor, Sachidananda Mohanty. In a clear, articulate fashion, he establishes the parameters within which travel writing must be viewed, especially in delineating the close relationship between writing, conquest and empire building. The seminal essay by Susan Bassnett, "The Empire, Travel Writing, and British Studies," further emphasizes distinctions among explorers, travelers and tourists, all both reflecting and, at the same time, creating a sense of identify for themselves and those they encountered. In this sense, travel accounts very much reflected the notions of patriarchy, racism, imperialism and overarching Orientalism of the day.

The quality of essays in this very smartly produced volume is consistently high, and this book would make an excellent supplemental text for university surveys. William Dalrymple's essay on "Porous Boundaries and Cultural Crossover: Fanny Parkes and 'Going Native'" shows us a much more fluid relationship among Hindus, Muslim and British in pre-Mutiny days—one in which the traveler, Fanny Parkes, feels free to critique her British compatriots and openly admire Indian men and women in a way virtually proscribed after 1857. The diaries of Charles Augustus Tegart are analyzed by by Tutun Mukherjee, a fascinating account of colonial justice and power represented in the prison compound in the Andaman islands. So too is the essay by Sindhu Menon an instructive analysis of sexual stereotyping in which behaviors of Indian and British women are examined through traveler accounts.

Other essays by Mohammad Zaheer Basha on Katherine Mayo's *Mother India*, by Pramod K. Nayar's on the link between historic and contemporary travel brochures, and V.B. Tharakeshwar's essay on Kannada travel fiction and travelogues, establish the link between present and past imperial rhetoric. Narendra Luther's account of the changing descriptions of Hyderabad in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and Pallavi Pandi Laisram's essay on Hajji Baba's fiction and images of Persia, and Orientalism, are well written and useful contributions. Because travel writing so closely reflected the historical moment, Susan Bassnett concludes that it challenges us to look at how this genre informs modern readers and scholars about concepts of "insider and outsider," of constructions of "otherness," and motivations. This is an excellently edited volume to introduce a growing field of both scholarly inquiry and general interest.



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THE ORISSA MEDIA BOOM THAT NEVER WAS

By
Sandeep Sahu**

Going by its external trappings, journalism in Orissa appears to have come a long way since the time when frail, prematurely ageing men sat hunched over boxes containing archaic looking pieces of lead. Now, we have the more edifying spectacle of smart looking young men – and women – perched comfortably on specially designed chairs, merrily running their fingers on the keyboard with the greatest of ease. The stubborn subs have, meanwhile, had to discard that ultimate symbol of power and erudition – the pen – and become ‘computer-friendly’. In place of morose looking middle aged men with protruding bellies, we now have smart young things straddling the media scene in trendy jeans and T-shirts.

But has journalism in the state changed in its essence? The answer to the question has to be an unequivocal ‘No’.

Sitting in Bhubaneswar, it is easy and natural to marvel at the ‘revolutionization’ of the media scene in Orissa in the last few years. Almost all major national newspapers and television channels (and even some international ones) now have full-time correspondents in Orissa, based at Bhubaneswar. Some of them have full-fledged bureaus with correspondents in districts. Four major national newspapers – The Times of India, The New Indian Express, The Hindustan Times and The Statesman – now have editions from Bhubaneswar. An Oriya edition of top-notch Bengali women’s magazine ‘Sananda’ (from the Ananda Bazar, a Calcutta Daily, stable) hit the stands at the beginning of the year. There are two Oriya TV channels – ETV and OTV – besides the good old Doordarshan, national broadcasting, dishing out news day and night to cable homes. While OTV is a round-the-clock news channel, ETV gives its viewers comprehensive coverage of news events in the state through its hourly news bulletins and three half-hour bulletins every day. To cap it all, there are about half a dozen websites exclusively devoted to news from Oriyas.

On the face of it, all these are tell-tale signs of the ‘media boom’ that has taken place in the state in the last few years. But unfortunately, these undeniably impressive achievements hide a lot that is wrong with journalism in Orissa.

The Telegraph from Kolkata, which ventured into Orissa in the mid-1990’s to explore the possibilities of an edition here has now completely backed out of it. From one full page of Orissa news daily and a four-page supplement on weekends, its coverage has now come down to an occasional news from the state tucked away somewhere in the inside pages. The Asian Age which one had an edition from Bhubaneswar has now closed shop. Likewise, The Hindustan Times has fallen from the high of three pages of news from the state and a weekly, four-page supplement to barely half a page of Orissa news and no supplement. Its ‘Bhubaneswar edition’ claim is a misnomer since it is actually printed in Kolkata and sent to Orissa by train. Only The Times of India, The New Indian Express and The Statesman can claim to have genuine Bhubaneswar editions now. ‘Sun Times’, the lone flag-bearer of English journalism in the state, folded up after a precarious existence for nearly a decade since its inception in 1988.

A major reason for the entry of big outside players onto the Orissa media scene in the mid-90’s was the perception that the state, with its enviable natural resources, was poised for a mammoth

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investment boom in the wake of the liberalization of the economy. But they were soon disillusioned. The promised investment just did not materialize, requiring shutting down or a scaling down of their ambitious plans.

The magazine scene is even bleaker than the newspaper world in Orissa. The state does not have a quality newsmagazine either in English or Oriya. 'Satabdi', launched with great fanfare some five years ago, is now gasping for breath. There are others which claim to be newsmagazines, but are actually a pot pourri of everything from short stories, poems, zodiac to discourses on religion. Of course, there has been visible improvement in the quality and production values of Sunday supplements of major Oriya newspapers. But they can hardly substitute for a quality newsmagazine. Among other niche magazines, only 'Kadambini', a women's magazine, can be said to be doing well. But with the arrival of 'Sananda', many have already started writing the obituary of 'Kadambini'. A principal reason for magazines not doing well in the state is that even the small advertising cake available is almost completely cornered by newspapers, leaving nothing for the magazines. The prospective advertiser sees no business sense in advertising in magazines since their circulation does not add up to much. It is classic Catch-22 situation. Magazines don't get ads because they don't have mass circulation.

Conversely, their circulation cannot grow without advertisement support. News has been defined as 'the most perishable commodity' long before the onset of the era of round-the-clock news channels. But the average Oriya newspaper reader (here, I have in mind the reader in Bongomunda or Chitrada, in Orissa, India) still gets his news between 24 to 48 hours late, depending on where he lives. Even the supposedly better placed reader of English newspapers published in Bhubaneswar often gets to read about an event nearly 36 hours after the event because they close their copy by early evening. The same goes for the news bulletin of the Doordarshan(country's national broadcasting) Kendra in Bhubaneswar. Some sign of 'revolutionization' this in the age of information super highway where news becomes stale in a matter of minutes! Indeed, the fact that thousands of people in the state with cable television at home still read newspapers will remain, to me, an abiding mystery of our times.

Not only has the communication revolution passed Orissa by. Even the fruits of liberalization-induced largesse doled out scribes of the national media have steadfastly refused to percolate down to the Oriya press. As a result, we have this unique scenario where the 'local' hack, who does most of the work for his 'national' counterpart, gets roughly a third (at times a fourth) of what the latter gets by way of remuneration. (I am aware that I am treading on a minefield here. But there is no use sweeping things under the carpet). The bitter, unpalatable truth is that the average reporter of an Oriya newspaper still does not get a telephone allowance and has to use his offices with friendly politicians or bureaucrats to gather or transmit his news. The average sub-editor still gets less than what a peon in a government office gets. The 'mofussil'(country side) reporter still uses his scale to measure his 'inchage' in a month, only to find that his monthly earnings add up to a princely sum of Rs. 300 to Rs 400(less than \$10.00). Even that amount often proves elusive. Freelance contributions fetch either a pittance or nothing at all. A freelancer does not have ghost of chance of surviving in the profession unless he or she writes for 'national' publications.

Every year, the state witnesses a lot of hullabaloo over distress sale of paddy by farmers in various parts of the state. But this scribe is not aware of any breast-beating over this wanton 'distress sale' of intellectual property – not even by the scribes themselves. Part of the reason for this could be the fact that there is nothing more embarrassing for a vernacular journalist than being asked about his salary. The Oriya scribe who does most of the digging up of news, must be made to feel that he or she is no way inferior to the Big Brothers of the national media – many of whom have, incidentally, been their erstwhile colleagues. But for that to happen, the gap between them has to be narrowed down, if not completely obliterated.

The depressing pay packet has ensured that the best of Oriya talent has stayed away from journalism and has opted for other, more lucrative careers. True, the Indian Institute of Mass Communication (IIMC) at Dhenkanal, Orissa, India, a premier school of journalism in the country, is the best thing to have happened to bright, starry-eyed youngsters aspiring to make a career in journalism. It churns out dozens of budding journalists every year. But the pertinent point is: while alumni of this institution have made a mark in the national media, the few who decided – by choice or compulsion – to stick to the Oriya press, paying for their decision dearly. Any meaningful change in the world of Oriya journalism has to begin with a semblance of parity between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’.

With the best of talent staying away from journalism, the field has been left open for crooks and fixers, who launch newspapers at the drop of a hat. At last count, there were some 50 Oriya newspapers registered with the Information and Public Relations (I & PR) department. But the combined readership of a vast majority of them would not add up to more than a few thousands. Such newspapers survive on advertisements from the government and income from dubious sources. The criteria under which newspapers are registered, advertisements doled out and reporters accorded accreditation by the I & PR department remain a mystery. A major attraction for many of those making forays into the media scene in Orissa is the promise of heavily subsidized government accommodation in prime locations of the city. Some of those allotted houses in Bhubaneswar have stayed in there for ages, though they have either ‘diversified’ into areas other than journalism or retired. If there are guidelines governing the allotment of government houses to journalists, they remain only on paper. No government worth its salt has the will or the inclination to enforce them.

State governments of all hues have confined their contributions to the field of journalism to release of periodic advertisements about their achievements to ‘friendly’ newspapers. Even these are released on the whims and fancies of the babus(gentle) rather than any rational criteria like circulation figures. The I & PR department is supposedly there to liaise between the government and the media. But actual experience suggests that if the government of the day does get some good press, not because of the department. The Naveen Patnaik(Chief Minister, Orissa) government is making all the right noises about ushering in e-governance. But its I&PR department is still stuck in a time warp. Government press releases are still typed, cyclostyled and physically handed over to newsmen rather than e-mailed notwithstanding the fact that a vast majority of them use the net.

Of course, the media is one area where the government never had – nor should it have now – a major role to play. The same, however, cannot be said about proprietors. Most owners of Oriya newspapers are active politicians and unabashedly serve the interests of their masters – fairness and objectivity be damned!

A long years back ago we made a tryst with destiny, and now the time comes when we shall redeem our pledge, not wholly or in full measure, but very substantially. At the stroke of the midnight hour, when the world sleeps, India will awake to life and freedom. A moment comes which comes but rarely in history, when we step from the old to the new, when age ends, and when the soul of a nation, long suppressed, finds utterance. It is fitting that at this solemn moment we take the pledge of dedication to the service to the service of India and her people and to the still larger cause of humanity.

At the dawn of history India started on her unending quest, and trackless centuries are filled with her striving and the grandeur of her success and her failures. Through good and ill fortune alike she has never lost sight of that quest or forgotten the ideals which gave her strength. We end today a period of ill fortune and India discovers herself again. The achievement we celebrate today is but a step, an opening of opportunity, to the greater triumphs and achievements that await us. Are we brave enough and wise enough to grasp this opportunity and accept the challenge of the future?

Freedom and power bring responsibility. That responsibility rests upon this Assembly, a sovereign body representing the sovereign people of India. Before the birth of freedom we have entered all the pains of labor and our hearts are heavy with the memory of this sorrow. Some of those pains continue even now. Nevertheless, the past is over and it is the future that beckons to us now.

The future is not one of the eased or resting but of incessant striving so that we may fulfill the pledges we have so often taken and the one we shall take today. The service of India means service of millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity. The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us, but as long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over.

And so we have to labor and to work hard, to give reality to our dreams. These dreams are for India, but they are also for the world, for all the nations and people are too closely knit together today for any one of them to imagine that it can live apart. Peace has been said to be indivisible, so is freedom, so is prosperity now, and so also is disaster in this One World that can no longer to split into isolated fragments.

To the people of India, whose representatives we are, we make appeal to join us with faith and confidence in this great adventure. This is no time for petty and destructive criticism, no time for ill-will or blaming others. We have to build the noble mansion of free India where all her children may dwell

- Jawaharlal Nehru, India Independence Day, August 15, 1947



Childhood in South Asia

A critical look at issues, policies and programs

A Book Review

By

Audrey E. Wright*

The book *Childhood in South Asia* edited by Jyotsna Pattnaik provides the reader with insight into the issues, policies, and programs that directly and indirectly affect children. Seven of the nine chapters in the book have been written by natives of South Asian countries, including India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The other two chapters have been written by authors who have worked extensively in Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Together they provide a lens into the life of children in these countries that is truly enlightening and deeply moving.

The titles alone are intriguing and draw the reader into the challenges presented: “Caught between a crocodile and a snake” (life in one’s home country and refugee camps in an alien host country) and, “Mad dogs and traffic jams: The psychosocial concerns of children in Kabul, Afghanistan” (the return of refugees to a war torn but changing and more stable country). These two chapters along with chapter 8 “Children: Broken promises and silent casualties of conflict in Nepal” highlight the direct and indirect long range impact of violence on children. Something the headlines never capture in their

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sound bites of war and upheaval. These three chapters provide a much needed wake up call to the true impact of such traumatic events on children.

Feeny's chapter 1 on life in a Rohingya refugee camp, sets a tone for the entire book in that it challenges the reader to rethink the long range impact of policies and programs, such as refugee camps, on the life of children. "Trapped between a traditional homeland that denies them citizenship and a host country that still refuses to offer anything other than the most temporary asylum even after a **decade**, the Rohingya are, like so many millions of refugees around the world, caught in a transitional state of limbo..." (p 6). The reader must rethink his/her notion of refugee camps as temporary "safe havens" and come to grips with the fact that such camps are often not temporary and have long lasting psychological and sociological impact on individuals.

DeBerry's chapter 3 focuses on the need for a community based "psychosocial" approach for war-affected children that is complemented by local, national, and international advocacy efforts. She argues that those working with children traumatized by war must look beyond its impact on their mental health. The Children of Kabul research shows that the risks to children's psychosocial well being are broader than the experience of violence alone and includes: "family loss and separation, family tensions and violence, the condition of the physical environment, children's work and responsibilities, comparing oneself with others, the attitude of teachers, and even falling in love" (p.73).

In chapter 8, Niraula points out what happens to children and the larger society when political ideologies clash. One chilling reality the reader is left with is why young people often become guerrillas. The author argues that the needs of Nepali children must be at the top of the agenda in seeking a peaceful solution to the conflict that exists in what was once perceived as one of the "most peaceful nations on earth". Unfortunately, children everywhere often pay the price for conflict and are seldom considered in any solutions.

India has the largest population of children in the world with 158 million children between the ages of 0-6. Hence, it is quite appropriate that three chapters seek to draw attention to their issues. Sharma chooses to focus the reader of chapter 2 on the estimated 30 million children under the age of 14 who have one or more disabilities. He skillfully uses four case profiles to illustrate the life of disabled children in India today. Sharma elaborates quite appropriately on the need to "change people's attitude toward disabilities; ensure that maternal and children's health care is available and used; implement inclusive education in schools; empower families and communities; and, provide impetus for voluntary action" (p. 42).

Sriram elaborates in chapter 6 on the need for ensuring infant and maternal health care in India. Probably the most notable message given to the reader is that there is no foolproof methodology that works in all contexts. Child advocates must understand the cultural, social and economic context in which different circumstances exist as well as the need to find ways to sustain efforts if real change is to occur.

In chapter 4, Datta focuses on the daunting task of providing early childhood care and educational intervention to every young child in India. The chapter examines both the efforts that have been made in India as well as some of the factors that impede progress. Datta claims that interventions must be multifaceted, comprehensive, and collaborative in order to address the multiple risks of children coming from economically deprived backgrounds.

Several authors, including Dharmadasa and Wickramaratne in chapter 5, Rasheed in chapter 7, and Pattnaik in chapter 9, reference the impact that ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child have had on initiatives within their respective countries to address the physical, psychosocial, safety and nutritional needs of children. Chapter five specifically examines the responses of Sri Lanka

with the help of UNICEF and other agencies to educate communities, families, and caregivers about quality childcare and the rights of children.

The authors emphasize the need to “build up joint support groups, including the leaders of state, provincial, and local bodies, as well as leaders from businesses, the media, community organizations, and religious institutions, so that comprehensive services can be provided to children and families...” (p. 130). Chapter 7 emphasizes an issue that is frequently in the news, namely, equal access for females to employment, health care, education, and the political/legal systems.

In Chapter 9, Pattnaik discusses debates and discourses surrounding children and childhood in South Asia as well as implications of these discourses and debates for policies and programs for children. The chapter draws attention to continuing violations of children’s rights in the region despite the fact that all the South Asian nations have ratified the convention to protect the human rights of all children. Pattnaik argues that governmental policies such as inadequate state provisions and commitment, failure to prioritize children’s issues, failure to highlight the long-term values of education, and failure to see interconnections among issues have contributed to violations of children’s rights in the region.

The specific examples of real situations provide a powerful reminder of the realities of many children in this world and the work that must be undertaken to ensure that no child is denied his or her rights. The failure of societies to adequately address the rights of ALL children in the world are poignantly addressed. However, the text also provides concrete real suggestions for moving forward. The impact of economics and conflict on children are underlying themes throughout this book; and, these should be thoughtfully considered by policy makers in every region of the world! *Childhood in South Asia* will stimulate all child advocates to examine more closely the policies and programs that they set up to address the needs of disenfranchised children, whether in a developed or emerging nation!

One thing is certain, in a world where much of the world’s population is in transition, children who have faced many of the challenges highlighted within this book will be in the classrooms of developed nations. How will we respond to their needs unless we have a clear understanding of the complex nature of their prior existence and its impact upon them? *Childhood in South Asia* provides a clearly written glimpse into the realities of children in emerging and ravaged nations; and, provides the reader with kernels of wisdom on ways to protect children’s rights and well-being.



The Assault

Writing is the balm

The joy that gathers my heart,

For all pain

Like the flame

It is the glory of my sorrow

In the mouth of a storm

Writing in train soaked woods.

My poetry

It is music of cloud –bursts

A luminous Lamp.

During the month of Sharvanas?

I wish I could speak of

- Bidyut Prava Devi, A South Asian Poet (*Courtesy of Sachidananda*

Mohanty, her son, and Nimrod Literary Journal, Oklahoma University)



Sachi Raut Roy, the Pioneer of a Renaissance

By
Pradyot Patnaik*

The year was 1938. India's freedom struggle was passing through its crucial hours. Like many other parts in the country, the message of independence was sweeping fast across Orissa. In that year a defiant twelve year old boy named Baji Rout was shot and killed by the British officers in Dhenkanal for refusing to ply his boat and ferry the officers across a river. The news of Dhenkanal firing engulfed the whole region within hours. Among the thousands of mourners assembled at the cremation there was a young man named Sachi Raut Roy. While everyone was weeping there, this rebellious young writer was pouring fire into his verses scribing his homage to Baji Rout, the boatman boy. Thus, the poem *Baji Rout* born at the cremation was so torrid, stirring and sensational that not only did it inflame Orissa at that time but also immortalize this martyr forever in the history of freedom movement in Orissa. The poem was banned soon by the British government. After independence it was translated into all the major languages in India. Its mesmerizing stanzas with the flow of a volcanic lava and impulse of an impetuous stream inspired many people in pre-independence era and even today *Baji Rout* may be considered as a piece of gem in all the literatures of the world. Its English translation, *The Boatman Boy's Song* by late Harendra Nath Chattopadhyay [1] is very well-known.

Sachi Raut Roy was probably one of the greatest Oriya writers of all time and a founding pillar of modern Oriya literature. Also, he was the best known writer from Orissa known to the outside world. Born on May 13, 1915 in a small village, named, Gurujanga near Khurda, Satchidananda Raut Roy started showing his prodigious talent at a very young age. He started writing at the early age of eleven, certainly captivated by the beauty of his native village. In many of his latter writings one sees the enchanting beauty of his little village and its rural surroundings. In *Chhota Mora Ganti* (My Little Hamlet) the poet transgresses into a nostalgic dream and transcribes the fond memories of his sweet childhood, transcending into an eternal beauty. The lines in the poem are amazingly soft, as if soaked with the drops of dews of a dawn oozing out its faint fragrance ---- the fragrance of his little hamlet. No other poet in Oriya literature, except perhaps *Pallikavi* Nandakishore has so vividly portrayed the beauty of rural Orissa.

While he was a student, Sachi Raut Roy joined India's freedom movement. During this period and latter on in the 1930s and early 1940s all his writings were imbedded with nationalist fervor. Some of his best writings belonged to this era. His well-known works of this period includes *Patheya* (1932), *Purnima* (1933), *Baji Rout* (1938), *Rakta Shikha* (1939). Both *Baji Rout* and *Rakta Shikha* were banned by the British government. Satchidananda remained a revolutionary all throughout his life. He participated in India's freedom movement, the Kisan movement in Orissa and the Gadajat Prajamandal movement and was jailed many times. He was one of the founders of the progressive movement in Oriya literature. Along with Ananta Patnaik and Bhagabati Panigrahi, Sachi Raut Roy is considered as one of the three founding pillars of this progressive movement that emerged in the Oriya literature in the early

* Dr. Patnaik is an Environmental Scientist and Laboratory Director, Interstate Environmental Commission, New York. The author wishes to thank Shri Pradosh Patnaik, News Editor, Samaja for providing some pertinent information for this article.

1940s. He championed the causes of the downtrodden masses through his hypnotic words and wrote fearlessly against all forms of social injustice. This is well reflected in his immortal work, *Utho Jago Bhoki Bandi* (Arise, Awake O Chained Hungry Mass) written in 1943 which was banned immediately.

From 1942 to 1962 Sachi Raut Roy worked in Kesoram Cotton Mills in Calcutta as its Labor and Welfare Administrative Officer. He remained a very popular figure in this organization, helping poor workers in the mills in every possible way and trying to eradicate their grievances. His writing continued unabated without any disruption. *Pandulipi* (1947), *Abhijan* (1948), *Hasant* (1948), *Bhanumatira Desha* (1949) and *Swogata* (1958) were the hallmarks of his creations during this period. He translated Mykowsky's collection of poems into Oriya in 1965 and latter wrote *Asiara Swopna* (Asia's Dream) in 1979.

Whether imbued in nationalism, socialism or humanism or be it a sheer singsong of Mother Nature, Sachi Raut Roy's poetry always retained an astounding rhythm, leaving a tremendous impact in the minds of its readers. In his poetry one sees the flavor of Radhanath Roy, Nazrul and Tagore, nevertheless all natural, spontaneous and original. Around the period 1940s and 1950s Oriya poetry witnessed another major renaissance, its architects this time being Satchidananda along with some of his illustrious contemporaries, such as Radha Mohan Gadanayak, Bhagabati Panigrahi, Ananta Patnaik, Godabarish Mohapatra, Mayadhara Mansinha, Kalindi Charan Panigrahi, Baikuntha Nath Patnaik and others. This was a period when the thoughts and emotions in poetry resonated vibrantly but very widely from nationalism and socialism on one end to the romanticism and existentialism on the other extreme. The first renaissance in Oriya poetry had occurred a few decades earlier coming mainly from the Midas touch of Radhanath Roy, Gangadhar Meher, Fakir Mohan Senapati, Madhusudan Rao and a few others. The second renaissance, however, seems to be more spectacular than the first one because the emotions and the perceptions in the poetry during this period drifted from the Nature and its enchanting beauty as Radhanath perceived in life to the torridity and turbulence of existence as Satchidananda perceived. This renaissance was set in motion by a select band of creative young writers of that era.

Sachi Raut Roy's pen never stopped nor took a respite anytime during his lifetime. His collection of poems under the titles, *Kabita 1962*, *Kabita 1969*, *Kabita 1971*, *Kabita 1983*, *Kabita 1985*, *Kabita 1987* and *Kabita 1990* comprise some of the finest poetry of modern Oriya literature. His poetry is a manifestation of hopes and aspiration, refracting through a crystal that is life, encompassing all its beauty, hardship and struggle but at the end transforming into a colorful rainbow.

Sachi Raut Roy's immense contribution to Oriya literature does not confine to poetry alone but extends far beyond to short stories, novels and essays. Among his popular short stories are *Masanira Phula* (Flowers of the Graveyard) and *Matira Taj* (Crown of Dust) written in 1947 and *Chhai* (Shadow) in 1948. *Chitragriba* (1935) reflects his anti-establishment progressive thoughts. Other major works include *Sahitya Bichar O Mulyabodha* (Thoughts and Analysis of Literature) and *Adhunika Sahityara Keteka Diga* (The Dimensions and Direction of Modern Literature) published in 1972 and 1982 respectively and his autobiography *Uttara Kakshya* in 2000.

Sachi Raut Roy received numerous national and international awards and recognitions in his lifetime. He received the coveted Jnanapitha prize in 1986, the highest and the most prestigious literary award in India. Earlier in 1962 he was awarded Padmashri by the Government of India. He is also the recipient of Central Sahitya Academy award (1964), Soviet Land Award (1965), Bibhuti Bhushan

Bandopadhyay prize (1988), Utkal Ratna (1994), Sahitya Bharati (1997) and the title of Mahakavi. He was honored by many universities abroad, such as, Harvard University (1955), Dacca University (1972), Moscow University (1979) and London University (1982). Both Andhra and Berhampur universities conferred him the honorary degree of Doctorate of Literature in 1977 and 1978. He was invited to speak in Russia, Czechoslovakia, England, Australia and New Zealand. As the president of Orissa Sahitya Academy from 1978 to 1981, Sachi Raut Roy was instrumental in setting up a monthly allowance scheme to help the poor and needy artists, writers and sportsmen in Orissa.

This doyen of letters breathed his last on August 21, 2004 at the age of 89. His life was a saga of a revolution in Oriya poetry and death brought an end to an epoch. Some of the stanzas he created shine like pearls embroidered into a tapestry. In the horizon of the modern Indian literature; he illuminates like the polestar, and that is Sachi Raut Roy.

[1] *The Boatman Boy and Forty Poems*, Prabasi Press, Calcutta -9, 1954



“THE MONALISA SMILE”

by Nita Panda*

Deep in the night
She woke me;

Her long hair, glistened in the moonlit
night
The candle in her hand, shone in her
eyes.

She spoke in my ears;
“Wake up from this deep sleep.”

She had the voice of a nightingale
She had the smell of a jasmine
She had the Monalisa smile!

Her beauty stole my heart
I lost my sleep all night.

This cannot be true, my inner voice said
to me.
Who is this maiden melody?
Why did she steal my dream?

As I stood in the front porch

She disappeared into the dark night.

Her memories hung deep in my heart.
Her smile stole my sleep.....

As daylight came
Her voice echoed in my ears.....

“This life is a dream
Do not fall into my beauty,
For
I am here now and then gone the next
minute.”



* A Senior Financial Officer at Finance America, California

ଅର୍ପଣ

ମନୋରମା ମହାପାତ୍ର*

ମୁଁ ଛୁଟୁଛି ଭିନ୍ନ ଏକ ପ୍ରୀତି ଆଗେ
ମୀରାବାଇ, ଭାବରେ ବିଦୁଳ-ସ୍ରୋତସ୍ନିନୀ
ଶ୍ରେତଗଙ୍ଗା ଜଳ ।

ଅବା ମୁହିଁ ଅରଣ୍ୟବାସିନୀ ସେହି ରାମାୟଣୀ ନାରୀ,
ତପୋରତା-ତିତିକ୍ଷାରେ ଶୀର୍ଷ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର
ଉତ୍କର୍ଷିତା ପ୍ରାଚୀନା ଶବରୀ ।

ଅଥବା ପାଞ୍ଚାଳୀ କୃଷ୍ଣ- ପଞ୍ଚପତି ପ୍ରୀତିବଳେ ମୋର,
ଏ ପରାଶ ନହୋଇଲା କୀର୍ତ୍ତ,
ବିଶ୍ୱଦୁଃଖ ନିବାରକ ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଙ୍କୁ
ମୋ ମାନସ ନିରୋଳାରେ କଳି ସମର୍ପିତ ।

ଅବା ମୁହିଁ କୁରୁଜା କୁରୁପା ଏକ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନବାଚୀ
ଅସମ୍ଭବ ଇଚ୍ଛା ରୂପ ରେଖା ।
କେଶବ କରପଲ୍ଲବ ଛୁଆଟିଏ ପାଇଁ
ଅଥଚ ମୁଁ ଚିରକାଳ-ଉନ୍ମୁଖ-ଉନ୍ମୁଖା ।
ଜାଣେ ନାହିଁ କିଏ ମୁହିଁ ?
କୁଆଡେ ଛୁଟୁଛି ଅବା ବନ୍ଧନ ଫିଟେଇ ?
ଜାଣେ ଖାଲି ବିଶ୍ୱାସକୁ କାନିରେ ଗଢ଼େଇ
ମୁଁ ଛୁଟୁଛି ଅଜ୍ଞେୟକୁ ଧ୍ୟାୟି ।

ହେ ଦେବ- ହେ ଜଗତକାରଣ ।
ବିଶ୍ୱବେଦନାର ବୈଦ୍ୟ- ହେ ବ୍ୟଧୁ
ହେ ସଖା, ପ୍ରିୟତମ ।
ତୁମେ ମୋର ନିତ୍ୟସତ୍ୟ- ଜୀବନ ମରଣ
ତୁମ ପାଶେ ଆପଣାକୁ ନିର୍ବିଚାରେ

ଗୋଟା ପଶେ କରିଲି ଅର୍ପଣ ।

* ସଂପାଦକ, ସମାଜ

ଏକାକିନୀ

ବିନୋଦିନୀ ଦେବୀ *

ମୁଁ ଯେ ଭରା ବସନ୍ତର ଶାଖାରେ ଶାଖାରେ
ଏକାକୀ କଢ଼ଳ ପାତି
ମୁଁ ଯେ ଭରା ବଉଳର ନିଶାରେ ବିଭୋର
ଏକାକିନୀ ମଧୁମତୀ

ମୁଁ ଯେ ଘର ବାହୁଡ଼ିଲା ଗୋଧୂଳି ଅଂଧାରେ
ଏକାକି ଲୋଚଣୀ ପାରା
ମୁଁ ଯେ ପାହାଡ଼ି ରାତିର ଉତ୍ତରା ଆକାଶେ
ଏକାକିନୀ ଚିକି ତାରା
ମୁଁ ଯେ ଝୁରା ଅତୀତର ଲିତାରେ ଲିତାରେ
ବିଧୂର ବରଦୀ ଛାତି
ମୁଁ ଯେ ଏକାକିନୀ ମଧୁମତୀ
ମୁଁ ତ ଏକାକୀ କଢ଼ଳ ପାତି

ମୁଁ ଯେ ସାତତାଳ ପଙ୍କ ଅଥଳ ଜଳରେ
ଏକାକିନୀ ନୀଳ କଇଁ
ମୁଁ ଯେ ନିଛାଡ଼ିଆ ବନ ପାହାଡ଼ ତଳର
ଉଷର ମଶାଣୀ ଭୁଇଁ
ଏ ମୋ ଜୀବନର ଜଳନ୍ତା ଜୁଇରେ
ଜଳୁଚି ମୋହୁରି ପ୍ରୀତି

ମୁଁ ଯେ ଏକାକୀ କଢ଼ଳ ପାତି
ମୁଁ ତ ଏକାକିନୀ ମଧୁମତୀ ...

* ମଲ୍ଲାଭଦ୍ର ଚଳଚ୍ଚିତ୍ରର ଶୀତକାର, ରାଷ୍ଟ୍ରପତିଙ୍କ ପୁରସ୍କୃତ ଲେଖିକା

ଅମୃତମୟ

*** ତତ୍କୃତ୍ ଶ୍ରୀନିବାସ ଉଦ୍‌ଗାତା

କବିକୁ ପ୍ରଜାପତି ବୋଲି ଯେଉଁ ଅସଲ କବିତି ଦେଖି ଘୋଷଣା କଲା, ସେତେବେଳେ ସେ କବିସଭାରେ କେବଳ ମାତ୍ର ସତ୍ୟକୁ, ଶାଶ୍ୱତକୁ, ଅମୃତମୟକୁ, ଓ ସର୍ବୋପରି ଆନନ୍ଦ... ପରମାନନ୍ଦ ହିଁ ଦର୍ଶନ କରିଥିଲା ।

ଚରମ ଉପଲବ୍ଧିରେ ଅନ୍ତର୍ନିହିତ ଆନନ୍ଦ ଯାହା ଦେଖି ହୁଏ ନାହିଁ, ଅଦୃଶ୍ୟରେ ରହିଥାଏ, ବୋଲି ଏବଂ ଦୃଶ୍ୟରେ ତାର ରୋମାଞ୍ଚକ ପ୍ରତିଫଳନ, ଉତ୍ପୁଲ୍ଲ ଉଦ୍‌ଭାସ, ଅପୂର୍ବ ମାଧୁରୀ, ବିମୋହିତ ହୋଇ ଖୋଜି ବୁଲିଲା । ସେଇ ବିଚିତ୍ର ଚିତ୍ରକରକୁ ଯେ ତାର ଅକ୍ଷୟ ତୁଳୀରେ କେତେ ଅଚିନ୍ତନୀୟ ବିଳକ୍ଷଣ ଛଟାରେ ଶବ୍ଦଜିତ, ମଜ୍ଜିତ, ମନ୍ତ୍ରବତ୍ ଅଭିମୁଦ୍ରିତ କରି ଚାଲିଛି, ନଭର ଅନନ୍ତ ଚିତ୍ରଫଳକକୁ, ପରମ ପ୍ରେମିକା ବସୁନ୍ଧରାକୁ । ନା ସେଇ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣର ଅକ୍ଷୟ ଭଣ୍ଡାର ନିଃଶେଷ ହେଉଛି ବା ହେବାର ସମ୍ଭାବନା ଅଛି, ନା ନିତ୍ୟ ନୂତନ, ପ୍ରତିଟି ପଲକରେ ଅଭିନବ ନବୀନ ସର୍ଜନାର ଧାରା ଆପଣାର ନିରନ୍ତରତା ହରେଇ ବସୁଛି କୋଉଠି, ନା ସେଇ ଅନନ୍ତ କଳ୍ପନାର ମୋହନ ନର୍ତ୍ତନ କୋଉଠି ଧିମେଇ ଯାଉଛି... ସେମିତି ମୁହଁତ ହୋଇ ଚାଲିଛି ତାର ନୁପୁରର ଲୟବଦ୍ଧ ନିକ୍ୱଣ... ସେଇ ଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠମ ଶିଳ୍ପୀର ଇଚ୍ଛାରେ... ମୟ ମଧୁର, ମଧ୍ୟ-ବିଭୋର ଦୁତ-ପ୍ରମତ୍ତ ଗତିରେ, ରୀତିରେ... ଛନ୍ଦରେ, ଭାବମୟ ଲାସ୍ୟରେ । ତହିଁରେ କେବଳ ଏ ଜଗତ ବିମୋହିତ ହେଉ ନାହିଁ, ପ୍ରମୁଦିତ ହେଉଛି ସେଇ ଭୂମିବି ।

ନଭ ନୀଳିମାରେ କମନୀୟ ଉଷାର ଉଦୟୋତ୍ସବ, ସତରେ ଯେମିତି ଏକ ଅଛୋଦ ସରୋବର, ଉଦୟାଚଳ ଯେମିତି ସେଇ ସରୋବରର ତୁଠ ପଥର ଆଉ ଯେମିତି ପ୍ରାତଃସ୍ନାନଗତା ଉଷା-ପାଦ-ଅଳତାରେ ରଞ୍ଜିତ ପ୍ରାଚୀ-ପଟ ... ପାଟଳ, ଅରୁଣାଭ ସେଇ ନାରଙ୍ଗ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣର ପୀତାଭସତ୍ତ୍ୱା ଯେମିତି ନଭ-ପ୍ରଶାନ୍ତ ନୀଳିମାରେ ଏକାମ୍ ହୋଇ ବୋଲି ଦେଉଛି, ଧରିତୀ ତନୁରେ ଶ୍ୟାମଳିମା ଉଲସାଇ ଦେଉଛି ଲତା-ପତ୍ର-ବନସ୍ତତିକୁ ନବୀନ ଆମୋଦରେ ପଲକିତ, ପୁଷ୍ପିତ, ଉନ୍ନେଷିତ, ସୁଗନ୍ଧିତ, ସୁରଭିତ କରି, ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧରାତିର ସମାଧିସ୍ଥ ପ୍ରଥମ ପାଦରେ ଶିବ ରଞ୍ଜନୀର ମୌନ-ମୁଖରିତ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା ପରି ଅପ୍ରମେୟ ତନୁତାରେ କ୍ରମଶଃ ଅଧିକ ମୁଁ, ପ୍ରଗଳ୍ଭ, ପ୍ରମତ୍ତ ହୋଇ ଉଠୁଛି, ବିହଙ୍ଗ କାକଳୀରେ ଅହିରଭୈରବ, ନଟଭୈରବ, ବାତାୟୋଳିତ ଆହୋରଣ ଅବରୋହଣର ପୁଲକ ରହିଛି, ରୋମାଞ୍ଚ ରହିଛି, କାମିନୀ ତଟିନୀର ଆତୁରତା ରହିଛି, ଶୃଙ୍ଖଳିତ ଲଳିତ ଛନ୍ଦରେ... ଏମାନେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଅଧୀର, ବ୍ୟାକୁଳ ସେଇ ପରମ ପୁରୁଷର ମିଳନ କାମିନୀ ପ୍ରକୃତି । ମୁଁ ଯାହା ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ କଲି ତାହା ସେଇ ରକ୍ଷି କବି ତପସ୍ୱୀ ସାଧକ କବିମାନଙ୍କ ଦିବ୍ୟ

ଦୃଷ୍ଟିର ବିସ୍ମୟକାରୀ ଉପଲବ୍ଧିର କୋଟିଏ ଭାଗର ଭାଗେ ବି ହେବ ନାହିଁ ।... ସେମାନେ ସେଇ ଆନନ୍ଦ ଅମୃତତ୍ୱ, ସବୁ କିଛିକୁ ମଧୁ... ମଧୁମୟ ବୋଲି ହିଁ ଦେଖୁଛନ୍ତି... ତଥାପି ବି ଆହୁରି ଆହୁରି ଲୋଭରେ ବାତ ମଧୁ ବିତରିତ କରୁ, ତଟିନୀ ମଧୁସ୍ରାବୀ ହେଉ, ବନସ୍ତତି ଦିବ୍ୟାଷପିର ପୀୟୂଷ ପ୍ରଦାନ କରୁ, ଧରା ମଧୁମୟୀ ହେଉ ବୋଲି ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା କରିଛନ୍ତି...

ସେଇ ପରମ ସିଦ୍ଧ ସତ୍‌ସାର୍ଥକ ରକ୍ଷି କବି ଗଙ୍ଗାଧରଙ୍କର ଦର୍ଶନପଲ୍ଲସରେ କି ଚିତ୍ତ ଚିତ୍ତିତ ହୋଇ ଥା'ନ୍ତା ସେଇ ଅମୃତକୃଷୀ ପ୍ରକୃତିର?

ନବ ବିକସିତ ପୁଲ ଗନ୍ଧ,
ନବ ସରସ କବିତା ଛନ୍ଦ,
ବନ ବିହଗ ମଧୁର ତାନ,
ଶିଶୁ ସରଳ ତରଳ ଗାନ,
ନବ ପ୍ରଫୁଲ୍ଲ କମଳ କାନନ,
ନବ ସୁକୁମାର ଶିଶୁ ଆନନ,
ଅମୃତମୟ ଅମୃତମୟ,
ଭସାଇ ଦେଉଛି ଜୀବନ ।

ଏହା ବ୍ୟତୀତ ମହାକବି ବାଲ୍ମୀକିଙ୍କର ସହଜ, ସରଳ ଅଥଚ ସାବଲୀଳ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନା ଚାତୁରୀ ପରି । ତେବେ ଦୃଶ୍ୟ-ଅଦୃଶ୍ୟର ଭେଦରେ, ରୂପ ଓ ଭାବ କଳ୍ପନାର ସୁସ୍ଥାସୁସ୍ଥ ଭେଦରେ ଯାହା ଭାଷା-ଭାରତୀ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ନିପୁଣ କବି କଣ୍ଠରେ ଉଚ୍ଚାରିତ, ଘୋଷିତ ହୋଇଛି, ତାହା ଭିତରେ ଏକ ଦୃଶ୍ୟମାନ ପ୍ରତୀକ ରହିଛି ନିର୍ମଳ ଓ ସୁକୁମାର ଶିଶୁର । ଶିଶୁଠାରୁ ବଳି ନିରହଂକାର, ଇଷ୍ୟା, ଅସୁୟାରହିତ, ପବିତ୍ର, ନିର୍ମଳ, ଅକଳୁଷିତ ସତରେ ଆଉ କିଏ ଅଛି? ତାକୁ କଣ ପରୋକ୍ଷରେ ପ୍ରତିଟି ମଧୁରତାକୁ, ପ୍ରେମକୁ, ଶାଶ୍ଵତ ସତ୍ୟକୁ, ଆନନ୍ଦ ଓ ମଧୁରତାକୁ ଉପଲବ୍ଧ କରିବାର ଏକମାତ୍ର ମାଧ୍ୟମ ବୋଲି ଗ୍ରହଣ କରି ସ୍ଵୀକାର କରା ଯାଇ ପାରିବ ନାହିଁ । ଆମେ ମଧୁରାଭାଷିକ୍ତ ହେବାଲାଗି ସେପରି ଏକ କାତକେୟୁ ପରି ସ୍ଵଚ୍ଛ ନିଷ୍କଳଙ୍କ ମନର ଅଧିକାର ହେବା ଏକାନ୍ତ ବାଞ୍ଛନୀୟ । ତାପରେ ସମଗ୍ର ବିଶ୍ଵ ମଧୁ-ମଧୁର ବନ୍ୟା-ପାବତ ହୋଇ ଉଠିବ ଆପଣା ଛାଏଁ । କବିତାର ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ଦୁଇ ପଦ ସେଇ ତାତ୍ଵିକତାର ବିକଶିତ ବିଶେଷଣ । ତେବେ ମଧ୍ୟ ମୁଁ ତାକୁ ଉଦ୍ଧାର କରୁଛି ଏକ ସ୍ଥିର ଅବବୋଧ ସକାଶେ -

ଧୀର ଚଳିତ ଶୀତଳ ବାତ,
ଚିର ଲଳିତ କୁମୁଦ ନାଥ,
କ୍ଷୀର-ଧବଳ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରିକା ଜାଲ,
ନୀରଦାନଦସ ଘନ ମାଳ,
ମୃଦୁ ମଧୁର ଆଲୋକ ଉଷାର ,
ନବ ପଲ୍ଲବ ପତିତ ତୁଷାର
ଅମୃତମୟ ଅମୃତଚର,
ମଜାଇ ଦେଉଛି ସଂସାର,
ମିଟିମିଟି ଜଳମଳ ତାରା,

ଟପଟପ ଜଳଧର ଧାରା,
ତମ ନାଶନେ ଧାବିତ ଧଳି,
ତମ ମୁକତ ହୁଷ୍ଟ ଅବନୀ,
ଗିରି ଗରଭପ୍ରସୂତ ନିର୍ଝର,
ଦୂର ଲଂପିତ ପ୍ରପାତ ଝର୍ଝର,
ଅମୃତମୟ, ଅମୃତମୟ, ,
ଜୀବନ କରୁଛି ଜର୍ଜର । ……

ଏମାନେ କାଳର ସ୍ଥିତି ପ୍ରଦାନକାରୀ ଉପାଦାନ ମାତ୍ର ନୁହଁନ୍ତି କିଂବା ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟର ବୋଧକାରୀ ପ୍ରତୀକ ସମୂହ ନୁହଁନ୍ତି ସେମାନେ ଗୋଟାଏ ଗୋଟାଏ ଶୃଙ୍ଖଳିତ ଅନୁଶାସିତ କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ ନିୟୋଜିତ ହୋଇ ରହିଛନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ନିସ୍ଵାର୍ଥ କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ ସଂପାଦନ ଫଳସ୍ଵରୂପ ସୁଷମାମଣ୍ଡିତା ହୋଇଥାଏ ଧରିତ୍ରୀ ତଥା ଐଶ୍ଵର୍ଯ୍ୟ-ବିଭୂତି ମଣ୍ଡିତ ହୋଇ ଥାଏ ଜଗତ । ପ୍ରକୃତିର କୌଣସି କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଆପଣାର ସ୍ଵାର୍ଥ ପ୍ରେରିତ ନୁହେଁ । ତାହା ଆପାତତଃ ଏକ ଦାତାପଣ । ଦ' ତାପିତ ହେବାରେ ବି ଯେଉଁ ସୁଖଲାଭ କରିଥାଏ ପ୍ରକୃତି ଆପାତତଃ ସବୁ ଦେଇ ନିଃସ୍ଵ ନିକାଞ୍ଚନ ହୋଇ ଯିବାରେ ବି ତାର କୌଣସି ଦୁଃଖ ନ ଥାଏ । କେତେ ଯତ୍ନରେ ପାଳିତ, ପୁଷ୍ଟ, ପକ୍ୱ, ପୁଷ୍ଟକ, ମଧୁସ୍ଵାଦଯୁକ୍ତ କରିଥିବା ଆପଣା ଫଳର ଭୋକ୍ତା ନିଜେ ବୃକ୍ଷ ନୁହେଁ । ସେଇ ଫଳ ଯେମିତି ଭୋକ୍ତାକୁ ଚୂଷ୍ଟ କରିଥାଏ ଆପେ ନିଃଶେଷିତ ହୋଇ ସେମିତି ବିରତ ହୁଏ ନାହିଁ ବୋଲି ପୁନଃ ନବ ଉନ୍ମେଷର କ୍ରିୟାରେ ଆପଣାକୁ ନିୟୋଜିତ କରି ଥାଏ, ଆପେ, ଆପଣା ଛାଏଁ, ପରିତ୍ୟକ୍ତ ବୀଜରୁ ଅଜ୍ଞରୋକ୍ତମର ପ୍ରକ୍ରିୟା ରୂପରେ । ସେପରି ଆକାଶ, ରୌଦ୍ରତାପରେ ତାପିତ କରେ ଆପଣାର ପ୍ରୀତିପ୍ରତିମା, ପ୍ରିୟତମା ବସୁନ୍ଧରାକୁ ପୁନଃ ତାକୁ କଲ୍ୟାଣ ବାରିରେ ସିଂତନରେ ଆପାଦିତା କରି ଦେବାକୁ, ନବ ସର୍ଜନାର ତନ୍ମୟ ଅନୁରାଗ-ବିଭୂଷିତା ଧରିତ୍ରୀକୁ କେତେ ମତେ ଐଶ୍ଵର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଲାବଣ୍ୟବତୀ କରି ସେଇ ରୂପଶ୍ରୀକୁ ବିଭୋର ସମର୍ପିତ ଆଖିରେ ଅନେଇବାକୁ… କେତେ ମଧୁର ଓ ରମଣୀୟ ନୁହେଁ ସତେ… ଦ୍ୟାବା-ପୃଥିବୀର କମନୀୟ, ମନୋହର ଉପନିଷଦିୟ ପରିକଳ୍ପନା । … ପୃଥିବୀ ଏଠାରେ ଉତ୍ସବ ଓ ଅପ୍ରତିମା, ନିତ୍ୟ ନବନୀତ ଉତ୍ସବର ଆୟୋଜନ କରି ଚାଲିଛି, ଆପଣାକୁ ଶୃଙ୍ଖାର-ମଣ୍ଡିତା କରି ପରମ ପ୍ରିୟ ସେଇ ପରମ କବି ଶିଳ୍ପୀକୁ ସମ୍ମୋହିତ କରିବାକୁ । ଯାହା ମହାକବି ଗଙ୍ଗାଧରଙ୍କର ଗଭୀର ଭାବରେ ଆତ୍ମସ୍ତ କରିଥିବା ବୈଦିକ ତତ୍ତ୍ଵଦର୍ଶିତାର ଏକ ମହତ ଉଦାହରଣ ଭାବରେ ଉପସ୍ଥାପିତ କରାଯାଇ ପାରିବ । ଅର୍ଘ୍ୟ ଥାଳୀରେ ସନ୍ନିବେସିତ 'ଭକ୍ତି', 'ଅମୃତମୟ', ଓ 'ମଧୁମୟ' ଶୀର୍ଷକ ତିନୋଟି କବିତା ପରସ୍ପରର ପରିପୁରକ । ମାତ୍ର ମୁଁ ତାର ଆଲୋଚନା ପ୍ରବନ୍ଧର ଅପ୍ରାସଙ୍ଗିକ ପଲ୍ଲବନ ଓ ଦୀର୍ଘତାର ଆଶଂକାରେ ନ କରି କବିତାର ଅନ୍ତମ ଚରଣକୁ ଆସୁଛି ।

ଏଠାରେ ସେହି ପ୍ରାତଃ ସ୍ମରଣୀୟ ଅପୂର୍ବ ମେଧା, ଅନୁଶୀଳନ, ପ୍ରତିଭା, ଉପଲବ୍ଧି, ପ୍ରଜ୍ଞାର ଅଧିକାରୀ, କୃତଜ୍ଞ ଓ ବିନୀତ, ପ୍ରକୃତିର ପରମ ପ୍ରେମୀ, ଭୂମା ପ୍ରତି ପରିପୁର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଆସ୍ଥାରେ ସଂପୁର୍ଣ୍ଣ ସମର୍ପିତ ତପସ୍ଵୀ କବିଙ୍କୁ ସ୍ମରଣ କରୁଛି । ମୋର ଅଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟତାରେ ଲାଗେ ଯେମିତି ନିଜର ଚିତ୍ତ ଓ ଧ୍ୟାୟକୁ କବି ନିନ୍ଦୋକ୍ତ ପଂକ୍ତିରେ ପ୍ରଜ୍ଞାପିତ କରିଯାଇଛନ୍ତି ।

ବନେ ବନେ ଭ୍ରମି ଭ୍ରମି ଗଣ୍ଡ କୁହୁକେ ନ ଭ୍ରମି
ବହୁ ବାଧା ଅତିକ୍ରମି ସୁଖ ଜୀବନେ
ଅନ୍ଧାର ଦୁଃଖ ନ ମଣି ଆଲୋକ ସୁଖ ନ ମଣି
ଚାଲିଛି ଦୂର ସରଣୀ ନତ ବଦନେ
ଜନମ କରୁଛି ସଫଳ
ତୋୟ ଦାନେ ତୋଷି ତୀରବାସୀ ସକଳ ।

କବି ଯେ ନିଃସିଦ୍ଧ ଭାବରେ ଏକ ସଂଘର୍ଷମୟ ଜୀବନଯାପନ କରିଥିଲେ, ତାହା ତାଙ୍କର ଜୀବନଚରିତରୁ ସ୍ପଷ୍ଟ ହୋଇଯାଏ । ସନ୍ତୋଷ ଥିଲା, କିଛି ତ ହେଲେ ଦେଇ କାହାକୁ ହେଲେତ ତୋଷ ଦେଇ ପାରୁଛି ! ଏବଂ ଏକ ଅମୃତମୟ ଆନନ୍ଦାପୁତ ଜଗତର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ହିଁ ଦେଖୁ ଥିଲେ……

ଭାରତୀୟ ଗଭୀର ତତ୍ତ୍ୱ ଦର୍ଶନରେ ଆତ୍ମାକୁ ଅବିନାଶୀ, ଅକ୍ଷର ଓ ନିତ୍ୟ ବୋଲି ସ୍ୱଇକାର କରା ଯାଇଛି । ସେଇ ଆତ୍ମା ଆପଣାର ସୁକୃତି ଓ ସିଦ୍ଧି ବଳରେ ପରମାତ୍ମାର ସତ୍ତାରେ ବିଲୀନ ହୋଇଯାଏ, ଯାହାକୁ ମୁକ୍ତି, ନିର୍ବାଣ, ମୋକ୍ଷ, ପରମଧ୍ୟମ ପ୍ରାପ୍ତି ବୋଲି କୁହାଯାଇଛି ଶଂସିତ ଏହି କବିତାରେ ପରିଶେଷରେ ଯୋଗୀକବି ଗଙ୍ଗାଧର ଆପଣାର ସେହି ବୋଧର ହିଁ ଅବତାରଣା କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଆପଣାର ଅପୂର୍ବ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ, ପରମ ଦେବତା ପ୍ରତି ପ୍ରଗାଢ଼ ଆତ୍ମା, ଓ ତାଙ୍କର ଅନ୍ତର୍ନିହିତ ଆତ୍ମବିଶ୍ୱାସ ସହିତ ସମର୍ପଣର ଭାବ ଲକ୍ଷଣୀୟ ।

ମୁଁ ତ ଅମୃତ ସାଗର ବିନ୍ଦୁ,
ନଭେ ଉଠି ଥିଲି ତେଜି ସିନ୍ଧୁ,
ଖସି ମିଶିଛି ଅମୃତ ଧାରରେ
ଗତି କରୁଅଛି ସେ ଅକ୍ୱପାରେ,
ପଥେ ଶୁଖିଗଲେ ପାପ ଭାପରେ,
ହୋଇ ଶିଶିର ଖସିବି ତାପରେ,
ଅମୃତମୟ, ଅମୃତମୟ

ସହିତ ମିଶିବି ସାଗରେ

ମୁଁ ସେଇ ପରମାତ୍ମାରୂପୀ ଅମୃତ ସାଗରର ଗୋତାଏ ବିନ୍ଦୁ ମାତ । ସେହି ସିନ୍ଧୁ ତେଜି ଉଠି ଯାଇଥିଲି ଓ ପୁନଃ ଅମୃତ ଧାରା ଖସି ଆସିଛି । ଜୀବନ ଚକ୍ରର ବିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ବି ପ୍ରାକୃତିକ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଧାରା ପରି ଚକ୍ରାକାରରେ ଗତି କରି ଥାଏ । ସମସ୍ତେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ପରିପୁରକ । ଯେମିତି ଆରମ୍ଭକୁ ସବୁ କିଛି ଫେରି ଆସିଥାଏ ପରିଶେଷରେ, ସେଇ ଗତିଶୀଳତା । ମୁଁ ମଧ୍ୟ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟର ଧ୍ୟେୟର ଅଭିମୁଖୀ ହୋଇ ସେହି ପ୍ରବହମାନତାରେ ଚାଲିଛି । ତେବେ ବାଧା ଅଛି, ପରିପତ୍ତୀ ସ୍ଥିତି ଅଛି, ତାକୁ କବି ଆପଣାର ପାପ ତାପ ବୋଲି କହୁଛନ୍ତି; କହୁଛନ୍ତି ସେଥିରେ ଦ' ହୋଇ ଶୁଖି ଗଲେ, ମୋର ଆତ୍ମା ଅଛି ହେ ଅମୃତମୟ, ଅମୃତମୟ ମଧୁର, ମଧୁରାପତି ଶିଶିର ହୋଇ ପୁନଃ ଖସି ଆସିବ, ସେଇ ଅମୃତମୟତାରେ, ମଧୁମଧୁର ପ୍ରେମମୟତାରେ ବିଲୀନ ହୋଇ ଯିବାକୁ……

କବି କୁଟୀର, ବଲାଙ୍ଗୀର

୧-୮-୨୦୦୧

*** ପ୍ରାୟ ଶହେ ପଚାଶରୁ ଅଧିକ ବହିର ରଚୟିତା ଡକ୍ଟର ଉଦ୍‌ଗାତା ସହିତ୍ୟ ବାଚସ୍ପତି

ପୁରସ୍କାରରେ ସମ୍ମାନିତ ଓ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଜଗତରେ ସୁପରିଚିତ ।

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SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF ORISSA

Dr. Baidyanath Misra⁴

The State of Orissa comprises an area of 60,136 square miles and it has been divided into 30 districts for administrative purposes. This has been reached through various stages. In fact, until 1936, Orissa was not a separate state. Orissa was a part of Bengal until 1912 and then a part of Bihar until 1936. Orissa was constituted as a separate province in 1936 by carving out certain portions from the provinces of Bihar, Orissa and Madras. At the time of separation, it was only a small province with six districts, viz., Balasore, Cuttack, Puri, Ganjam, Koraput and Sambalpur. It was only after independence, when the princely states were merged with India in the year 1948. 23 out of 24 princely states inside Orissa were merged within the state of Orissa. The merger of the state of Mayurbhanja was delayed by one year, and in January 1949, it became a part of Orissa. Orissa was then converted into 13 districts for administrative purposes. Later on, the number of districts increased to 30 for administrative convenience.

The areas which formed the province of Orissa in 1936 had been under different provinces. Since they used to form the tail ends of the provinces concerned, they did not receive sufficient attention in the matters of development. We can cite one instance which can show how the development of Orissa was neglected as it formed a part of other provinces. During the colonial period, no attempt was made by the British Government to increase industrial development of India. As such there were no industries of any significance in Orissa. Agriculture which was the main occupation of most of the people of Orissa could not develop due to sun-set law, most of the zamindaries were sold to outsiders who had no interest in Orissa except to collect rent through intermediaries who rack-rented the peasants, and the landlords used the rent so collected for conspicuous consumption. Thus the surplus of agriculture which was derived through rent was not utilized for agricultural development, not to speak of industrial development. Further, since the prices of agricultural goods were terribly low, the tillers of the soil had to eke out their existence with a subsistence level of income. Neither there was development of agriculture, nor was there any improvement in the level of living of the people.

The princely states under the ruling chiefs were of various sizes and many of them had exceedingly limited resources. And those who had some resources did not make any attempt to improve the economic condition of the people or accelerate the economic progress of the state. There was not only economic backwardness, but also social retrogression. Very few princely states had any progressive system of administration. On the other hand, it has been observed by many that arbitrary rule of some of the princely states was so oppressive that there was hardly any scope for the people of the states to make any mark in the field of education, social status or economic well being. And therefore, when in 1949, all the different areas were constituted into the state of Orissa, there was considerable diversity in regard to structure of administrative set up and level of economic development. However, there was one redeeming feature in the vicious circle of poverty and backwardness. All through history, there was

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more or less complete homogeneity all over the state, not only with regard to language, but also in the matter of culture, traditions, heritage and social inter-course. But on account of dismemberment of the regions, an integrated economic structure over the entire area was lacking. The Government of Orissa tried to bring about this integration through the help of different plans which were initiated from the beginning of fifties.

In our analysis, we will cover five important features of economic development, i.e. (i) general features comprising demography, rate of growth, extent of poverty, etc. (ii) agriculture which is the mainstay of most of the people of Orissa, (iii) industry which has been given a lot of importance in the planned era to diversify the economy of the state, (iv) social sector which plays an important part in increasing human development and (v) budgetary position of the state which is deplorable. Since we are not writing an economic history of Orissa, we have not only confined ourselves to these five major components of development, but also neglected a lot of historical background. While making a quantitative assessment of the development that has taken place during the planned era, we have presented a few statistical data of the pre-independence period just to indicate the progress that has been made in the state in recent years. Even though the analysis shows that Orissa has emerged as a developing state due to planned development, compared to many other states of India, Orissa is still considered to be one of the poorer states of India. The macro-economic review of Orissa since independence shows that Orissa has been wading through unending poverty, unemployment and deprivation.

Socio-Economic Backdrop

Orissa constitutes 4.74 per cent of the landmass and 3.58 per cent of population (2001 census). Its forests coverage according to official estimate was 37.3% of the total area in 2001-02. But some of the other estimates indicate that it is not more than 25 per cent. Orissa has a long coast line with rich marine wealth which extends up to 480 KM. It contains a large number of mineral resources, accounting almost 98 per cent of chromites, 95 per cent of nickel, 70 per cent of bauxite, 26 per cent of iron ore and 24 per cent of coal reserves of the country. The total cultivable land of the state is nearly 65.59 lakh hectares of which 26.89 lakh hectares were irrigated by the end of 2003-04 by different sources which is about 41 per cent of the total cultivable land of the state. According to the estimate of the Central Ground Water Board, the total replenishable ground water resources from normal recharge in Orissa in 1992 were about 16.5 lakh hectare meter. By 2001, only 14.79 of ground water resources had been harnessed.

If we consider economic development on the basis of per capita income, Orissa's per capita income in the year 2002-03 comes to only Rs.5665 at 1993-94 prices compared to all-India average of Rs.10964. According to the Economic Survey 2004-05 the per capita GSDP of all states except Bihar is more than that of Orissa. But when we come to poverty, Orissa is found to have the highest percentage of people below poverty line i.e., 47.2% compared to all India average of 26.10% in 1999-2000. Even Bihar which had had highest percentage of people below poverty line in 1993-94 has now less number of people below poverty line, the percentage being 42.60. The level of poverty in Punjab comes to only 6.2%.

The development pattern of Orissa is marked by low level of social development. Take the case of literacy rate. In 2001 while literacy rate was 63.6 in Orissa, the all India average comes to 65.5. Of the 28 states of India, 19 states have higher literacy rates than Orissa. What is worse is that the female literacy rate is much lower in Orissa; it is only 50.97 per cent. Of the total 30 districts, 12 districts have lower rates of literacy rates. The same trend is also noticed with regard to female literacy rate. Orissa has also higher annual death rate than all India averages. The Human Development Index of Orissa is only

0.404. Of the major states of India, 10 states have higher HDI while four states have lower HDI than that of Orissa. There is again a lot of difference between different districts of Orissa. Particularly, in the districts where there is concentration of SC & ST population, the HDI is much lower.

Some of the other illustrations regarding development show that while per hectare average yield of rice in Orissa is about 15.90 quintals per hectare (2001-02), in Punjab it is about 35.40 quintals. Irrigation plays an important part in increasing yield from agriculture. Whereas in Orissa the percentage of net area irrigated to net sown area (1999-00) comes to 34.40, in Punjab & Harayana, the percentages come to 94.48 and 81.31 respectively. There is also considerable difference in fertilizer consumption. While consumption of fertilizer per hectare of gross cropped area in Orissa during 2002-03 comes to 39.00 kg, it is 174.99 in Punjab and 152.79 kg. in Harayana, all-India average being 84.82 kg. Coming to industry we find that the percentage of distribution of factory workers in Orissa to total all-India factory workers in the year 2001-02 comes to only 1.50 compared to 13.70 for Maharashtra, 15.05 for Tamil Nadu and 12.61 for Andhra Pradesh. The per capita gross output in industry for Orissa (in the same year) comes to Rs.3631.69 compared to Rs.18539.59 for Maharashtra, Rs.15490.51 for Punjab and Rs.15118.01 for Tamil Nadu. Per capita value added by manufacture (in the same year) comes to Rs.526.46 for Orissa compared to Rs.3005.71 for Maharashtra, Rs.3043.64 for Harayana and Rs.2342.62 for Tamil Nadu. All this shows that there is a great deal of contradiction between the bounties of nature and development of the state. It is presumed that development of the state in a big way is possible with efficient exploitation and optimal utilisation of rich mineral and other resources and adequate human resource development.

Demographic Feature

According to 2001 census, population of Orissa stands at 367 lakhs. It has increased by 16.25 per cent over that of the previous decade. It is better than all-India average rate of growth of 21.54 per cent. However, there has not been any significant change in birth rate and death rate. Many other major states like Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, West Bengal, Punjab and Maharashtra have much lower birth rate and death rate. Kerala is one of the best where the birth rate and death rate come to 16.8 and 6.4 respectively. Similarly infant mortality rate is also very high compared to many other developed states of India.

One of the important reasons why Orissa lags behind many other states is due to preponderance of scheduled caste and scheduled tribe population. They constitute 16.20 and 22.21 per cent respectively compared to all-India average of 16.48 and 8.08 per cent respectively (1991). Again, of the total population of the state, nearly 85 per cent live in villages compared to all-India average of about 72 per cent (2001). The urban population of Maharashtra (42.40%), Gujarat (37.35%) and Tamil Nadu (43.86%) is much higher than that of Orissa. This shows that there has been much industrialization in these states compared to Orissa. Infrastructure facilities available in rural areas of the state are much less. For example, percentage of villages electrified in the state is only 75 as on March 2001 compared to all-India average of 87 and 100 for the states like Andhra Pradesh, Harayana, Gujarat, Kerala, Punjab and Tamil Nadu. Similarly, other infrastructure facilities like road and railway mileage are also much less in Orissa compared to many other states. All this has stood in the way of economic development.

Employment Situation

The preponderance of agriculture and lack of industrial and infrastructural development have created considerable under-employment and unemployment in the state. According to 2001 census total labor force was 38.79 per cent of the population. Out of this, 67.2 per cent were main workers and 32.8

per cent were marginal workers. Out of the total workers of 142.76 lakh in 2001, 24.1 per cent were cultivators, 14.7 per cent were agricultural laborers, 2.8 per cent were engaged in household industries and 25.6 per cent were other workers. Most of the cultivators and agricultural laborers do not get full employment through out the year. The work force participation rates were 29.67% and 38.47% in rural and urban area respectively.

According to the latest Economic Survey (2004-05) the total backlog of unemployment at the beginning of Tenth Plan was estimated at 10.11 lakh person-years. With the addition to the labor force of 9.33 lakh person-years and employment generation of 9.70 lakh person-years during the Tenth Plan, the unemployment which was 10.11 lakh person-years at the beginning of Tenth Plan may come down to 9.74 lakh person-years at the end of Tenth Plan. As the diversification of the economy is negligible unemployment and under-employment continue to be serious problems in the economy.

State Income

The GSDP (Gross State Domestic Produce) at constant prices (1993-94) of Orissa has increased from Rs.18,536.66 crore in 1993-94 to 28,685.68 crore (Q) in 2003-04, registering an annual compound growth rate of 4.46 per cent over the period. Similarly, the Net State Domestic Product (NSDP) commonly known as State Income increased from Rs.16,184.88 crore in 1993-94 to Rs.24,613.00 crore (Q) in 2003-04 at 1993-94 prices. The per capita income at constant prices (1993-94) has been estimated at Rs.6,487.00 in 2003-04 (Q) against Rs.4896.00 in 1993-94. As against Tenth Plan target growth rate of 6.2 per cent, the growth rate during 2002-03 (P) and 2003-04 (Q) were respectively (-) 0.07 per cent and 14.40 per cent. The negative growth rate during 2002-03 was due to drastic fall in agricultural production in view of severe drought and the growth rate during 2003-04 was abnormally high due to negative growth rate in the previous year and better performance in agricultural sector.

The magnitude of state income depends on the contributions of three major sectors of the economy, namely, Primary, Secondary and Tertiary. The contributions of these sectors to NSDP at 1993-94 prices in percentage terms are given below:

Sectoral Percentage Contribution to NSDP of Orissa

Sector	1994-95	2003-04(Q)
Primary	47.55	41.08
Secondary	17.96	12.59
Tertiary	16.04	20.89
Service Sector	18.45	25.44
Total	100.0	100.0

The table shows while the sectoral contribution of the Primary Sector and Secondary Sector decreases, the contribution of Tertiary and Service Sectors has increased. This creates great hardship for most of the people who depend on primary sector.

State of Agriculture in Orissa's Economy

Prior to the planning era, no effort was made to improve the productivity of agriculture. There were frequent famines and devastating natural calamities. Extreme poverty and destitution prevailed among a substantial portion of the agricultural population. Since the beginning of planning era a number of policy measures have been initiated to change the character of agriculture. Additional resources have also been invested to diversify agriculture and increase its productivity. All these changes have, no doubt, brought about a number of improvements in income, production, cropping pattern and cropping intensity in agriculture. All the same, agriculture in Orissa has lagged behind several other developed states due to various constraints. The following six constraints stand in the way of modernization of agriculture. We have, therefore, made some suggestions to rectify the constraints.

- (i) Due to inadequate irrigation facilities, agriculture is dependent upon monsoon which fluctuates widely from year to year. Though the irrigation potential created by the end of 2003-04 from all sources comes to 41 per cent of the total cultivable area of the state, many of the irrigation facilities are perfunctory. What is worse is that Orissa exploits nearly 44 per cent of its irrigation potential. On the other hand, Gujarat which is one of the industrially developed states of India exploited 65 per cent of its irrigation potential (1995-96). It is therefore, necessary that not only irrigation facility should be increased; it should be properly and effectively utilized.
- (ii) The coverage of high yielding variety of crops is terribly inadequate. Particularly in kharif season, there is not much scope for increasing high yielding variety. There is need to change the technology in case of kharif crops and improve the extension of high yielding variety in Rabi season.
- (iii) Application of chemical fertilizers and organic manure plays a vital role in increasing productivity. But as we have shown earlier compared to many other developed states, the corresponding figure of application of fertilizer is much less. Though the consumption of chemical fertilizer on average in the year 2002-03 is stated to be 39.00 kg. per hectare, in some of the districts it is less than 10 kg. per hectare. Since there are large numbers of small farmers, they cannot afford to apply the new technology. Though the new technology is size neutral, it is not resource neutral. As such there is need to evolve a new technology which would be less costly but at the same time increase the productivity of land. Further increased application of chemical fertilizer, insecticides and pesticides deteriorates the quality of land and creates environment pollution. Therefore, there is sufficient justification to evolve a healthy technology through adequate research and extension.
- (iv) There is not much diversification of cropping in Orissa. The area covered by food grains comes to 91.48 per cent and rice alone covers an area of 70.40 per cent (2003-04) and as we have seen the productivity of rice per hectare is awfully low. Since demand is increasing for fruits, vegetables, flowers, fish and milk etc., more emphasis should be given to increase the production of horticultural products, fisheries and animal resources. These will provide more income to those who are depending on agriculture and meet the growing demands of the people for these products.
- (v) Though different institutions have been created to provide credit to agriculture the amount provided so far is not adequate to modernize agriculture. It is seen that the total credit provided by commercial banks, RRBs, cooperative banks and OSFC in the year 2003-04 comes to only about Rs.1327 crores. It is estimated that farmers require four to five times more credit to make agriculture a viable proposition. Apart from increasing the quantity of credit, what is more important is that there is need to provide timely credit so that the farmers can use the same effectively.
- (vi) Increase in agricultural productivity not only depends on technological change, but also on structural change. But no structural change has taken place in Orissa except abolition of Zamindari and

fixation of ceiling to some extent. Due to heavy dependence on agriculture there has been considerable increase in sub division and fragmentation of operational holdings. We have also a large number of small and marginal farmers along with tenants. The total number of marginal and small farmers comes to more than 77% of the total farmers. Thus there is great deal of inequality in the agrarian structure. According to the findings of Agricultural Census 1995-96, out of total number of operational holdings, about 82 per cent holdings were small and marginal.

All this shows that agricultural sector has not made much improvement to provide adequate employment to all those who are depending on it or increased the income of the state.

Industrial Development in Orissa

Orissa inherited a totally backward economy on the eve of independence. It had hardly any industry worth the name in spite of abundant mineral and forest resources. During the planning era, a lot of improvement has been done in the industrial sphere even though Orissa is still considered as an industrially backward state. As indicated earlier the percentage distribution of factory workers, per capita gross output in industry and per capita value added by manufacture are much less compared to many other states in India.

Orissa has initiated the process of industrialization from a scratch and by the end of 2003-04, it had 713 large and medium industries with an investment of more than Rs.7000 crore and employment potential of more than 1.7 lakh persons. Again by the end of 2003-04, about 78554 small industries with an investment of about Rs.1310 crore were operating in the state providing employment to 1.52 lakh persons. Besides, quite a large number of cottage industries were also established in rural areas with the help and assistance of the state government.

All these however, have not changed the industrial scene of Orissa. The contribution of the industrial sector to NSDP is less than 13 per cent. This means Orissa has not taken advantage of utilizing the abundant mineral deposits that are available in the state and the presence of some large scale industries like steel plant at Rourkela and NALCO at Damonjodi and Angul.

The Government of Orissa has of course established a number of institutions to provide technical and financial assistance to industries and at the same time start some industries on its own. For example, IPICOL is providing both technical and financial assistance, IDCOL directly promoting industries, IDCO creating industrial infrastructure in the identified industrial estates/areas for accelerated growth of industries, trade and commerce, OSFC providing financial assistance for a number of small and medium industries and so on. All these institutions are supposed to create a favorable environment for an over-all development of industries.

Though all these institutions have made some contribution to industrial development, Orissa lags behind many other states due to some imponderable difficulties. First, a large number of small scale industries are found to be sick due to lack of working capital, raw materials and market facilities. It is estimated that almost 30 to 40 per cent of small scale industries are sick in Orissa. Second, the productive capacity of many of the big industries is abysmally low. Political and bureaucratic interference and lack of autonomy do not provide sufficient scope for development. Very often

managing directors are appointed on political considerations and staff component in each of these increases to satisfy political authorities. Thirdly, Orissa does not have adequate infrastructure to create an industrial environment in the state. Roads are inadequate, railways are not in a position to cater to the needs of industries, port facilities are terribly low, there is short supply of electricity, banks are shy to provide required amount of capital for industrial development and so on.

Fourth, we do not have sufficient technical skill to manage the industries with efficiency. We have a large number of traders, but not entrepreneurs or promoters. There is no training program worth the name to provide adequate technical skill to improve the caliber of managers. And finally very few people in Orissa have forward looking attitude. Most of the businessmen think more of the present, rather than future. They are more anxious to get quick profit rather than creating a good will for their product. It is one of the reasons why industrialists and businessmen in Orissa are not held in high esteem. The social structure is also so primitive that people with authority are given more importance than people having enterprise and foresight. Now that liberalization has been accepted by the government, industries, small and big will face severe competition. Unless they improve the quality of their product and develop a foresight to create an image for industrial change, Orissa will continue to remain backward in the field of industries for a long time to come. The challenge is severe. Therefore, there is urgent need to change our outlook and policy implications for building a viable industrial program which not only can successfully compete with others, but also create an atmosphere for future development. Further though the participation of private sector has to be taken in furthering industrial development (particularly in commercial enterprises) the public sector will have to play a dominant role in increasing investment in basic, heavy and strategic industries along with infrastructure so as to create a favorable atmosphere for industrial development.

Improvement of Social Sector

Economic development does not depend only on investment in physical infrastructure. Social infrastructure like education, health, social security, improvement in healthy environment and so on plays an important part in accelerating the process of economic growth and improving the social structure. Since we aim at both economic development and social justice, we cannot neglect social sector in the process of change of the economy and social environment. In fact human development now has assumed more importance in the rate of growth of income.

And we find that even though there has been some improvement in the social sector like education and health, we are still far behind many other developed states. Even compared to all-India averages, our performance seems to be low in many cases. We have already seen the level of literacy in Orissa. It is again noticed that drop out rates in primary and upper primary schools are abnormally high. The rate of drop out is one of the important indicators of internal efficiency of the education system. In Orissa, the rates of dropouts come to 34.7 per cent at primary level and 59.0 per cent at upper primary level in the year 2002-03. The rate of dropout is marginally higher in the case of girls, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Health status in the state is equally bad. We have already discussed the level of infant mortality rate in Orissa. What is most unfortunate is that not only infant mortality rate is highest in the state, the rate of decline in IMR has been rather slow and gives rise to concern. In the 16 year period between 1981-83 and 1995-97, it declined by 25 per cent, i.e. at the rate of about 1.6 per cent per annum. This

high infant mortality rate is due to (a) high malnutrition among females, (b) lack of professional delivery system (c) inadequate medical facility – in Orissa, people have to travel a mean distance of more than 10 KM. to reach any public health care facility – in some districts, it is even more, (d) lack of adequate number of doctors, midwives, hospital beds – all fall below the norms stipulated by WHO (e) lack of quality of health services available to patients in hospitals and so on. All these and lack of many more basic facilities like safe drinking water, housing, proper sanitation and social security measures stand in the way of economic well-being as a result of which the level of human development in Orissa has made little progress.

Budgetary Position of the State

One of the main hurdles of the economic and human development in Orissa is paucity of developmental funds. Orissa has an outstanding loan of more than Rs.32000 crore as on 31.3.2004. The budget estimates of 2005-06 show that of the total receipt (consolidated fund), debt servicing accounts for 21.58 per cent, repayment of loans 20.36 per cent, expenditure on other non-plan account comes to 40.69 per cent, disbursement of loan 0.74 per cent and investment in plan sector only 16.69 per cent.

The Government of Orissa has published a White Paper in which it is mentioned that non-priority and unproductive expenditure have been increasing year by year as a result of which the scope for much needed investment expenditure has been substantially reduced. Even provision of maintenance expenditure (1.72 per cent of GSDP in 1980-81 and 1% in 1999-2000) has suffered reduction. Fiscal deficit which was 5.65 per cent of GSDP in 1990-91 increased to 9.54% in the year 1999-2000. And of the fiscal deficit, revenue deficit came to more than 68.4 per cent during the same year i.e. 6.53% of GSDP. Orissa had the highest debt GDP ratio at 46% as on 31.3.2000 while all India state average was only 24.33%.

This shows the precarious financial position of Orissa. The Government has to borrow almost Rs.424.00 crore to get funds for a development of Rs.100.00 crore.

Concluding Remarks

As we have seen neither agriculture nor industry has made any significant contribution to Orissa's economy. Agriculture which is the most important sector of Orissa's economy has remained more or less traditional. A rather slow growth of agriculture, namely 2.16 per cent during the period 1950-51 to 1988-89 at 1970-71 prices has depressed the overall growth rate of the economy. During the same period, the NSDP of Orissa has been 2.7% and that of per capita NSDP only 0.6%. There has been no significant change in industrial growth. Only many components of the tertiary sector have grown at more than four to five per cent.

Further, due to inadequate investment in social sector, Human Development Index in Orissa is of a very low order. As Aristotle said in ancient Greece, "Wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking, for it is merely useful for the sake of something else". That something else is of building human capabilities. According to Human Development Report 2001, "The most basic capabilities for human development are to lead long and healthy lives, to be knowledgeable, to have access to the resources needed for a decent standard of living and to be able to participate in the life of the community. Without these, many choices are simply not available, and many opportunities in life remain inaccessible.

In furtherance of the objective of increasing economic growth and improving human development index, a number of steps may be taken both in the short run and long run to create a favorable economic and social environment in the state. We have already made some suggestions to improve the economic structure of Orissa while discussing the constraints. However, we may mention here a few more fundamental changes that are necessary to gear the process of development in the right direction. The short term measures are:

- (1) Drastic reduction in non-productive expenditure and use of borrowed funds only for investment in development of infrastructure, agriculture and industry which are likely to create not only more wealth, but help to increase additional employment opportunities.
- (2) Large scale decentralization of different power structures by withdrawing Government from the grassroots level functioning. This will accelerate the process of rural development by avoiding dilatory process of red tapism and increase the scope of empowerment of people who are now neglected and bypassed in the system of administration.
- (3) Development of sustainable and achievable poverty reduction strategy which will improve the economic well being of the poor and satisfy their basic needs.

These are immediate program of action. But for the long term change, we have to take steps to reduce the disparity between the poor and rich, make effective utilization of available resources by tapping the untapped and undertapped resources, strengthening governance at the state level by ensuring transparency in administration and improving ecological balance in order to ensure a healthy environment. A number of other long-term measures will have to be taken to change the economic and social structure of the state. As development gathers momentum, many new problems may arise and these have to be tackled with critical intervention at different levels.



Poverty And The Need For Government Action

By Prabhat Patnaik*

Notwithstanding its cultural richness, Orissa remains, in material terms, the most poverty-afflicted state in India. In 1999-2000 for instance, the ratio of population below poverty line in rural Orissa (I shall be talking throughout this paper of rural poverty alone) was the highest among all the states in India. It was 62.67 percent, according to one estimate, for Orissa, compared to 36.35 for the whole of India. Indeed apart from a brief period in the early nineties when Bihar occupied the top spot, Orissa has had the dubious distinction of being the most poverty-afflicted state in the country for at least the last quarter of a century.

To be sure, Orissa inherited much abject poverty at Independence. Princely states had hardly witnessed any worthwhile development effort. In British Orissa too, a combination of factors, such as the prevalence over large tracts of Permanent Zamindari Settlement which discouraged government investment in infrastructure (since no extra revenue would accrue to the government from such investment), and the disastrous policy of cutting back public expenditure in tandem with the decline in revenue during the Depression years, kept development effort stymied. In addition there were important environmental changes taking place in consequence of even such intervention as the government did

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undertake, which also had a damaging impact on peoples' livelihoods. One can mention here for instance the construction of railway embankments in coastal Orissa across the direction of drainage, which resulted in water-logging, malaria and a decline in rice yields. The overall consequence was a growing food crisis, associated with growing poverty.

Orissa of course was not an exception in this respect. Over the half-century prior to Independence, British India as a whole witnessed a decline in per capita food-grain output from around 200 kilogrammes per annum to around 150 kilogrammes, a precipitous drop that was particularly acute in Eastern India and formed the background to the Great Bengal Famine of 1943. Orissa too shared in this drop and experienced a similar famine, under the combined impact of war finance and a declining food-grain economy.

The legacy of pre-Independence retrogression however cannot alone be held responsible for the contemporary prevalence of poverty. Not only have we had more than half a century to rectify inherited deprivation, but, what is even more disturbing, the level of poverty appears to be going up in Orissa in recent years. Rural poverty declined quite noticeably between 1977-78 and 1990-91: according to some the poverty ratio was halved between these two dates. But after 1990-91 it has started climbing up. Between 1993-94 and 1999-2000, according to the estimates quoted earlier, while the rural poverty ratio for India as a whole declined from 39.36 percent to 36.35 percent that for Orissa increased from 59.12 percent to 62.67 percent. Not only do we have massive poverty but of late even growing poverty.

Added to this is a very poor record in terms of social indicators. According to 1993 data, Orissa's infant mortality rate (103 per thousand) was the highest among all states, its death rate only the second highest (after Madhya Pradesh), and its average life-expectancy (55.5 years) only the third lowest, after Madhya Pradesh (54.0) and Assam (54.9).

At the same time however Orissa is among the richest states in the country in terms of mineral resources, and has great industrial potential. Successive governments in the state have been quite aware of this, and have made notable efforts, not without success, to encourage investment in the state to realize this potential. In fact any one visiting Orissa would be struck by the apparently rapid pace of modernization and "development" taking place.

This paradoxical co-existence of massive and growing poverty on the one hand with apparently rapid growth of the modern sector on the other, only underscores the fact that the latter cannot be expected to eliminate the former. The solution to Orissa's poverty would not come automatically from the growth that is occurring in its modern sector; it does not even lie in a still greater acceleration in the pace of its modernization. The type of growth and modernization that is occurring in Orissa is intrinsically unequal to the task of making a dent on mass misery and deprivation. Poverty and the quality of life of the bulk of its population are issues that have to be addressed directly, independently and immediately. And the only agency that can do so is the government.

The nineties have witnessed a dramatic collapse in the level of rural development expenditure by the government as a proportion of Gross Domestic Product in the country as a whole, and Orissa is no exception to this general trend. Any such decline in development expenditure has two significant effects: first, it tends to keep the growth of agricultural production arrested, especially in the food-grain sector where commercially-oriented private investment does not tend to flow in; and secondly, the purchasing power which is put into the hands of the rural poor as a consequence of rural development expenditure (and this happens even when the expenditure does not directly reach the poor) gets curtailed, causing an aggravation of poverty even beyond what the decline in food-grain growth would have effected.

Both these phenomena have been in evidence in Orissa. The nineties have witnessed not only wild fluctuations in food-grain output in the state, far greater than the fluctuations witnessed for the country as a whole, but a sharply declining trend in output. In India as a whole during the nineties per

capita food-grain output has gone down; in Orissa even the absolute output shows a declining trend. The misery that this it would cause to the rural poor has been compounded by the lack of purchasing power on account of the drying up of rural development expenditure.

There is thus a crying need in Orissa today for larger government expenditure on employment generation programmes and for building up rural infrastructure, both through such programmes and otherwise. Two questions immediately arise: first, where are the resources for undertaking such expenditure; and secondly, can the government play such an agency role, given its well-known infirmities in the form of corruption and bureaucratism?

The answer to the first question is as follows. Given the fact that in the country as a whole there are surplus food-grain stocks, which constitute an idle resource, the problem of additional resource mobilization has, to that extent, become less pressing. Using already-existing, idle food-grain stocks for distribution among the rural poor through employment generation programmes requires no additional resource mobilization, and appropriate financial arrangements can be worked out for this purpose which causes no damage to any other part of the economy.

Besides, even to the extent that some need for additional resource mobilization arises, over and above the resources existing in the form of surplus food-grain stocks, this can be met in two ways. One is through larger devolution from the central government. The nineties have seen a sizeable decline in the ratio of central government tax revenue to Gross Domestic Product, which *inter alia* has worsened central government finances and constricted the magnitude of central devolution to states. A strong case exists not just for insulating a poor state like Orissa from such constriction but even for enlarging the extent of devolution to it compared to the original level, i.e. for an "Orissa package".

Indeed even in the absence of a special "package" the government of Orissa can make imaginative use of certain existing possibilities to effect poverty reduction. The Central government for instance has just introduced a Rural Employment Guarantee Bill in parliament. Notwithstanding the limitations of the proposed legislation, the government of Orissa can make use of it to claim assistance from the Centre.

In addition, the "modern" sector of the Orissa economy which has grown rapidly, and generally done well out of the "development" experience, should and can contribute larger revenue to the state government for expenditure in poverty-stricken rural Orissa.

The answer to the second question, relating to the infirmities of the government, lies essentially in making the government more accountable to the people. This requires a host of institutional changes, ranging from reforms in the agrarian structure to effective democratic decentralization of decision-making, designed to improve the people's capacity to intervene meaningfully in matters affecting their lives. This to be sure is not easy. But a withdrawal of the government from its role as an active agency promoting rural development and rural employment generation will only accentuate the prevailing hiatus in society.



Children in Orissa: How They Live and Die¹

By Prasanta K. Pattanaik*

On April 8, 2004, the online edition of Pragativadi carried a small news item.

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Krusna Swain of Kavisurya Nagar, Orissa, and his wife, Shanti Swain, had committed suicide because they could not bear their poverty any longer. Before committing suicide, they tried to kill their three children by hanging them. Two of the children died. One child, a five-year old girl, survived because the rope broke; neighbours found her alive on the floor. I tried to get from the media more information about the family, but I did not succeed. In April 2004, India was preparing for a general election. I suppose, it was unrealistic to expect that these deaths in a remote part of India would attract much attention in the midst of the political and intellectual debates about national issues that were in full swing at that time. We do not know how Krusna Swain and his family, especially the children, lived before the parents took their fateful decision. Nor do we know what happened to the surviving child of the family. However, we know something about what happens to thousands of children in Orissa who are born in poor households such as Krusna Swain's. This article is about them.

There are many possible indicators of the welfare of children in a given population. One can consider how many, out of every 1000 children who are born alive, die before a certain age, say, one year. One can consider the percentage of children who, in a given year, live in families with income levels below the poverty line. One may like to consider the incidence of malnutrition among children. In that case, one can focus on the percentage of children who suffer from malnutrition in the sense that their weights fall below the desired benchmark levels for their ages. Alternatively, one can consider measures that take into account not only what percentage of the total number of children fall below the benchmark weights, but also the extent to which they fall below the benchmark levels. One can think of a variety of sophisticated indices to measure the deprivation of a given group of children. However, for our purpose here, it is hardly necessary to go into the intricacies of these measures. The basic fact that emerges from various studies is that the degree of deprivation, however measured, is enormous among the children in Orissa.

Consider first the infant mortality rate (IMR), which is one of the most basic indicators of the well-being of children. In 2000, the rate of infant mortality in Orissa was 96.² What it means is this: on an average, out of every 1000 children who were born alive in Orissa in 2000, 96 died before attaining the age of one year. Thus, approximately one out of every 10 children born alive in Orissa in 2000 died before reaching the age of one year. To put this in perspective, it may be noted that the IMR in 2000 was 81 for Congo, 92 for Gambia, and 69 for Nepal.³ The IMRs for Kerala and West Bengal in 1999 were 14 and 52, respectively.⁴ The IMR in Orissa has come down to 87 in 2002. While this is a welcome change, the death, before reaching the age of one year, of 8.7 % of the children born in Orissa in 2002 can hardly be a cause for much comfort.

How do the children, who survive beyond a year, fare? Again, the mortality rate of these children is a good indicator. I do not have the most recent figures. However, one estimate that we have for 1993 is the following.⁵ In 1993, 609250 children were born alive in Orissa. Of these, 67017 children died before reaching the age of one year. Out of the 542233 children, who survived beyond the age of one year, about 22339 died before reaching the age of 5 years. Thus, of the children who survived beyond one year, about 4% died before the age of 5 years; and the total number of children who died in the 0-4 year range constituted 14.6% of the number of children born alive in Orissa in 1993.

The child mortality rate constitutes only one of many indicators of the extent of deprivation of children, though it is perhaps the most telling one. Another relevant indicator is the extent of malnutrition as reflected in the weight for age. The medical profession specifies certain norms for the weight of a child at each specific age. When judged by these norms, more than half of the children in the age group of 0-35 months in Orissa were underweight in 1998-1999.⁶ The percentage of underweight children in Orissa actually increased between 1992-93 and 1998-1999. For coastal Orissa, it increased from 47.49 % in 1992-1993 to 47.95% in 1998-1999; for southern Orissa, it increased from

41.44 % in 1992-1993 to 54.12 % in 1998-1999; and, for northern Orissa, the corresponding increase was from 55.40 % to 58.95 %.⁷ Consider next the education of children. If one looks at the gross enrollment ratio (i.e., children actually enrolled in schools as a percentage of children in the school-going age group), then the picture does look bright: the gross enrollment ratio for primary schools (the age group of 6-11 years) was 108.8 in 1999-2000.⁸ However, the favourable gross enrollment ratio hides some very depressing aspects of education of children in Orissa. While the enrollment of children in schools is certainly important, equally important is the percentage of children enrolled in class I who manage to reach a higher class. According to the report of the Sixth All-India Educational Survey, 1993, only 50.14% of the children enrolled in Class I in Orissa remained till Class V; the corresponding figures for Class VII and Class X were 36.47% and 21.78%, respectively.⁹ Thus, of the students enrolled in Class I in Orissa, approximately half dropped out before reaching Class V, approximately 63% dropped out before reaching Class VII, and approximately 78% dropped out before reaching Class X. These figures tell us much about the state of school education in Orissa, even if we do not go into the details regarding dilapidated school buildings, absentee school teachers, and lack of books in schools.

I have considered three indicators of the welfare of children: the mortality rate, the level of nutrition as measured by weight, and school education. Behind the statistics for each of these indicators lies the chilling story of thousands of children in Orissa and their parents. Nearly sixty years after the independence of the country, an unbelievably large number of children in Orissa die before reaching the age of one year; more than half of the children aged 0-35 months in Orissa suffer from malnutrition, which probably leaves them stunted for life even when they manage to escape an early death; and about half of the children in Orissa who enroll in Class I in schools fail to reach even Class V.

In 1803, William Blake felt that “A dog starv’d at his Master’s Gate/ Predicts the ruin of the State”.¹⁰ Two centuries later, one cannot but wonder what the death and stark deprivation of numerous children in Orissa and other states such as Bihar and Madhya Pradesh portend for the political and social structure of India.

NOTES

1. I am grateful to Dr. Nirode Mohanty, who encouraged me to write this article. This article does not contain any original research. Its sole purpose is to present a few facts about children in Orissa. Though these facts are readily available, a surprisingly large number of people in Orissa do not seem to be aware of them. That is my only reason for writing the article.
2. See Figure II.4 in World Bank, Attaining the Millennium Development Goals in India: Role of Public Policy and Service Delivery (2004), p.23.
3. See the United Nations Statistics Division’s data on infant mortality rates on the website http://millenniumindicators.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_series_list.asp.
4. See “Children: Statistics” on the website (www.indianngos.com/issue/child/overall/statistics/statistics1.htm) of Indian NGOs.
5. See Box 4.1 in Orissa Human Development Report 2004 (Planning and Coordination Department, Government of Orissa, 2004), p.71.
6. See Figure III.1 in World Bank, Attaining the Millennium Development Goals in India: Role of Public Policy and Service Delivery (2004), p. 52.

7. See World Bank, Attaining the Millennium Development Goals in India: Role of Public Policy and Service Delivery (2004), p.134.
8. See Table 5.7 in Orissa Human Development Report 2004 (Planning and Coordination Department, Government of Orissa, 2004), p. 107. While the figure of more than 100% may seem surprising, such figures are often observed when children outside the appropriate age group are enrolled in the schools under consideration. Thus, the gross enrollment ratio of 108.8 indicates that, while the notional age group for primary schools is 6-11 years, children above 11 years actually attended primary schools in Orissa in 1999-2000.
9. These figures are cited in Table 5.12 in Orissa Human Development Report 2004 (Planning and Coordination Department, Government of Orissa, 2004), p.111.
10. William Blake, “Auguries of Innocence” (written around 1803) in J. Bronowski (ed.), William Blake, A Selection of Poems and Letters (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1958), p.67.



Economic Success Of Children Growing Up With Both Biological Parents

by
Madhusudan Mohanty*

This essay presents an important economic finding from the United States that confirms that in the matter of children’s future economic success, parents do matter. Since this finding is applicable universally to all U. S. residents regardless of their racial and ethnic origins, it deserves wide dissemination. This essay is written primarily for a general audience. A more technical version with detailed statistical analysis (to be presented at the 5th Annual International Business Conference, Honolulu on May 27, 2005) may be obtained from the author on request. The purpose of this essay is simply to raise the awareness of the audience on this important finding and thus to help initiate a process of rethinking of the economic values a two-parents family can offer to its future generation.

Recent data obtained from *The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, 1979* (NLSY79), a nationally representative sample from the United States, indicate that children raised in families with both biological parents (two-parents families or intact families) during their childhood until the age eighteen earn significantly more during their adulthood than those who grew up in non-intact families. To demonstrate the importance of this empirical evidence, two most recent samples were drawn from the NLSY79 collected during the years 2000 and 2002. The 2000 sample consists of 6,135 employed workers aged between 35 and 44, of which 3,818 were raised in intact families during their childhood. The 2002 sample, on the other hand, consists of 5,877 workers with their ages ranging between 37 and 46, and has 3,656 workers with intact family backgrounds. The average annual wage incomes of both groups of workers from the above two samples were computed. The results are quite interesting. In the 2000 sample, the average annual incomes of workers raised in intact and non-intact families are \$39,141.65 and \$31,787.13, respectively. These averages for the year 2002 respectively are \$42,579.03

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and \$35,017.38. These results confirm that children raised in intact families, in fact, earn significantly more than their non-intact counterparts when they grow up.

The evidence just mentioned raises an important question, “Why are the wages higher for workers raised in intact families?” In this essay, I do not intend to provide an answer for this important evidence that is relevant to most industrialized economies today. I simply examine several existing theories that can provide possible explanations of this evidence and ask the readers to think for themselves and if possible form their own theories to see how economically valuable is the parental presence during a child’s most precious formative years of life.

There exist several theories in economics and sociology on family structure that can be used to explain why earnings may differ between workers raised in intact and non-intact families. One of the most important theories in economics is the human capital investment theory. This theory suggests that investment in education invariably leads to higher future earnings (Becker, 1993; Card, 1999). There are numerous studies by economists and sociologists that support the conclusion that children coming from intact families perform better at school and are likely to acquire more years of schooling (McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994; Ginther and Pollak, 2003). Consequently, it can easily be concluded that workers raised in intact families during childhood are likely to earn more during their adulthood because they have more and better schooling than their non-intact counterparts.

A related important argument focuses on the “nurture” theory. This theory suggests that it is the family environment and the family investment on children that lead to children’s success in their lives (Becker and Tomes, 1979; Haveman and Wolfe, 1995; Ginther and Pollak, 2003). Two major components of the “nurture” theory are “less economic deprivation” and “more social control.” Children raised in non-intact families, especially with single mothers, are likely to suffer from economic deprivation in the form of less basic necessities that affect their education and even physical growth adversely. This eventually lowers their success rate in the job market and so they earn less. Social control aspect of the nurture theory suggests that children raised in non-intact families receive less adult supervision and so less guidance in important decision making (Seltzer, 1994; Ginther and Pollak, 2003). For example, they get less parental help in doing their homework. Moreover, due to inadequate parental guidance, they are more likely to be involved in illegal activities, such as drugs, alcoholism, teenage pregnancy, crimes etc. All these factors contribute to their weak performance at school and hinder desired human capital accumulation, leading to lower future earnings. Children raised in intact families, on the other hand, suffer from less or no economic deprivation and receive more adult supervision and guidance. This parental nurture helps them do well at school and thus they earn more when they grow up.

An alternative theory that focuses on “nature” rather than “nurture” can also be used to explain the earning differentials mentioned above. There is a long line of research on inter-generational income mobility which claims that wealthier parents in most cases have more affluent children (Dearden et al., 1997; Solon, 1999). The exponents of this theory attribute higher earnings of an individual primarily to superior genetic endowments and higher innate abilities (Berham and Taubman, 1989; Solon, 1992). It is possible that the parents in intact families possess special types of genetic endowments which help them maintain a stable life style not only at home, but also at school and workplaces, leading to their greater success in the labor market. The superior genetic endowments of these parents get transmitted to their children who exhibit higher abilities and thus earn more. Interestingly, the fact remains that a large percentage of children with higher incomes are primarily from families with wealthier parents who most likely have more schooling and better occupations (Berham and Taubman, 1989). Transfer of superior genetic endowments from parents to children may thus affect future earnings of children raised in intact families.

Another important theory that examines the impact of family structure on children's educational attainments focuses on the "stress" the child suffers on account of parents' marital dissolution (McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994). This theory attributes poor educational performance of children coming from broken families primarily to stress. By eliminating the possibility of stress due to marital dissolution, an intact family fosters a nurturing environment for the children to grow. Such children are usually happier and more satisfied than their otherwise identical non-intact counterparts, and consequently they succeed not only in their education, but also in other aspects of life (McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994; Ginther and Pollak, 2003). Recently, an important study by Graham, Eggers and Sukhtankar (2004) based on the Russian panel data confirms that "people with higher levels of happiness are more likely to increase their own income in the future," (p. 340). Both variants of this theory – less stress or more happiness – provide an additional explanation of why workers raised in intact families during their childhood earn more during adulthood. It is the happiness associated with growing up in intact families that helps them become more productive at their workplaces and so they earn more. In fact, following appropriate statistical techniques, I have demonstrated in a related work that happiness of growing up in an intact family acts as a significant determinant of higher earnings during adulthood.

The list of theories mentioned in the above paragraphs by no means exhaust all possible explanations of the earning difference examined in this essay. Other theories may exist and new theories may be developed. All these theories focus on different aspects of the parental role in building a child's economic future, and thus they provide only partial explanations of why such an income difference may exist. They agree, however, in answering one question, "Do parents matter?" Regardless of the differences in their approaches, they all suggest that the parental guidance is the key to a child's future economic success and hence parents do matter. I leave this issue at this stage to the judgment of the readers. In an age when parental interference is often considered by teenagers as an impingement on their freedom, the evidence that growing up with both parents during childhood and youth promotes future economic success is quite puzzling. In fact, it presents a real challenge to today's youths who are often tossed between their conflicting desires for current freedom and future success (defined mostly in economic terms). I don't think I am qualified enough to provide a solution. I hope, however, that the evidence presented in this essay would provide deep insights and some guidance to today's parents and youths for taking wiser decisions when dealing with the age-old decision problem of securing the economic fortune for the future generation.

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Orissa at a glance:

- Economic growth over the past five years: 3%
- Per-capita income: \$270
- Population: 37 million
- Percent living in poverty: 52%
- Literacy rate: 64%
- Employment in mining and metals: 100,000; Potential by 2015: 385,000
- Iron-ore production in 2003: 22 million tons; Potential by 2015: 45 million to 70 million tons

Sources: Orissa government; McKinsey & Co. April 2005



BECAUSE I DARE TO THINK

By

HRUSIKESH PANDA*

I

I am no economist. What I write here is my personal view, of someone who has worked in the state of Orissa with concern for its development, particularly, it’s poor. This viewpoint of a worker in the field will neither be pedantic, nor on the other hand, pedestrian. I will not give a lot of statistics, nor will draw up any theory: that is beyond my competence. The economic strength of any community will grow only if the economic strength of a very large number of people in the community grows. That happens for two reasons. First, unless the economic condition of a larger section of the population grows, then they will be deprived of economic gains of certain sectors [like mobile phones or market capitalization of shares], which may show growth of the Gross Domestic Product [GDP], but will have no impact on the poverty as the people who are already poor will not benefit from the growth in service sectors like above. Second, even the sectors which can contribute to the economy of the vast sections of population [like increased production of steel and cement which can give better houses to the rural poor] will have no impact if the larger sections of people do not have the power to purchase from these industries. These industries may increase the GDP, but if the people cannot buy the produce, these produces will be exported outside the state, the government may or may not earn some taxes, but otherwise, the condition of the people will remain the same.

Since the occupation of a very large number of people of the state is in the primary sectors [agriculture, animal husbandry, pisciculture, handlooms, masons etc], and will continue to remain so in foreseeable future, the development should have come in these sectors.

To illustrate this point, I will give some examples of 1980's. That was the time when Orissa joined the rat race of giving multiple financial subsidies to industries. I had briefly worked in Industries Department then. When hotels and cinema theaters were included as industries, I had opposed. I was a mere Deputy Secretary, and there was a very powerful Secretary. Let us remember that hotels meant those of three star classifications, and above. I was curtly told that 'according to a study' every subsidy of ten thousand rupees gives employment to one person. I said "even without subsidy there are about a lakh of tea shops and eateries all over the state which are doing fine without subsidy, thank you sir". But, most of these hotels and cinema halls, set up with government subsidy closed down. The state lost money, not only on account of subsidy, but also on account of loans given through Orissa government undertakings, like IPICOL and OSFC. The state had to finally repay these loans from its taxes.

The subsidy for industrialization was not so much based on economic principles, as was driven by the pelf for some and a sense of shame for some others, who thought that not having enough number of five star hotels was shameful. The real shame, I had argued, would be when these hotels came up in the midst of poverty of the state.

Some of these industries positively harmed the economy. An example is the production of plastic shopping bags. A large number of such units came up all over Orissa, driven by target syndrome. I had seen some of these units and had objected to their subsidization by the state government. Please note that I was opposed to their subsidization and not their coming up, for the following reasons. They were employing workers from outside the state and not from the state because this involved skill which workers of Orissa did not have. Even these workers received wages which was less than the agricultural wages in rural Orissa, and therefore, a typical Oriya laborer was not likely to go for these jobs. All the entrepreneurs were from outside the state. The production of plastic bags threw out of employment, thousands of workers and hundreds of entrepreneurs of Orissa, engaged in making paper bags [*thunga*] out of used old news papers. By providing subsidy, we encouraged production of plastic bags which damaged the eco-system, and killed an environment-friendly industry of making paper bags which employed local entrepreneurs and workers.

Industries, per se, will not develop the economy, unless purchasing power of the larger section of population is raised. But that does not mean that we should obstruct setting up of industries. Because we have the advantage of having mineral deposits, any industry coming up will engage at least some educated people and create employment in services sector. My argument, throughout my career, has been that government money should not go to the rich people in the name of subsidy of industrialization. Industrialization should come because of Orissa's *competitive advantage*. This competitive advantage includes not only availability of minerals, but also a pre-dominantly law-abiding work force, adequate electricity and low levels of corruption.

And the role of the Government should be limited to provide good governance so that an industry can come up. In fact, good governance is essential for all legitimate and legal economic activity to grow. Even a tea stall owner will benefit if there is good governance: He should not face extortion from local lumpens, he should not face extortion from police and the myriad inspectors of the state, and he should be allowed genuine space to run his business.

But, when we started doling out subsidies from the tax-payer's money we effectively undid our competitive advantage. Without subsidy, there would have been industries which were based on the

competitive advantage. For example there would have been a few more pig iron plants and foundries without the subsidy, but the subsidy engaged people at every echelon: so that despite NALCO, there was no aluminum re-rolling plant; despite Kalinga Iron Works, there was no foundry. One of the reasons was that the people who could have set up these industries and had the political support to do so, preferred to earn pelf from fixing contracts for transport and trade.

When we talked of development in the rural sector, we should also have talked of processing of pulses and oilseeds. I am discussing later some of the impacts of paddy production-policy. But at this stage one point is worth mention. While the Industrial Policies from 1980 onwards provided subsidy for industries like polythene bags [which actually harmed the employment potential and ecology], small processing units like oil and dal (lentil) mills did not qualify for subsidy. The apparent logic was that these industries were not sophisticated enough and would come up anyway. But they did not come up. Today, though we are surplus in crops like groundnut (e.g. peanut), it is almost entirely sent outside the state for extraction. With hindsight, perhaps these tiny industries should have been supported more than the so-called sophisticated industries like sponge iron plants.

II

In this context a strange argument is being floated suddenly by various people: politicians, press, and of course mining companies. Let us take the case of a mining company and call it M. It took the first mining lease for iron ore from the Raja of Mayurbhanj in 1905. The Raja had been given to understand that M will set up a steel plant in his state eventually. By 1950, the mines had been exhausted and the mining areas became ghost towns. In course of time, M took new leases of mines from Orissa for other ores. It has near-monopoly in chromites ore lease, and to get this lease it bought a public sector Ferro-chrome plant. After the lease was granted, it asked all technical executives from Orissa to either move out or take voluntary retirement. The Oriya personnel should have fallen into the discipline of the private entrepreneur, and I am not defending them. But they did not, and on account of this, people of Orissa lost employment.

Next time it needed renewal of mining lease, it took another government plant on operating lease basis, and apparently supplied chromites ore of poor quality to the Plant. Meanwhile, this state owned Ferro-chrome plant did not own a chromites mine and continues to buy chromites ore from M. It is public knowledge that M distributes petty favors to relations of politicians and officials who can help them in getting these mining leases by employing their relations as receptionists, clerks and liaison officers or giving small contracts like transport of ore or coke. Today, this public sector Ferro-chrome plant owns a chromites mine, but it buys ore from M. It sells its low grade ore to other exporters instead of washing the same [beneficiation], and loses money.

In mechanized mining, there is practically no employment, and the contribution to the mining company has been very high. This money power has been so much, and we get bought so easily that every time any other industry related to iron and chromium comes up, a cacophony of corruption is raised. It is interesting that this cacophony of corruption is not raised when any *new mining lease is granted*. The subornation of corruption is raised only when an industry for steel, pig iron, Ferro-chrome or stainless steel comes up. After a hundred years of taking the mining lease from Orissa, which enabled M to become an industrial powerhouse, it has not set up a single industry in Orissa. It has gone on to establish pig iron units, cancer hospital, power plants, research institutes, all outside Orissa, and some outside India.

M occasionally holds orthopedic camps in Orissa which get wide coverage in every newspaper and every segment of the media. Some major newspapers write editorials going gaga over its achievements.

And suddenly M has started an advertisement campaign in Oriya press citing all its contributions to Orissa. The contributions are: mobile health camps, donations to educational institutions, plantation [which it has to do anyway as a condition of mining operations], and distribution of relief during natural calamities.

III

I still stand by my thesis that even if M had set up a steel plant in Orissa, it would not have altered the economy of the state. The state could have earned some money through taxes, and there would have been some employment in the services sector, in the town where such a steel plant would have come up. Going by the experience of Brahmanipal charge-chrome plant, not many Oriya engineers or executives would have got employment, but at least a few technicians and unskilled laborers would have been engaged. Though that is no reason why the people of Orissa should allow themselves to be cheated so cheaply and become a victim of colonization by a company for a hundred years.

Now I will mention a few issues relating to the primary sector. Let us take up agriculture first. After Hirakud dam in Sambalpur, Orissa, was constructed, the growth in production of cereals acquired paramount importance. One reason was that the water had to be utilized. Second was the fear that people would die of starvation given the population growth, and the consequent focus on green revolution. During British period, Orissa was a surplus state. But there had been mismatch between production and demand after independence for some positive and some negative reasons. One positive reason was increase in life expectancy with better health care and a government subject to accountability. One negative reason was the uncertainty arising out of changes in land tenure laws, which stopped investment in agricultural sector, the consequent attritional litigations which siphoned off the surplus from agricultural sector to those engaged in administering the laws.

Meanwhile, the irrigation projects contributed to agricultural productivity only in case of paddy. As a result, by 1980, Orissa had become a surplus state in paddy production. That was the time when states like Punjab began to switch over to other crops like cotton. Orissa, however, continued to follow the policy of growing paddy through a series of policies, some of them deliberate, some of them inadvertent and some through the mere force of inertia. I will mention some examples briefly in the following paragraphs.

All our irrigation projects [including the canal (irrigation) systems] were designed to provide standing water in the agricultural fields, where only paddy could grow. The research in improved variety of seeds [at least the research findings that reached from lab to land] was limited to paddy. For example, no improved variety of seed of *mandia* [ragi] was available to the farmers until 2001, and this was the second important cereal crop after paddy before the green revolution. Even today the coverage under high yielding variety [HYV] of ragi is negligible.

The extension machinery was trained and focused on only paddy cultivation. They effectively worked primarily in the command areas of irrigation projects suitable for paddy only. Nitrogenous fertilizers like urea were heavily subsidized and they contributed only to the production of paddy and did not encourage, for example, increase in coverage of pulses. The HYV seeds available were limited only to paddy. The timing of availability of credit was targeted at paddy. All reviews on agriculture focused on paddy. Support price with assured procurement was available only for paddy.

All this increased paddy cultivation. The farmers converted their medium and up- land to low land suitable for paddy cultivation.

The increased production of paddy certainly improved the economy of the farmers. At least till 1980s. The economy of paddy cultivation remained OK almost till 1985 in non-traditional areas. From 1980, we should have switched over to other crops through changes in all the policies which had worked successfully for paddy: irrigation, seeds, extension, inputs, credit, and subsidies, support price and so on. But we did not do so until about 1995. But this was a minor part of the problem. We created more serious problems for ourselves by a legal regime that impoverished the farmers, created lobbies that perpetuated obsession with a crop that was no more economic. Perhaps, the reason we could not switch away from paddy is related to, the vested interests described below.

Paddy and rice were essential commodities under the Essential Commodities Act. Under this law, control orders are issued. One such control order was called Rice and Paddy Control Order. Under this order, no one could stock rice beyond ten quintals (100 kilograms, about 220 pounds) without a license. Transportation from one district to another inside Orissa was not permissible without a license. Transportation outside Orissa was saddled with even more stringent conditions. By 1980, the price of rice in Orissa was at least one rupee lower per kg than that in the neighboring states. Had there been no restriction on movement of rice, all this money would have gone to the farmers of Orissa. Those days one rupee per kg of rice actually meant double the price. So the GDP would have gone up by double the value of surplus rice.

Meanwhile, the draconian law forced rice mills to close down in traditionally surplus areas like Balasore and Bhadrak, Orissa. A new breed of mill owners came up in the command of Hirakud and other projects, almost all of them coming from outside the state.

There was another law which prevented the rural economy from benefiting from the paddy revolution. The Rice Millers Industries Act put a restriction on setting up small rice hullers. But the restrictions on it were such that it needed approval from block and tehsil levels (county authorities) right up to the state government. The ostensible argument was that these small hullers caused loss of valuable rice bran oil. But I have always suspected that this law was perpetuated by the millers' lobby. Thankfully, this law has been repealed now.

IV

We continued to impose restriction on sale of rice and paddy, even when there was no deficit of rice in the state, for several reasons. One was the pelf generated by the license raj (permits- bureaucracy). This license raj was perpetrated not only by petty officials of civil supplies and police departments, but was very well understood by the political governments and top civil servants.

Once restrictions were put on sale of paddy and rice, the farmers did not get good price. But the difference in price of rice in Orissa and neighboring states continued to remain high. The money which should have gone to the farmers, and which would have generated both investment in the farm sector, and would have increased consumption in rural economy, went instead to the powers that enforced the laws of Rice and Paddy control order.

After a long and protracted effort by some of my friends in the civil service inside and outside the state, the restrictions on inter-district sale of rice inside Orissa was done away with. Abolition of restriction on sale outside the state took much longer. First, some do-gooders said that there should be no restriction on sale of rice or paddy outside the state, but there should be restriction on import of rice into the state. My humble argument was that once you put a checking mechanism, this instrument would check both incoming and outgoing vehicles and collect pelf. This is the money that should go to the farmers.

But, sadly, the movement of rice continues to be stalled. Cases are registered and news reports continue to be generated by officials who ‘seize’ rice and paddy ‘smuggled’ outside the state. There has not been any significant detection in smuggling out of precious minerals like manganese, chromites, iron ore [yes, iron ore is very precious now], or timber from Keonjhar border of Orissa. The irony is that while rice that is seized is the legitimate private property of citizens, timber and minerals that escape seizure are state properties.

This was only a small damage to the agricultural economy. The larger damage has come from the conundrum of distress sale of paddy and simultaneous starvation death. As I have said, I am no economist, but I have no doubt that the theories of people like Amartya Sen of entitlement are rarefied and theoretical. A large number of people began to lose their livelihood when forests became depleted, particularly, in western and southern Orissa, because they earned food from the forests for about 100 days in a year. With the depletion of forests by both hydro-electric projects and timber smugglers they lost their livelihood. It is another tragedy that hydel projects like Machhkund, and Balimela, both in Orissa, generated electricity, displaced tens of thousands of families and did not provide *any* irrigation until 50 years after they were set up. These people dependent upon the forest first gave up marginal agriculture for the lucre of wages. Then they became bonded laborers. As may have been seen from the above discussions, the green revolution in Orissa gave a go-by to all non-paddy and un-irrigated areas. When the small farmers moved out as destitute, as indentured labor, their quota of rice was shown to have been released. Though documents had been prepared to several degrees of perfection, the rice never left the mills, never reached the villages, and the millers were stuck with this rice.

The millers wanted this rice to be procured all over again. From my days as Revenue Divisional Commissioner, Sambalpur, [1997-98], Orissa, I have been pointing out at this recycling of rice meant for the poor, which was procured by the Food Corporation of India [FCI], all over again to redistribute this under the public distribution system [PDS]. Since the number of migrant and absent beneficiaries under the PDS increased every year, the amount of rice that was not lifted increased every year. With this, the demand for purchase by the FCI, that the allegation of distress sale rose and the conundrum of distress sale of paddy alongside starvation death multiplied.

My argument has been that the state machinery should not be used for restriction on purchase and sale of paddy. This is a private output. When it is, for example, the sale of rice meant for food-for-works program that amounts to pilferage of state property. But when it is rice produced by a farmer, which is available in plenty, which is not a state property, and where a farmer can gain by free trade, there should be no restriction, there should be no procurement, and the draconian Essential Commodities Act should not apply. The police certainly should be kept out of this if agricultural growth is to be ensured.

Photographs of old men and women were taken and demonstrated ostensibly, meticulously, and demonstrably. The same photographs were repeated from village to village, across districts, over the years, as evidence of starvation. I had not earlier worked in Kalahandi, until I had the high-sounding but vacant designation of Commissioner, Kalahandi-Balangir-Koraput [KBK], Orissa. Since I had no particular assignment, I used to go around interior villages, and generally looked at the condition of the people. One of my first shocking discoveries was about the lentils supplied for feeding program of school children. I found that these consisted of seeds of grass used as cattle feed, and I sent a report. The then Chief Minister became furious. This lentil [moong] was purchased centrally by the government. The allegations of starvation deaths resulted in inclusion of more and more number of people to be included under the category of below-poverty-line (BPL). Cheap or free rice flowed in for the apparently starving people. Some of these starving people did not exist. Some had been destitute. As more rice came in under the PDS at two to four (1rupee =24cents) rupees per kg, the price of rice produced by

Orissa farmers depressed further. Farmers lost their bargaining power. When government rice was available at two to four rupees per kg they had to agree with a lower price regime.

Whose rice comes to the market? That of a big farmer, who has surplus. Now the state government, under the advice of several young officers, introduced a system that all rice shall be purchased only through the market yards administered by the government agencies and/or local politicians. They tried to eliminate all intermediaries by saying that each farmer must get a certificate from the local Revenue Inspector or keeper of land records, as to how much land they hold, and how much paddy they can sell. I have no doubt that these IAS officers have no idea about how paddy is sold. No self-respecting large farmer, who has surplus paddy, will come to the market yard of the government, and wait there for seven days. The transaction cost of being forced to come to the market yard of the government is high, and being forced to sell to a miller is humiliating. I consider this to be a new kind of elitism, well-intended but unimplementable.

This regime, which impoverished the farmers, was not just the result of ignorance. A study was done in Kalahandi district, Orissa, around 2002, which showed that millers were chosen subjectively and arbitrarily; they did not pay fair prices, delayed payments, and at the end of the day, the farmers would have gained without the millers, without the Collector, the Civil Supplies Organization, the government.

The gains of green revolution to the economy of Orissa were annulled by the selective enforcement of the Essential Commodities Act, and are still being annulled by the civil servants including the police. As long as the people in charge of civil supplies made money by pilfering stocks of sugar and wheat meant for the public, well, it was illegal; but it did not impoverish the people. But over time, black marketing in sugar and semolina has become a non-issue. The PDS in respect of rice has certainly improved. But this has a tragic fall out.

V

As if the restriction on sale and purchase of rice and paddy, in the name of procurement and providing support price to the farmers, was not sufficient to depress the price of paddy that a farmer actually received, two things have happened to exacerbate the situation. One is the repeated allegation of starvation death. Part of the allegation of starvation is true. The two most important reasons of genuine starvation in areas most talked about like western and southern Orissa are [a] depletion of forests, on which the people of the area depended for food and livelihood for about six months in a year, [b] abolition of intermediaries like village *naik* (leader) and *gountia* (village chief) who despite the horror stories written about their exploitation did provide food security.

The relief codes remained stiff and frowned upon free distribution of food grain to the destitute under the assumption that if free food grain was available liberally, then there would be unlimited demand for this and the government would not be able to meet the expenses. As the allegations of starvation increased, leading to political embarrassment and investigation by National Human Rights Commission, around 1998 instructions were issued that the sarpanch(Mayor, City Council), the elected chief of the village *Panchayat* (council) will distribute free rice to all people said to be starving. However, this was not followed with allocation of funds and the scheme never took off. There was not only resistance from most civil servants at every possible level; there was also resistance from politicians at different levels.

In 2001, when I became the Special Relief Commissioner, advance funds were given to all *gram panchayat* (village councils) for providing free food grain to the starving people. This has stopped the allegations of starvation to a large extent. And contrary to the apprehensions of many in the government, the *panchayats* (village council) have been judicious in distribution of food grain, and the expenditure

on account of this did not soar. The expenditure on account of this is less than 1% of the total expenditure under calamity relief. Some of the allegations of starvation are certainly false. I must say with a lot of sadness that almost every death of old people, in some districts, was front-lined as starvation death in local and English press. When a childless couple, quite poor, adopted a child of another couple who had a large number of children and who was equally poor, it made headlines as ‘sale of child on account of starvation’. The inquiries into this have almost made adoption a crime in rural areas. When people eat *kumuda* leaves it was a sign of starvation for some in the media because they did not know that *kumuda* is nothing but pumpkin leaves which people eat as a healthy green vegetable.

Then came the scheme of rice at the rate of two-rupees-a-kilogram for people below the poverty line [BPL]. This scheme was also a result of the allegation of starvation. There was a rush to be included under this not only for the two rupees scheme, but also because every scheme under rural development was reserved for those belonging to scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and those under the BPL. In this scenario of competition to be included as poor, the number of poor increased to more than 80% in many districts, including some apparently developed areas like Jagatsinghpur. That was when Orissa acquired the questionable position of the second poorest state in the country, just above Bihar. This statistic was certainly wrong, but statistics are statistics.

As the disreputation of poverty rose, more and more rice came in under several schemes. Schemes like *Annapurna* and *Antyoday* are certainly relevant, most of the beneficiaries are genuine, and food insecurity of the aged and the utterly poor has disappeared after these schemes have been introduced. But at the same time, some schemes like food-for-work pumped in rice far in excess of demand. Three years back most of such food grain did reach the work sites and was paid as wages; but that is not true anymore.

This rice which did not reach the work sites and was not paid as wages was sold in the market at low prices, between three to four rupees a kg.

It has had a tragic impact on the paddy growers of Orissa. They just could not sell rice or paddy in the open market. Coupled with the impact of the procurement policy I have stated earlier, this paddy available in the open market depressed the price of rice and paddy further. This has finally undone all the gains of green revolution so far as paddy is concerned. But this has entailed a positive effect now. Farmers are beginning to shift over to other crops and avocations.

VI

While working as Managing Director of Orissa Milk Federation [Omfed], I find that it has taken twenty years for Omfed to achieve sale of one lakh (100,000) liters of milk per day [LPD]. And at least 30% of the milk was not bought from the farmers of Orissa, but was reconstituted from milk powder bought from Gujrat. Not only our dairy sector did not grow for at least ten years, at least thirty percent of the money of consumers of this state also went out to a prosperous state like Gujrat... In less than two years that I have been in this organization, the procurement has crossed three lakh (300,000) liters per day. That is if the consumers of Orissa were paying to the farmers of Orissa about seven lakh (700,000) rupees per day in 2002 through Omfed, then today, it is thirty lakh (3 million) rupees per day. Besides, the payments were erratic earlier: The Omfed refused to buy milk on holidays and during rainy season, and the farmers lost heavily. The activity of the Omfed was restricted to only five undivided districts: Cuttack, Puri, Sambalpur, Dhenkanal and Keonjhar, all in Orissa. Now we assure purchase for 365 days in a year, all over Orissa, and without any restriction on quantity. Whenever we see Balangir, Orissa, in the media, it is about parched lands, starvation and sale of children. This was the first district in Orissa which became self-sufficient in egg production. For those who are not familiar with the economics and

trade of eggs, most of the eggs consumed in urban areas of Orissa come from Andhra Pradesh. Even rural areas of Orissa are now dependent upon the eggs and broiler chicks from Andhra Pradesh (AP). The government of AP provides subsidy for the same. So, when we import eggs from AP, our state budget gains because it does not have to pay any subsidy and, possibly, it earns some revenue by way of entry tax. But subsidy and taxes have a very small impact on the economy of the state. The total value of these products should have gone to the farmers of Orissa. The taxes would have been more than recompensed by the taxes on the consumption by the farmers. Unlike many rich politicians in Orissa, *Narasimha Mishra*, former Minister of the state government, who has successfully demonstrated a basic economic activity like egg production in Balangir, Orissa is profitable and good for the economy.

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Primary School Enrollment in Orissa: A Closer Look

By Santosh Mishra*

Any analysis of Orissa economy is a sober reminder of our eternal quiet crisis. Tony Morrison's (Nobel Prize winner in literature) statement regarding double curse of a black woman seems apt here. To be a poor state in a developing country is not exactly a blessing. Statistical data and repeatedly show Orissa Economy in unflattering light. The benefits of 1991 and subsequent liberalization has not brought forth conclusive commensurate improvements all section of the population. Here are some of the startling indicators that indicate our sad state of affairs⁵. 47.2 percent of our population live below the poverty line (compare this with Punjab's 6.2 percent). Only Bihar makes us look competitive with a 54.2 percent. In terms of the per capita income the story is much more dismal. In 1980 our per-capita income was 20 percent lower than the all India average, but in 2001 our per-capita income is close to half that of the All India average. It doesn't mean that Orissa did better in 1980. To paraphrase Churchill "India was equally equitably distributing poverty through democratic socialism". In infant mortality rate Orissa is 30 percent higher than the National average. Now selected parts of India have managed to get up and fly with the wings of liberalization but Orissa is still grounded.

It is almost a cliché to mention that education is a pivotal contributing factor for the development of any society. India as a whole has a very unique, rather ironic, distinction. It is the second largest technically qualified manpower in the world but it is also the repository of the largest illiterate population. A simple answer to this paradox is a very well known phenomenon. India is among the few developing countries that has subsidized higher education for a long time. So while India has excelled remarkably in tertiary education, its primary education has been perennially neglected, especially in the rural areas. Thus while one part of the population has transcended the national barrier and is integrated with the developed world, the other part is frozen in an ancient time capsule. The latter group only occasionally come and stokes India's guilt, temporarily, when Indians watch the savagery of "Bandit Queen" in HDTV in a glorious Saturday afternoon.

This piece is also a small tribute to the latter group of people (the group Nixon called "silent majority", even though in a very different political context). It is true that converting NIT Rourkela to IIT will do wonder to Orissa, but it is Oriyas belief that unless our poorest lots are doing better, the notion of

⁵ The data are collected from the Planning commission's excellent comprehensive survey on Orissa.

development lacks ethical content (remember the old saying “you judge the standard of a school by the intelligence of its below average students”). The focus of this paper is primary school enrollment in Orissa. A direct comparison of primary school enrollments in Orissa and India gives reasons for optimism. The enrollment figures have converged over time. Then we take a step further and investigate whether the so called convergence is nothing but the miracle of averages. So we compare our state’s performance with that of nonBIMARU states (BIMARU states include Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Utter Pradesh) of India. As expected we find that our current position is much worse than it looks at first blush. The last logical piece relates to some policy prescriptions based on crude statistical analysis. The purpose of the essay is to see how crucial factors like wealth, mid day meal program, total literacy campaign (TLC), and cost of education affect the probability of a child going to school. As expected the relevant impacts will vary across heterogeneous category of the population. For example, marginal impact of additional wealth on probability of enrollment is higher for boys compared to that of girls. Similarly any cost increase has a lesser impact on male child’s education prospect compared to female child. In the similar vein we carry out the analysis for lower castes (SC and ST) and upper caste children. One of the key findings is that marginal benefit of increasing income on enrollment is more for lower castes compared to higher castes. A partial explanation is that the average lower caste income is low and the base level of enrollment is already is low, so any marginal rupee(Indian Currency) will boost the prospect of enrollment more strongly than the better off upper caste. We also find that the marginal impact of cost has a stronger pernicious impact on enrollment for the lower caste as compared to the upper caste. The other key finding is that total literacy program has no statistically significant impact on the enrollment statistics across the four groups considered in this analysis. On the contrary the mid day meal program is found to be a strong incentive for increased enrollment across the board. So it is suggested that the policy makers should look deeper into the drawbacks of the TLC, and try to expand the reach of mid-day meal program. It is also suggested that any income generation program or subsidy programs in tribal areas will benefit the primary school enrollment program, so also the programs reducing cost of education.

In 1951 literacy rate of Orissa was 15.80 percent as compared to 18.33 percent for whole of India. In next thirty years period the gulf widened, and in 1981 the corresponding numbers for Orissa and India were 33.62 percent and 43.56 percent respectively. This abyss, fortunately, has come down subsequently. In 1991 survey, the overall literacy gulf has reduced to 3 percent, 49 percent for Orissa and 52 percent for Orissa). In the comparison at the all India level, Orissa has not very well in Female enrollment. While in male enrollment the average enrollment for Orissa is higher than that of India, in female enrollment it lags behind the All India average by as much as six percent (34.1 percent for Orissa and 39.1 percent for whole India). The fact that female enrollment is close to half of that of male enrollment during that period is in itself a serious topic of discussion. Coming to the current period, does the rosy overall average tell the true story? Or is it the fact that the laggards in social indicators (The numbers for the BIMARU states) are pulling the average down for the national average. So our purpose is to segregate those laggards and compare the performance of Orissa with respect to the average of NonBIMARU states.

To this end we use the Household 53rd round National sample survey (NSS) data collected during 1998-1999. The total sample considered for this study is 46235 household from all over India. The number of Oriya households considered is 3425 (52 percent male and 48 percent female, and 46 percent lower caste and 54 percent upper caste). Our primary variable of interest is the enrolment statistics of children between age 6 and 13⁶.

⁶ It is a widely known fact that initial enrollment numbers are very high at all India level, but it is the subsequent drop out that brings the relevant statistics to realistic numbers. In our analysis the numbers we report are higher than the post dropout

We first provide the comparison of nonBIMARU states statistics with that of Orissa. The numbers are indeed revealing. For the nonBIMARU states 84 percent of the male and 65 percent of the female attend primary school education (the relevant number for all India is 76 percent and 57 percent for male and female respectively). For Orissa enrollments are 76.3 percent and 49.1 percent for male and female sample respectively. We also found that 82 percent of the upper caste children are enrolled while only 62 percent of the lower caste children are enrolled. It is true that a more stratification of the sample will provide a much better insight into the data, but the scope of this piece prevents us from going into that. This crude statistics clearly show that our relative complacency (the absolute numbers are nothing to write home about anyway) is misplaced. As several Indian states have galloped forward in social indicators, it is not wise to draw solace from the poor performance of the BIMARU states.

Thus a natural question arises. Is there anything Orissa can do about it? To put it differently, can we locate some explanatory variables that might explain the enrollment pattern in our sample? More significantly can we provide rudimentary policy prescription to increase primary school enrolment? To that end we provide a rudimentary statistical analysis of the data. Due to the heterogeneity of the population we stratify the sample to four categories, namely, we consider sub samples of male, female, upper caste, and lower caste children. Our main variable of interest is the probability that any given child attends the primary school⁷. The explanatory variables used are non-food consumption expenditure, cost of schooling⁸, whether the respondent's residence was covered by mid-day meal program and total literacy campaign⁹. Here are the main findings of the statistical analysis:

- (a) A 10 percent increase in consumption expenditure (that is 773 Rupees (\$20.00) for upper caste and 583 rupees (\$14.5) for lower caste per year) leads to a 4 percent increase in the probability of enrollment for the upper caste and 7.3 percent increase in probability for lower caste. The probability increment for a similar increase is 6 percent and 3 percent for male and female child respectively. As we can see, contrary to the conventional wisdom, the lower caste is not prejudiced towards education. Any monetary incentive will go a long way towards increasing enrollment. We also find that the female enrolment is driven partly by traditional factors. So the impetus for change there will come from change in the perception of the role of women in our society. Similarly in the cost front we find that a 10 percent rise in cost reduces the probability of enrollment by as much as 5 percent for the lower caste but only 3 percent for the upper caste. The figures for male and female for a 10 percent rise is 2 percent and 7 percent respectively. The qualitative implication is that households are more apt to take out their children from school under adverse situation if the child is a female child or he/she belongs to lower caste.
- (b) We also find that mid day meal program is a very strong factor in favor of the children enrollment. This effect is uniformly strong across the four groups we have considered in this analysis. The average impact of introducing the mid day meal program increases the enrollment probability by as much as 25 percent¹⁰. The impact is highest for the lower caste (33 percent) and

effect but lower than fresh enrollment rate. The qualitative nature of our analysis, in spite of this drawback, is quite robust when finer age groups are considered.

⁷ In statistical literature this is called logistic regression. All the calculations were done using the computer software SAS. There are several ancillary results that are not included in this piece. Interested readers may contact the author to get further detailed information about the data and other results.

⁸ This includes cost of tuition, examination, other fees, books and stationery. The average cost of primary education is found to be 425 rupees per children. Of course this hides a huge dispersion across geographical locations.

⁹ Admittedly, this is a very short list of explanatory factors. But we have substituted simplicity for a more nuanced complicated analysis with several additional variables.

¹⁰ With a base probability of 0.2 the absolute change may be quite modest.

lowest for females (18 percent). This meshes well with the notion that in developing societies children are considered as investment goods (they are considered wage earners). So one can consider mid day meal as a proxy for income generated from going to school.

- (c) We don't find any impact of the TLC on the probability of enrollment. This is true across all four category of the sample. At first glance it appears surprising. But further rumination suggests few clues to this conundrum. It is possible that the TLC is not able to effectively convey the long run benefits of education. It may also be true that, if a family with a given income and cost structure decides not to send its child to the school (perhaps because of poor future employment potential), paean of long run non monetary benefits is not enough to sway the decision of the household. Also observe that compared to the TLC mid day meal is a short run tangible benefit. It is also generally true that as long as the primary school enrollment is not perceived to increase the probability of future employment, these programs will remain ineffectual.

In this piece we provide an overview of the primary school enrollment in Orissa. We find that even though we are doing relatively well with respect to all India average, our performance is dismal compared to nonBIMARU States. Especially the female enrolment is an area of grave concern. We also provide a very crude statistical analysis that dwells on factors contributing to the probability of children getting enrolled to the primary school. We find that the impact of explanatory factors varies across different strata of the population, and we also make few policy suggestions.



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF ORISSA

By Anadi Naik*

Recently, the Governor of Maryland Robert Ehrlich Jr. sent a delegation to India to explore business possibilities. The delegation went to places like Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Hyderabad, New Delhi and Bombay. There was no mention of Rourkela, Bhubaneshwar or Talcher.

Maryland is not the only state that has been looking for businesses in India. Almost all of the states in the United States are sending delegations to drum up new business and try to strengthen the old ones. Fields such as educational expansion, information technology, biotechnology, and production of medical instruments are very hot now. Everybody expects phenomenal growth in employment in those sectors. In the last few years, India has made a great deal of progress in the above fields. Many states in the Union are trying to benefit from this trend. However, Orissa's story in this regard is different.

Every fifth grader knows that Orissa is blessed with many natural resources. The state has a large deposit of coal and iron ore under its soil; it has abundant forest products and a bay to the East. It has skilled workers willing to work hard. But an invisible disconnect exists between its job seeking population and available jobs. The biggest source of employment in Orissa has been

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agriculture. In rural areas, almost every able bodied man who does not have a government job, is engaged in a farming related activity. However, over the years, a tendency has developed among the educated youth to stay away from agriculture. Neither the society nor the government has done much substantially to motivate the youth toward farming. Even unemployed young men in rural areas are not interested to run behind the bullocks. Agriculture related work is hard, dirty and unglamorous work and does not pay as much as the clerks and officers get. The young men do have a point!

Due to the super cyclone of 1999 many farmers of the coastal areas of Orissa lost their bullocks. Now, they are hiring tractors to do the plowing. The use of tractors has reduced the need for a bullock and has saved money for the farmer. At the same time, the new change has not been so good to the day laborers previously depending on plowing some one's field. The extensive use of tractors in plowing and carrying grains from the field has puts them deeper into the misery of unemployment.

The economic development of Orissa depends on how well the existing problems in the rural areas are tackled. Urban centers are a reflection of their rural counter parts. People from rural areas come to towns and cities looking for work. They crowd the facilities there. They sleep in the street; do all kinds of odd jobs and live in unsanitary conditions. Their massive presence in urban centers creates "urban problems". Once the problems in the villages are solved, the urban problem would plug itself automatically. Until that happens, both the areas have to get proper attention. Urban centers like Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Rayagada or Bolangir can not attract investments from outside if they have no good roads, clean hotels or a safe atmosphere to do business. In addition to a good workforce, they need to develop a basic infrastructure. In a sense, a town has to have a good road to attract an outside investor to open a factory. Availability of a road is also linked to bringing in visitors and philanthropic groups to the area. In this context my own village comes to mind. Bari used to be the Headquarters for The Kasturba Gandhi Memorial Trust. In those days Bari had no serviceable road and the nearest bus station was 15 miles away. Visitors from other areas were finding it difficult to trek such a distance. Finally, the Trust moved to Satyabhama pur , closer to the Cuttack-Kendrapara Road. When the Headquarter of the Trust was in Bari, a lot of meetings were taking place. Outsiders were coming frequently. A women' training center was there. Local vegetable vendors were getting a good price. With the move to Satyabhama pur all of that moved also. If we multiply this incident thousand times we get a good picture as to how important the infrastructure such as a road or a school or a well is for the development of an area. Who can deny the contribution to India's IT prowess of all those IITs built in the 1950s?

Historically, Orissa has remained sympathetic to the philosophy of egalitarianism. That is why Chaitanya found such a fertile ground in Orissa. That is why a Socialist movement took place in Orissa before it could take hold over the entire country. Until 1947 the Congress Socialist Party was the Congress Party in Orissa. Vinobaji's Bhoodan-Gramdan movement was widely accepted in its villages. While making new plans for the future one should not forget the past. If working toward equality is a strength then one needs to build on that. An activist working for economic development needs to create grama- sabhas, pani -panchayats that would bring out the working together spirit of the people.

The other day in a conversation with a World Bank employee I was told that projects like Grameen Bank are very useful for Orissa's development. The friend was very enthusiastic about it. The problem was that he wanted some one else to implement his plans. I reminded him that

there are hundreds of good ideas and thousands of beautiful plans like Grameen Bank that would be helpful for the development of Orissa. What Orissa needed was a group of people willing to sit down in different areas and start putting their nice ideas into practice. I reminded him the concept of Santi- Sena that Gandhiji had espoused.

Frankly speaking, economic development is not a system that exists in isolation. Economic Development is dependent upon many other developments within the socio-economic structure of a given area. For example, a society devoid of political freedom, a universal literacy program or adequate healthcare for women and children can not achieve economic development to its fullest. Whatever it would have in the name of “ growth” or “ development “ would be stunted from the beginning. Economic progress of Afghanistan during the Taliban rule may be an example in this regard. Before one talks about bringing Information Technology, Bio-Technology, Industrialization and Foreign- investment into Orissa, one has to be careful as to the connectivity of these programs to the real life in the state. The reality of life there is stark. Like everywhere in India its bureaucracy is anachronistic and corrupt. Roads, if they exist at all, are full of pot- holes. Educational institutions sheltered in dilapidated buildings continue to create thousands of literate men and women every year without offering them skills. The rate of unemployment is sky high everywhere and no one seems to have any clue to bring it under control. Above all else there is a profound lack of co-operation among citizens toward working for a common goal. Ordinary folks in the past have responded to spontaneous calls for action, specifically in the political arena. However, economic development requires sustained, long-term involvement of a large segment of the population. Ordinary folks have not been mobilized effectively toward this goal. Any attempt by the government to mobilize them has fallen on deaf ears because they do not trust bureaucrats who are entrusted to inspire them.

Given the scenario above I am not suggesting that we keep on waiting to bring economic development to Orissa until we have a perfect situation there. The situation above was not created in a day or in a year. Therefore, its solution requires a long term and comprehensive effort. What I am suggesting is that unless a group of people is willing to get their hands dirty in the field and willing to take the risk of challenging the government, the bureaucracy and the citizenry and being counterchallenged by them, things will not change.

I am aware that Sam Pitroda who has spoken twice at OSA gatherings (in Nashville and Chicago) wants NROs to get help from and work with local authorities – Collectors, Magistrates, SDOs etc. As agents of the Government the officers should be looked as harbingers of change. But they are not. They are the ones who give their sons in law big cars as dowry that has been illegal for years. They are the ones who take a cut in grants that come to public institutions. Therefore, it is necessary that people “ gherao” them, challenge them and make them feel that in spite of their hard earned title I.A.S., they are servants of the people and paid by every one’s taxes. I am not suggesting that one go out looking for officers to incite against. It is not necessary. Yet, there comes a time when a government officer becomes an oppressor and a stumbling block. Some one has to take the lead to cross the path of him/her. At the same time one has to thank an officer when he/she is genuinely helpful as many of them are.

From the Soviet experience of so many years we have seen that economic development without social and political change can not stand on its own. By opening hundreds of call centers, biotechnology parks and medical facilities we may be able to pronounce ourselves as “heroes” and “path finders” in those fields. But all of that would not be able to scratch the surface of the problems that we have on hand. For economic- development to spread far and

wide and for every one to benefit from it, participation in the process at every level is necessary. Theorizing economic development of Orissa is fine. But it is the action that counts. It would be useful to remember that up until Gandhi's arrival on the political scene in India, political stalwarts of his time were confined to writing petitions to the Government. Espousal of various theories about economic development works in the same way.

It would be an illusion that by creating a few wealthy individuals, institutions or business houses, Orissa would solve its economic problems. Among a lot of Oriyas there is a strong desire to create wealth in Orissa by making a handful like them wealthy so that their riches will trickle down to the less fortunate. If through legitimate efforts some one gets rich or super rich all the power to him/her. Production of real wealth, however, depends on the transformation of raw materials to finished goods. Orissa has a long history of overseas trade. Oriya folk-lore has many stories of distant trades and conquests. Those who are interested in the economic development of Orissa today need to look at her past and present and then draw a line between the two and see the disconnects. It is soothing to imagine a big picture of things where we need to go. There are thousands of fields we could explore and there are hundreds of avenues we could follow. But it would be more realistic if we look around us and see what is there and transform them into possibilities. Any effort at any level and volume to fit the masses into those disconnects and those possibilities would be the key to a real Economic Development of Orissa..

*Author of several biographies on Gandhiji, Vinoba, Acharya Harihara Das, Nabakrusna Chowdhury and others and former Editor of Sarvodaya

I will tell you truth, O Brahman, if I make so bold.
These idols in your temples- these idols have grown old.
From them you have learned hatred of those who share your life.
An Allah to *His* preachers has taught mistrust and strife;
Disgusted, from your temple and our shrine I have run,
Now both our preachers' sermons and your old myths I shun.
In shapes of stone you fancied God's dwelling-place: I see
In each speck of my country's poor dust, a deity.
Come, let us lift this curtain of alien thoughts again,
And reunite the severed, and wipe division's stain:
Too long has lain deserted the heart's warm habitation;
Let us build in this homeland a new temple's foundation!
With lofty pinnacles touching the skirts of heaven's robe;
And there at every sunrise let our sweet chanting move
The hearts of all who worship, and pour the wine of love;
Strength and peace too shall blend in the hymns the votary sings
For in love lies salvation to all earth's living things

-----*Mohammad Iqbal (A New Shrine)*

I remember once going to see when he was lying ill at Putney. I had ridden in the taxi-cab No.1729, and remarked that the number (7.13.19) seemed to me rather a dull one.' No, 'he replied,' it is very interesting number; it is the smallest number expressible as a sum of two cubes in two different ways.'

- G.H. Hardy on **Srinivas Ramanujan(1887-1920), a great Mathematical genius of India,** in Proceedings of the London Mathematical Society 26 May 1921, p.57. (The two ways are $1^3 + 12^3$ and $9^3 + 10^3$).



The Sumatra – Andaman Indian Ocean Tsunami of 2004

By
Lalu Mansinha*

Tsunamis, great tidal waves, and earthquakes are fearsome natural disasters, each with its own terrifying nature. Each occurs without any warning. The intense horizontal shaking during earthquakes is the main mode of damage to manmade structures and dwellings. With tsunamis the destruction is caused by the huge flood of sea water. Tsunamis are created by coastal undersea earthquakes. Those living in the coastal areas near tsunami causing earthquakes are first jolted by the earthquake, and within minutes, are hit by the tsunami. This happened to the city of Banda Aceh and nearby areas in Indonesia on December 26; 2004. Tsunami waves traveled away from the epicenter area, across thousands of kilometers of Deep Ocean and hit unsuspecting coastal settlements with total surprise.

In this article, I will try to provide some basic facts about the generation, propagation and destructive dissipation of tsunamis. As in any field, there are important details about tsunamis and earthquakes that are not yet understood by scientists.

Tsunami in a bathtub: To understand tsunamis, let us try this simple experiment in a bathtub, or in a swimming pool. Hold your hand flat with palm facing up, about one foot under water. Then rapidly jerk your hand up. You will see the water above your hand up well and flow away to the sides. With some luck, you will see a few waves move away in all directions. You have created a micro-tsunami.

Now think of the ocean bottom suddenly going up 20meters (60feet), over 100,000 square kilometers (40,000 square miles). The whole water column above the ocean floor will rise like a tower, but just for an instant. Under the force of gravity, and inertia, the water column will drop down and rise up again with buoyancy and so on. A tsunami wave has started.

A tsunami can be caused by any event that causes a massive disturbance of the ocean such as a meteorite impact at sea, undersea volcano, submarine landslides, and large earthquakes. The speed of this type of wave is proportional to the square root of the water depth. The wave moves faster in Deep Ocean and slower in shallow coastal waters. The tsunami speeds away from the epicenter as a gravity wave, moving at the speed of a jet airliner, at about 800km/hour.

Earthquake as a crack: Earthquakes give rise to tsunamis. Therefore, it helps to know a little about earthquakes. When a stone hits the windshield of a car, a tiny crack starts. Both sides of the crack move apart slightly, opening up a *tensile crack*. Quite often one can see the crack start at one point and grow. An earthquake crack, termed a *fault*, can grow at 12,000km/hour (7,500miles/h). A shear fault or a shear rupture causes an earthquake. Each side of the rupture slips past the other, without opening apart.

The slip can be vertical (one side moving up, other down) or horizontal (one side moving west, say, and the other moving east).

Tsunami and “Lahadi”: On a stormy day at the beach the waves that crash onto the beach (in Oriya, *Lahadi*) can be impressive. The waves are created by the wind blowing across the water surface. These are *surface waves*, which gradually disappear at depths of a few tens of meters. One can estimate the separation between the crests of the incoming waves. It is normally between 100 to 200m, and is called the *wavelength*. One can also time the interval between the waves. A breaker hits the beach every 5 to 20sec. This time interval is called the *period*. The height of the breakers is about 10 meters or so. These ocean surface waves travel at speeds less than 80kmh (50 miles/h).

A tsunami is a water wave that is created by the sudden uplift or down drop of the ocean floor, caused by an earthquake fault. The tsunami wave velocity, amplitude and wavelength depend on many factors, among which is the local water depth. In Deep Ocean the tsunami wave amplitude is only 50cm or so, with a speed of 800kmh, with a wavelength of 100 to 300km.

A *lahadi* exists only in the top 20meters of the ocean, whereas a tsunami wave involves the entire ocean depth, 3800meters at south end of the Bay of Bengal. Therefore, the tsunami carries 200 times more water by volume. And the tsunami travels at the speed of a jet airliner, while a *lahadi* travels at the speed of a car.

The speed of a tsunami depends on the square root of the depth of the water. The ratio of the speed at 9m depth to the tsunami speed at 3600m depth is a ratio of 3 to 60. Thus when the front part of a tsunami wave reaches the shore, say a depth of 10m, the back of the same wave is 100km behind, in deep water. The front is moving at a speed 20kmh, a slow car, the back is still moving at 800kmh, a jetliner. So the water at the back catches up rapidly with the slow moving front, piling up the water into a wave that can be 30 meters high, and there is lot of water still coming in.

The Tsunami of December 26, 2004: On December 26, 2004, at 7:58:53 am local time, a shear rupture started below the ocean floor, west of the northern tip of Sumatra and grew at a speed of 12000km/h into a 1000km long fault, taking about 200 seconds. The fault grew northwards towards Andaman Islands. The fault was slightly curved, but roughly oriented north-south. The west side of the fault went down, the east side went up. Just above the point where the fault started, the maximum uplift was 20m. The total energy released by the earthquake was equivalent to 30,000 Hiroshima atom bombs.

The ocean in that region is 3800m deep, on the average. With instantaneous ruptures and uplift of one side and down drop of the other side, the column of water 3800m tall, 1000km long, and 100km wide was pushed upwards, and on the west side of the fault a similar column went down. The deadly tsunami wave had started.

The tsunami hit Banda Aceh within a few minutes. The east coast of south India and Sri Lanka were hit about two hours later. The northern coasts of the Bay of Bengal, including the coast of Andhra, Orissa, West Bengal, Bangladesh, and Myanmar did not witness a devastating tsunami wave.

Why Orissa was spared: From the instant of the earthquake, the fate of 300,000 people around the Indian Ocean was sealed. The northern tip of Sumatra, the Andaman and Nicobar islands not only were devastated by the earthquake, but also were hit by the Tsunami. Along the east coast of southern India and Sri Lanka, and the west coast of Thailand, the tsunami hit with destructive force and with no warning.

On the first learning about this tsunami, my fear was about all the villages along the Orissa coast, and particularly about the new mouth of Chilika Lake into the sea, and about my own village, Nandala, on

the lake. Fortunately, the tsunami wave's height along the Orissa, West Bengal, Bangladesh and Myanmar coasts were too low and caused only minor damage. The reasons are not clear.

The first hypothesis is that the generation of tsunami by the uplift/down drop of the ocean bottom is too simplified a model. It is not just the uplift and down drop of the ocean floor that generate tsunamis. The Ocean bottom seismic surface waves or a free oscillation mode plays an unsuspected role. The second hypothesis is that the north-south orientation of the fault directed the energy of the tsunami in an east –west direction.

Large earthquakes: My own personal interest with large earthquakes came about in the late nineteen sixties when I and my colleague Doug Smylie showed that large earthquakes change the shape of the earth, the length of day, and excite the wobble of the poles. On the basis of two great earthquakes (the 1960 Chile earthquake M=9.5 and the 1964 Alaska earthquake, M=9.2, in Richter), we put forward this hypothesis. The 2004 Sumatra earthquake changed the rotation rate of the earth (the length of day) by about 3 microseconds. The pole shifted by about 3cm.

Tsunami Warning System: One question that I asked myself is whether we Indian seismologists should have anticipated the Tsunami and pressed for the setting up of a tsunami warning network for the Indian Ocean. A Tsunami network has been operating in the Pacific since 1948. But the situation in the Pacific and Indian oceans is different. Large undersea earthquakes occur in various parts of the Pacific Ocean quite frequently. Since 1948, 20 warnings have been issued for the Pacific. Of these, there were only 5 Pacific wide tsunamis. So for the Pacific, we are looking at one tsunami every 10 years, In contrast, large undersea earthquakes are rare in the Indian Ocean. There were perhaps two tsunamis in the Indian Ocean in the last 150 years, roughly one tsunami every 75 years.

There is currently no exact method of predicting earthquakes. However, within minutes of an earthquake occurrence, seismic networks can determine the location of the earthquake. If it is a large undersea earthquake, then the possibility of a tsunami exists. We know that submarine earthquakes, submarine landslides or underwater volcanoes generate tsunamis. But only one of four coastal undersea earthquakes generates a tsunami. Thus we need ocean Tsunami sensors to detect tsunamis, and then issue warnings. Such a system for the Indian Ocean would be expensive, estimated to cost some \$30million. These sensors measure acoustic signals and the signals are to be converted to radio frequency signals that can be transmitted to satellites and land based communication networks for broadcast and warning in appropriate frequencies.

The question now becomes a cost benefit ratio. Is it worth spending \$30m to set up a warning system, plus \$5m/year running costs, to issue one warning as necessary?

A better choice would be to exploit the current wide spread use of mobile phones. Design a combined radio-cell phone warning system that would broadcast a warning every time a major undersea possible tsunami generating earthquake in the Indian Ocean. Most of these warnings would not result in a tsunami, but with speedy evacuation, lives would be saved when it did occur. The technology for earthquake location already exists. All the government needs to do is develop the cell phone warning broadcast system.

The most cost effective measures against tsunami are to enforce existing laws in India that ban dwellings and structures within one kilometer of the waterline. The single important factor in the very large number of casualties is the increase of population living within reach of the sea. A simple and effective tsunami protection system would be to make sure that there are no cottages, huts, houses, hotels within the reach of the tsunami on the beach. This is doable right now. And it will improve the natural beauty of our beaches.

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The Great Wave, tsunami, courtesy of Katsushika Hokusai, 1827



From Supercyclone, Orissa Has Seven Tips for Black Sunday relief

By ILA PATNAIK *

BHUBANESWAR, JANUARY 6: Like a war veteran who has been there, done that, suffered and survived, Orissa is watching the massive relief operations in Tamil Nadu and the Andaman and Nicobar islands with the eye of a professional. The tsunami may have spared Orissa but there is no state in India that has more experience in dealing with the aftermath of a calamity. And no other state that knows more about how relief operations can get botched up despite good intentions and an excess of resources.

“Often the constraint is not material resources but coordination,” Special Relief Commissioner of Orissa, R. Balakrishnan told The Indian Express. Not only does the state experience floods, starvation and cyclones almost every year, but it has even had to live through the supercyclone of 1999 that killed at least 10,000 people and left 15 lakh homeless. So Balakrishnan knows what he is talking about.

- Delink the distribution of resources from their mobilization, he says. This makes sense because, otherwise, all the burden will fall on officials from the districts that have been hit while their colleagues in areas that are unaffected will have very little to do.
- So Balakrishnan says that Orissa has learnt to leave the mobilization of resources to districts untouched by calamity so that officials in the worst-hit districts can focus on distributing them. In Tamil Nadu, too, where areas like Nagapattinam have faced the brunt, it may make sense to let their neighbors take care of raising resources.
- The media, NGOs and volunteers should act as watchdogs and whistleblowers, says Balakrishnan. And the state would do well to listen. When a flood hit Orissa in 2003, the relief commissioner’s office would hold a press conference every day, not just to give out information but also to get feedback from the media on which areas were being neglected and where improvements could be made.
- Damodar Raut, Minister for Panchayati Raj and six-time MLA from Ersama block in Jagatsingpur, Orissa, which was the worst hit by the supercyclone, agrees that a breakdown of communications delayed relief reaching some of the worst-hit areas. And Balakrishnan added that while 250 kitchens were set up during the last flood, it would have been very useful if there was someone at each one of them to make sure that everyone was being fed.
- Orissa has learnt that it pays to set up an inventory of resources — both material and human — that can be called upon when disaster actually strikes. It has, for example, a database of boats that can be hired. It has a list of people who have experience in making packages and handling relief materials.
- Orissa has identified “gateways” — districts that share borders with Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal — which can mobilize resources from these states. Even mills that can supply large quantities of “chura-gur” to feed the victims have been earmarked.

- Two other practical lessons may come in handy. One is that airdropping is very expensive and relief does not reach the vulnerable — the old, the women and the children — as it is often grabbed by the strong. The other is that communication systems using very high frequency have to be put in place. These have been made available to block offices. They do not need electricity. Also, underground optical fiber cables are being put in place as overhead phone wires fail during such emergencies.

Today it is Tamil Nadu and the Andamans. Tomorrow the need could arise anywhere. Orissa's lessons apply to all of India.

* Dr. Patnaik is a Columnist for The Indian Express (*Courtesy of The Indian Express*)

ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟ କିଏ ?

ଦେବୀପ୍ରସନ୍ନ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ

ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟ ଗୋଟିଏ ଦୁର୍ଘଟରୁ ଏକ ଆପେକ୍ଷିକ ଶବ୍ଦ ! କୋଟିପତି ତୁଳନାରେ ଲକ୍ଷପତି ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟ । ଲକ୍ଷପତିଙ୍କ ତୁଳନାରେ ହଜାର କମାଉ ଥିବା ଲୋକ ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟ । ଏମିତି ହେଇ ଦିବକ୍ତ ଖାଇବାତ ଦୂରର କଥା ଦିମ୍ବୁରା ଖାଇବାକୁ ନପାଉଥିବା ଲୋକ ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟ । ପୁଣି ଏପଠୁ ଦେଖିଲେ ଦି ମୁଠା ଖାଇବାକୁ ନପାଉଥିବା ଲୋକ ଆଗରେ ଦିବକ୍ତ ଖାଇଥିବା ଲୋକ ଧନୀ । ଶହେ ତୁଳନାରେ ହଜାର ଧନୀ, ହଜାରରୁ ଲକ୍ଷ ଧନୀ, ଲକ୍ଷରୁ କୋଟି କମାଉଥିବା ଲୋକ ଧନୀ ।

ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟର ନାନା ପରିଚୟ ଅଛି । ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟ ହେଉଛି ଭୋକ । ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟ ହେଉଛି ଆଶ୍ରୟର ଅଭାବ । ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟ ହେଉଛି ରୋଗରେ ସଜିଲେ ଓଷଦ କିଣିବା ପାଇଁ କିଂବା ଡାକ୍ତରକୁ ଦେଖେଇବା ପାଇଁ ସଂବଳର ଅଭାବ । ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟ ହେଉଛି ନିରକ୍ଷରତା । ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟ ହେଉଛି ପିଲାକୁ ସ୍କୁଲକୁ ପଠେଇବା ପାଇଁ ସଂବଳ ଏବଂ ଇଚ୍ଛାର ଅଭାବ ।

ସ୍ଥାନ ଓ ସମୟ ଭେଦରେ ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟର ନାନା ରୂପ । ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟ ବିଷୟରେ ଗବେଷଣା କରି, ତାହାର ବିଶ୍ଳେଷଣ କରି, ତାହାକୁ ମାପି ତାହା ଭିତରୁ ମାପକାଠି ବାହାର କଲାବେଳେ 'ଅପରେସନ୍ ସକ୍ସେସ୍‌ଫୁଲ୍ ପେସେଣ୍ଟ୍ ଡେଡ୍' (ଅପରେସନ୍ ସଫଳ କିନ୍ତୁ ରୋଗୀ ମରିଗଲା) କଥା ମନକୁ ଆସେ । ଏଇ ମାପକାଠି ପୁଣି ବଦଳି ବଦଳି ଯାଉଛି । ଗୋଟିଏ ସମୟରେ ଜି ଏନ୍,

ପି ଓ ଜି ଡି ପି ବିକାଶର ମାପକାଠି ଥିଲା । ତାପରେ ପି ଆଇ କ୍ୟୁ ଏଲ୍ (ଫିଜିକାଲ୍ ଇନ୍‌ଡେଭ୍ ଅଫ୍ କ୍ୟାଲିଟି ଅଫ୍ ଲାଇଫ୍) ମାପକାଠି ହେଲା । ତାପରେ ଏହା ମଧ୍ୟ ବଦଳି ଗଲା । ଏବ୍ ଡି ଆଇ (ହିଉମାନ୍ ଡେଭଲପ୍‌ମେଣ୍ଟ୍ ଇଣ୍ଡେକ୍ସ୍) ନୂଆ ମାପକାଠି ହେଲା । ଆମେ ଅଣନିଶ୍ଚାସୀ ହୋଇ ମାପକାଠି ପଛରେ ଗୋଡ଼ାଉଛେ । ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟ ଯେଉଁ ଠି ଯେପରି ଥିଲା ସେଇଠି ସେଇପରି ରହିଲା । ଏଥିପରି ସର୍ବେ ମାନ ସମୟସାଧ୍ୟ ହୋଇଥିବାରୁ ମୌଳିକ ତଥ୍ୟ ସଂଗ୍ରହ, ତାହାର ବିଶେଷଣ ଓ ରିପୋର୍ଟ୍ ତିଆରି ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଛ ବର୍ଷର ଖାଇ ଆପଣାଛାଏଁ ତିଆରି ହୋଇଯାଏ ।

ଏଇ ମପାମପିରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ମାପକାଠି ପୁଥିବାର ସବୁ ଦେଶ ପାଇଁ ବ୍ୟବହାର କରାଯାଉଥିବାରୁ ଓର୍ଲଡ୍ ବ୍ୟାଙ୍କ୍ ଦୈନିକ ଏକ ଡଲାର୍ ଓ ଦୁଇ ଡଲାର୍‌କୁ ଧରି ଦୁଇଟି ରେଖା ଟାଣିଛନ୍ତି । ଏହି ରେଖା ହେଉଛି ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟ ରେଖା । ଅର୍ଥାତ୍, ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଦିନକୁ ଏକ ବା ଦୁଇ ଡଲାର୍ ଅର୍ଜନ କରନ୍ତି ସେମାନେ ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟ ରେଖା ତଳେ ବୋଲି ଧରି ନିଆଯାଏ । କହିବା ବାହୁଲ୍ୟ ଯେ ଆମ ଦେଶର ଦରିଦ୍ର ଏକ ଡଲାର୍ ତଳର ମଣିଷ ।

ଯେଉଁମାନେ ବିଶ୍ୱବଜାର, ପୁଞ୍ଜିର ଚଳନ, ଏବଂ ବ୍ୟବସାୟ ବୁଦ୍ଧି ବିଷୟରେ ପାଟି କରୁଛନ୍ତି, ସେମାନେ ବୁଝିପାରୁନାହାନ୍ତି ଯେ ଆମ ଗାଉଁଲି ହାଟ୍ ଏବଂ ବିଶ୍ୱବଜାର ଗୋଟିଏ ସୁତାରେ ବନ୍ଧା । ଆମ ଗାଉଁଲି ହାଟ୍ ଓ ସହରି ହାଟ୍ ଭିତରେ ସମ୍ପର୍କର ଗୋଟିଏ ଧାରା ହେଉଛି ସହରି ବ୍ୟବସାୟୀ ଗାଁର ଚାଷି ମାନଙ୍କୁ କିପରି ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦୟ ଭାବରେ ଶୋଷଣ କରୁଛନ୍ତି ।

ଆର୍ତ୍ତତାତିକ ବ୍ୟବସାୟୀ ମାନେ ଆମକୁ ଯେମିତି ଶୋଷଣ କରୁଛନ୍ତି, ଆମେ ସେମିତି ଗାଁ ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ ଶୋଷଣ କରୁଛୁ । ଗୋଟିଏ ଗାଁର ଜଣେ ଚାଷି ପିଆଜ ଚାଷରୁ ଭଲ ପସଲ ପାଇଲା । ସିଏ ଅଳ୍ପ ପଇସାରେ କିଣୁଥିବା ମଧ୍ୟମ ଲୋକକୁ ନ ଦେଇ ଅଧିକ ଦି ପଇସା ପାଇବା ଆଶାରେ ସହରକୁ ଗଲା । ସକାଳୁ ସଞ୍ଜିଯାଏ ବସି ବସି ଗୋଟିଏ ସୁଜା ଗ୍ରାହକ ନ ପାଇ ଫେରିବା ବାଟରେ ବଳଦଙ୍କ ବୋଝ କମେଇବା ପାଇଁ ପିଆଜ ଗୁଡିକ ସତକ କତର ନାଳରେ ପକାଇ ଦେଇ ଆସିଲା । ବୈଦେଶିକ ବିକଶିତ ଦେଶମାନେ ଆମ ବଜାରରେ ପଶିବା ପାଇଁ ସହଯୋଗ ଲୋଡୁଛନ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏହି ସହଯୋଗ ବାଘଛେଲିର ସହଯୋଗ । ଆମେରିକା ଆପଣା ଖାଦ୍ୟଶସ୍ୟ ପାଇଁ ତାଙ୍କ ଚାଷିଙ୍କୁ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ପ୍ରକାର ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ଦେଉଛନ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଆମ ଚାଷିମାନଙ୍କୁ

ଆମେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ଦେବାରେ ସେମାନେ ଘୋର ବିରୋଧି । ଥରେ ଆମ ବଜାର ସେମାନେ ଅକ୍ତିଆର କଲେ ଆମ ଜୀବନ ନାଟି ତାଙ୍କ ହାତରେ ରହିଲା । ଯେଉଁମାନେ ବିଶ୍ୱବଜାର କଥା କହୁଛନ୍ତି ତାଙ୍କୁ ଜବାବ ଦେବାକୁ ହେବ ଯେ ବିଶ୍ୱବଜାର ଆସିଲେ ଆମ ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟ ବଢ଼ିବ ନା କମିବ ? ତାଙ୍କୁ ଯାଉଛି ଜବାବ ଦେବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ ଯେ ହିରୋସିମାରେ ବୋମା ପଡ଼ିଲେ କିଂବା ଆଫିକାର କୌଣସି ଦେଶରେ ଅସ୍ଥିରତା ଦେଖାଗଲେ ଆମ ବାଇଗଣ, ଜହ୍ନି, ଭେଣ୍ଟିର ଦାମ୍ ବଢ଼ିବ କାହିଁକି ? ଏହି ପ୍ରଶ୍ନର ଉତ୍ତରରୁ ବିଶ୍ୱବଜାର ଓ ଗାଁ ହାତର ସମ୍ପର୍କର କିଛି ଧାରଣା କରିହେବ ।

ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଆର୍ତ୍ତତାତିକ ବ୍ୟବସାୟୀ ମାନେ ତାଙ୍କ ବ୍ୟବସାୟ ପକ୍ଷର ପୁନର୍ବିଚାର କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ସେମାନେ ଅଧିକ ସମ୍ମୁଳ ଦାବୀ କରୁନାହାନ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏହି ସମ୍ମୁଳ ବ୍ୟବହାରର ପରିଣାମ ବିଷୟରେ ଅଧିକ ଧ୍ୟାନ ଦେଉଛନ୍ତି । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ବିଶ୍ୱବଜାର ଖଣ୍ଡ ଖଣ୍ଡ ହୋଇ ଅଧିକରୁ ଅଧିକ ଆଞ୍ଚଳିକ ବଜାରରେ ପରିଣତ ହେଉଛି । ବିଶ୍ୱବଜାର ପ୍ରେମୀ ମାନେ ଏକଥା ଦେଖିପାରୁ ନାହାନ୍ତି ।

କୁହାଯାଏ ଯେ ଅମଲାତନ୍ତ୍ର ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟର ଏକ ବଡ଼ କାରଣ । ଦେଶକୁ ଦରିଦ୍ର କରି ଦେଖାଇବା ଅମଲାତନ୍ତ୍ରର ବଡ଼ କାମ । ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟ ନିରାକରଣ ପାଇଁ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ମାଗିବା ଏବଂ ଏହି ସାହାଯ୍ୟକୁ ଉପଭୋକ୍ତାଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ପହଞ୍ଚେଇବା ହେଉଛି ଅମଲାତନ୍ତ୍ରର ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ । ଦୀପ ତେଜିଲେ ହାତ ଚିକ୍କଣ ହେବା ସ୍ୱାଭାବିକ । ଟଙ୍କାକରୁ ମାତ୍ର ପଇସା ପଇସା ଉପଭୋକ୍ତାଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ପହଞ୍ଚୁଥିବା ହେଉଛି ଭାରତର ପୂର୍ବ ପ୍ରଧାନ ମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ ରାଜୀବ ଗାନ୍ଧିଙ୍କ କଥା । ଉପରୁ ତଳକୁ ଆସିବା ବାଟରେ ବାକି ସବୁ ପଇସା ଯେ ଅମଲାତନ୍ତ୍ର ଓ ରାଜନୈତିକ ନେତାଙ୍କ ହାତରୁ କୁଆଡ଼େ ଉଭେଇ ଯାଏ, ଏ ବିଷୟରେ କାହାରି ଦୁଇମତ ନାହିଁ ।

କୁହାଯାଏ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ତେଫସଲି ରାଜ୍ୟ । ଏଠି ତୃତୀୟ ଫସଲ ହେଉଛି ଦୁର୍ବିପାକ । ଝଡ଼ି, ବଢ଼ି, ଓ ମରୁତିହେଉଛି ଏଇ ଦୁର୍ବିପାକର ପ୍ରକାଶ । ଏହା ସାଙ୍ଗକୁ ନିଆଁ, ଭୂମିକଂପ, ପୁଣି ଏବର ସୁନାମି ଅଛି । ଏହା ଫଳରେ ଦେଶ ବିଦେଶରୁ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ଆସେ । ସେଇ ସାହାଯ୍ୟକୁ ହେରଫେର କଲେ ବ୍ୟବସାୟୀ ମାନେ ଖୁସି ହୁଅନ୍ତି । ଲାଭବାନ ବି ହୁଅନ୍ତି । ମଝି ଲୋକେ ଫାଇଦା ଉଠାନ୍ତି । ଏହି

ସବୁ ଲୋକ ଦରିଦ୍ର । ଧନ ଅର୍ଜନ କଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ମନରେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଦରିଦ୍ର । ମାନସିକ ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟ ଅନ୍ୟ ସବୁ ପ୍ରକାର ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟଠାରୁ ଅଧିକ ବିପଜ୍ଜନକ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏହାର ବିଚାର ଆଲୋଚନା ନାହିଁ ।

ଆମେ ମାନି ନେଉଛୁ ଯେ ଆମେ ଏକ ଦରିଦ୍ର ଦେଶ । ଧନି ଦରିଦ୍ର ଆଦିବାସୀ ସମାଜର ମାପକାଠି ନୁହେଁ ବୋଲି ମାନନ୍ତି । ଅଥଚ ଦରିଦ୍ର ବିଚାରରେ ସେମାନେ ଦରିଦ୍ର ରେଖାର ଡଳେ ଗଣାଯାନ୍ତି । ଆମେ ଐଶ୍ଵର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଧନୀ ବୋଲି ସମସ୍ତେ କହୁଛୁ । ଅଥଚ ଆମେ ଗରୀବ ବୋଲି ମଧ୍ୟ ମାନି ନେଉ । ଗାନ୍ଧି କହୁଥିଲେ, ଆମ ଦେଶରେ ଉପଜ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ନ୍ୟୁନତମ ଦାବି ମେଣ୍ଟେଇବା ପାଇଁ ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ, କିନ୍ତୁ ଅଳ୍ପ କିଛି ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଲୋଭ ପାଇଁ ଅପର୍ଯ୍ୟାପ୍ତ । ଅଳ୍ପ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଲୋଭ ପାଇଁ ଦେଶ ଗରିବ । ଆମେ ଏଇ ଲୋଭି ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ କଟକଣାରେ ରଖିବା ପରିଚିବର୍ତ୍ତେ ଗରୀବଙ୍କ ପଛରେ ଧାଇଁଛେ । ଗରିବର ମାପକାଠି ବଦଳି ବଦଳି ଯାଉଛି। ଆମେ ସବୁ ମାପକାଠିକୁ ମାନି ନେଉଛେ । ଆପଣା ହସ୍ତେ ଜିହ୍ଵା ଛେଦି । କେ ତାର ଅଛି ପ୍ରତିବାଦୀ ?

ଡକ୍ଟର

ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ, ପୂର୍ବତନ ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷ, ସେନ୍ଟ୍ରାଲ୍ ଇନ୍ସ୍ଟିଚ୍ୟୁଟ୍ ଅଫ୍ ଇନ୍ଡିଆନ୍ ଲାନ୍‌ଗୁଏଜ୍, ମଇସୁର୍

ORISSA'S CONTRIBUTION TO PROPAGATION OF BUDDHISM

IN SOUTH-EAST ASIA

By

*Govind Chandra Senapati**

Bhagawan Buddha (567 B.C.) who is called the 'Light of Asia' by Edwin Arnold, is considered the greatest Indian by Swami Vivekananda, who in his address to the world parliament of religions on September 11, 1893 at Chicago, observed that Buddha had a message for the East and he had a message for the west. More than 2500 years have rolled by since Buddha passed into 'Mahaparinirvan'. India as well as other Buddhist countries celebrated in 1956, the 2500th anniversary of his final departure. Today millions of Indians and Buddhists all over South East Asia look upon him as the 9th incarnation of Vishnu, the Supreme Lord. Many thinkers and intellectuals all over the world regard him as the first great rationalist and democrat in spiritual and religious matters. It may be said that nearly half of the world is attracted in one way or the other towards Buddha and his teachings. In India, Buddhism ruled for over 700 years and had its impact on art, painting, religion, literature and society as a whole. In fact,

Buddha left his footprints in all walks of life in the entire South-East Asia, particularly in its attitude towards life and culture even with today's differing practices. Buddhism exacts homage from even the non-Buddhist world for the colossal spiritual and moral personality of Buddha and his simple teachings.

There is no doubt about the historicity of Buddha. He walked on the earth in India in flesh and blood. His approach to life was highly scientific. His teachings on "eightfold truth": stands the test of reason. He emphasized ethical conduct as the essence of religion and distinguished it from rituals and ceremonies. Buddha took religion to the doors of people and taught them in their own language. He recognized no outside authority, save that of his own inner light. "Be a light unto you" was his exhortation to his disciples. His thoughts influenced many thinkers and philosophers abroad including modern philosopher Jidu Krishnamurty. "Mahima Dharma" in Orissa is called neo-Buddhism by German scholar Dr.Herman Kulke. Horrors of Kalinga war (261 B.C) fought near Bhubaneswar by Ashoka touched the heart of the conqueror, who embraced Buddhism after the war, and was responsible for spreading Buddhism all over the South-East Asia through his son and daughter and his Ambassadors. The glaring example of it can be seen even today in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Nepal, China, Japan, Burma, Mongolia, Tibet, Siam, Cambodia, Korea, where largest Buddhist monuments like 'Borobudur' (Jakarta), tallest Buddha statue in Kabul and Buddha's tooth relic in Anuradhapur apart from Ashokan edicts in India, Nepal and Pakistan still exist and attract attention. Thanks to Ashokan edict on 'Dhauli Hill' near Bhubaneswar and at Jaugada in Ganjam, the people of the world have realized the role played by the people of Kalinga in converting Ashoka to Buddhism, which became a turning point in Asian history.

Recent excavations in Orissa have proved that Kalinga was already a Buddhist country before Kalinga war. This continued until the 7th century A.D even after it was conquered by Harsa Vardhan in the 7th century A.D. The great Chinese scholar Huien Tsang spent 18 years in Nalanda University and visited Puspagiri University of Kalinga (in Jajpur District of Orissa) as recorded by him in his tour diary translated into English by Thomas Walters of England in 1905. Dr.D.Pradhan, Curator of the State Archeology and Secretary of the Orissa Institute of Maritime and South Asian Studies, has done excellent work during 2000-2001 in discovering Buddhist rock-cut caves at Langudi and six adjacent hills, and Ashokan stupa and two rare statues of Ashoka, which was discovered for the first time in India at Langudi hill with Brahmi letters, 'Ranja Ashoka,' on the reverse of the statue. The Chinese pilgrim, Huien Tsang attests in his travel diary Ashoka's association with Kalinga, particularly the propagation of Buddhism. Historians, therefore, rightly point out that had there been no Kalinga war with its bloodshed and horror, Buddhism would not have become a world religion.

Two important places associated with the birth and death of Buddha is LUMBINI in Nepal and KUSINARA in INDIA. There is no doubt that Lumbini was the birthplace of Buddha. It was identified by Ashoka himself who erected a fifteen feet pillar in 244 B.C with the inscription, 'Here the exalted one was born.' Some scholar of Orissa like Late Chakradhar Mohapatra claimed that Buddha was born in Orissa at Kapileswar near Bhubaneswar which is not acceptable by scholars in view of Lumbini pillar with inscription by Ashoka. The Renunciation of prince Sidhartha gave us Buddha and his 'Sambodhi' gave us Buddhism. The legitimate end of all meditation is 'Sambodhi' or full spiritual knowledge and realization. The next important incident at Sarnath where Buddha delivered his first sermon is the visit of two merchants from Kalinga – Tapussa and Bhallika who went to Sarnath and offered rice cake to

him and asked for his blessings. Later on they became his disciples. Buddha passed away at the age of 80 at Kusinara near Gorakhpur (U.P.). ‘Tripitaka’ constitutes the basic teachings of Buddhism. I had the good fortune to visit all of the important Buddhist monuments in Indonesia, Siam, Sri Lanka, Nepal and India. I was struck by the impact of Buddhism in Ajanta and Ellora caves (Maharashtra) where Buddha’s life was depicted in fresco painting. ‘Borobudur’ in Jog Jakarta is the biggest Buddhist monument in the world.

Excavated Buddhist sites in Orissa:

Ratnagiri - Ratnagiri Buddhist establishment in the district of Jajpur of Orissa is situated on the hills about 100 Kms from the state capital Bhubaneswar. The rivers, Brahmani, Kimharia and Birupa bound the hill on three sides. The excavation of Ratnagiri by Dr. Debala Mitra of A.S.I. unearthed the remains of an impressive stupa (main stupa,) two magnificent monasteries (1 & 2), a single winged monastery, numerous miniature votive stupas, large number of stone sculptures, bronze images, terracotta seals and sealings and various object of daily use. A large number of monolithic stupas carved with Vajrayanist pantheon were unearthed from the site. The remains of a large brick stupa situated on the Southwest flank, the highest part of the hill, commands a view from a distance. The monastery site at a lower level was brought to height on an expensive courtyard paved with stones. On the basis of seals and sealing, the site has been identified as “Sri Ratnagiri Mahavihariya Aryabhikhu Sanghasya.” With its dating at least from the 5th(A.D.) this establishment witnessed a phenomenal growth in architecture and sculptural art till until the 13th century A.D. One attractive museum building has been constructed for housing and display of sculptures and other antiquities found from excavation.

Lalitgiri - In 1985 Bhubaneswar Circle of A.S.I took up the excavation of Lalitgiri to expose the hidden archeological treasures buried underneath. Excavation has given a positive reply on the long existence of the relic of Lord Buddha in Orissa. In the core of the Stupa three caskets made out of Khandolite stone, one containing the sacred relics was discovered. The technique of preservation as adopted by the Orissan Buddhist is unique and unparalleled in its kind. Besides the above discoveries, the excavations at Lalitgiri have yielded 3 monasteries and one “Chaitya Griha”. All the monasteries are made of stones and burnt bricks with stone pillars and doorjambes. On the basis of the findings of seals and sealings and after its decipherment, the site has been identified as “Shri Chandraditya Vihara Samjha Arya Bhikshu Sangha”. The site goes back to pre-Kushana period on the basis of associated findings and continued to 8th/9th century A.D. Among the notable sculptures found from the excavation are life size images of Buddha, Aparajita, Avalokiteswar, Manjushri, Tara, Bambhala, and Hariti. One sculpture depicts Buddha’s descent from Tushita Heaven, which is one of the eight important miracles of Buddha.

Udayagiri – The Udayagiri Buddhist establishment in the district of Jajpur of Orissa is about 80 Kms. from the state capital, Bhubaneswar. The excavation of the site has been undertaken by the excavation branch-IV of A.S.I. They have unearthed the remains of a huge Buddhist establishment and stupa at Udayagiri. The excavation has yielded the remains of two monasteries and a huge stupa encircled by Dhyan Buddha in the four cardinal directions. The images of Buddha in all popular poses like Bhumisprasa, Dharmachakra, Abhaya, Varada and Dhyan Mudra have been discovered. After the decipherment of the sealing, this site has been identified as “Shri Madhavapura Mahavihara Arya Bhikshu Samgha”. The site goes back to the end of 7th century or the early part of the 8th century A.D. It continued up to the 12th/13th century A.D.

Langudi Hill – The Langudi Hill in the district of Jajpur of Orissa is situated on the right bank of the river Kelua at a distance of about 85 Kms from the state capital, Bhubaneswar. The present excavation at Langudi hill is an honest attempt by the Orissan Institute of Maritime and South East Asian Studies to prove the cultural relationship with the Buddhism of South-East Asian countries with Orissa. The identification of Puspagiri vihar by Huien Tsang has been established. During the 1st season of excavation, they could unearth the clusters of rock-cut votive stupas, two unique Buddha images and Panchadhyani Buddha with their female counter parts. In the monastery area, the remains of the entrance cells and brick walls were exposed. On the basis of the epigraphically and topographical evidences, the site has been identified as “Puspagiri Vihara” of Huien Tsang’s time. The next important findings of Langudi Hill were an early Brahmi inscription referring to the names of King Ashoka. The inscription reads, “Upasaka Ashoka Samchiamana Agra Eka Thupe,” meaning a lay worshipper, Ashoka with religious longing is associated in the construction of a prominent stupa. On the basis of the above inscription and other associated findings like plain railing, the rectangular base stupa of Langudi Hill with one entrance in the southern side has been identified as an Ashokan Stupa. Other notable findings of Langudi Hill include seals and sealings of Mauryan period, bricks, appliques, design pottery and terracotta votive stupas and images of Buddha. The prize discovery of Langudi Hill during the 2001 excavation season was two inscribed image of King Ashoka, one individual and another with his two queens. The inscription on the backside of the individual image reads, ‘Sri Korona Rajna Ashokhena,’ and on the backside of the panel it reads, ‘Ranja Ashoka.’ Culturally Langudi Hill goes back to the 3rd century B.C. “Borobadur” was constructed by the kings of Sailendra dynasty from Kalinga when the Sailobhava kings ruled Kalinga. They were Buddhists. There is a lot of similarity between Buddhist stupas of Langudi Hills and Borobadur. Both are square in shape.

Already Budhagaya (in Bihar where Buddha attained enlightenment,) Sarnath (near Banaras) where Buddha delivered his first sermon, Kusinagar near Gorakhpur (U.P) where he passed away, Lumbini (Nepal) where he was born, and Rajgiri (Bihar) where he stayed, are great centers of pilgrimage for Buddhists all over the world. Now Dhauli, Ratnagiri, Lalitgiri, Udayagiri and Langudi have already become great centres of pilgrimage for Buddhists from all over the world. Many Buddhist Temples have been converted for Hindu worship in Orissa as in Bhaskareswar Temple of Bhubaneswar, where an Ashokan pillar has been installed as Shiva Lingam. A brick Buddhist Temple of Ranipur Jarial (Titilagarh) of the 9th century has been converted for Shiva worship, where a Shiva Lingam and Buddha’s statue co-exist. Temple of Lord Jagannath is believed to be founded on a Buddhist stupa, and Jagannath is worshipped as Buddha. Buddha’s tooth relic is believed to be in the navel of Lord Jagannath as “Brahma,” which is transferred from the old image to the new during ‘Naba Kalebar’. The state symbols of India bears the statue of Ashokan pillar of Sarnath. Buddhism declined due to Muslim invasion and revival of Hinduism by Adi Shankaracharya in the 8th century A.D. The Buddhist ideas of a casteless society, free from untouchability, adoption of ‘Panchsheel’ as the state policy in international relations have been adopted by the Government of India in our constitution and foreign relations.

Recent discoveries of Buddhist monuments including Buddha’s relic in a casket and a statue of Ashoka have attracted Buddhist pilgrims to Orissa in large number. The Government of Orissa has decided to construct a ‘peace park’ at Dhauli at a cost of Rs.5 Crores. An N.G.O has decided to put up one of the largest ‘reclining Buddha’ in Buddha Vihar in Bhubaneswar to attract Buddhist tourists.

The world has yet to appreciate fully the role of people of Kalinga in the propagation of Buddhism in South East Asia for promotion of peace and harmony in the world. During the freedom struggle, lakhs of downtrodden oppressed Indians embraced Buddhism. Dr. Ambedkar converted ten lakhs of Harijans into Buddhism in one day. Buddha's revolutionary approach is unique in the history of religions in India and abroad, throwing a challenge to the traditional faiths.

* *IPS, retired as Director General of Orissa Police in 1987.*



Kishen Pattnayak and People's Democratic Visions

By
Manoranjan Mohanty*

Socialist thinker and leader of the National Alliance of People's Movements Kishen Pattnayak who passed away on 27 September in Bhubaneswar at the age of 74 was a unique public figure in contemporary India who represented ideological and political challenges to the entire spectrum of democratic forces in India including the left in the fight against oppression. Ideologically a part of the socialist movement and a follower of Ram Manohar Lohia, he inherited some of the essential principles of Gandhi and Ambedkar, and above all absorbed the issues raised by the contemporary people's movements. He was inspired by the movements of women, dalits and adivasis and people displaced by various big projects which prompted him to take the initiative together with Medha Patkar, to form a national coordination of the people's struggles in 1990. In the past decade he was in the forefront of the campaigns against communalism and globalization. In all his activities the Marxist critique of capitalism and its application to the phenomenon of globalization informed the core of his thinking. Politically, even though he was an MP elected from Sambalpur, Orissa in 1962 at the young age of 32, he became increasingly disillusioned with his colleagues and stayed out of the various socialist groups which chose to work in one alliance or the other in the post 1980 electoral process. He formed the Samajvadi Jan Parishad in 1993 with a small group of activists in different parts of the country to pursue an alternative vision.

The Activist Thinker

Kishen Pattnayak constantly engaged in intellectual debates while participating in political movements and organizational work for his party. During the 1960s he helped Lohia in running the socialist party journal *Mankind* and continuing the responsibility after Lohia's death. He launched the Hindi journal *Samayik Varta* from Patna in 1977 as a fortnightly which later moved to Delhi and became a monthly after occasional interruption. The publication of the Oriya quarterly journal, *Vikalp Vichar* was started in 1995 under his editorship from Bargarh in Western Orissa where he had built up a sustained peasant movement. His editorials in both these publications were most thought provoking contributions to serious discussion on burning issues of our time.

The ideologue in Kishen Pattnayak was never the domineering expert on history though he would smoothly take the listener in a forum to the whole span of world history; not a master of classical texts though one would get a gentle hint of an important writing to go to; not parading the great load of practical experience of over four decades all over the country while making simple connections with

examples from Mushahari in Bihar to Panch Mahal in Gujarat and not the overbearing leader who was an evident exception to the rule of Indian politicians but a modest political worker. His analysis always started with the concrete experience, explained in the context of the historical trends, theorized in the language of the people and concluded with a perspective rather than specific directives for action. It did not matter whether he had a small group to address or a large gathering before him; he was naturally drawn to those who sought alternatives to the dominant development paradigm. So he took each occasion seriously for he pinned great hopes on his fellow workers, especially the young.

Even though he was an all India figure and was often stationed outside Orissa for long periods - he led the Lohia Vichar Manch from Patna for over a decade till 1975 - he maintained his close links with the political movements in Orissa. Odisha Gaveshana Chakra (Orissa Research Society) was one of his favorite groups. He never failed to attend the annual conference of this forum of researchers and activists held in the last weekend of June each time in a different town of Orissa since 1994. The format of the thematic discussion by social activists coming from different movements interacting with the academic researchers had particularly appealed to him. He had been assigned the role of speaking in the concluding session together with other political activists. For two days he would sit quietly in a back row, closely follow the proceedings and wait for his assigned time at the end. His speech was every time the highlight of the session. At the Dhenkanal session last June his analysis of the issue of “water, economy and people” put the whole discussion in the perspective globalization. He explained how it had commercialized water in such a way that poor people were the greatest sufferers and society as a whole faced increasing crisis including pollution. He had made a point at the Rayagada session in 1999 which was a challenge to all social scientists. He had said that contemporary social scientists had lost the capacity to dream. Their methodology of investigation and analysis with focus on quantitative, mathematical and empirical research and with preoccupation with immediate managerial objectives made them incapable of seeing visions of a better human future. Even those doing futuristic studies were governed by the concerns of the present rather than great visions which have moved humankind through history.

India's Social Question

Like other Lohia socialists Kishen Pattnayak took the caste question in India very seriously and critiqued the politics of the communist parties of India for not adequately comprehending the roots and manifestations of the unequal caste order. But it was the context of the anti-Mandal agitation in 1990 which brought to the fore new dimensions in caste mobilization and political formations in India. Kishen Pattnayak strongly defended the implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendation giving reservation to the backward classes and wrote extensively exposing the persistence of upper caste domination in all spheres of life in India especially in entrepreneurship, politics, bureaucracy, education and culture. But he emphasized the need to link the caste issue with the movement for an alternative development strategy. This is where he stood apart from his erstwhile colleagues Lalu Prasad Yadav and Mulayam Singh Yadav who mobilized the backward classes to come to power and consolidated the caste alliance to remain in power. In the latter's strategy, land reforms and rural employment did not figure very much nor was there search for an alternative to globalization strategy.

For Kishen Pattnayak the caste question was part of a social framework that linked it with the issue of exploitation of the tribal people, women, poor peasants and artisans all of whom were victimized by the on-going development process. He drew special attention to the plight of the adivasis whose rights over local resources were encroached upon by the state and the multinational corporations. His understanding of the Indian state as an agency of enforcing the anti-people development strategy was key to his analysis of the social questions in a comprehensive manner. This explained his close involvement in the many social movements such as the Narmada Bachao Andolan as well as the various

struggles in Orissa against the big mining projects. By relating the caste issue with other dimensions of oppression and placing it in a critique of state and development strategy he raised the debate to a new level with significant theoretical and practical implications. It is this perspective which led to the forging of solidarities among dalit groups with adivasi struggles, peasant movements with environmental groups with women's movement activists participating in them. This made Kishen Pattnayak a much sought after leader for all these movements. His call, *Bharatme Shudron ka Raj Hoga* (The Shudra or the toiler castes will rule one day in India) which is the title of one of his collections of essays in Hindi is the political affirmation of that vision.

Alternative Vision

From the time of the JP Movement in 1974 Kishen Pattnayak constantly spoke of an alternative vision of transformation and asserted his ideas more emphatically in the recent years while campaigning against globalization. He made a positive assessment of the radical visions of Gandhi and Mao Zedong in the twentieth century who according to him aimed at achieving justice in society through egalitarian reforms. (Visions of Development: the inevitable need for alternatives, *Futures* 36:2004). Both India and China had now opted for "technological visions of development" propelled by western capitalism. Such a development strategy historically meant creation of colonies for markets and raw materials. Like in the case of classical colonialism, today too globalization made developing countries more and more dependent upon the west for advanced technology. He had a sharp comment of the current technology focused President of India whose vision of India 2020 had created a euphoria. This kind of development process also created internal colonies within each country, the underdeveloped regions; especially the mineral rich regions inhabited by the tribal people were exploited for achieving economic growth. This strategy was based on creating and utilizing inequalities within and across societies. The technological vision was now challenged by the struggling adivasis who asserted their right over the natural resources in their regions. Kishen Pattnayak raised the basic question as to whether this policy of digging up mines and using up underground resources for industrialization was not an un-sustainable and inequitable strategy of development. He called mining "the crudest technology of contemporary civilization". In his Introduction to the Oriya book *Bhitamatir ladhei* (Struggle of one's own soil) which is a chronicle of the people's movement in Kashipur and Lanjigarh against the aluminum projects he discussed this issue in detail.

The alternative vision entailed such technological innovations which will not create dependency and inequality. He said this would call for delinking the development process in the developing countries from those of the developed nations. He said: "this delinking will be the epoch-making act of a political leadership capable of inspiring large sections of third world intelligentsia including scientists. Their goal will be achieving limited prosperity through egalitarian politics and alternative technology. (Ibid. p.677) This involved choice of those technologies which involve less capital but which led to creation of a decent life to every citizen without multiplying the wants. He advocated the need to change the package of priorities in technology. He pointed out that such alternatives did already exist in many parts of India and the third world. Reviving handloom industry, promoting organic farming and low-cost irrigation and such other sustainable and equitable measures should get priority. Modern technology such as computers should be used for large establishments, automobile technology for public transport and so on. Globalization was pushed ahead by the rulers on the plea that there was no alternative before us. Kishen Pattnayak's reply was *Yah Duniya Vikalpheen Nehi Hai* (This world is not without alternatives – title of another Hindi collection).

Politics of Transformation

Kishen Pattnayak was rising against the tide in contemporary India. The tidal wave of globalization and liberalization and the political campaigns of the competing elites representing them seemed to occupy all the visible space. His vision of an alternative recalling Gandhi and Mao and going beyond them through the experiences of people's movements seemed to be only a small strand of political imagination. But the fact that it was rooted in the historical conditions of struggle against oppression made him a rare figure in contemporary India.

Kishen Pattnayak's concept of politics was the comprehensive pursuit of social transformation. He was a radical who centered his activities on social movements but while simultaneously participating in electoral politics through the instrumentality of a political party. In both, the stress was on principles and ideology whatever the length of time and sacrifice it might involve. He clearly pursued peaceful struggles for social change and had debates with the Naxalites on this issue. But often they were together along with Sarvodaya activists and several left groups in people's movements against globalization, communalism and repression. In his last editorial in *Vikalp Vichar* he welcomed the electoral verdict of May 2004 defeating communal forces, but warned about the danger of forces of globalization getting stronger under the new regime. Therefore, he made an appeal to the Left parties not only to coordinate forces within the Parliament and pressurize the government to face this challenge, but also launch a nationwide people's movement in the country on the basis of a set of common goals which would be supported not only by forces such as the National Alliance of People's Movements, the Samajvadi Janparishad and the Naxalites but also other mass movements. He envisaged the possibility of such an initiative creating a new political force in seven to ten years' time to give a new turn to Indian politics towards people's democratic transformation. This visionary statement is Kishen Pattnayak's legacy.

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Kishori Charan Das

(1924 – 2004)

By

Sri Gopal Mohanty*

Phyllis Granoff from the Department of Religious Studies called me one day, "Gopal, I want to learn Oriya. Can you help me?" What could I say except that at first I was astounded to hear someone was interested in learning "Oriya" of all the Indian languages. She immediately explained her reason that she wanted to read and translate some of the short stories of K. C. Das. That was a great coincidence, for I knew K. C. Das – Kishori Charan Das – since fifties and am very close to his family. I was well aware of his eminence as a short story writer, but never expected a Sanskrit Professor at McMaster University, who has strong interest in Indian studies and Buddhism would have reasons to consider the translation project except for her high regard and deep appreciation of Das's literary work. It was an honor and privilege for me and my wife Shanti to help her reading his stories and explain to her some colloquial expressions. In 2000, her book "The Journey, Stories by K. C. Das" was published by the University of Michigan.

During my stay in New Delhi in fifties, I was actively involved with Oriya Samaj, the socio-cultural organization for Oriyas in Delhi. We heard that a young Oriya I.A.A.S. (Indian Audits and Accounts Service) officer and his family had arrived. He happened to be the son-in-law of Bhubanananda Das (popularly known as B. Das), the oldest Parliament Member whom Pundit Nehru referred to as the 'Father of the House' and the newly arrived family was staying with B. Das at 5 Firoz Shah Road. We were eager to meet this family. The officer was Kishori Charan Das and his wife Kumari Das. Very soon I became close to the family and often was received in the bedroom. The deep warmth and affection made me feel to be part of the family. Since then I knew them as 'Kesha Babu' and 'Kuma Apa'.

Both Kesha Babu and Kuma Apa were affable, but Kuma Apa could reach our mundane life by directly taking active part in Oriya Samaj affairs and working side by side with us. Kesha Babu remained merely a supportive observer.

Born in 1924 as the eldest son of an upper middle class Oriya family in Cuttack, Kesha Babu was a quiet and shy child. In his masterly introspection expressed in writings, he surmised whether his shyness was a reflection of his introversion (ref: "*mun kahinki lekhe*" – Why Do I Write (1970), published in *Gadyashilpi Kishricarana, Abhinandana Grantha*, Sri Kishori Charan Das, Felicitation Volume, Bholanath Press, Bhubaneswar, 1999).which was very likely due to his overly protected and sheltered life. He was compelled to stay away from the outside world and thus developed the talent for imaginative descriptions. Once asked to write an essay on rainy season, he described the sounds of rain droops and flow of water, movement of insects and earthworms and people's comfort from inactivity, instead of the expected answer of how the clouds are formed and rainfall occurs and what are the benefits and inconveniences of rainy seasons. The teacher was furious with sarcastic comment that he was day dreaming to be a poet. He mused himself: Why not?

We only knew Kesha Babu as an Oriya officer. Soon he revealed to us his second career as a writer. In his early youth he literally wanted to be a poet, writing mostly passionate poems of love and patriotism. However, the contemporary events of his time – hopes associated with Orissa becoming a separate province contrasted sharply by Great Famine in Bengal, exuberance associated with the attainment of India's independence contrasted ghastly by grand killing during Partition and assassination of Mahatma – made an impact on his creative impulse. By the age of thirty, he started writing much more prose than poetry, and mostly short stories.

At the very young age, Kesha Babu was confronted with the conflict or the "divide" as he calls it, of appearance and reality and tormented by the gap between idealism and action. He writes: ...From a distance Jagudada appears to be honest and Banudada is a crook, but in close contact Banudada looks innocent and Jagudada is a devil;...in conclusion, is it no one is good and no one is bad either ...(ref: *mun kahinki lekhe*).His disillusion became more apparent even very early in his bureaucratic career. In another essay in English, "My Writings, My Times" (1997) (also published in Felicitation Volume), he writes: ...That was when I learnt, barely six months after holding a Govt job, that what matters is how an activity of ours stands recorded in the Govt files in obedience to the current rules and orders. There is no abiding obligation to the people as a public servant. The moralistic conflict that haunted him in his formative years made influences on his writings.

The "Kesha Babu" I knew during 1962-64, who came on a Govt assignment to Washington, DC along with his family, was very much engaging in conversations on India, literature, politics, movies, places and what not. During that period I got married and we had a baby daughter. On any pretext we used to visit DC just to spend time with him and his family. That was when he wrote *Amari bhitaru jane* which was translated as 'Death of an Indian' and published in Debonair (1979). There I learnt more on his

short stories, and more and more each time I visited them later in India. I realized his early age conflict and thought process were striking a chord within me. We all see what he saw, but he saw more to transform them into art.

The author for reasons of the “divide” penetrated his search light into the cracks and crevices of human behavior, exposed the concealed emotions and inner self, not with compulsion but with compassion, and not as a dry scientific endeavor but as a brilliant artistic exposition. He has been acknowledged as a major force on contemporary Indian literature. In the ‘Write-up in “Encyclopedia” of Indian Literature’, one reads: “...He has distinguished himself by concentrating on a particular area of experience, the middle and the upper middle class and also by bringing an introspective and reflective element into the Oriya short story form. The predominant theme of his stories is a search for meaning of life by the members of a comfortable middle class. ... Das attempts to shock his character out of the complacency of a secured middle class life and make them confront the shallowness and emptiness of their experiences. This frustration propels them to achieve significant human relationship or even at times spiritual communion.”

Das’s writing style is unique to himself. His stories neither have a beginning nor an end, but depict a series of events guiding the reader deep into the mental state of the characters and thus making the events secondary. They are resolved at the end usually in a moment of revelation.

In the essay on Oriya prose fiction, *shatabdira kaladrusti: kshudragalpa*, Das emphasizes the debt that Oriya literature owes to Fakir Mohan who was the first to use the everyday language in the village. He particularly notes Fakir Mohan’s “black humor” in his short story “Rebati”. Interestingly, many of Das’s stories have their own black humor, which is achieved by an artful combination of irony and compassion. He further notes that Fakir Mohan and many others continued their writings on contemporary political and social issues (*samaja chetana* – social consciousness) and a gradual shift occurred to focus on individual’s needs, thoughts and motivation (*byakti chetana* – individual consciousness). In this regard, he cites Gopinath Mohanty, one of Orissa’s best-known writer, (whose writings on tribal are well known) for his short story ‘Town Bus’ which examines the individual consciousness. Das himself followed the second path by creating his own style. I quote Granoff’s words, “Perhaps no other writer in Oriya has probed the individual and his tangled thoughts with such uncompromising honesty”.

K.C. Das received many literary awards. In 1997, Utkal University awarded him an honorary D. Litt degree. His work has been extensively translated into Hindi, Bengali, Gujrati, Malayalam, Kanada, Assamese and Telugu and into English, French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic.

Kesha Babu was humble and gentle and never projected any sense of bureaucratic authority – the outside world apparently did not take note of his human qualities. In a sentimental way, his second daughter Chinu Das who lives with her family in Vancouver, expresses recently these words, “*Bapa was a father to me first and then a writer. Sometimes, we forgot the greatness of the writer but we always loved the greatness of a man who was never unkind to anybody. His harshest commentary on human relationships was left in his writing. He was the gentlest soul I have ever known and yet I know the world will remember the writer not the man.*”

He writes in the last lines of his poem “I wish to write”:

*I wish to write nevertheless
Even my death will be an expression*

*of the smothered streak
and how the clouds suffered
in claiming the writer
single, irrelevant.*

His *Samaya Nahin*, an autobiography, was published after his death.

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Peaceful, Cultured, Dignified: Tributes

by Family

Dearest Bapa,

As we sit and try to come up with words to fully express our deepest thoughts and feelings of you, the words flow freely in our hearts but much more difficult to put on paper. We want our children, your grandchildren, to know the person you were and to live their lives by your example.

If it were up to us, we would have “Amiya” added to the English dictionary as an adjective to describe a person who is peaceful, cultured, dignified and loving – all without reservation, because that is exactly what you were and more.

You were Atlas who carried our worries and troubles for us without question. You were the pillar of strength for not just Kaba, Mami, Mana, Titu and Papu, but for many far and near, who through the years have learned that here was a man who would do anything for you. You were a strong yet gentle soul. Your warm, contagious smile and bone crushing bear hug would make us forget what was on our minds and remind us that love of family was more important than anything else in the world. But what made you more special was the fact that the smiles and hugs were not reserved just for us. You loved to give hugs and it didn't matter if you were family, friend for years or if he had just met you a few moments ago. All got the same reception.

Born in the village of Bindhanima, you used to tell us about the many miles you walked daily to your school. Soon, you left your village, and state, and headed for Madras University for your Bachelors and Masters degrees in Veterinary Science. Afterwards, you worked for the Government of Orissa before setting out for the land of opportunity in 1964.

We don't know if we would have had the character of strength or confidence you had when you came to this country. Having to leave behind a pregnant wife and three kids. We would have loved to be there when you told Bou. Were you running out the door with your hands on your head and dishes crashing around you? We know how important education was to you. You saw this as an opportunity for your family and you.

The United States became the destination where you expected to fulfill your thirst for knowledge and advance your learning and growing not only for yourself but for us as well. Of course, you thought one day you would return to Orissa, but as the years came and went, you realized the possibilities were getting more and more remote.

You rose to be an eminent research scientist in the field of Veterinary Pathology at the Animal Medical Center (AMC) in Manhattan. You stayed at AMC for forty years before retiring in December

2004. A three-hour commute everyday in and out of the city would have sapped almost anyone, but not you. You published over 200 papers that appeared in important veterinary journals, contributing author to veterinary textbooks used by veterinary students worldwide and awards after awards after awards. You left behind a legacy, with a modesty that kept you from saying anything to us. Bou would prop up an award in the cabinet and when we saw them and inquired about the awards, you'd vaguely say something and Bou would finally have to take over and explain who gave it and why.

If there was one person who loved his job, truly enjoyed his work, it was you. Growing up we all heard people say nice things about you. But the words and emotions came together like a symphony on the day the AMC celebrated your 40th anniversary. That was the first time you wanted all of us to attend. Unfortunately two of your four children lived in Florida and were not able to make it. It was a moment that we wish we could have bottled forever.

Dr. Pidgeon, the CEO of the AMC, came up to the podium to praise you and present you with a gift. The room suddenly got very quiet, but not because he was about to speak. A tangible wave of emotions was washing over everyone in the room. It wasn't as much a wave washing ashore, as a ripple ever widening from Dr. P. Between chokes and sobs he spoke of being your student years ago, and then he stood there with tears rolling down his cheeks as he stopped listing the accomplishments and began honoring the man instead...the kindness, the civility and fair-mindedness.

We were to learn that day that there was a Patnaik Method of counting that is used in veterinary work throughout the world. Our faces were warm, we had goose bumps, tears welled in all our eyes and our hairs stood on ends. We never thought we would ever be in the presence of someone so admired, greatly respected and so deeply loved. But here was such a man being honored...and that man was you, our Bapa, our mother's husband. What struck us the most that day was that the warmth, pride and love we as his family obviously felt was not ours alone but was shared by everyone. It was almost like, "Behold, I give you a Saint" and there you stood with one hand in your pocket, looking at the floor with your never-ending modesty and humbleness. We know why all this came so easily to you...you were obviously an angel just passing time with us here.

Bapa, you were a man who never raised his voice to anyone - not your children, not to Bou and certainly not to your friends and colleagues. You had a gift for seeing into the core of someone you just met and accepted them without being partial.

You were a strong advocate of passing on the Oriya heritage and culture to the younger generations. You always worried about how to do this. In the seventies, with a few friends who shared your vision, concern and dream, you founded the Orissa Society of Americas. You became president of the Orissa Society of Americas several times, embracing everyone who joined. To you, the politics of the Society came a distant second to treating people fairly and making each and everyone feel welcome and comfortable.

You also felt strongly about social, educational and cultural work. You served on the Prafulla Mukharjee Scholarship Foundation and were involved in various other cultural organizations including the Tagore Society.

Bapa, saying we miss you is too simple – it sounds like, "I'm tired"- something that can be remedied with sleep. This can never be remedied. The ache in our hearts dulled only when our minds are distracted or when loving thoughts of our times with you cool us. As a husband and father, we all thrived on your endless support and unconditional love...you're uncompromising care, sincerity and civility. We have become who we are because of you but we will never fill your shoes. We know you have your hand in your pocket, brushing your other hand through your hair and looking down at the

floor. You are a great soul. Until we talk again, you will always live in our breaths, thoughts, emotions and pains. Comforted by your love and your bear hug.

We love you Bapa,
Mamata Patnaik, Sujata Parida, Asis Patnaik, and Asit Patnaik



*He who knows Me ,the Birthless and the Beginniless,
The Mighty Lord of the World,
He among mortals is undeluded
From all evils he is released.
----The Bhagavad Gita,X,3*



Tsunami

By
Upsana Senapati*

My friends and I had just returned from fishing in the Celebes Sea.
With the three fish we had caught, surely we would have a jubilee.

A catch of three fish was terrific! We thanked the ocean.
The water was my best friend and had my sole devotion.

It gave me a good life with the fish it contained.
From the water, many happy years were obtained.

All of a sudden, the ocean grew tall with rage.
It ferociously blustered in a vicious rampage.

Before I could look back, the giant had swallowed me.
I was surrounded by a ruthless evil, one that would accept no pleas.

I was inside the giant's belly, alive I was eaten.
The pitiless evil thrashed me as I was beaten.

Finally, the horror was over, and I began to cry.
I was so thankful that I was still alive.

The ocean had always taken care of me and given me a good life,
But now, it had betrayed me and stabbed me like a knife.

I recalled old times, when I returned home without fish.
I forgave the ocean then, although to catch some I did wish.

This time the water could not be forgiven.
The evil within had been deceptively hidden.

* Age 13, Eight Grade, Troy MI



The Great Wave

By
Sneha Mohanty*

The winter wind blows down to the sea
The morning sun paints the sky
With warm glowing rays
The sea is in tranquility

Who awakened the sea?
The monstrous waves pound the earth
As if the sea is churned by the demons with wrath
How fearful it is, my child,

I cling to you for a timeless minute
I hold you tightly for the last time
Never letting you go
How merciless, cruel, the terror of the sea

I shouted to the big waves,
You were floating like a straw
Deeper and farther into the sea.
My arms are empty

Sadness, tears of pain
I stared vacantly in a rage
Is it not the waves that were once so playful.
You washed away the sand castles,

He builds them again
You bring the pebbles and the shells
He collects them like precious gems,
The look of utter transcendence flashes before me

Suddenly the calmness is shattered
You turned into a monster
You took thousands of little angels.
Placed them as stars in the dark sky

The stars now twinkle brighter
The moon softly fades away
I whispered to my little star,
You look like a stream of spilled milk

Watching wherever you are.

(This poem is dedicated to the
thousands of children that lost their
lives in the Tsunami in South East
Asia on December 26, 2004)

* A regular contributor to the OSA
Journal, Annual Souvenir Issues.

***We deeply mourn the loss of Dr.
Jagat Subudhi of NewYork who
passed away on December 22,
2004.***



Risk Factors for Coronary Artery Disease in South Asians

Srijoy Mahapatra MD*

Coronary arteries are the pipes that transmit blood to the heart muscle. When these conduits become partially or completely blocked it is called coronary artery disease (CAD.) Because this reduces or eliminates nutrition to the heart, CAD may lead to chest discomfort, shortness of breath with exercise, or a heart attack.

Although CAD is often thought of as a Western disease, over 70% of cases now occur in developing countries. In particular, the CAD rate has soared in India and the prevalence of CAD among men in New Delhi is now 9.7% compared to 2.5% among men in Framingham, Massachusetts. Furthermore, Indian-born male doctors who immigrated to the US are 4 times more likely to have CAD than US doctors in general. The problem is growing and the World Health Organization predicts that by the year 2010, 60 percent of all CAD will be in South Asians. Thus, a traditionally Western disease will become a South Asian disease.

Moreover, South Asians seem to have more severe disease and thus are more likely to die of CAD despite a higher socio-economic status. In both US and Canadian population-based studies South Asians are more likely to die from CAD than other immigrant groups despite lower rates of overall death.

The cause of this disproportionate CAD burden is incompletely understood. Most of the risk of CAD in South Asians can be explained by a predisposition to traditional risk factors such as obesity, hypertension, diabetes and poor cholesterol control. In addition, South Asians may have some distinctive risk factors that further increase risk.

This article will first review the traditional and non-traditional risk facts as well as how to treat them. Since, the best treatment is prevention it will conclude by showing how an improved diet and exercise program can prevent the development of these risk factors and thus CAD.

Standard Modifiable Risk Factors

Most of the risk of CAD in South Asians can be explained by risk factors that are common in the general population. However, South Asians seem to be more likely to develop these risk factors despite a similar body weight and lifestyle. For example, although the incidence of diabetes correlates with the degree of obesity in all populations, South Asians develop diabetes at a lower weight than their white counterparts. Thus, South Asians that look only modestly overweight may have risk factors closer to someone who is obese.

Smoking

Smoking does not appear to be more common among South Asians than others but some reports suggest that among young South Asians it is increasing. Smoking increases the risk of CAD 3-fold and the risk of death from CAD 5-fold. The risk is correlated with amount of smoking but begins with as few as 4 cigarettes day. This risk applies to both cigarettes and cigars. In fact, cigars may be more dangerous since they are not filtered. Lack of inhalation with cigars is unlikely to eliminate the risk since even second-hand smoke carries a higher risk of CAD. Finally, because it contains nicotine, long-term use of chewing tobacco may also increase the risk of CAD.

Treatment and Prevention: Smoking cessation cuts the risk of CAD mortality by 36%. Thus, if one does not smoke, one should not start. A smoker should quit. While detailed smoking cessation strategies are beyond the scope of this review, there are multiple products that a doctor can explain to improve the chances of cessation. What is common to most strategies is that the smoker picks a quit date and stops. Family support has been shown to be helpful.

Diabetes

Glucose, the main sugar in the blood, is regulated by insulin. Diabetes is disorder of glucose regulation in the body either because the pancreas fails to make insulin or the body no longer responds to insulin. Thus, the blood sugar is high and is diagnosed when the fasting blood sugar is greater than 126 mg/dL. A blood sugar of greater than 100 mg/dL but less than 126 mg/dL is impaired glucose tolerance—a pre-diabetic state that is warning sign of impending diabetes. A normal fasting glucose is less than 100 mg/dL.

In type I (juvenile onset) the pancreas fails to make insulin while in type II (adult onset) the pancreas makes insulin but the body's fat cells no longer respond. Type I is an autoimmune disorder while type II diabetes is associated with obesity and has a genetic component. Interestingly, the degree of obesity needed to trigger diabetes is less in South Asians than in white Caucasians or other Asians.

Diabetes increases the risk of CAD by 2.5 fold. CAD is so common in diabetes that the American Heart Association considers diabetes to be a CAD equivalent. In addition patients with diabetes and CAD do worse than patients with just CAD. For example, after a heart attack of similar size patients with diabetes are 70 percent more likely to die within 30 days than those without diabetes.

Treatment and Prevention: People over the age of 30 should be screened annually for diabetes. There is no effective prevention of type I diabetes but type II diabetes can be prevented by not becoming obese and keeping one's body mass index below 25 (see below.) Once develops diabetes weight loss may ameliorate or even cure diabetes.

Aggressive control of blood sugar has been shown in two studies to reduce the risk of CAD once diabetes develops. In addition aggressive control of cholesterol (goal LDL of 100 or even less) and high blood pressure (goal of 120/80) has been shown to be effective. Additionally, almost all patients should take one aspirin per day and most should be considered for an angiotensin converting enzyme inhibitor (ACE inhibitor) in addition to regular diabetic medications. Your doctor can provide advice of these.

Hypertension

Hypertension is a resting systolic blood pressure greater than 120mmHg or diastolic blood pressure greater than 80mmHg measured on two separate occasions. Depending on other risk factors, each 20mmHg increase in blood pressure can increase the risk of CAD by 50 to 200 percent.

Treatment and prevention: All people over the age of 25 should be screened annually for high blood pressure. Maintaining an ideal weight can help prevent high blood pressure. Once it develops weight loss can often reduce hypertension as can a low salt diet (less than 2.4 grams of sodium), eating a lower fat diet, and exercise independent of weight loss. If these are not effective, medication can usually reduce the blood pressure and the risk of CAD.

Lipid abnormalities

South Asians are plagued by low HDL (the good cholesterol) high triglycerides along with an only modestly elevated LDL (the bad cholesterol.) Thus, the total cholesterol is often close to normal. Unfortunately, the low HDL and high triglycerides seem to significantly increase the risk of CAD. This abnormal profile is caused by an oily diet, little exercise and genetics. Furthermore, it is often difficult to reduce South Asians LDL or increase the HDL with drug therapy.

Treatment and prevention: All people over the age of 20 years should have an LDL, HDL and triglyceride check every five years. A low-fat diet combined with a vigorous exercise program can prevent lipid abnormalities or correct them once they start. However, many patients require drug therapy in addition to lifestyle changes. Statins (including Atorvastatin and Simvastatin) have shown the greatest ability to reduce mortality from CAD. Currently the American Heart Association recommends patients with one or fewer other CAD risk factors have a goal LDL of less than 160 mg/dL. Patients with two or more risk factors have a goal of less than 130 mg/dL. Patients with known CAD or diabetes have a goal LDL of less than 100 mg/dL. These may soon be revised downward and many cardiologists feel that a normal LDL is less than 70 mg/dL. HDL should be greater than 40 and can be increased by exercise, drugs and perhaps *moderate* alcohol consumption (1-2 glasses of wine daily.)

Obesity

The body mass index (BMI) is the weight divided by height. Normal is 18.5-24.9 kg/m². Overweight is 25-29.9 kg/m². Obesity is 30 or higher. As a note some have suggested that a normal BMI for South Asians is 23 kg/m² or less. The BMI is conveniently calculated using the website <http://nhlbisupport.com/bmi/bmicalc.htm>. Using this site and a BMI cutoff of less than 25 kg/m², the maximum ideal weight for a person who is 62 inches tall is 136 pounds; 64 inches is 145; 66 inches is 155 pounds; 68 inches is 164 pounds; 70 inches is 174 pounds; 72 inches is 184 pounds. Using a BMI of 23 kg/m² these cutoff are approximately 12 pounds lower.

In small studies of South Asians living in the UK, each three point increase in BMI above 23 doubles the risk of CAD. Obesity increases CAD risk by causing diabetes, hypertension and high cholesterol. In addition obesity itself is associated with CAD. In South Asians diabetes and abnormal cholesterol seem to develop at a lower BMI than Whites

Treatment and Prevention: Although there are numerous diets and exercise plans to prevent obesity, what is common to most of them is that calorie consumption must not exceed calorie use. Otherwise one will gain weight. As an example, eating just 20 excess calories a day will result in a 2 pound weight gain in a year. While this may sound minor, continuing this pattern from age 20 to 50 leads to a 60

pound weight gain which would increase a 70 inches male BMI from 20 to 30 kg/m² (thin to obese.) Thus, prevention of obesity requires life-long attention to eating well and exercising enough.

Once obesity develops it can generally be treated by either eating less or exercising more. Speak to your doctor about more information and before starting an exercise program if you are already overweight. In addition a nutritionist and a personal trainer may be of help.

Novel Risk Factors that may be important in South Asians

Numerous new risk factors have been suggested to increase risk in the general population and the South Asian population. These include Lp(a), small dense LDL, C-reactive protein (CRP), and abdominal obesity. However, with the exception of CRP and perhaps Lp(a) there is no clear way to reduce risk of these factors.

Lipoprotein (a)[Lp(a)]

Lp(a) is structurally similar to LDL but it has a glycoprotein chain attached to it that may inhibit fibrinolysis, the body's natural way of getting rid of blood clots. Numerous population based studies suggest that South Asians have a high Lp(a) even with normal cholesterol and since Lp(a) is associated with CAD it may contribute to their high CAD burden.

However, there is no definite evidence that reducing Lp(a) reduces CAD risk and thus the American Heart Association does not suggest screening all people for Lp(a). It is felt that Lp(a) should be checked in patients younger than 40 with CAD, with a strong family history of CAD, CAD without other risk factors, with a high LDL that is refractory to statin therapy, or with hypertension and early organ damage. Nevertheless, some experts feel that South Asians should have an Lp(a) and if its greater than 40 mg/dL, the LDL should be lowered to below 80 mg/dL using a statin drug. In addition some feel that nicotinic acid is warranted to lower the Lp(a) itself. These recommendations are controversial.

Small dense LDL

Since South Asians have LDLs that are lower than expected given their CAD burden, it was hypothesized that there is something different about the type of LDL they have. At any given LDL level, LDL can exist as a few large particles or as many small particles. Small dense LDL refers to having many small particles. Some evidence suggests that having many small particles is more likely to cause CAD than fewer large particles. In other words, it is not just the level of LDL that matters but the number of LDL particles--more particles more CAD. Some data suggests that South Asians are more likely to have more small dense particles and thus more CAD.

However, there is a paucity of evidence that increasing particle size cuts CAD risk. Furthermore, there are few current drugs that greatly increase LDL particle size although some Statin drugs do this and there are drugs in development that may do this. At the current time there is no recommendation for screening or treatment of small dense LDL although this emerging risk factor may soon be treated.

Abdominal obesity

Although obesity of any kind is associated with a higher risk of CAD, obesity in the mid-section appears to be even more harmful. A waist size to hip size ratio of greater than 0.9 is associated with a greater

risk of CAD regardless of weight. A waist size greater than 38 inches is also associated with a greater risk. This may be because abdominal obesity predisposes one to diabetes. In addition, some studies have shown that South Asians are more likely to get abdominal obesity than Whites at any level of weight.

However, there is no clear way to eliminate abdominal obesity other than weight loss. A lower carbohydrate has been touted as a way to reduce abdominal obesity but no prospective trial has shown a reduction in CAD with this low carbohydrate strategy alone. Weight loss however has been shown to reduce CAD death.

C-reactive protein (CRP)

CRP is blood protein that increases during inflammation. Levels greater than 3 mg/dL have been associated with higher levels of CAD regardless of other risk factors. Some studies have found a higher than normal level of CRP in South Asians.

Reduction of other risk factors using weight loss may reduce CRP. In addition statins may reduce CRP in addition to cholesterol. Furthermore, there is some evidence that in patients with an elevated CRP even with a normal LDL cholesterol, reduction of CRP with a statin may reduce CAD. Thus, some experts recommend checking CRP routinely every five years and reducing with drugs. However, this recommendation is controversial.

General recommendations

Prevention and treatment of CAD is best accomplished by diet and excreted.

The US now recommends 30-90 minutes of aerobic exercise a day. One easy way to judge “vigorous” is to do a conversation test. Excursus should be performed just below the point at which one cannot have a conversation. If the patient cannot speak they are working too hard; but they should be just below this threshold. Typically a 50 year old man should have a heart rate of 120-140 per minute while exercising.

To prevent boredom and prevent injury, any exercise program should be varied. Thus, one could run one day, swim the next and bike on the third for example. An exercise program should be started slowly with a gradual increase in intensity, frequency and length of the program over a period of weeks. In addition people over the age of 40, with known diabetes, or any heart disease should see their doctor before starting an exercise program.

Diet should have no more than 30 percent fat with no more than 8 percent saturated fats. An easy way to do this is to eat more fruits and vegetable, lean meats such as chicken or fish and use minimal or no oil. Dairy products are healthy but should be no-fat and egg yolk should be eliminated. It should be noted that a vegetarian diet is no guarantee of a healthy diet since in India vegetarians were found to have the same rate of CAD as non-vegetarians.

All people should have an annual blood pressure check, annual glucose checks, and a cholesterol check every 5 years. Recommendations for novel risk factor screening are controversial. People should keep their BMI below 25 and preferably below 23.

All of the above recommendations are general recommendations and should be tailored by ones doctor for individual situations.

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Disorders in Learning, Attention and Thinking

Symptoms and Services

By

J.P.Das*

Have you ever seen a child who is restless and inattentive, and even is so hyperactive that he exhausts you by watching him 'climb the wall'? A child who cannot learn to read in spite of having been sent to a 'good school'? A child who appears to be somewhat backward and delayed in his development of speech and language? Have you come across an 'autistic' child? He is otherwise smart when the cloud disappears and his brilliance astonishes you? Often times though he does poorly in school. He seems to be in his own world, alone and unsocial. His teachers want him to be held back in the same class.

And then there are quite a few children who have been physically punished so much that they are traumatized-sometimes extremely anxious and emotionally disturbed, violent and aggressive, or there are some other abused children who become quite indifferent and apathetic even to severe punishment.

What to do with such children? We have many clinics and service facilities in the US. You are perhaps aware of cognitive disorders, for that's what these are. But if you live in Orissa, or have a person in your extended family in Orissa, can you get any such service, or would you be even aware that there are learning disorders and behavioral problems that need some consultation? Even if you are living in one of the two big cities in Orissa, Bhubaneswar and Cuttack? You are a caring parent or well meaning friend of the family; you get him examined by a host of special doctors,--psychiatrists, neurologists and of course to start with, your town's famous pediatricians. Nothing seems to help. No tutor wants to give him lessons, and a few of the 'good schools', expensive for sure, either do not take him, or reject him after 6 months -"You better find another school" and helpfully add, "Take him away to an Oriya medium school"!

And then there are children who appear to be intelligent but hate school work. Specially writing. The father complains: But he has been practicing writing since age 3; in fact we engaged a tutor for him when he was 4 years old to compel him to sit down and write every day for an hour! -says the mother to me when he was brought to our "Learning Clinic" at *Saheed Nagar* in Bhubaneswar,.

"Oh I see"! I reply .

Then we see in our Learning Clinic the bright, very bright children too. What could be their problem?

'Gets bored in the class'

'Makes and throws paper airplanes'.

I ask: What does he/she want to do when he/she is grown up?

A fashion model! A mathematician and dancer--my father must take me to all the dance competitions.

I wish to go to America! A third kid replies.

Facts and Questions:

Some 15% of children in Canadian and American schools have learning difficulties and behavioral problems in spite of adequate teaching and instruction. And they are reasonably intelligent.

Their number is much greater in Orissa, don't you suspect? We find all of the varieties of cognitive and learning difficulties in Orissa as well. But most have little awareness of the special needs of such a variety of children

Attitude of teachers towards children who seem to fall behind should be this:

"What the child fails to do today, he can do it tomorrow with some help". Vygotsky, a Russian child psychologist said this in the 1930s. The child's potential for learning is open to be discovered. Our method of teaching must be geared to develop his potential, and not to label him as 'dumb', 'lazy', or 'wicked'. Not to leave him with this label etched on his sensitive self like an indelible tattoo, for ever.

You say: OK!OK! But tell me what can be done? How do we solve the problems of learning, language impairment, attention deficit, autism or tell me what can we do for a child with mental retardation -does he have an island of intelligence waiting to be utilized?

What can be done by you and your psychologists? Is there an oasis in this desert?

Yes, there are solutions, and there is a Learning Clinic in Bhubaneswar which provides help.

Let us talk about punishing the kid for school failure. Let us remember that one of the major, I mean major reasons, why a child who is otherwise intelligent does not learn is fear and anxiety, fear of punishment, and anxiety that he/she will be disapproved, ridiculed, will be made to feel small. You may not believe it, but physical punishment is given to young children by mothers, and fathers, and by many teachers in school in Orissa; but it is a crime in Canada and the US..

A mother can be so cruel when she perceives that her child is getting behind in studies! The psychologists have to be like detectives to find out what's really being done to the child, how severely is he getting beaten up.

The first step in our psychological treatment is interview to discover the reasons for the child's problems.

A young Oriya couple, their child and tutor for the child, visited our Clinic. Child is indifferent to studies, is their main complaint. He is at the bottom 5% of the class, and he does not care.

He showed little emotion and revealed nothing that will help us understand why he lacks interest. Before we give him tests to determine his intelligence, and his reading and arithmetic abilities, we interview the adults.

1. Interview is necessary; it should be skillful. It turns out that the couple and the child lived with the child's grand father; the grand mother had passed away. However, now they live separately in a different house. Suspect something-why did you decide to live separately, we ask? Well, it was not too comfortable to live together. We were getting nowhere in the interview--the mother went on narrating how the child is not interested in his studies. Sort of challenged us to find out why. Fair enough.

As we were taking away the child to give him some tests and settled the child down in a different room, the father followed us quietly and whispered-"Sir, Agyan,! My wife beats up the kid so severely that there are blue and black marks on his skin! My father (child's grandpa) could not tolerate this beating any more. So he asked us to leave and find a separate accommodation!" he child quietly confirms it. And adds that the private tutor beats him up as well. We did not proceed with any testing. Told the parents and the tutor we do not tolerate any kind of physical punishment here. Zero tolerance for physical abuse! We can help if you bring back the child again after you have stopped beating him.

2. Diagnosis follows interview and assessment. brief case-history of a boy with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder: He had fits as a child. His developmental milestones were delayed; especially his language development was slow. He is now in school, but has difficulty in memory and understanding, and does poorly in math and in fact in most subjects. This came out of our interviews.

We suspect that he has significant problems in intellectual activities. We test him for (A)how good is he in Planning. When given a problem, does he plan ahead?(B)How good is he in Attention--does he get off the task easily at the slightest distraction? (C)

How good is he in understanding figures and triangles with narrow and large angles?(D) Remembering sequences--does he forget 2 of the 5 things he was asked to get from his home when he came to school? Our tests work very well in Orissa even though these were standardized in the USA ! Our Oriya kids perform at the same level as American kids of their age. The tests pick up the child's strengths and weaknesses in intellectual abilities, the four main abilities described above. **Detecting the problem is not enough.** Then what? If the kid needs improvement in some of the abilities, we have a Remediation programme .This programme builds up the foundations for school learning; it is not a drill or exercise in subjects covered in the class. It tackles the source of the kid's inability to learn from lessons in the class or in the books. The Remediation Programme has been tried and tested; it works in Canada, America and in India in English. It works even when it is used in Finland in Finnish, in Spain in Spanish, or in Japan in Japanese! It is a robust programme.

Give back something to the community, the city and the country that helped you to be what I am today--a popular sentiment many Oriya inhabitants in Canada and the USA have. They help our land of origin as much as they can. I am one of them. Except that none I know provides a psychological service in Orissa except what we provide in Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. There is a pressing need for psychological services in Orissa's cities and villages. For the last seven years, I have kept running the Learning Clinic in Bhubaneswar with 3 to 5 psychologists. It is affiliated with the University of Alberta, Edmonton, and therefore much of the testing materials is gifted to the Clinic. I hope that the service can be expanded .Both for raising awareness as well as 'doing good ' to the clients who need psychological consultation based on scientific knowledge. The major problem of course, as always, is the availability of funds--you wish that the service will be widely used, and thus should be inexpensive and affordable for the generally less well to do people .And that does not make the service sustainable.

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Sayings of Paramahansa Yogananda

“ Sir, what should I do to find God?” a student asked. Yogananda said:

“ During every little period of leisure, plunge your mind into the infinite thought of Him. Talk to Him intimately; He is the nearest of the near, the dearest of the dear. Love Him as a miser loves money, as an ardent man loves his sweet heart, as a drowning person loves breathe. When you yearn for God with intensity, He will come to you.”



OUR HEALTH

By

Santosh K. Mohanty, M.D.*

One definition of good health, given by the World Health Organization, is “Health is not merely an absence of disease but a mental and social state of well-being”.

In most countries of the world, longevity has been gradually increasing. Today, as we all know, India’s population is one billion; increasing almost thrice in the last 57 years. The number of people who live to age 65 has doubled since 1947. Although longevity in the Third World lags behind the developed countries, absolute longevity has increased greatly in all of the countries of Africa and Asia.

In 1900, four percent of the population of the United States was 65 years and older. In 2000, that number has increased to twelve percent. Today, people over 85 years of age are the fastest growing group in the USA. In the United States in 2004, the average life span for males is 77 years and for females about 80 years. The population of the world has doubled over the past 58 years to approximately six and one-half billion. The population of India before August 15, 1947 was 440 million, and 370 million after the division.

This, of course begs the question. To many, it may mean that the price of longevity is to have very expensive, “high tech” resources. In reality it is not so. The reasons for lower mortality are very simple, not expensive and not even “high tech”. Of all the factors, clean water stands out as being responsible for preventing pandemics of Cholera, Typhoid, and Dysentery, which killed millions in a matter of months. Simple hygienic practices such as hand washing, wearing shoes and boiling water have prevented such past pandemics. Next, vaccinations against Smallpox, Polio, Cholera, Typhoid, and now Hepatitis, have eliminated diseases such as Small Pox and Polio. The effect of DDT on Malaria & Filarial was significant, although DDT is no longer used. Simple medicines such as Oral Dehydration Solution (Gatorade) have saved more lives than all open-heart surgeries world-wide. Subsequently, the discovery of Penicillin only sixty years ago has dramatically changed the treatment of infectious disease; the most common cause of death in the 40’s.

Today’s common killers are Diabetes, High blood Pressure, Heart Disease, Stroke and Cancer. Many of these conditions are preventable or easily treatable. There is no reason why Diabetics and Hypertensive patients cannot be very effectively treated to the point where the effect and complications can be drastically reduced. Medicines for these conditions are not expensive, even in Third World countries. Cessation of smoking alone will reduce all cancers by over 40 percent. Obesity, especially in children, is more a matter of lifestyle and discipline, rather than Medicine. We should not live to eat. Rather, we should eat to live.

My simple suggestions for a healthy life are as follows. It will require a sincere commitment to discipline and balance. For instance, pregnant women should have regular prenatal care and babies should have recommended vaccination schedules along with breast-feeding for the first eight months of life. Children should be encouraged to play outdoor games, dance, sing and read stories of great people. Parents should not indulge in Television during the time that their children are studying. Television programs should be parentally selected that are informational and educational. Women should have Pap Smears and Mammograms at the appropriate age. For all of us, a periodic focused health check is

beneficial, but should not be obsessive (balance). Physical exercise of some type is vital to maintain the smooth functioning of the body. A healthy mind dwells in a healthy body.

Mental and spiritual wellness does not come spontaneously, but rather with effort to seek higher truths than merely living a convenient life. Suffering and pain make us grow. Like iron in fire become steel, gold in fire becomes pure, pain and suffering strengthens our character and endurance. This strength then can be used to alleviate the suffering of others.

Let us not forget Rama had to endure the loss of Sita. Thus, came Ramayana. Arjuna had to anguish the ordained killing of his superiors. Thus, came Gita. Jesus had to suffer and die on the Cross. Thus, came Christianity. Growth from suffering is the essence of life.

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WOMEN'S HEALTH IN THE 21ST CENTURY

By

S. A. Mahapatra, M.D.*

The highly motivated and self confident 21st century woman has the ability to do anything today. She can be a rocket scientist or a rock climber. She can manage motherhood and a large corporation simultaneously. This is only possible due to improvement in women's health. Conquering battle against cervical cancer and improving maternal mortality are few of many developments that helped her to live longer and pursue her dreams. Woman, "the Equal partner" in today's world has many unique health problems. Her chromosome, sex organs and hormone differences make the health care challenging. Special attention to diseases related to above are only possible due to gender specific medicine and a group of specialists completely dedicating themselves to Women's health called Obstetrician and Gynecologists. The 21st century offers many new medicines and surgeries to postpone pregnancy, the ability to get pregnant at a later age, and to treat and prevent many sexually transmitted diseases. Minimally invasive surgeries and improvement in menopausal health helps a woman accomplish her goals.

Birth control in the later part of the 20th century revolutionized women's health. The 21st century added more choices and fewer side effects. If she can not remember to take pills every day, or she has stomach problems, she can use a birth control patch called Ortho Evra. She tapes it on to her body, and changes it once a week. She can use a ring called Nuvaring, which provides protection for a month. She can use injections once a month or in every three months to prevent pregnancy. Some new Birth control pills help her get menstrual period once in every three months, so that she does not have to bleed or suffer from pain every month. New low dose pills like Yasmin do not make her gain weight and reduce premenstrual symptoms. She can continue taking low dose pills until menopause as long as she does not smoke or does not have other risk factors. New I.U.Ds with progesterone hormone produces less cramps and bleeding. The I.U.D called Paragard has to be replaced in every ten years. Emergency contraceptive pill "Plan B" is available over the counter in certain certified pharmacies. A new surgery called Essure procedure is available to block the fallopian tube without any scar. New developments in reproductive science and maternal fetal medicine can help her get pregnant in her late forties and give birth without significant complications.

During child bearing age, many women loose their uterus (womb) from bleeding or due to a tumor on the wall of uterus called fibroid. Endometrial ablation is a minimally invasive procedure, which could help to control the bleeding without a hysterectomy. With this procedure, she does not have to stay in a hospital, and can return to work in a week. Uterine (fibroid) artery embolization is available to shrink fibroids. If above procedures fail, she can have hysterectomy with the assistance of laparoscope. Laparoscopic hysterectomy reduces hospital stay, causes less pain and the recovery is faster than conventional hysterectomy.

Uterine prolapse, in which weakness of vaginal wall happens due to aging or multiple and difficult child births. Thirty percent of women experience involuntary loss of urine (urinary incontinence) in their forties. Synthetic and non-synthetic graft materials' use in prolapse repairs is reducing the rate of reoccurrences. The sling procedures, for vaginal vault prolapse called I.V.S Tunneler, for urinary incontinence called T.V.T and T.V.T.O, are easy to perform, and the recovery is faster than older methods.

With improvement of life expectancy, today's woman spends one third of her life after menopause. In 2002 W.H.I. (Women's Health Initiative), a large epidemiologic study done by N.I.H (National Institute of Health) created a lot of controversies to prescribe female hormone estrogen and progesterone during and after menopause. Institutions like A.C.O.G. (American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology), N.A.M.S. (North American Menopausal Society), etc. have come up with recommendations to use low dose hormones to treat menopausal symptoms. Today, we have many new hormone medications with different delivery systems. Low dose hormone pills, hormone patches, vaginal ring and hormone cream with nano particles are available, which reduce menopausal symptoms with fewer side effects. Early detection of breast cancer and new chemotherapeutic agents has reduced the death rates from breast cancer to less than four percent. Common diseases after menopause like over active bladder, osteoporosis and dementia are treatable.

There are many new challenges in women's health care. Stem cell research, human cloning and genetic engineering are bringing moral and ethical dilemmas. New research is adding more cost to the health care delivery system, which is making access to health care impossible for many. Medical malpractice premium is making it impossible for many obstetricians to provide prenatal care in U.S.A. The care givers have to expand their knowledge in economics, politics and ethics to provide full care to today's woman.

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Hinduism: A youth's Primer for Health and Happiness

From Various Sources

Introduction: Practicing Hinduism can bring health and happiness. Health and happiness are not just an absence of disease and depression, but a state of physical, mental, social, and spiritual well being. Disorders, whether mental, physical, or social, are caused by conflicts, depression, anxiety, not eating right food, not seeing right thing, not saying right thing, not listening right thing, not doing right thinking, and not doing right relaxation. All of these behaviors are influenced by our heritage and

religion. Hinduism, as a religion, provides guidelines for appropriate behavior for a happy life. Hinduism is practiced by more than one billion people in every continent, and is considered as the oldest religion. Unlike other major religions of the world, such as Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, which were initiated by prophets like Abraham, Jesus, Mohammed and Buddha, Hinduism is based on the earliest texts of mankind. These important texts include the *Vedas, Vedanta, and the Upanishads* (read *Gems from The Upanishads*, by H.B. Philips Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600 004, India, a tiny book that fits into your pocket). One of the timeless wisdom contained in *Upanishads* translated into English is:

*Lead from death to life, from falsehood to truth,
Lead me from despair to hope, from fear to trust,
Lead me from hate to love, from war to peace,
Let peace fill our heart, our world, our universe.*

Another prayer for all mankind in the *Upanishad* is:

**Sarve bhavantu sukhinaa,
Sarve santu Niraamaya,
Sarve bhadrani pashyantu,
Maa kaschit dukhabhag Bhabet...(Rig Veda)**

**(Let all mankind be happy
Let all mankind be healthy,
Let all mankind prosper
Let none ever suffer.)**

Hindus believe that God is present everywhere, in each human being, animals, plants, and in all parts of nature such as, rivers, oceans, mountains, sky etc. Some Hindus worship idols, animals, mountains, rivers, lands and some do not worship any form of idol or nature at all. In the *Chandogya Upanishad*, VI, 13, this reality is depicted in an analogy as a dialogue between a father and his son:

Put this salt in water, and come to me in the morning, a father said.

The son did as he was told.

The father said: Fetch the salt.

The son looked for it; he could not find it because it had melted.

Taste the water from the top, said the father.

How does it taste?

Of salt, the son replied.

Taste from the middle. How does it taste?

Of salt, the son replied.

Taste from the bottom. How does it taste?

Of salt, the son replied.

Then the father said: You do not perceive that the one Reality exists in your body, my son, but it is truly there.

Some believe several Gods and Goddesses, *Vishnu, Shiva, Brahma*, and one for each objective we desire for living. such as *Krishna* for love and spirituality, *Saraswati* for learning, *Ganesh* for good luck,

Lakshmi for wealth, *Durga* for strength, Hanuman for devotion etc. But all these are manifestations of one God. Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* says:

*Some bow to the countless gods that are only
My million faces.*

Some Hindus observe all kinds of rituals; by following *Gurus*, spiritual guide, religious teachers to attain the path of God; others by meditation or by service and duty. They believe that there are numerous ways to reach God but there is no uniquely defined path. So, there is no need for religious conversions in Hinduism that are prevalent in Christianity and Islam. In Hinduism, women are regarded with respect and reverence. Hinduism preaches non violence; teaches tolerance, respect for parents, teachers, and elders. It seeks detachment from desires, devotion to duty and peace as core requirement for the highest bliss, *Nirvana*. In this state the being attains freedom from all passions, becoming a Brahman i.e., a part of God.



A Hindu Deity



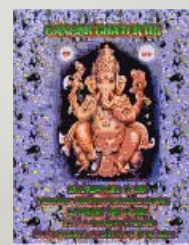
A Hindu Temple-Nepal



Hanuman



Brahma



Ganesh



A Hindu Symbol



Durga



Radha Krishna



Shiva



Krishna



Sita Rams



Saraswati



Vishnu



Lakshmi

Epics in Hinduism: The Ramayana and The Mahabharata: Hinduism is also depicted in two great epics: the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Each of these writings are earlier and larger than the Iliad of Homer. These two epics are prevalent in South Asia, South East Asia, and among the Indian Diaspora every place. *The Ramayana* by Valmiki deals with the idealism and sacrifice. The main character is the

ideal King Rama who relinquished his throne for fourteen years and voluntarily lived in the deep forest for that period to honor his father's wish to make his half brother to be the King . The *Mahabharata*, by *Vyasdev*, deals with justice, right and duty. The story is based on the war for justice by the five *Pandava* brothers *Yudhishtira*, *Bhima*, *Arjuna*, *Sahadev*, and *Nakula* against their one hundred cousin brothers, *Kauravas*, headed by an arrogant and egoist *Duryodhan*. Lord Krishna, a friend of the Kuru clan, to avoid the war begged before the Kurus for a little village for *Pandavas*, not the throne. But, *Duryodhan* even denied as little a space as that of a needle end to *Pandava* brothers. In the battle all *Kaurava* brothers were killed along with their armies. (Read: *Ramayana* by C. Rajagopalchari, *Mahabharata* by C. Rajagopalchari, written for young readers, both published by *Bhartiya Vidya Bhavan*, Bombay 400007, and India). *Rama* and *Krishna* are said to be the seventh and the eighth incarnation of *God Vishnu*, the preserver of the universe.

An episode in *Mahabharata* presents a discourse between *Yudhishtira*, the eldest *Pandava* brother, with *Dharmaraj* in the guise of a Crane . *Dharmaraj* is the personification of duty and virtue. The discourse presented below succinctly presents some basic principles to follow for a happy life.

Crane 1: What is the road to heaven?

Yudhishtira 1: Truthfulness

C2: How does a man find happiness?

Y2: Through right conduct

C3; What must he subdue, in order to escape grief?

Y3: His mind

C4: When is man loved?

Y4: When he is without vanity

C5: Of all the wonders in this world, which is the most incredible?

Y5: That no man, though he sees others dying all around him, believes that as if he is going to live for ever.

C6: How does one know what is true?

Y6: Not by argument. Not by scriptures and doctrines; they cannot help. The path to truth is through religion which is trodden by the saints.

Most adored Hindu scripture: The Bhagavad-Gita: Lord Krishna, the hero of the *Mahabharata*, has defined 1. *Dharma*, religious duty-righteousness, 2. *Brahma* and *Naya*, the truth and justice, 3 *Kama*, desire, 4. *Karma*, a deed, and effect of a deed, 5. *Moksha*, the liberation from desire and the salvation. These are incorporated in the *Bhagavad Gita* as the discussion between *Arjuna* and *Krishna* in the battleground. His message to all mankind is to treat each one with love, dignity, equality, kindness, and self-less service. (read: *Bhagavad-Gita* , *Song of God*, by *Swami Prabhananda* and *Sri Ramakrishna Math*, Madras 600 004, India, *Christopher Isherwood*.)

The following are a few stanzas from The *Bhagavad Gita* describing religion, ethics, duty, and detachment in life:

*If any worshipper do reverence with
faith to any God whatever,*

*I make his faith firm, and in that faith he reverences his God
and gains his desires,*

For it is I who bestow them (Chapter VII, 21)

*I am the silence of what is secret,
I am the knowledge of those who know,
And I am the seed of all that is born
There is nothing that can exist without me* (Chapter X, 36)

*Do the work you are ordained to do
Always without attachment
For the man who works without attachment
Reaches the supreme..
Cast all your acts upon me,
With your mind on the highest soul.
Have done with craving and selfhood
Throw off your terror, and that fight!* (Chapter III, 8)

The ultimate way to get bliss is

*Lay down all duties
In me, your refuge.
Fear no longer, for I will save you
From sin and from bondage* (Chapter XVIII, 66)

*On the definition of **Brahman**, a state of spiritual self:*

*He knows peace who has forgotten desire
He lives without craving:
Free from ego, free from pride.
This is the state of enlightenment in Brahman:
A man does not fall back from it
into delusion.
Even at the moment of death
He is alive in the enlightenment:
Brahman and he are one.* (Chapter II, 71-72)

The American nuclear physicist Robert Oppenheimer, who was originally a refugee from Germany, while witnessing the explosion of the first atom bomb, quoted *Arjuna while* Arjuna was witnessing *Krishna's* divine form (*TheBhagavad Gita*, Chapter XI, 12):

*If there should be in the sky
A thousand suns risen all at once,
Such splendor would be
Of the splendor of that Great Being.*

Hindus believe in incarnation of God. As described in the *Bhagavad Gita*, God's intense concern for the world makes Him descend from time to time in the form of an *Avatar*, incarnation:

*In every age I come back
To deliver the holy,
To destroy the sin of the sinner
To establish righteousness. (Chapter IV, 7)*

Hindu Cosmology, Inventions, and Food habits: Hindus, for well over two millennia, believed that the universe was not geocentric and it was immensely large and immensely ancient. Hindu cosmology was lately verified by late astrophysicist Carl Sagan. Ancient Hindus invented many scientific disciplines including number and decimal systems, pi, geometry, law of gravity, *Ayurveda*, and the science of life. The eating habits of Hindus are very sophisticated and selective. They do not eat cow, many other animals, and most of the sea food. The eating of beef, besides being a red meat, has had detrimental impact on agriculture, dairy products, and transportation in old times. Even the killing of unwanted or worn out cattle seemed almost as reprehensible as the killing of elderly or infirm human beings. Majority of Hindus are vegetarian, thus avoid cholesterol and animal fat.

The Symbol of Hinduism :AUM. The symbol of Hinduism is *AUM (OM)*, usually found in the apex of Hindu temples. Only a few of the different varieties available are shown below. *AUM/OM* signifies three states, awake, sleep, deep sleep and three planes, earth, sky, and heaven, and three stages of the universe, creation(*Brahma*), preservation(*Vishnu*) and destruction (*Shiva / Maheswar*). The *AUM* stands for the infinite, ultimate reality, consciousness. In the *Bhagavad Gita* it is said (*The Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter IX):

*I am OM, I am absolute knowledge:
I am also the Vedas-the Sama, the Rig and the Yajus.
I am the end of the path, the witness, the Lord, the sustainer:
I am the place of abode, the beginning, the friend and the refuge.*

The Aums



The *Chakra* (right most, seen at the *Jagannath* temples)

Usually, a Hindu prayer begins and ends with the chanting of the *Aum/OM* and the word is also present in the beginning of the recitation of *Gayatri mantra*, a mystical formula of invocation, in Sanskrit:

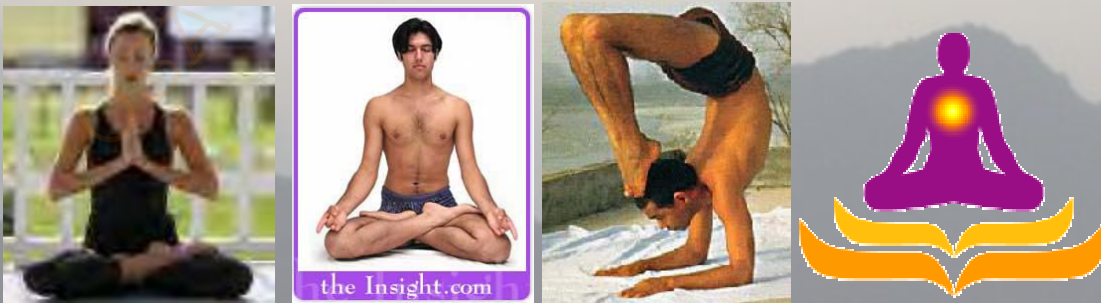
*Aum bhur bhuva swah,
Tatsavitur varenyam,
Bhargo devasya dhimahi,
Dhio yo nah prachodayat - (Samaveda, 2.812)*

An English translation of the mantra is:

God is the giver of life, the dispeller of miseries, and the bestower of happiness. Let us meditate upon the creator, the most worthy and acceptable Almighty God. May he inspire and lead our minds and intellects.

Meditation and Yoga: Hindus follow meditation and *Yoga*, a spiritual discipline, for their mental and physical upliftment. The principles to attain this heavenly bliss are obtained through a combination of rigorous spiritual discipline, physical exercises, and meditation. The methods of *Yoga* are described by *Patanjali*., Among many others. *Yoga* means union with God, a special form of deep concentration in which the mind is essentially liberated from restlessness and is united with the Self (*Atman*). The prime utility of meditation lies in obtaining both the map and the vehicle for a journey to the kingdom of God. It is established that meditation and *Yoga* (through *Pranayam*, the rhythmic control of the breath, and *Asanas* (*postures*)) can cure high blood pressure, heart problems, diabetes, skin diseases, obesity and sleeplessness.

Yoga (the *Asana* part) relaxes the body using breathing and several positions, by removing tension from nerves and muscles. Studies have shown that one hour of meditation is equivalent to several hours of deep sleep. Further, it purifies the mind from the effects of anger, short temper, craving, lust, and envy; sharpens the memory and intelligence. The energy one taps from within by meditation has been found to gradually stimulate inactive brain cells by activating the neurons. A few of the *Yoga* positions are shown below:



The Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 6) renders a universal meaning to the teachings of *Yoga*, a tradition from the days of the *Upanishads*. The *Patanjali Yoga*, also known as *Raja Yoga*, consisting of 196 Sanskrit *shlokas*, hymns, and (verses dates back to 250 BC350 AD) is meant to purify the body and mind for developing perfect concentration. It has eight steps: 1. Practice of the moral virtues, 2.Regular habits of purity, contentment, study, austerity and self surrender to God, 3.Posture, and 4.Control of vital energy by breathing exercises, 5.Withdrawal of the mind from sense objects, 6. Concentration, 7.Meditation, and 8.Absorption in the consciousness of God. Perfect concentration leads to perfect meditation which eventually leads one to the super-conscious state (*Samadhi*).

Yoga helps body posture, improves the intake of oxygen, and improves the functioning of the respiratory, digestive, endocrine, reproductive, and elimination systems. It is equally beneficial for calming the mind, attuning us to the environment, and diminishing insomnia caused by mental restlessness. *Yoga* is being used for people in competitive, stressful working environments, for those

who suffer from headaches, back and shoulder aches, allergies, and asthma. There are no side effects from this ancient technique.

Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883) claimed that originally Hinduism was a pure theism, the belief of existence of God, which knew no idols, and that the proliferating idolatrous polytheism, caste, and untouchables of later times were a perversion of the true language.

Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi (1869-1948) annulled the religious myth of Hinduism by rejecting the concept of lower caste and untouchables calling them *Harijan*, the people of God. Following Hindu principles of non violence, tolerance, and harmony, Gandhi won the battle against colonialism without armed insurgence. Following his principles, Martin Luther King, Jr., Desmond Tutu, and Nelson Mandela (all three winners of Nobel peace prizes) won battles against racial segregation and injustice.

The Hindu religion, philosophy, and civilization are much older than their Greek and Chinese counterparts. The philosophy buried in it is vast and fathomless. It has been attracting scholars for ages around the world for its universality, plurality, spirituality, equality, openness to all ideas, for its mysticism, its concepts of *Karma and Yoga*, and for its respect for all creatures and ecology . Buddhism, Sikhism, and Jainism, propagated by *Goutama Buddha, Nanak, and Mahavir* respectively are considered as sister religions of Hinduism.

Festivals: There are numerous festivals associated with Hinduism around the year to celebrate. In the spring season, like *Baisakhi, the Holi*, to enjoy the beginning of and garnering of harvests, the *Makar Sankranti*, the *Pongal*, commemorate the ancestors, the *Deepavali*- the festival of light to ward off the darkness and welcome light into life as light is always associated with hope for the future, to observe the youth, the *Raja Sankranti* and the *Kumar Punai* in Orissa and to liberate the soul, the *Rath Yatra*, the Chariot Festival. This spectacular chariot festival celebrated for 8 days is held at the famous *Jagannath* temple at Puri (Orissa). Thousands of devotees flock to Puri to have a glimpse of Lord *Jagannath* and to pull His chariot.

Conclusion: Hinduism is a set of ancient righteous faiths(*Santana Dharma*) that believe in peace, plurality and diversity, purity of soul and purpose, polytheism and monotheism, total non violence, total non attachment, truth, tolerance, kindness, equality , *karma*, and an infinite number of defined and undefined rules. Hindu thoughts represent highly developed philosophical systems.

The following are some basic features of Hinduism in a nutshell:

1. Let noble thoughts come to us from every side (Rig-Veda, 1-89-1)
2. Truth is one and wise men call it by different names (Ramakrishna)
3. All of the mankind is one family (Vasudaiva Kutumbakam)
4. As you sow, so you reap in this life and beyond (Karma)
5. God resides in all creatures and soul never dies (The Bhagvad Gita)
6. Transmigration- passing at death from one body to another, through cosmos till individual soul attains God (Moksha)
7. Anger, lust, greed, egos are the gateway to hell
8. Do not get dejected if you fail and do not get excited if you win- detachment
9. Be humble, pure, simple, and calm
10. Respect everybody; pay obeisance to your parents and teachers.
11. No to drugs, alcohol, smoking, illicit love as it affects mind and body
12. Yes to prayer, meditation, Yoga, study, duty as it makes you happy

(More information may be obtained from Dr. Jitendra Mohanty's: Classical Indian Philosophy, and Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought; Bansi Panditâ's The Hindu Mind. These books are available from Barnes and Nobles and Amazon.com)

Note on Miracle Medicinal Ayurvedic Plants

By Abhoy Kumar Pati*

Introduction: Over 6000 years back, India developed Ayurveda, the vedic system of health care. The Ayurveda was codified by the sage-physician Charaka and the sage-surgeon Shushruta. This ancient science is health, not disease, specific and takes into account the patient's entire personality - body, mind and spirit. This note describes three medicinal plants, Turmeric (haladi), Gymnema (gurmar), and Fenugreek (methi) with their traditional and therapeutic uses. The toxicity and cautions are also described in the text. These plants have been used extensively in India and various parts of the world for generations. Several institutions are involved in extraction and identification of active components in these plants. These extracts (drugs) are used in treating arthritis, obesity, digestion, diabetes, high cholesterol, and hepatitis

A. Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*)

Turmeric, extensively used in India, has long been considered an essential flavoring spice of Indian and other ethnic cuisines. Turmeric provides the typical yellow color of many curry dishes and helps the food more digestible. Turmeric, along with other curry herbs, has several physiologic activities, including the inhibition of platelet aggregation, antibiotic effects, anticholesterol action, and fibrinolytic activity. Many studies on turmeric have revealed that the herb contains cholagogue-type substances, which increase the secretion of bile.

Principal among these substances is curcumin, which possesses liver protective activity, detoxifying dangerous carcinogens, stimulating the gall bladder and acting as a free radical scavenger. Curcumin has cholekinetic activity (bile duct stimulation). It has been suggested that turmeric lowers blood cholesterol through these various choleric effects. Turmeric's effects on weight loss may also be mediated through curcumin's catabolic and metabolic activities on fats. Studies have also revealed that curcumin has anti-inflammatory properties, inhibiting platelet aggregation and cyclooxygenase and lipoxygenase enzymes which catalyze the formation of inflammatory prostaglandins and other molecules. Curcumin requires the presence of the adrenal glands to have this non-steroidal anti-inflammatory activity.

Traditional AND OTHER therapeutic uses:

- used in folk medicine to treat arthritis
- anti-inflammatory agent
- cholagogue that stimulates digestion, used or indigestion
- protects the liver (heptoprotective) and treats liver disease such as hepatitis
- gall bladder and bile duct diseases
- used in treating obesity
- has strong antibacterial and antifungal properties
- lowers blood cholesterol
- possible cancer preventive

TOXICITY, CAUTIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS

No known toxicity. Large doses are not recommended in cases of painful gallstones, obstructive jaundice, acute bilious colic or extremely toxic liver disorders.

B.Gymnema (Gymnema Sylvester)

Gymnema Sylvester, origin in India, is a woody, vine-like plant which climbs on bushes and trees in the Western Ghats in South India, and to the west of those mountains in the territory around the coastal city of Goa. It came to be known as “destroyer of sugar” because, in ancient times, Ayurvedic physicians observed that chewing a few leaves of Gymnema suppressed the taste of sugar. That is, sweet foods no longer tasted sweet, but rather became almost completely tasteless. In later generations, clinical tests showed that regular use over a period of three to four months helped to reduce glycosuria, or the appearance of sugar in the urine. Recent clinical trials conducted in India have shown that an extract of G. Sylvester is useful in both insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (IDDM) and in certain types of non-insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM). As a result of these clinical tests and years of successful treatments, Gymnema is used today all over India for treating diabetes mellitus. In reducing the symptom of glycosuria, the dried leaves are used in daily doses of three to four grams for a period of three months or more. Studies conducted in India as early as 1930 showed that the leaves of G. Sylvester cause hypoglycemia in experimental animals. This state of hypoglycemia is explained on the assumption that the drug stimulates insulin secretion of the pancreas and it has no direct effect on carbohydrate metabolism. Recent pharmacological and clinical studies have shown that Gymnema Sylvester acts on two sites, the taste buds in the oral cavity⁵⁰ and the absorptive surface to the intestines. The structure of the taste buds, which detect sugar in the mouth, is similar to the structure of the tissue that absorbs sugar in the intestine. The important active ingredient of G. Sylvester is an organic acid called “gymnemic acid.” The gymnemic acid is made up of molecules whose arrangement is similar to that of glucose molecules. Those molecules fill the receptor locations on the taste buds for a period of one to two hours, thereby preventing the taste buds from being activated by any sugar molecules present in the food. Similarly, the glucose-like molecules in the gymnemic acid fill the receptor locations in the absorptive external layers of the intestine, thereby preventing the intestine from absorbing the sugar molecules. It has also been noted that Gymnema Sylvester takes away the bitter taste of bitter substances, such as quinine, in much the same way that it affects the sense of sweetness associated with candies and other sweet foods. However, it has no effect on pungent, salty, astringent or acidic tastes. Therefore, if you are eating an orange within two hours after chewing Gymnema Sylvester leaves, for instance, you would taste the sourness of it but not the sweetness.

Gymnema Sylvestre is perhaps the most powerful herbal agent for improving blood sugar control. Human studies have demonstrated that Gymnema Sylvestre has therapeutic value for both type 1 and type 2 diabetics. In a study involving type 1 diabetics, average insulin requirements dropped by almost 30%. In another study of type 2 diabetics, A1C levels were reduced from 12 to 8.5%.

TRADITIONAL AND OTHER THERAPEUTIC USES

- suppress the taste of sweet foods, and consequently the desire to eat
- reduce metabolic effects of sugar by preventing the intestines from absorbing sugar molecules during digestion

- treatment of diabetes
- snakebite treated by powder or paste of the root applied to the wound
- fever treated with oral administration of half an ounce to an ounce (one part in 10) of leaves
- swollen glands treated with an external application of triturated leaves mixed with castor oil

TOXICITY, CAUTIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS

For most people using *G. Sylvester*, blood sugar goes down toward but not below normal blood sugar levels. This can happen in a small number of patients, however, because the mechanisms of the diabetic syndrome vary with different patients. Remarkably, unlike insulin or oral hypoglycemic sulfonylurea compounds, the hypoglycemic effects of *Gymnema Sylvester* are seen in only a small percentage of diabetic patients. The safety of *Gymnema Sylvester* has been demonstrated by the fact that it has been safely and successfully used for more than 2,000 years in traditional Ayurvedic medicine.

3. FENUGREEK

Although originally from southeastern Europe and western Asia, fenugreek is now grown in many parts of the world, including India, northern Africa, and the United States. The seeds of fenugreek contain the most potent medicinal effects of the plant. A number of uses were found for fenugreek in ancient times. Medicinally it was used for the treatment of wounds, abscesses, arthritis, bronchitis, and digestive problems. Traditional Chinese herbalists used it for kidney problems and conditions affecting the male reproductive tract. Fenugreek was, and remains, a food and a spice commonly eaten in many parts of the world. The steroidal saponins account for many of the beneficial effects of fenugreek, particularly the inhibition of cholesterol absorption and synthesis. The seeds are rich in dietary fiber, which may be the main reason it can lower blood sugar levels in diabetes. Due to the somewhat bitter taste of fenugreek seeds, debitterized seeds or encapsulated products are preferred. The typical range of intake is 5-30 grams with each meal or 15-90 grams all at once with one meal. As a tincture, fenugreek can be taken up to three times per day.

TRADITIONAL AND OTHER Therapeutic uses

- constipation
- diabetes
- high cholesterol
- high triglycerides

TOXICITY, CAUTIONS AND CONTRAINDICATIONS

Use of more than 100 grams of fenugreek seeds daily can cause intestinal upset and nausea. Otherwise, fenugreek is extremely safe. The details are found in author's book, *Vitamin and Herbal Digest*.

Conclusion: As Ayurveda gives us a model to look at each individual as a unique makeup of the three doshas and to thereby design treatment protocols that specifically address a person's health challenges. When any of the doshas (Vata, Pitta or Kapha) become accumulated, Ayurveda will suggest specific lifestyle and nutritional guidelines to assist the individual in reducing the dosha that has become excessive. A few herbal supplements in this article will hasten the healing process.. We hope that you

will continue to explore the scope of these medicinal plants to enhance your health and to gain further insights into this miracle.

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ମୁକ୍ତିର ପଞ୍ଚୁରି

ବିଜ୍ଞାନୀ ଦାସ

ଆଜିର ପାଗଟା ହଠାତ୍ କାହିଁକି ବଦଳିଗଲା? ସକାଳର ସୁନେଲି ରଙ୍ଗରେ ହସୁଥିବା ଆକାଶଟା ହଠାତ୍ କଳାବାଦଳରେ ଢାଙ୍କି ହୋଇଗଲା । ପ୍ରଥମେ ବର୍ଷା, ତାପରେ ବର୍ଷାମିଶା ବରଫ, ପୁଣି ତାପରେ ଶୁଖିଲା ବରଫ ଭୂମି ଉପରେ ଅଜାତି ହୋଇପଡ଼ିଲା । ଆଜି ଶିବରାତ୍ରି ଭଳି ଶୁଭଦିନରେ ମନ୍ଦିର ଯାଇ ପୂଜା କରିଆସିବାର ଆକାଂକ୍ଷା ଦବିଦବି ଆସିଲା ଶାଶୁତୀର । ତେବେ ମନରେ ସାହସ ବାନ୍ଧିଲା । ଶିବବିଷ୍ଣୁ ମନ୍ଦିର ତ ଏ ମେରିଅଟ୍ ହୋଟେଲ୍‌ରୁ ଜମା ସାତ, ଆଠ ମିନିଟ୍‌ର ବାଟ । ଏଇ ସମୟରେ ଦର୍ଶନ କରିଆସିବାଟା ଭଲ । ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାବେଳକୁ ଲୋକଗହଳ ଲାଗିଯିବ । ସେ ସମୟରେ ଚିହ୍ନାଜଣା ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରେ ପଡ଼ିଯିବାର ଭୟ ବି ଅଛି । କମ୍ପାନୀର ମିଟିଙ୍ଗ୍ ପାଇଁ ଗ୍ରୀନ୍‌ବେଲ୍‌ଟର ମେରିଅଟ୍ ହୋଟେଲ୍ ସ୍ଥିର ହୋଇଥିଲା ଓ ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଶାଶୁତୀକୁ ମେରୀଲାଣ୍ଡ ଆସିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିଥିଲା । ହେଲେ କମ୍ପାନୀର ସିନିଅର୍ ମ୍ୟାନେଜର୍ ବୋଷ୍ଟନ୍‌ରୁ ସକାଳର ଫ୍ଲାଇଟ୍ ମିସ୍ କଲେ । ଅତଏବ ସକାଳର ମିଟିଙ୍ଗ୍‌ଟା ଉପରବେଳକୁ ଘୁଞ୍ଚିଗଲା । ମହାଦେବଙ୍କ ଦର୍ଶନର ଏପରି ଅବସର ଉପଯୋଗ କରିବାର ଯୋଜନାରେ ଅଦିନମେଘଟା ସନ୍ଦେହ ମିଶାଇ ଦେଇଥିଲା । ତେବେ ଶାଶୁତୀର ମନୋବଳ ପାଖରେ ମେଘର ସମସ୍ତ ଚକ୍ରାନ୍ତ ହାରମାନ୍ଦିଲା ।

ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ଏତେ ଭିଡ଼ ନଥିଲା । ମନ୍ଦିରର ପରିବର୍ଦ୍ଧିତ ରୂପ ଦେଖି ଶାଶୁତୀର ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ହେଉନଥିଲା ଯେ ପତିଶ ବର୍ଷ ପୂର୍ବେ ଏଇ ମନ୍ଦିରଟି କେତେ ସାନ ହୋଇ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ଏ ମନ୍ଦିରଟିର ମୁଖ୍ୟ ପ୍ରବେଶଦ୍ୱାରରେ ତିନି ଠାକୁରଙ୍କର ମୂର୍ତ୍ତି ରହିଥିଲା । ମଝିରେ କାର୍ତ୍ତିକେୟଙ୍କ ମନ୍ଦିର ; କାର୍ତ୍ତିକେୟଙ୍କ ଡାହାଣକୁ ଶିବଙ୍କ ମନ୍ଦିର ଓ ବାମକୁ ବିଷ୍ଣୁଙ୍କ ମନ୍ଦିର । ଶିବଙ୍କ ମନ୍ଦିର ସାମନାରେ ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା କରିବାକୁ ପ୍ରାୟ ଚାଳିଶି, ପଚାଶ ଭକ୍ତ ରୁଣ୍ଡ ହୋଇଥିଲେ । ଆଜି ମଙ୍ଗଳବାର; ଅପିସ୍ କାମରେ ସମସ୍ତେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ । ଅପିସ୍ କାମର ବନ୍ଧନ ନଥିବା ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ

ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କର ସଂଖ୍ୟା ତେଣୁ ପୁରୁଷ ମାନଙ୍କଠାରୁ ବେଶି ଥିଲା । ସେଇ ଭକ୍ତମାନଙ୍କ ଗହଣରେ ବସିପଡ଼ିଲା ଶାଶୁତୀ । ସମସ୍ତେ ମିଶି ଶିବଙ୍କ ବନ୍ଦନା ଗାଇଲେ -

“ଶମ୍ଭୋ ମହାଦେବ ସଦାଶିବ, ଅମୃତ ନୟନ ନାରାୟଣ
ହର ଓଁ ହର ଓଁ ସଦାଶିବ, ହରି ଓଁ ହରି ଓଁ ନାରାୟଣ ।
ପନୁଗ ଭୃଷଣ ସଦାଶିବ, ପନୁଗ ଶୟନ ନାରାୟଣ
ହର ଓଁ ହର ଓଁ ସଦାଶିବ, ହରି ଓଁ ହରି ଓଁ ନାରାୟଣ ।”

ତାମିଲ୍ ବ୍ରାହ୍ମଣ ଜଣକ ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା କରୁଥିବା ଭକ୍ତମାନଙ୍କ ପାଖକୁ ଆସି ପୂଜାଭଣ୍ଡାର ଛୁଆଁଇ ନାମ, ଗୋତ୍ର ପଚାରୁଥିଲେ । ଶେଷରେ ଶାଶୁତୀର ପାଳି ପଡ଼ିଲା ।

- ଗୋତ୍ର?
- ଭରଦ୍ୱାଜ ।
- ନାମ୍ ?
- ସୁମିତ୍ର ।
- ଔର୍ ?
- ମିତା ।
- ଔର୍ ?
- ଅନୁପ୍
- ଔର୍ ?
- ଶାଶୁତୀ ।
- ସରସ୍ୱତୀ ।
- ସରସ୍ୱତୀ ନେହିଁ, ଶାଶୁତୀ ।



ହେଲେ ତାମିଲ୍ ବ୍ରାହ୍ମଣ ଜଣକ ସେଇ ସରସ୍ୱତୀ ନାଁକୁ ହିଁ ଉଚ୍ଚାରଣ କରି ପୂଜା କଲେ । ସବୁ ତାମିଲ୍ ବ୍ରାହ୍ମଣ ତା’ ନାଁକୁ ଏମିତି ଭୁଲ୍ ଉଚ୍ଚାରଣ କରିଥାନ୍ତି । ତେବେ ସେ ନେଇ ସିଏ ଯେତେ ବିସ୍ମିତ ହେଲାନି, ମନକୁ ସଂଯତ କରିବାପାଇଁ ଏତେ ନିୟମ କରିଥିବା ସତ୍ତ୍ୱେ ପାଟିରୁ ‘ସୁମିତ୍’ ନାଁଟା ବାହାରିଯିବାରେ ସେତେଟା ବିସ୍ମିତ ହେଲା । ତାପରେ ସବୁଆଡେ ନଜର ବୁଲେଇଆଣିଲା, କେହି ଚିହ୍ନା ଓଡିଆ ଏ ଗହଳିରେ ଏ ନାଁଟା ଶୁଣିଦେଲାନି ତ ?

ଏ ମେରାଲାଣ୍ଡରେ ସୁମିତ୍‌ଙ୍କର କେତେ ସ୍ମୃତି । ନୂଆ ବାହାହୋଇ କଲେଜପାର୍କର ଗ୍ରାଜୁଏଟ୍ ଆପାର୍ଟମେଣ୍ଟରେ ହିଁ ସିଏ ତା ଘରକରଣା ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଥିଲା ସୁମିତ୍‌ଙ୍କ ସହିତ । ସେତେବେଳେ ଏ ମନ୍ଦିର କାମ ନୂଆନୂଆ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇଥାଏ । ସୁମିତ୍ ଓ ଶାଶୁତୀ ବହୁତ ସମୟରେ ଏ ମନ୍ଦିର ଆସୁଥିଲେ । ସେତେବେଳେ ଶାଶୁତୀ ସ-ମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଓଡିଆରମଣୀ ଥିଲା । ବାରମାସରେ ତେର ଉପାସ; ସୋମବାର ପୂଜା, ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ ପୂଜା, ସନ୍ତୋଷୀମା’ଙ୍କ ବ୍ରତ, କେତେ କଣ କରୁଥିଲା । ସୁମିତ୍‌ଙ୍କର ଆଇଁଷଖୁଆ ଅଭ୍ୟାସ ଶାଶୁତୀର ଓଷା, ବ୍ରତ ପାଇଁ ଦବିହୋଇ ରହେ । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ସୁମିତ୍ ରାଗନ୍ତି । ଓଷାପ୍ରଣାଳୀର ସଂଶୋଧନ ହେବା ଉଚିତ୍ କହି ଚିପ୍‌ପଣୀ ଦିଅନ୍ତି । ନିଜେ ବ୍ରତ କରି ଆଇଁଷ ନ ଖାଇଲେ ବି ସ୍ୱାମୀଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ତିଆରି କରିବା ଉଚିତ୍ ବୋଲି ଯୁକ୍ତି ବାଜନ୍ତି ।

“ନାରୀ ପାଇଁ ତା’ର ସ୍ୱାମୀ ହିଁ ପରମଧର୍ମ, ପରମଦେବତା । ତମେ ପ୍ରଥମେ ସ୍ୱାମୀଙ୍କୁ ସନ୍ତୁଷ୍ଟ କରିରଖିବା ଉଚିତ୍ । ତା’ପରେ ଦେବାଦେବୀଙ୍କ ଓଷାବ୍ରତ କର ।”

“ମୁଁ କଣ ତମକୁ ଅସନ୍ତୁଷ୍ଟ କରୁଛି ?”

“ଆରେ । ମଣିଷ ଏ ଦୁନିଆରେ ଯାହା ସବୁ କରୁଛି, ଏଇ ପେଟ ଚାଖଣ୍ଡକ ପାଇଁ । ତମେ ସୋମବାର କରିବ, ଚିକେନ୍ ବନ୍ଦ ; ଗୁରୁବାର କରିବ, ଚିକେନ୍ ବନ୍ଦ; ଶୁକ୍ରବାର କରିବ, ଚିକେନ୍ ବନ୍ଦ । ଏମିତି ହେଲେ ତ ମୋର ଅବସ୍ଥା ଗଲା ।”

“ଠାକୁରଙ୍କ ନାଁରେ ସେମିତି କୁହନି । ଅମଙ୍ଗଳ ହେବ ।”

“ଆଉ ମୋ ପ୍ରଫେସର୍ ମାଇକ୍ ସବୁଦିନ ଚିକେନ୍, ବିପ୍ ଖାଉଛି; ତା’ର ତ କାହିଁକି କିଛି ଅମଙ୍ଗଳ ହେଉନି । ଜାଣିଲ; ଏବର୍ଷ ତା’କୁ ଚାରିଚାରିଟା ବଡ ଗାଈ ମିଳିଛି । ଆମେରିକାନ୍ ଫିଜିକାଲ୍ ସୋସାଇଟିରୁ ଆଡ୍ୱାର୍ଡ ବି ପାଇଲା । ଆଉ, ତମ ବୁଦ୍ଧିରେ ଦେବାଦେବୀଙ୍କୁ ଧରି ମୋର କଣ ଉନ୍ନତି ହୋଇଛି ?”

“ଏବେ ଉନ୍ନତି ନହେଲେ କଣ ପରେ ହେବନି । ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ଜୀବନରେ ଭଲ ସମୟ, ଖରାପ ସମୟ ଅଛି ।”

“ଉନ୍ନତି ଆଉ କେବେ ହେବ ? ଏତେ ଯାଗାରେ ଇଞ୍ଜର୍ଭୁୟ ଦେଲିଣି, ଏପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଚାକିରି ହେଲାନି କେଉଁଠି । ସେଇ ପୋଷ୍ଟକ୍ରାଲ୍ ହେଇହେଇ କାଳ ପାଇବ ଜଣାପଡୁଛି ।”

ଶାଶୁତୀ ଯୁକ୍ତି କରିନଥିଲା । ସୁମିତ୍ ବି ଏତେଟା ରୁଷ ନଥିଲେ । ସେତେବେଳେ ଶାଶୁତୀ କେବଳ ସୁମିତ୍‌ଙ୍କର ପତ୍ନୀ ହିଁ ଥିଲା । ସୁମିତ୍‌ଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଭଲ ଖାଇବାକୁ ରାନ୍ଧିବା, ସୁମିତ୍‌ଙ୍କ ସାର୍ଟ, ପ୍ୟାଣ୍ଟ ଆଇରନ୍ କରିବା, ସୁମିତ୍‌ଙ୍କ ମୋଜା, ଜୋତା ମ୍ୟାଟ୍ କରି ସଜାଡି ରଖିବା ସବୁ କାମ ସେ ଖୁସିରେ କରୁଥିଲା । ରସଗୋଲା, ସନ୍ଦେଶ୍, ଆଳୁଚପ୍, ମଟନ୍‌ଚପ୍ ସବୁ କିଛି ସେ ତିଆରିକରିବା ଶିଖିଗଲା ଓ କେବଳ ସୁମିତ୍ ନୁହଁନ୍ତି, ତାଙ୍କ ବନ୍ଧୁମାନଙ୍କୁ ବି ତାଜି ଖୁଆଉଥିଲା । ନିଜକୁ ବି ସଜାଇ ରଖୁଥିଲା ଖୁବ୍ । ସୁମିତ୍ ବେଳେବେଳେ ଭାବବିହୁଳ ହୋଇଯାଉଥିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କ ଉଲ୍‌ସିତ କବିମନସି କ୍ଷଣକ୍ଷଣକେ ସାହାଜାହାନ୍ ପାଲଟି ରଚନା କରୁଥିଲା ପ୍ରେମକବିତାର ତାଜମହଲ ।

“ଲଳିତାଙ୍କ, ଖଞ୍ଜନାକ୍ଷୀ ମୋର ପ୍ରିୟତମା
ରୁପଗୁଣେ ଅନୁପମା ମୋର ପ୍ରିୟତମା
ମଧୁର ମନ୍ଦଭାଷିଣୀ, ସୁଚତୁରୀ, ସୁହାସିନୀ
ସୁକେଶୀ, ସୁମନଗନ୍ଧା ମୋ ପ୍ରୀତିତମ୍ଭାମା ।”

କବିତା ଶୁଣି ବିହୁଳ ହୋଇଯାଉଥିଲା ଶାଶୁତୀ । ହସିହସି ଲୋଟିପଡୁଥିଲା ସୁମିତ୍‌ଙ୍କ ଛାତିରେ । ସୁମିତ୍ ଚାକିରି ଖୋଜୁଥିଲେ । କଠିନ ପରିଶ୍ରମ ବି କରିବାକୁ ପଡୁଥିଲା ତାଙ୍କୁ । ତେବେ ଶାଶୁତୀର ସେବା, ଯନ୍ ତାଙ୍କର ଚାକିରି ନ ପାଇବା ଜନିତ ନିରାଶା କିଛିଟା ଲାଘବ କରୁଥିଲା । ଏମିତି କେତେ ମଧୁର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନକୁ ନେଇ କୋଳକୁ ଆସିଥିଲା ମିତା । ପୁଣି ଦୁଇବର୍ଷ ପରେ ଆସିଲା ଅନୁପ । ପିଲା ଦୁଇଙ୍କର ଏକୋଇଶା, ଜନ୍ମଦିନ ପୂଜା ସବୁ ଏଇ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ହିଁ ପାଳନ କରିଥିଲେ ସେମାନେ ।

ପାଞ୍ଚବର୍ଷ ପରେ ପ୍ରୋଜେକ୍ଟ୍ ସରିଗଲା । ମଣିଷ ଯୋଜନା କରିଥାଏ ଗୋଟିଏ, ଘଟେ ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ । ମେରାଲାଣ୍ଡରେ ରହିବାର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ତାଙ୍କର ସାର୍ଥକ ହୋଇନଥିଲା । ମିଟିଗାନ୍‌ରେ ଦୁଇବର୍ଷ ପାଇଁ ପୁଣି ଗୋଟିଏ ପ୍ରୋଜେକ୍ଟ୍‌ରେ କାମ କରିବାକୁ ସୁଯୋଗ ମିଳିଥିଲା ସୁମିତ୍‌ଙ୍କୁ । ତଥାପି ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଚାକିରିର କୌଣସି ଆଶା ମିଳିଲାନି । ଏମିତିକି ଛଅ ମାସ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଘରେ ବସିବାକୁ ପଡିଲା । ବେବିସିଟିଙ୍ଗ୍ କରି କିଛିଦିନ ଚଳେଇନେଲା ଶାଶୁତୀ । କିନ୍ତୁ ନିଜର ପିଲାମାନେ ବଡ ହେଉଥିଲେ ଓ ଘରର ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚ ବି ବଢୁଥିଲା । ସୁମିତ୍‌ଙ୍କ ପରାମର୍ଶରେ ଶାଶୁତୀ ପାଖ କମ୍ୟୁନିଟି କଲେଜ୍‌ରେ କମ୍ୟୁଟର୍ ଟେନିଙ୍ଗ୍ ନେଲା । ଛୋଟ ଏକ କମ୍ପାନୀରେ ତାଟା ଏଣ୍ଟ୍ରି କରିବାର ଚାକିରି ମିଳିଗଲା ତାକୁ । ସୁମିତ୍‌ଙ୍କର ପଦାର୍ଥ ବିଜ୍ଞାନ ପ୍ରତି ବିତୃଷ୍ଣା ଆସିଯାଇଥିଲା । ଶେଷରେ ସେ ସ୍ଥିରକଲେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ପଢିବେ ।

“ତାଙ୍କୁ ପଢିବ ? ଏ ବୟସରେ ? ତାଙ୍କୁ ତ ବହୁତ ବର୍ଷ ଲାଗିବ ।”

“ବହୁତ ବର୍ଷ ଲାଗିଲେ ବି ଚାକିରିର ନିଃତତା ତ ରହିବ । କିଛି ନହେଲେ ନିଜେ କିନିକ୍ସଟିଏ ଖୋଲି ଜଣେ ଗୁଜୁରାଣ ମେକ୍ସେଇପାରିବ ।”

“ହେଲେ ଆମେ ଏତେଦିନ ଚଳିବା କେମିତି ?”

“ଛୋଟ ହେଉ, ବଡ଼ ହେଉ, ତମ ଚାକିରି ତ ଅଛି । ପ୍ରାଚୁର୍ଯ୍ୟରେ ଚଳିପାରିବାନି ସିନା, ହେଲେ, ଖାଇବା, ପିନ୍ଧିବାରେ ତ ଅସୁବିଧା ହେବନି ।”

ଡାକ୍ତରୀ ପଢ଼ିଲେ ସୁମିତ୍ । ତାଟା ଏଣ୍ଟ୍ରି କରୁକରୁ ପ୍ରୋଗ୍ରାମର୍ ହେଲା ଶାଶୁତୀ, ପ୍ରୋଗ୍ରାମର୍ରୁ ମ୍ୟାନେଜର୍ । ଓଡ଼ିଆଘରଣୀ ଶାଶୁତୀର ସୋମବାର, ଗୁରୁବାର, ସନ୍ତୋଷୀମା’ ବ୍ରତ ସବୁ ହଜିଗଲା କମ୍ପ୍ୟୁଟର୍ ଭିତରେ, ଅଫିସ୍ କାମରେ । ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାରେ ଘରକୁ ଫେରି ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କ ପଢ଼ାପଢ଼ି ଦେଖୁଥିଲା । ସୁମିତ୍ ନିଜ ପଢ଼ାପଢ଼ିରେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ; ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ବେଳ ନାହିଁ । ଆଉ ସେଇଠୁ ଆରମ୍ଭହେଲା ଜୀବନର ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ।

“ତମକୁ କହିଥିଲି ନା ମୋ ସାର୍ତ୍ତା ଆଇରନ୍ କରାଦେବାକୁ ? ଆଜି ମୋର ପ୍ରେଜେଣ୍ଟେସନ୍ ଅଛି ।”

“କେତେବେଳେ କହିଥିଲ?”

“ତମକୁ ତ ମୋ କଥା ଶୁଣାଯାଉନି ଆଜିକାଲି । ଚାକିରି କରିଛ ତ? ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଅହଙ୍ଗାର ବଢ଼ିଗଲାଣି ।” – ସୁମିତ୍‌ଙ୍କର କଣ୍ଠସ୍ୱର ଉଚ୍ଚ ହୋଇଗଲା ।

“ତମେ ମତେ କେବେ କହିଥିଲ ମୁଁ ଶୁଣିପାରିନି । ସେଥିରେ ଅହଙ୍ଗାରର ଭୂମିକା କେଉଁଠି ରହିଲା ?”

“ଦେଖ, ମୁଁ ତମ ସହିତ ଯୁକ୍ତି କରିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁନି । ଏଇଟା ସତ ଯେ ତମର ମୋ ପ୍ରତି ଖାତର ନାହିଁ ।” – ସୁମିତ୍‌ର କଣ୍ଠସ୍ୱର ଉଚ୍ଚରୁ ଉଚ୍ଚତର ହେଲା ।

“ମୋର ବି ଯୁକ୍ତି କରିବାକୁ ବେଳ ନାହିଁ । ମତେ ଅଫିସ୍ ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ ହେବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ ।”

ଶାଶୁତୀ ଗାଧୁଆଘରକୁ ଗଲା ଓ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ ହୋଇ ଲିଭିଙ୍ଗରୁମ୍‌ରେ ପହଞ୍ଚି ଦେଖେତ ସୁମିତ୍ ଚାଲିଯାଇଛନ୍ତି । ଝିଅ ମିତା କହିଲା, “ତାତି ନିଜେ ସାର୍ତ୍ତ ଆଇରନ୍ କଲେ ଓ ରାଗିକରି ଗଲେ । ଏମିତିକି ମତେ ବି ବାଏ କହିଲେନି ।”

ସେଦିନ ଅଫିସ୍‌ରେ ଶାଶୁତୀର ମନ ଗତବତ ରହିଲା । ନା କାମରେ ମନଲାଗିଲା ନା ହିତାହିତ ଜ୍ଞାନ ରହିଲା । ଜଣେ କୁନିୟର୍ ସିଙ୍ଗ୍‌ମ୍ ଇଞ୍ଜିନିୟର୍ ଉପରେ ବୃଥାରେ ରାଗି ପାଟିକଲା । ସିନିୟର୍ ମ୍ୟାନେଜର୍‌ଙ୍କୁ ମାସିକ ବିବରଣୀ ଦେବା ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତେ ଜଣେ ଏମ୍ପଲ୍‌ର ପରଫର୍ମାନ୍‌ସ୍ ଇଭାଲୁଏସନ୍ ଦେଲା । ଏସବୁ ଭୁଲ୍ କରିବାପରେ ନିଜେ ନିଜକୁ ବୁଝାଇଲା ଓ ନିଜକୁ ନିୟନ୍ତ୍ରିତ କରି ରଖିବ ବୋଲି ସ୍ଥିର କଲା । ତେବେ ସୁମିତ୍ ଯେ ତାକୁ ଆଲିଙ୍ଗନ ନକରି, ତୁମ୍ଭା ନଦେଇ,

ନକହି ଘରୁ ବାହାରିଗଲେ, ସେଇଟା ତା’ ମନକୁ ସବୁ ସମୟରେ ଆନ୍ଦୋଳିତ କରିରଖିଲା ।

ସେଦିନ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାରେ ବି ସେମିତି ପୁଣିଥରେ ସୁମିତ୍ ପାଟିକଲେ । ଫିକ୍ ସାରା ଖୋଲି ଦେଖିଲେ ଖାଲି ଡାଲ୍‌ମା ଅଛି । ଅନ୍ୟ ତରକାରି, ଭଜା କରିବାକୁ ଶାଶୁତୀର ସମୟ ହୋଇନି । ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟତଃ ଆସନ୍ତା ସଞ୍ଜରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ପ୍ରୋଜେକ୍ଟର ଡିଉଡେଟ୍ ଥିବାରୁ, ଶନିବାର, ରବିବାର ସେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତଥିଲା ଓ ଘରେ ଅଫିସ୍ କାମ କରୁଥିଲା; ପରିବା କିଣିବାକୁ ଯାଇପାରିନି । ରାଗରେ ଡାଲ୍‌ମାବାଟି ବାହାର କରୁକରୁ, ତରବରରେ ବାଟି ତଳେ ପଡ଼ିଗଲା । ଡାଲ୍‌ମା ତ ଯାହା ନଷ୍ଟହେଲା, ଭଙ୍ଗାକାତକୁ ସଫା କରିବାର ଆଉ ଏକ ବୃଥା ବୋଧ ପଡ଼ିଲା ଶାଶୁତୀ ଉପରେ । ବାଟି ଭାଙ୍ଗି ତୁପ୍‌ହୋଇ ସିଧା ନିଜ ପଢ଼ିବାରୁମ୍‌କୁ ଚାଲିଗଲେ ସୁମିତ୍ । ସେଦିନ ସେ ଉପାସରହିଲେ ଓ ସେଇ ପଢ଼ିବାଘରେ ହିଁ ଶୋଇପଡ଼ିଲେ । ଏମିତି ଛ, ସାତ ଦିନ କାଳ ଟେନ୍‌ସନ୍‌ରେ ଗଲା । ପ୍ରୋଜେକ୍ଟ ରିପୋର୍ଟ ପଠାଇସାରିବା ପରେ ଶାଶୁତୀକୁ ଚିକେ ଫାଙ୍ଗ ସମୟ ମିଳିଲା । ମଙ୍ଗଳବାର ଦିନ ଅଧା ଛୁଟି ନେଇ ସେ ଦୋକାନକୁ ଗଲା ଓ ସୁମିତ୍‌ଙ୍କ ମନରୁତିର ସଉଦା କିଣିଲା । ଘରେ ପହଞ୍ଚି ରାନ୍ଧିଲା ମଟନ୍ ତରକାରି, ମଲାଜକୋଞ୍ଚା ଓ ଗୋଟା ବାଇଗଣ ଭଜା । ନିଜକୁ ସଜାଇରଖିଲା ସୁନ୍ଦର କରି । ସୁମିତ୍ ଦ୍ୱାର ଖୋଲୁଖୋଲୁ ମଟନ୍ ବାସ୍ନା ପାଇ କିଟେନ୍‌କୁ ଆସିଲେ । ମଟନ୍ ଚାଖୁଚାଖୁ ସେଇ ଅଇଁଠାପାଟିରେ ତୁମ୍ଭା ବିଛାଇ ଦେଇଗଲେ ଶାଶୁତୀର ଗାଲରେ ।

“ଆରେ, ପାଗଳ ହେଲ ନା କଣ? ମିତୁ, ଅନୁପ ଅକସ୍ମାତ୍ ଆସିଯିବେ ଯେ ?”

“ସେମାନେ ହୋମ୍‌ସ୍ପ୍ରେକ୍ଟି କରୁଛନ୍ତି, ତମେ କାହିଁକି ଚିନ୍ତା କରୁଛ ?”

“ତଥାପି……”

“ତଥାପି ଛାଡ଼ ।” – ସୁମିତ୍‌ଙ୍କର କଣ୍ଠରୁ ସ୍ନେହର ସ୍ରୋତସ୍ୱିନୀ ସତେକି ଉଛୁଳି ଉଠୁଥିଲା ।

ସେଦିନ ସୁମିତ୍‌ଙ୍କ ସ୍ନେହରେ କିଣି ହୋଇଗଲା ଶାଶୁତୀ । କିଛିଦିନ ପୂର୍ବର ଟେନ୍‌ସନ୍ ମନଭିତରୁ ଅପସରିଗଲା । ପରଦିନ ଅଫିସ୍‌ରେ ସେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ସହିତ ପୁଣି ସ୍ୱାଭାବିକ ହୋଇଗଲା ଓ ଘରେ ବି ପାଲଟିଗଲା ହାସ୍ୟମୟୀ, ଲାସ୍ୟମୟୀ କୁସୁମରାଣୀ । ସୁମିତ୍‌ଙ୍କ ସ୍ନେହ ତା ମନଭିତରେ ଏକ ନୂଆ ପ୍ରେରଣା, ନୂଆ ମହକ ଭରିଦେଇଥିଲା ।

କ୍ଷଣସ୍ଥାୟୀ ଥିଲା ସେ ସୁଖ । କମ୍ପାନୀ କାମର ଚାପ ଯେତେଯେତେ ବଢ଼ୁଥିଲା, ଶାଶୁତୀର ଘରକାମରେ ସେତେଟା ଅନିୟମିତତା ବଢ଼ୁଥିଲା । ପରିଶାମରେ ଚିତ୍କତା ବଢ଼ୁଥିଲା ତା’ର ଓ ସୁମିତ୍‌ଙ୍କର ସମର୍ଜରେ । ସେଦିନ ଶାଶୁତୀ ଫେରିବା ବାଟରେ ଏକ ବଡ଼ ଧରଣର ଆକ୍ସିଡେଣ୍ଟ ହୋଇ ଟ୍ରାଫିକ୍‌ଜାମ୍ ହୋଇଯାଏ । ଘରେ

ପହୁଞ୍ଚିପହୁଞ୍ଚି ରାତି ଆଠଟା । କବାଟଖୋଲି ଘରେ ପଶୁପଶୁ ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କର କଠୋର କଷ୍ଟସ୍ୱର ଭାସିଆସିଲା -

“ଘରକୁ ଫେରିଲ କାହିଁକି? ସେଇଠି ଅଫିସ୍ରେ ରହିଗଲନି । ସିନିୟର୍ ମ୍ୟାନେଜର୍ ସହିତ ଚିକେ ବେଶି ଅୟସ କରିପାରିଥାନ୍ତ ।”

“ହୁଅଁ ! ଶାଶୁତୀ ବିସ୍ମିତ ହୋଇଗଲା ।

“ତମର ସାଙ୍ଗେ ପାଞ୍ଚଟାରେ ଫେରିବାର କଥା । ଆଠଟାରେ ଫେରିବାର ଥିଲା ତ ଫେନ୍ କରଦେଇ ପାରିଥାନ୍ତ ?”

“ମୁଁ ଟ୍ରାଫିକ୍‌ଜାମ୍ରେ ପଡିଯାଇଥିଲି ।”

“ବହୁତ ବାହାନା କରିଜାଣ ତମେ । ମିଛ କହିବାର କୌଣସି କାରଣ ନାହିଁ । ସ୍ୱାଧୀନ ଦେଶ ଏଇଟା; ଯାଅ ଅୟସ କର ।”

ସୁମିତ୍ର ବାକ୍ୟବାଣି ଛାଡିଦେଇ ପଳେଇଗଲେ । ମୁଣ୍ଡକୁ ସେଦିନ ରକ୍ତ ଚଢିଯାଇଥିଲା ଶାଶୁତୀର । ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କର କଣ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଖରାପ ହୋଇଗଲାଣି ? ଏମିତି ଅସମୀଚନ ଚିନ୍ତା ତାଙ୍କ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ କାହିଁକି ପଶିଲା ? ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କର ବାକ୍ୟବାଣି ଶାଶୁତୀର ହୃଦୟରେ ଏକ ବଡ଼ କ୍ଷତଚିହ୍ନ ଛାଡିଦେଇଗଲା । ଯେଉଁ ସ୍ୱାମୀ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀକୁ ସମେତ କରେ, ଯେଉଁ ସ୍ୱାମୀ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀକୁ ଅନ୍ୟପୁରୁଷ ମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ମିଶାଇ କପୋଳକଳ୍ପିତ ଅସମୀଚନ ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ରଚନାକରେ, ସେ ସ୍ୱାମୀ ଯେ କେତେ ନ୍ୟୁନ, ସେ ଚିନ୍ତାକରି ଶାଶୁତୀର ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଗୋଳମାଳ ହେବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲା । ତଥାପି ନିଜକୁ ସଂଯତ କରିରଖିଲା ଶାଶୁତୀ । ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ ହେଉଥିଲା ଚାକିରି ଛାଡିଦିଅନ୍ତା । କିନ୍ତୁ ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କର ରେସିଡେନ୍ସିଆ ବର୍ଷେ, ଦେଇବର୍ଷ ହେଲା ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇଛି । ଚାକିରି ହେବାକୁ ଆହୁରି ସମୟ ଲାଗିବ । ଘର ପାଇଁ ମୋର୍ଗେଜ୍, ମିତାର କଲେଜ ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚ ଓ ଅନୁପର ଦୁଇବର୍ଷ ପରେ କଲେଜ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିବାର ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚ ବିଷୟ ଚିନ୍ତା କରି ଆଉ କିଛିଦିନ ଚାକିରିରେ ରହିବ ବୋଲି ସ୍ଥିରକଲା ଶାଶୁତୀ ।

ଚାହୁଁ ଚାହୁଁ ଦେଇବର୍ଷ କେମିତ ବିତିଗଲା । ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କର ରେସିଡେନ୍ସିଆ ସରିଯାଇଥିଲା ଓ ଏକ ଛୋଟ ମେଡିକାଲ୍ ଫର୍ମରେ ନିଯୁକ୍ତି ମିଳିଥିଲା ତାଙ୍କୁ । ସଂସାର ହୋଇଆସୁଥିଲା ସୁଖମୟ । ଶାଶୁତୀ ଭାବିଥିଲା ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କର ଚାକିରିରେ ଚିକେ ସ୍ଥିରତା ଆସିଗଲେ ସେ କିଛିଦିନ ପାଇଁ ଚାକିରି ନକରି ଘରେ ରହିବ । ନୂଆ ବାହାହେବା ସମୟର ଓଡିଆଘରଣୀ ସାଜି ତାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ମନଲାଖି ଖାଦ୍ୟ ରାନ୍ଧିବ, ତାଙ୍କ ସାର୍ଟ, ପ୍ୟାଣ୍ଟ ଆଇରନ୍ କରିବ ଓ ତାଙ୍କର ସମସ୍ତ ରକମର ଯତ୍ନ ନେବ । କିନ୍ତୁ ହାୟ, ସେ କାଳଦିନଟି ଶାଶୁତୀର ସମସ୍ତ ସୁଖସୁପ୍ତକୁ ଭାଙ୍ଗି ଚୁରଚୁର କରିଦେଲା ।

ସେଦିନ ଅପରାହ୍ନରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଅପରେସନ୍ କରିବାର ଥାଏ ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କର । ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କର ଗାତି ଖରାପ ଥିଲା । ଶାଶୁତୀ ସକାଳୁ ଯାଇ ଅଫିସ୍‌ରୁ ଦୁଇଟା ସୁଷା ଫେରିଆସିଲେ ସୁମିତ୍ର ଗାତି ନେଇ ଯିବାର ସ୍ଥିର ହୋଇଥିଲା । ହେଲେ ଅଫିସ୍‌ରେ ଦୁଇତିନିଟା ମିଟିଙ୍ଗ୍ ଆଟେଣ୍ଡ କରିବା ଭିତରେ ସେକଥା ଭୁଲିଯାଇଥିଲା ଶାଶୁତୀ । ସୁମିତ୍ର

ଟ୍ୟାକ୍ସି ଡାକି ଯାଇପାରିଥାନ୍ତେ । ସେ ଶାଶୁତୀକୁ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରି ରହିଥିଲେ । ଶାଶୁତୀ ନ ଫେରିବାରୁ ଶେଷରେ ଟ୍ୟାକ୍ସି ଡାକି ଗଲେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଟ୍ରାଫିକ୍‌ରେ ପଡିଗଲେ ଓ ଅପରେସନ୍ ପାଇଁ ଠିକ୍ ସମୟରେ ନ ପହଞ୍ଚିବାରୁ ଉପରିସ୍ଥ ଡାକ୍ତରଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଚେତାବନୀ ପାଇଲେ । ସେଇ ଅପମାନଟା ସିଏ ରାତିରେ ପହଞ୍ଚି ଶାଶୁତୀ ଉପରେ ଶୁଣାଇଲେ ।

“ତମକୁ କହିଥିଲି ଦୁଇଟା ବେଳକୁ ଘରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିବାକୁ । ତମର ଖାତର ନାହିଁ ।”

“ମିଟିଙ୍ଗ୍ ଥିଲା । ମୁଁ ଭୁଲିଯାଇଥିଲି । ସରି ।”

“କଣ ସେ ବୁଢ଼ା ପଲ୍ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ମିଟିଙ୍ଗ୍ ଥିଲା ? କଥା ତାହେଲେ ଏତେ ଦୂର ଗଲାଣି । ଯେମିତି ମଣିଷ ଦୁନିଆ ଭୁଲନ୍ତି । ତମକୁ ତ ସେ ବୁଢ଼ା ସିନିୟର୍ ମ୍ୟାନେଜର୍ ମନ୍ତ୍ର କରିଦେଲାଣି ।”

“ପ୍ଲିଜ୍ ! ଏମିତି କଥା କୁହନି ।”

“ଏମିତି କହିବିନି ଆଉ କେମିତି କହିବି ? ଏକଥା ବି ସତ ଯେ ଆଜି ବି ତାଲମା ଛତା ଆଉ କିଛି ନଥିବ ।” - ସୁମିତ୍ର ଚିଲାଇବା ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲେ ।

“ଦେଖ, ମିତା ସିନା କଲେଜ୍‌ରେ, କିନ୍ତୁ ଅନୁପ ଘରେ ଅଛି । ସିଏ କଣ ଭାବିବ ?”

“କଣ ଭାବିବ ? ମା’ର ରାସଲୀଳା କାହାଣୀ ଶୁଣିବ ।”

ଶାଶୁତୀ ଚାହୁଁଥିଲା ପାଟି ବନ୍ଦ କରିବାପାଇଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ କଥାକୁ କଥା ଯୋଡି ହୋଇଯାଉଥିଲା । ଉଭୟ ରାଗରେ ଫୁଁ ଫୁଁ ନିଃଶ୍ୱାସ ଛାଡୁଥିଲେ । ହଠାତ୍ ରାଗିକରି ଲିଭିଙ୍ଗ୍‌ରୁମ୍ କାନ୍ଥରେ ଟଙ୍କା ହୋଇଥିବା ବାହାଘରର ପଟଟାଟିକୁ ଫେପାଡିଦେଲେ ସୁମିତ୍ର । ପଟଟାଫେମ୍‌ର କାଠ ଓ କାଟ ଉଭୟ ଯାଇ ବାଜିଲା

ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କ ସ୍ମୃତିର ପଞ୍ଜୁରିରେ ତା’ର ମନପକ୍ଷୀ ଆଜୀବନ ବନ୍ଦିନୀ ହୋଇ ରହିବ ପଛେ, ତାଙ୍କ ଆସନରେ ଆଉ କାହାକୁ ବସାଇବା ତା ପାଇଁ କେବେ ବି ସମ୍ଭବ ହେବ ନାହିଁ ।

ଶାଶୁତୀର ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ । ରକ୍ତ ଧାରଧାର ଛୁଟିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲା । ଅନୁପ ଯେ କେତେବେଳେ କଲିଗୋଳ ଶୁଣି ଓ ଏ ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ଦେଖି ୧୧୧ ଡାକିଦେଇଛି, ଏମାନଙ୍କୁ ଜଣାନାହିଁ । ହଠାତ୍ ପାରାମେଡିକାଲ୍ ଆସିଲେ । ଶାଶୁତୀକୁ ଏମର୍ଜେନ୍ସିକୁ ନେଇଗଲେ । ସୋସିଆଲ୍ ସର୍ଭିସ୍‌ର କର୍ମଚାରୀ ଆସି ସମସ୍ତ ବିବରଣୀ ନେଲା । ସେମାନେ ଅନୁପକୁ ବି ଜେରା କରିବାରେ ଲାଗିଲେ । ଘରର କଥା ଦାଣ୍ଡରେ ପଡିଲା । ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କୁ ଅଲଗା ରହିବାକୁ ନୋଟିସ୍ ଦେଲେ ସୋସିଆଲ୍ ସର୍ଭିସ୍‌ର ଅଧିକାରୀ ଜଣକ । ଦୁଇମାସ ପରେ ଡିଭୋର୍ସ୍ କାଗଜପତ୍ର ପଠାଇଲେ ସୁମିତ୍ର । ଶାଶୁତୀର ହିତାହିତ ଜ୍ଞାନ ଯେମିତି ଲୋପ ପାଇଯାଇଥିଲା । ଛାତପତ୍ରର ସମସ୍ତ କାଗଜପତ୍ରରେ ଦସ୍ତଖତ କରି ପଠାଇଦେଲା ସେ ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କ ଠିକଣାରେ । ତାପରେ ୨୦୦୦ ମସିହା ଫେବୃୟାରୀ ମାସ ୨ ତାରିଖରେ ତାକୁ ମିଳିଥିଲା ମୁକ୍ତି, ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ପଦରୁ, ସୁଜନପୁର

ଗାଁର ସରପଞ୍ଚ ବେଶୁ ମିଶ୍ରଙ୍କ ପ୍ରଥମବୋହୁ ପଦରୁ, କଟକ ମେଡିକାଲର ଡାକ୍ତରୀ ନିଶା ରାଜୁଙ୍କର ଭାଉଜ ପଦରୁ । ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କ ତରଫରୁ ଥିବା ସମ୍ପର୍କର ସୁତାଖିଅରେ ଆଉ ଯେତେଯେତେ ମାଲି ସବୁ ଖଞ୍ଜ ହୋଇଥିଲେ, ଧୀରେ ଧୀରେ ସେ ସବୁ ମାଲି ବି ଭାଙ୍ଗିରୁଜି ନଷ୍ଟ ହୋଇଗଲେ । ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କ ସହିତ ପୁନଃମିଳନର ଯେଉଁ ଆଶାର ଆଲୋକଚିକିତ୍ସା ଜଳି ରହିଥିଲା, ତାଙ୍କର ଦ୍ଵିତୀୟ ବିବାହ ସମ୍ପାଦରେ ସେ ଆଲୋକଚିକିତ୍ସା ବି ଲିଭିଗଲା ।

ମୁକ୍ତିରେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଆନନ୍ଦ ମିଳେ । ତେବେ ଏ କି ରକମର ମୁକ୍ତି ? ସଙ୍ଗିନୀ ସୁଜାନ୍ ବୁଝେଇଥିଲା, “ସୁମିତ୍ରର ସ୍ତୁତି ତତେ ବିଚଳିତ କରୁଛି ଯଦି, ତୁ ସେ ଘର ଛାଡ଼ି ଦେ । ସୁମିତ୍ରର ଫଟା ଓ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ସ୍ତୁତିର ଜିନିଷ ସବୁ ମିତା ଓ ଅନୁପଙ୍କ ପାଖକୁ ପଠେଇଦେ । ଖାଲିସମୟ ବିତାଇବା ପାଇଁ ଯୁନିଭର୍ସିଟିରେ କିଛି ଗୋଟିଏ କୋର୍ସ ନେ । ମନ ସେଥିରେ ମଜିରହିବ ଓ ସୁମିତ୍ରର ସ୍ତୁତି ତତେ ଆଉ ବିଚଳିତ କରିପାରିବନି ।”

ସୁଜାନ୍ ପ୍ରଥମ ସ୍ଵାମୀ ତା’ ସହିତ ଯେତେବେଳେ ବିଶ୍ଵାସଯାତକତା କରିଥିଲା, ସୁଜାନ୍ ସେ ସ୍ତୁତିରୁ ନିଷ୍ପତ୍ତି ପାଇବାପାଇଁ ଏସବୁ କରିଥିଲା । ଯୁନିଭର୍ସିଟିରେ କୋର୍ସ ନେଉନେଉ ତା’ର ଦ୍ଵିତୀୟ ସ୍ଵାମୀକୁ ଭେଟିଥିଲା । ସେକଥା କହି ଜୀବନରେ ନୁଆରଙ୍ଗର ଆଶା ବୁଣିବାକୁ ବି ସୁଜାନ୍ ଭୁଲିନଥିଲା । ଶାଶୁତୀ କେବଳ ସେ ଘର ଯେ ଛାଡ଼ିଲା, ତାହା ନୁହେଁ; ମିସିଗାନ୍ ରାଜ୍ୟ ଛାଡ଼ି ଫ୍ଲୋରିଡା ଆସିଲା । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାଙ୍ଗସାଥୀ ମାନଙ୍କ ସହ ସବୁ ସଂପର୍କ ଛିଡ଼ାଇଦେଲା; କାହାକୁ ବି ନିଜର ନୁଆଘରର ଠିକଣା ଦେଇନଥିଲା । ସେମାନେ ଯେ ତା’ ଜୀବନର ଏ ମର୍ମହୁତ ଘଟଣାକୁ ଆଲୋଚନାର ବିଷୟବସ୍ତୁ କରି ମଜା କରୁଥିବେ ଓ ହସୁଥିବେ, ସେକଥା ଶାଶୁତୀକୁ ଭଲଭାବେ ଜଣାଥିଲା । ବୟସ ବଢ଼ିବା ସହିତ ଜ୍ଞାନର ପରିପକ୍ଵତା ଆସିଯାଇଥିଲା ଓ ଅଧିକାର କାମ ସବୁ ଏବେ ସାଧାରଣ ମନେ ହେଉଥିଲା । ମିତୁ ଓ ଅନୁପ ତ କଲେଜ୍ କ୍ୟାମ୍ପସ୍ରେ ରହୁଥିଲେ । ତେଣୁ ଶାଶୁତୀ ହାତରେ ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ ସମୟ ରହୁଥିଲା । ମନ ଭୁଲାଇବା ପାଇଁ ଶାଶୁତୀ ପାଖତ୍ୟ ନାଚ ଶିଖିଲା, ସାନିଟ୍ ଭାଷା ଶିଖିଲା, ପାରାମେଡିକାଲ୍ ଟେନିଙ୍ଗ୍ ନେଲା ଓ ହୋମଲେସ୍ ସେଲ୍ଟର୍ ମାନଙ୍କର ସ୍ଵେଚ୍ଛାସେବିକା ଭାବେ କାମ କଲା ।

ହେଲେ ଏତେସବୁ ବାହାରକାମରେ ମଜିରହି ବି ସତରେ କଣ ସେ ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କଠାରୁ ମୁକ୍ତି ପାଇଥିଲା ? ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କର ସ୍ତୁତି ତା’ ମନଭିତରେ ସଦାସର୍ବଦା ସେମିତି ଜ୍ଵଳନ୍ତ ହୋଇ ରହିଥିଲା । ମନ୍ଦିର ଗଲେ ସେ ପ୍ରଥମେ ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କ ନାଁ ନେଇ ହିଁ ପୂଜା କରୁଥିଲା । ଘରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଲେ ପ୍ରତି ପଦାର୍ଥ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସେ ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କ ସ୍ତୁତିକୁ ହିଁ ଦେଖୁଥିଲା । ଯଦିଓ ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କର ଶରୀର ତାଠାରୁ ଦୂରରେ ରହିଥିଲା, ମନଭିତରେ ତାଙ୍କର ଅସ୍ତିତ୍ଵ ସଦା ବିରାଜମାନ ରହୁଥିଲା । ଏସବୁ ଶୁଣି ସୁଜାନ୍ ଉପଦେଶ ଦେଇଥିଲା, “ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ବିବାହ କର । ଆଉ ଜଣକୁ ପ୍ରେମ କରିବା ଶିଖ; ତାପରେ ସବୁ ଠିକ୍ ହୋଇଯିବ ।” ହେଲେ

ସୁଜାନ୍ ଏ ଉପଦେଶ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିପାରିନଥିଲା ତା’ର ଆତ୍ମା । ସୁମିତ୍ର ଯାହା ବି ହେଉଛି, ତା’ର ସ୍ଵାମୀ ସିଏ ; ତା’ର ପ୍ରେମ; ସେଇ ପ୍ରଥମ; ସେଇ ବି ଶେଷ । ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କ ସ୍ତୁତିର ପଞ୍ଜୁରିରେ ତା’ର ମନପକ୍ଷୀ ଆଜୀବନ ବନ୍ଦିନୀ ହୋଇ ରହିବ ପଛେ, ତାଙ୍କ ଆସନରେ ଆଉ କାହାକୁ ବସାଇବା ତା ପାଇଁ କେବେ ବି ସମ୍ଭବ ହେବ ନାହିଁ ।



ସୁଜାନ୍ ବହୁତ ଯୁକ୍ତି କରିଥିଲା, “ଦେଖ୍ ଶାଶୀ, ସୁମିତ୍ର ତ ପୁଣି ତତେ ଭୁଲି ଦ୍ଵିତୀୟଥର ପ୍ରେମକରିବା ଶିଖିଲା, ଦ୍ଵିତୀୟଥର ବିବାହକଲା ଓ ନୁଆକରି ଜୀବନ ଗଢ଼ିବା ଶିଖିଗଲା । ତୁ କାହିଁକି ତେବେ ତୋ ପ୍ରତି ଅନ୍ୟାୟ କରିଥିବା, ତତେ ତ୍ୟାଗ କରିଥିବା ଓ ତତେ ଭୁଲିଯାଇଥିବା ସେ ମଣିଷଟିର ସ୍ତୁତିରେ ସାରାଜୀବନ କାଟିବୁ ?” ସୁଜାନ୍ ଯୁକ୍ତି ଶାଶୁତୀକୁ ନିରାଚ ସତ୍ୟ ମନେହୋଇଥିଲେ ହେଁ ତାର ଆତ୍ମା କେବଳ ସୁମିତ୍ରମୟ ଥିଲା । ସୁମିତ୍ର ତା’ର ଶିରା, ପ୍ରଶିରରେ ରକ୍ତ ହୋଇ ପ୍ରବାହିତ ହେଉଥିଲା; ସୁମିତ୍ର ତା’ର ସ୍ନାୟୁମାନଙ୍କର ବିଦ୍ୟୁତ ସଞ୍ଚାର କରୁଥିଲା; ସୁମିତ୍ର ତା’ର ନିଃଶ୍ଵାସରେ ବାୟୁ ହୋଇ ତାର ପ୍ରାଣ ବଞ୍ଚାଇ ରଖୁଥିଲା । ତା’ ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରେମର ବନ୍ଧନ, ବିଶେଷତଃ ବିବାହ ବନ୍ଧନ ତିରଜୀବନର ବନ୍ଧନ । କାଗଜର କେତୋଟି ଫର୍ଦ୍ଦ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସେ ବନ୍ଧନର ସୀମାରେଖା ନିର୍ଦ୍ଧାରଣ କରିହୁଏନି । ଯଦିଓ ତିର ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନଶୀଳ ଦୁନିଆର ଗତି ସହିତ ତା’ ଜୀବନ ବି ତାଳଦେଇ ଚାଲିଥିଲା ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ପରି; ତେବେ କେତୋଟି ଜିନିଷ ତା’ପାଇଁ ଅପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନୀୟ ଥିଲା । ତନ୍ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ଗୋଟିଏ ଥିଲା ତା’ର ବିବାହବେଦୀରେ କରିଥିବା ଶପଥ ।

ଶିବଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା ସରିଆସିଲା । ପୂଜକ ପ୍ରସାଦ ଦେବାପାଇଁ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ମନ୍ଦିରର ଦକ୍ଷିଣପାର୍ଶ୍ଵର କୋଣକୁ ଡାକିଲେ । ଶାଶୁତୀର ଦୃଷ୍ଟିପତିଲା ସାମନାରେ ଥିବା ତାମିଲ୍ ଦମ୍ଫଣିଙ୍କ ଉପରେ । ଚାରିପାଖ ମାସର ଝିଅଟିକୁ କାଖେଇଥିଲା ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଲୋକଟି; ସବୁଜରଙ୍ଗର କାଷ୍ଠପୁରମ୍ ଶାଢ଼ୀ ପିନ୍ଧିଥିଲା ଓ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ଫୁଲ ଖୋସିଥିଲା । ସ୍ଵାମୀ, ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଦୁହେଁ ଝିଅର ଦୁଇଗାଲକୁ ଦୁଇପଟୁ ଗେହ୍ଲୁ କରୁକରୁ ଆଉଜିପତିଲା ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଟି ତା’ ସ୍ଵାମୀର କାନ୍ଧରେ । ସ୍ଵାମୀଟି ତାର ହସିହସି ସ୍ତ୍ରୀର କେଶରେ ଖଞ୍ଜି ହୋଇଥିବା ଫୁଲକୁ ଛୁଉଥିଲା । “ଆରେ! ଏ ତ ସୁମିତ୍ର ।”

“ମିତା କେମିତି ହସୁଛି ଦେଖନା !” - ଗେହ୍ଲୁଇ ହୋଇ କହୁଥିଲା ଶାଶୁତୀ ।
“ଠିକ୍ ତମ ଭଳି ହସ ।” - ସୁମିତ୍ରଙ୍କ ହାତ ଶାଶୁତୀର ଗାଲ ଛୁଉଥିଲା ।
“ହେଲେ ମୁହଁଟା ତ ତା’ର ଠିକ୍ ତମ ଭଳି ।”
“ମିତା ଆମ ଦୁଇଜଣଙ୍କ ପ୍ରେମର ସଜ୍ଞକ; ମୋ ମୁହଁ, ତମ ହସ; ମୋ ରଙ୍ଗ; ତମ ବାସ ।”

“ତମେ ତ କବି ହୋଇଗଲଣି ।” – ଆଉଜି ପଢୁଥିଲା ଶାଶୁତୀ ସୁମିତ୍ରାଙ୍କ କାନ୍ଧରେ ।

“ସତ କହିବି ରାଣୀ ! ତମର ଏ କଥାକୁହା ଆଖି, ଫୁଲଭଳି ମୁହଁ ଆଉ ଏ କନକରଙ୍ଗ, ମତେ ତ ଜବରଦସ୍ତ କବି କରିଦେବ ଜାଣୁଛି ।”

କେତେବେଳଯାଏ ଯେ ଶାଶୁତୀ ସେ ତାମିଲ୍ ଦମ୍ପତ୍ତିଙ୍କୁ ଏକଲୟରେ
ଚାହିଁ ରହିଥିଲା, ଖୁଆଲ କରିପାରିନି । ତେବେ, ସେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ, ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ
ଦୁଇଜଣ ତାକୁ ତବତବ କରି ଚାହିଁଥିଲେ ଆଖ୍ୟାୟ ହୋଇ । ଶାଶୁତୀ
ଶିବଙ୍କ ପ୍ରସାଦ ପାଇଁ ଲାଗିଥିବା ଧାତିରେ ନିଜର ସ୍ଥାନ ସଂରକ୍ଷଣ
କରିବାକୁ ଅଗ୍ରସର ହେଲା ।

ତକ୍ତର ବିଜ୍ଞାନୀ ଦାସ କଲମ୍ପିଆ, ମେରାଲୀଶ୍ଵରେ ରହୁଛି ଓ ନାସା,
ଗତାତ ସେକ୍ଟରରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକରୁଛି । ସଂପତ୍ତି ସେ ଓସାର ତୈମାସିକ
ମୁଖପତ୍ର ‘ଉତ୍କର୍ଷ’ର ସମାଦିକା ଅଛନ୍ତି । ଯଦିଓ ଏକ ଗାଣିତିକା
ହିସାବରେ ସେ ଉଚ୍ଚଶିକ୍ଷା ଓ ତାଲିମ୍ ପ୍ରାପ୍ତ, ତେବେ ମନରେ
ଉଠୁଥିବା ଭାବନାର ତରଙ୍ଗକୁ ଲେଖାଲେଖି ଓ ଅଭିନୟ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ
ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିବାକୁ ସେ ସର୍ବଦା ଚେଷ୍ଟିତ । ଏତଦ୍ ବ୍ୟତୀତ ନୃତ୍ୟ,
ଗୀତ ଓ ବହୁମିଳନରେ ତାଙ୍କର ବିଶେଷ ଆଗ୍ରହ ।

“THE MONALISA SMILE”

by Nita Panda*

Deep in the night
She woke me;

Her long hair, glistened in the moonlit night
The candle in her hand, shone in her eyes.

She spoke in my ears;
“Wake up from this deep sleep.”

She had the voice of a nightingale
She had the smell of a jasmine
She had the Monalisa smile!

Her beauty stole my heart
I lost my sleep all night.

This cannot be true, my inner voice said to me.
Who is this maiden melody?
Why did she steal my dream?

As I stood in the front porch
She disappeared into the dark night.

Her memories hung deep in my heart.
Her smile stole my sleep.....

As daylight came
Her voice echoed in my ears.....

“This life is a dream
Do not fall into my beauty,
For
I am here now and then gone the next minute.”

* A Senior Financial Officer at Finance America,
California

ମାଗୁଣୀ

ଝିନୁ ଛୋଟରାୟ

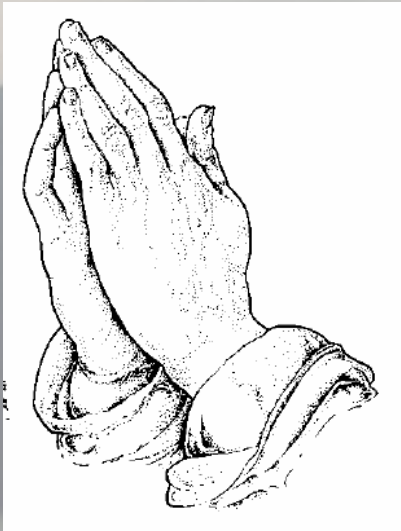
କ୍ରମାଗତ ଦୁର୍ଭିକ୍ଷାକ ଦେଖୁଅଛି ଏ ନୟନ
 ଜରା, ବ୍ୟାଧି, ଦୁଃଖ, ଶୋକ କରେ ଭାରାକ୍ରାନ୍ତ ମନ ।
 ସବୁଦେଖୁ ସବୁ ଜାଣି
 ଅଜଣା ଏ ମୂଢ଼ ମନ ।
 କାଳିଆ ନିଃସୂତବାଣୀ ଚେତାଏ ପ୍ରତିଟି କ୍ଷଣ । ୧ ।

ଦେଇଛୁ ମଣିଷଜନ୍ମ ପୁଣି ସଂସାରୀର କର୍ମ
 କ୍ଷତରିପୁ ସମାଗମ ଅପରାଧ ମୋର କ୍ଷମ ।
 ଏତିକି ମାଗୁଣି ମମ
 ହୁଅ ସାହା ଏ ଅଧମ ।
 ସଂସାର ରଥକୁ ବାହି ନ ଭୁଲେ ତୋ ଶ୍ରୀଚରଣ । ୨ ।

ସେ ବାଣୀ ଛୁଟି ଏମନ, କ୍ଷଣିକ ଦାରା ସନ୍ତାନ
 ପୁତ୍ର ବୋଲି ଧରୁ କୋଳେ କରୁ ବ୍ୟର୍ଥ ତୁ ତୁମ୍ଭନ ।
 ଚେତାଇ ଦିଏ ସେ ପୁଣି
 କାହିଁକିରେ ବାଇମନ ।
 କ୍ଷଣସ୍ଥାୟୀ ଅଟେ ପରା ଧନଜନ, ସନମାନ । ୩ ।

ଭଜେ ସଦା
 ନିତାଇ ଗୌର ରାଧେ ଶ୍ୟାମ
 ହରେ କୃଷ୍ଣ ହରେ ରାମ । ୩ ।

କହିଥାଏ ତ୍ୟାଗ ତୁମ 'ମୁଁ', 'ମୋର' ଅଭିମାନ
 କରି ମୁଁ କରାଉଥାଏ ନାହିଁ ସେଠି ତୁମ ନାମ
 ଛାଡ଼ିବାକୁ କହେ ପୁଣି
 ଲୋଭ, ମୋହ, କୋପ, କାମ ।
 କରେ ସଦା ମତିଭ୍ରମ ଦମ୍ଭ, ଦର୍ପ, ଅଭିମାନ । ୩ ।



ନୁହେଁ କିଛି ବତସାନ କହେ ସେ ଚକା ନୟନ
 କୋମଳ ମଧୁବଚନ କହି ହର ପ୍ରାଣୀମନ ।
 ଅଭ୍ୟାସ କର ସେ କହେ
 ପବିତ୍ର ସରଳ ମନ ।
 ବାନ୍ଧିରଖୁଥାଏ ସଦା ଭକତ ଓ ଭଗବାନ । ୪ ।

ବାଣୀ ତା'ର
 କଳିଯୁଗେ ଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠଧର୍ମ ହରିନାମ ସଂକୀର୍ତ୍ତନ
 ନିଜ ନାମ ଶୁଣୁଥା'ନ୍ତି ବସି ସେଇ ଶ୍ୟାମଘନ ।
 ଯେଉଁଠାରେ ଶ୍ୟାମଘନ
 ସେଠିଥାଏ ରାଧା ଯେମ ।
 ପ୍ରେୟସୀ ରାଧିକା ଥାଇ ଶୁଣୁଥା'ନ୍ତି ବଂଶୀସ୍ଵନ । ୫ ।

ଏକ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାସୀର ମନ ନେଇ ସାଂସାରିକ ଦୀର୍ଘତ୍ର ତୁଲେଇବା ସାଧାରଣ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ପକ୍ଷେ ଦୁଃସାଧ୍ୟ । ସଂସାରୀର ମନ ତରଙ୍ଗ ପରି ସଦା ଚଞ୍ଚଳ ଓ ଅସ୍ଥିର । ମନତରୀଣି ତା'ର କେତେବେଳେ କି ଭାବନା ନେଇ କେଉଁ ଉପକୂଳ ଛୁଇଁଆସେ, ତାହା ଅପରିକଳ୍ପନୀୟ । କେତେବେଳେ ବାମନ ହୋଇ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରମା ଛୁଇଁବାର ଅଭିଳାଷ ତ କେତେବେଳେ ଆଶ୍ରୟରେ ରୁଡି ରହିବାର ଲାଳସା । ଆଉ କେତେବେଳେ ସନ୍ତାନର ସମ୍ପର୍କତା ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରାଣପଣେ ଉଦ୍ୟମ ତ କେତେବେଳେ ନିଜର ଯଶ ଓ ସମ୍ମାନ ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରବଳ ସଂଗ୍ରାମ । କେତେବେଳେ ଦୁଃଖୀ, ରଜ୍ୟାଙ୍କ ଦୁଃଖରେ ମିୟମାଣ ହୋଇ ନିଜ ଜୀବନକୁ ଉତ୍ସର୍ଗୀତ କରିବାର କଳ୍ପନା ତ କେତେବେଳେ ଇଶ୍ଵରଙ୍କ ବିତମ୍ବନାର ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ଅବଲୋକନ କରି ବିଚଳିତ । କିନ୍ତୁ ସେଇ ଅପ୍ରିୟ ସତ୍ୟ 'ଇଶ୍ଵରଙ୍କ ବିତମ୍ବନା' ହିଁ କେବଳ ସଂସାରୀର ମନକୁ କିଛି ସମୟ ବୈରାଗ୍ୟରେ ଆଛାଦିତ କରିଥାଏ । ଆଉ ସେଇ ସମୟରେ ତା'ର ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାସ ମନତରୀଣି ଛୁଇଁଆସେ ଆଧ୍ୟାତ୍ମିକ ରାଜ୍ୟର ଉପକୂଳ ।

ଝୀନୁ ଛୋଟରାୟ ସେକ୍ଟରଭିଲ୍, ଭରଦ୍ଵଜିଆରେ ରହନ୍ତି । ଲେଖାଲେଖି ସହିତ ବୟୁମିଳନ ଓ କଳା ପ୍ରତି ତାଙ୍କର ବିଶେଷ ଆଗ୍ରହ । ନିକଟ ଅତୀତରେ ଘଟିଥିବା “ସୁନାମୀ”ର କରୁଣ ଓ ବିଭ୍ରତ ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ଲେଖକଙ୍କୁ ଖୁବ୍ ବିଚିତ କରିଥିଲା । ଉପରୋକ୍ତ ଲେଖାଟି ସେଇ ସମୟର ଅନ୍ତରର ଭାଷା ।

ପରିଚୟ

ଅର୍ଜୁନ ପୁରୋହିତ*

କିଏ କହେ ମୁହିଁ ଏକ ଅକ୍ଷୟ ଅମର
 ଯୁଗେ ଯୁଗେ ହେବି ଆବିର୍ଭାବ ବାରମ୍ବାର
 ଏକି ନୁହେଁ ଭବତୃଷ୍ଣା ?
 ଜୀବନର ଅତୃପ୍ତ ବାସନା ?

କିଏ କହେ ଟେକହୀନ ପ୍ରଦୀପର ପରି
 ଲିଭିଯିବି ସରିଯିବି ନ ରହିବ କୌଣସି ସଙ୍ଗେତ
 ଏକି ନୁହେଁ ଦୁଃଖମୟ ଜୀବନର ବାସନା ?
 ନିରାମୟ ଜୀବନର ତ୍ରାହି ନିବେଦନା ?

କେ କହେ ମୁଁ ଯିବି ସ୍ଵର୍ଗପୁରେ
 ଯେଉଁଠି ବସନ୍ତ ହସେ ଚିରନ୍ତନ ମଳୟ ଲହରେ
 ନିରନ୍ତର ବାଜୁଥିବ ମେନକାର ପୟର ନୁପୁର
 ଅବାନ୍ତର ସ୍ଵପ୍ନ ଏକି ଶୁଦ୍ଧ ଜୀବନର ?

କେ କହେ ମୁଁ ଅବାସ୍ତବ ବନ୍ଧ୍ୟାପୁତ୍ର ଏକ
 ଲୟିମା ଗରିମା ମୋର ମାପକାଠି ଧରି
 କିଏ ବା ରଚନା କରେ କରି କେତେ ତଥ୍ୟ, ବେଶ୍ଵେଷଣ
 ଏହି ସବୁ କୋଷବନ୍ଧ ଗତିଳଙ୍କ କୁଟୀଳ ଜନ୍ମନ !!

ଭୂତ ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ ମଧ୍ୟେ ମୁହିଁ ମଧ୍ୟବିନ୍ଦୁ
 ଭାସୁଥାଏ ମୁହିଁ ଏକ କ୍ଷଣିକ ବୁଦ୍ଧବୁଦ

ଚିନ୍ତୟ ସମୟ ଧାରା ବହୁଥାଏ ଅବିରଳ
 ଅମୂଳ ଅନନ୍ତ ଏହା, ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟପଥ ଏହାର ଅକ୍ଷଣ
 ଏହା ମୋର ମାତୃଭୂମି ଏ ମୋର ଠିକଣା

ଏ ଧାରାର ଗର୍ଭେ କେତେ ସ୍ଵପ୍ନର କଙ୍କାଳ

କେତେ ହସ ହୁଲହୁଲି, କୟ ପରାଜୟ
 କେତେ ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଆଉ କେତେ ଯେ ଲାଞ୍ଛନା
 କେତେ ସ୍ନେହ ଆଲିଙ୍ଗନ କେତେ କରାଯାତ

ଏ ସବୁର ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଏ ସବୁର ଛାୟା
 ପ୍ରତିଫଳ ସବୁ ମୋର ଆଶା ଅଭିଳାଷେ
 ମୁଁ ଚଳନ୍ତି ଇତିହାସ ଅନଳ ମୋ ସ୍ଵପ୍ନ ସମୁଦାୟ
 ଅକ୍ଷୟ ଅନୁଭବ ମୋର ପରିଚୟ

ପଶ୍ୟ ମେ ବନ୍ଧୁ ଅନୁଭବମୂର୍ତ୍ତିମ୍
 ଅନୁଭବନକ୍ଷେ ଅହମେବ ନକ୍ଷେ

*କବି ଶ୍ରୀ ଅର୍ଜୁନ ପୁରୋହିତ କାନାଡ଼ାର ଜଣେ ସ୍ଵୀକୃତିପ୍ରାପ୍ତ ବରିଷ୍ଠ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟବେକ୍ଷଣକାରୀ ମନସ୍ତତ୍ତ୍ଵବିତ୍ । ଅକ୍ଷରିତ ପ୍ରଦେଶର କିଙ୍ଗ୍‌ଜନ୍ ସହରରେ ସେ ତା'ଙ୍କ ସହଧର୍ମିଣୀ ପଦ୍ମିନୀଙ୍କ ସହ ବାସ କରନ୍ତି । ଅନୁସନ୍ଧିତ ଓ ଆଗ୍ରହୀ ପାଠକପାଠିକାଗଣ ଶ୍ରୀ ପୁରୋହିତଙ୍କ ସହ

apurohit2@cogeco.ca ବୈଦ୍ୟୁତିକ ଠିକଣା
ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଯୋଗାଯୋଗ କରିପାରିବୁ ।

ଅଧର୍ମ ପଦ ଶିଖଣ୍ଡ ଶତପଥୀ, ଅଜିନ୍, ଚେନ୍ନାଇ

ଧରାଶାୟୀ ମୁହିଁ ଅଧମ ଧରମା
ପବନ ରୁଧିର ଧାରେ
ଲୋଗୁଛି ମୋହର ନଶ୍ୱ ଶରୀର
ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଭାଗାର ତୀରେ

ଲଂପ ଦେଇଛି ଶିଖର ଉପରୁ
ଗୁଡ଼ ରହିବ କଥା
ରାଜସମ୍ମାନ ଅଭୀଷ୍ଟ ସାଧନ
ଉନ୍ନତ ଜାତିମଥା

ଶୀର ମୋ ବିଦୀର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଅବୟବ କ୍ଷୀଣ
କ୍ଷଣ ଲାଗେ ଯୁଗ ପ୍ରାୟେ
ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଭାଗାର କୋଳରେ ଥାଇବି
କଂଠ ମୋ ଶୁଖିଯାଏ

ଆବେଗେ ଚାହିଁଛି ଆସିବ ମରଣ
କ୍ଷଣ ଯିବି ପାଶୋରି
କେଉଁଠି ଲୁଚିଛି ବାଟ ତା ଚାହିଁଛି
କେବେ ନେବ ମୋତେ ଧରି

ଏକ ପରେ ଏକ ଆସଇ ତରଂଗ
ସିଞ୍ଚ କରଇ ଅଂଗ
ରୁଦ୍ଧ ଅନଳ ପିପାଶା ବିକଳ
ଝଙ୍କାରେ ମୋ ମେରୁଦଣ୍ଡ

ଉଠଇ ଉତ୍ତାଳ ମହୋଦଧୀ ଜଳ
ଫେନିଳ ତା ବିଚିମାଳା
ଚାଣିନେବ ଶେଷେ ତା ମହାକୋଳକୁ
ସରିବ ମୋ ଧରାଲୀଳା

କେତେ ଆଶା କରି ବସିଥିବି ମାଁ
ମୋ'ର ଫେରା ବାଟ ଚାହିଁ

ହେ ସଖା ମରୁତ ମୋ'ର ଶେଷ ଚ୍ୟୁତ
ଶ୍ୱାସ ଦେବୁ ତା'ରେ ଯାଇ

କ୍ଷମା କରିଦେବୁ ଜନ୍ମଦାତ୍ରୀ ଗୋ
ଅବୋଧ ସନ୍ତାନ ତୋର
ଜନତା ମଂଗଳ ରାଜମାନ ପାଇଁ
ପାଷାଣେ ପିଟିଲା ଶୀର

ଏ ରାତି ପାହିବ ସୁରୁଜ ଉଇଁବ
ଅମା ଯିବ ଅପସରି
ମୋ ଜୀବ କୁସୁମ ମଉଳି ପତିବ
ବୃତ୍ତରୁ ଯିବ ଛିଡ଼ି

ଛାମୁଁଙ୍କ ଆଦେଶ ଶୀଘ୍ର କର ଶେଷ
ପୂଜା ଯେ ରହିଛି ବାକି
ଇତିହାସେ ପରା ଲେଖା ହେବ ନାଁ
ଦେଉଳ ରହିବ ସାକ୍ଷୀ

ଗୋଟିଏ ରାଜାର ସନମାନ ପାଇଁ
ଅନେକ ଜୀବନ ବନ୍ଧା
ମୋ' ଛାର ପରାଶ ଉଡ଼ିଯାଉ ପଛେ
କୁଳକୁ ନଆସୁ ବାଧା

ହେ ପ୍ରତାପୀ ରାଜା ଏ କି କଲ କୁହ
ହେଲା କି ତମର ଯଶ
ନିରୀହ ବାଳକ ପରାଶ ହାରିଲା
ପାଳିଶ ଅହଂ ଆଦେଶ

ଅଭିଶାପ ମୋର ଘେନ ହେ ନୃପତି
ତମର ଅଗଭା କିର୍ତ୍ତି
ଅଯୋଡ଼ା ନୋହିବ ପୁଣ୍ୟ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରପରେ
ନରହିବ ତା'ର ଦ୍ୟୁତି

ରହିଛି ଦେଉଳ ମୁକ ସାକ୍ଷୀ ହୋଇ
ଶତ ଶିଳ୍ପୀଙ୍କର ରଣୀ
ଭଗ୍ନ ଗୋପୁର ନଗ୍ନ ଶିଖର
ଧରି ଧର୍ମପଦ ବାଣୀ



ପୁଅ ଏକୋଇଶିଆ

ଚାପସ ରଞ୍ଜନ ସାହୁ

ବେଶ୍ କିଛି ସମୟ ଲାଗିଗଲା ପାଖର ପାଖରୁ ପୋଡ଼ିକୋ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଲମ୍ବିଥିବା କାର୍, ସ୍ତରମାନଙ୍କ ଭିଡ଼ ମଧ୍ୟଦେଇ ଘରେ ପ୍ରବେଶ କରିବାକୁ । ଅନେକ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ହର୍ଷରୋଳ, ଆନନ୍ଦସୂଚକ ଧ୍ବନି ମୋର ସବୁ ଆଖିକୁ ଶତଶୁଣ ବଢ଼ାଇ ଦେଉଥିଲେ ଯେମିତି । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ଜଣେ ଆଇ. ଏ. ଏସ୍ ଅଫିସର ତଥା ଜିଲ୍ଲାପାଳଙ୍କ ଘର ଆଗରେ ଏପରି ଭିଡ଼ ଜମିବାଟୀ ଏକ ନିତିଦିନିଆ ଘଟଣାରେ ପରିଣତ ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲା । ଘରେ ପାଦ ଦେବାମାତ୍ରେ ଅଜସ୍ର ସ୍ଵର ସମ୍ମିଳିତ ଭାବରେ ମୋତେ ଅଭିନନ୍ଦନ ଜଣାଇବାର ଶୁଣିପାରିଲି -

“କାଗ୍ରାତୁଲେସନସ୍, ମିଃ ମହାନ୍ତି । ଆପଣ ପୁତ୍ର ସନ୍ତାନ ଲାଭ କରିଛନ୍ତି ।”

ତାହେଲେ କ’ଣ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ଆଶା ପୂରଣ ହୋଇଛି ? ପ୍ରଥମ ସନ୍ତାନ କନ୍ୟା ହେବାପରେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଚାହୁଁଥିଲେ ପୁଅଟିଏ । ଆନନ୍ଦରେ ଗଦଗଦ୍ ହୋଇ ଭିତରକୁ ଗଲି । ଏତେ ଖୁସି ମଧ୍ୟରେ ମୁଁ ନିଜକୁ ଦୋଷୀ ମନେ କରୁଥିଲି ପୁଅ ଜନ୍ମ ସମୟରେ ଅନୁପସ୍ଥିତ ରହିଥିବାରୁ । କ୍ଷଣିକ ପାଇଁ ମୋ ପଦବୀ, ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା ଉପରେ ବିଚିତ୍ରି ଓ କ୍ରୋଧ ଜାତ ହୋଇ ମୋ ମନରେ । ଏତେଶୁଣିବ ଲୋକ ଯେମିତି ଜବରଦସ୍ତ ସମସ୍ତ ଆନନ୍ଦ ମୋଠୁଁ ଛଡ଼ାଇ ନେଉଥିଲେ । ସବୁଜାଣି ବି ମୁଁ ମହାଜ୍ଞ ଗଣ୍ଡରେ ସାମିଲ୍ ହୋଇଥିଲି ଆଉ ଏମାନେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଯେମିତି ମୋତେ ଦୂରେଇ ଦେଉଥିଲେ ମୋ’ର ସମସ୍ତ ନିଜସ୍ଵ ଖୁସି ଓ ଆନନ୍ଦମାନଙ୍କରୁ ।

ଭିତରକୁ ଗଲି । ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ଖଟ ଉପରେ ବସିଥିଲେ । ଦୁର୍ବଳ ଲାଗୁଥିଲେ ବି ସତେଜ ଓ ପ୍ରଫୁଲ୍ଲ ଦିଶୁଥିଲେ ।

“ରିନୁ, ମୋତେ ଟିକେ ଖବର ଦେଲନି ସଙ୍ଗେ ସଙ୍ଗେ . . .”

“ଦୁଇଦିନ ହେଲା ଲାଲନ୍ ମିଲୁନି ତୁମ ପାଖକୁ ଫୋନ୍ କରିବାକୁ . . .” କାନ୍ଦୁପୁଣ୍ୟ ଉତ୍ତର ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କର ।

ଚାରିବର୍ଷର ବଡ଼ିଆ ସୋମା ପୁଅକୁ ଆଣିଲା; କୋଳକୁ ନେଲି । ଏଇ ସେଇ ଗୋରା ତକ୍ ତକ୍ ସୁନ୍ଦର ମୁହଁ, ଯାହାର ଆଗମନକୁ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରି ରହିଥିଲେ ଜେଜେବାପା, ଜେଜେମା ଏବଂ ଆମେ ସମସ୍ତେ । ଇଏ ସେହି ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମରଙ୍କ ବରଦାନ - କେତେ ପୁତ୍ରା, ବ୍ରତ, ମାନସିକ ପରେ । ବାପା, ବୋଉ କେତେ ଖୁସି ହୋଇଯିବେ ନାତିଟିଏ ପାଇ । ବାପା ବୋଉଙ୍କ କଥା ମନେ ପଡ଼ିଲା କ୍ଷଣି ମନଟା ବିଦ୍ରୋହ କରି ଉଠିଲା ପୁଣି । ଏକମାତ୍ର ପୁଅ ତାଙ୍କର . . . ଅଥଚ ମାର୍ଗଶିର ଗୁରୁବାର ମାଣବସା, କିମ୍ବା ସାବିତ୍ରୀ ଅମାବାସ୍ୟାରେ ପୁଅ ବୋହୁଙ୍କର ଉପସ୍ଥିତି ତାଙ୍କ ଭାଗ୍ୟରେ କେବେ ଭୁଟେ ନାହିଁ । ଏବେ ବି ମୋର ମନେ ଅଛି ବାପାଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଦାଦା ଭିନ୍ନ ହେବା କଥା । ଜେଜେ କାଳେ ହଇରାଣ ହେବେ ବୋଲି ସେ ନିଜେ ତାଙ୍କର ସମସ୍ତ ଦାୟିତ୍ଵ ବହନ କରିଥିଲେ । ବାପାଙ୍କ ମନରେ ଏକ ପ୍ରକାର ଶାନ୍ତି ଥିଲା ଯେ ଅନ୍ତତଃ ସେ ଜେଜେଙ୍କ ଭଳି ମାନସିକ ଅଶାନ୍ତି ଭୋଗିବେନି - ଏକମାତ୍ର ପୁତ୍ର ଥିବାରୁ । ଅଥଚ ମୋ ପାଖରେ ରହିବାକୁ ମୋ’ର ସମସ୍ତ ଅନୁରୋଧକୁ ଏଡ଼େଇ ଦେଇ ସେ କହିଥିଲେ -

“ଗାଁରେ ଜମିବାଡ଼ି, ଘରଦ୍ଵାର ସେଗୁଡ଼ାକ ବୁଝିବ କିଏ ? ତା ଛଡ଼ା ଆମର ତ କିଛି ଅସୁବିଧା ହେଉନି ଗାଁରେ ।”

ମୋତେ କିନ୍ତୁ ଲାଗିଥିଲା ଯେମିତି ବାପା ଅଭିମାନ କରି ମୋ ପାଖରେ ନ ରହିବାକୁ ଛିନ୍ନ କରିଥିଲେ । ଯେମିତି କିଛିର ଅଭାବ ରହି ଯାଉଥିଲା ଏଠି । ମୋର ମାନସିକ ଅବସ୍ଥା ବୁଝିପାରି ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ବୁଝାଇ ଦେଇଥିଲେ -

“ଦେଖ, ସେମାନେ ଗାଁ ଭିତା ମାଟି ଛାଡ଼ିବାକୁ କେବେ ରାଜି ହେବେନି । ତମେ ତ ଜାଣିଛ ଗାଁରେ ବାପା ଯେପରି ସ୍ଵାଧୀନ ଭାବରେ ଚଳି ପାରିବେ, ଏଠି ତ ପାରିବେନି । ତାଛଡ଼ା ଚାକର ପୁଜାରୀ ତ ଅଛନ୍ତି । ଆଉ ଚିନ୍ତା କ’ଣ ?”

ସେଦିନ ଭାବିଥିଲି ଚିକ୍କାର କରି କହିଦେବାକୁ - ‘ନିଜ ପୁଅ ବୋହୁଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ବାପା ସ୍ଵାଧୀନ ଭାବରେ ଚଳିବେ କିପରି ? ଗାଁରେ ଚାକର ପୁଜାରୀଙ୍କ ସେବାରେ ଆନନ୍ଦରେ ରହୁଛନ୍ତି; ଆଇ. ଏ. ଏସ୍ ପୁଅର ବାପା ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି, ତାଠୁ ବଡ଼ ସମ୍ମାନ ଆଉ ତାଙ୍କର କ’ଣ ?’ ହେଲେ କିଛି ବି କହି ପାରିନଥିଲି । ଖାଲି ମନେ ପକାଇଥିଲି ମୋ’ର ପିଲାଦିନ . . . । ହାଇସ୍କୁଲରେ ପଢ଼ିବା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବାପା ନିଜ ହାତରେ ମୋ ପାଇଁ ସାର୍ଟ୍ ପ୍ୟାଣ୍ଟ୍ ସିଲାଇ କରୁଥିଲେ । ଅନେକ ଥର ନିଜେ ବୁଡ଼ା ଚାଉଳ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ନେଇ ମୋ ହଷ୍ଟେଲରେ ଦେଇ ଆସୁଥିଲେ । ଆମେ ସବୁ ହାତରେ ରୋଷେଇ କରି ଖାଉଥିଲୁ । ଓଃ . . . ଆଉ ମନେ ପକେଇଲେ ଛାତି ଭିତରଟା କ’ଣ ହୋଇଯାଏ । ସେତେବେଳେ ମୁଁ ମନେ ମନେ ଶପଥ କରୁଥିଲି - ବାପା ବୋଉଙ୍କୁ ଖୁସି ଆନନ୍ଦରେ ବୁଡ଼େଇ ରଖିବି ଜୀବନସାରା । ଏବେ ବୁଝୁଛି, ବାପା ମୋ ପାଖରେ ରହିଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ସମ୍ମାନ ନୁହେଁ, ମୋ ସମ୍ମାନ କ୍ଷୁଣ୍ଣ ହେବ - ଏପରି ଧାରଣା ମୋ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ଠେଲିପେଲି ପୁରାଯାଉଛି ।

ମନେ ମନେ ଶପଥ କରୁଥିଲେ ବି ମୁଁ ବରାବର ଗାଁକୁ ଯାଇ ବାପା ବୋଉଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖା କରି ପାରୁନଥିଲି । ଏହାର ଏକମାତ୍ର କାରଣ ଥିଲା ମୋ’ର ଉଚ୍ଚ ପଦବୀଜନିତ କର୍ମବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ଜୀବନ । ମନରେ ସବୁବେଳେ ଅବଶୋଷ - ବାପା ବୋଉଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଏକାଠି ସମୟ କଟାଇବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ଆଉ କେବେ ମିଳିବ ? କେବେ ଆଉ ପୁରଣ ହେବ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସେବାପାଇଁ କରିଥିବା ଶପଥ ? ଅନେକ ଥର ଭାବେ - ସବୁ ହୁଏତ ଠିକ୍ ବାଲିଆନ୍ତା ଯଦି ମୁଁ ଏତେବଡ଼ ଚାକିରୀ କରି ନଥାନ୍ତି . . . ଯଦି ପଦବୀ ଓ କ୍ଷମତାର ଆବରଣଠାରୁ ମୋ ଅମ୍ଭକୁ, ମୋ ନିଜତ୍ଵକୁ ଦୂରେଇ ରଖିଥାନ୍ତି . . . ।

“ବାପାଙ୍କୁ ଖବର ଦିଆଯାଇଛି ନା ନାହିଁ ?” ହଠାତ୍ ପ୍ରକୃତସ୍ଥ ହୋଇ ପଚାରିଲି ।

“ତମେ ତ ନ ଥିଲ, ଆଉ କିଏ ଖବର ଦେବ । ଏଇ ପହରିଦିନ ତ ପୁଅ ଜନ୍ମ ହେଲା ।”

“ସଙ୍ଗେ ସଙ୍ଗେ ଖବର ଦେବା ଉଚିତ୍ ଥିଲା . . . । ବାପା ବୋଉ କେତେ ପୂଜା ମାନସିକ କରୁଥିଲେ । ଦେଖ ରିନୁ, ପୁଅ ମୁହଁଟା ବାପାଙ୍କ ପରି ଦିଶୁନି ? . . . ଆଉ ନାକଟା ତ ପୁରା ବୋଉ ପରି ହୋଇଛି ।”

(ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ମୁହଁରେ କିଛିଟା ବକ୍ରତା ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ କଲି । ପୁଅ ତାଙ୍କ ପରି ହୋଇଛି ବୋଲି କହିବା ଉଚିତ୍ ଥିଲା ବୋଧହୁଏ ।)

ବାରବର୍ଷ ତଳେ ଯୋମା ଜନ୍ମ ହେବାବେଳେ ବୋଉ ଏଠି ଥିଲା, ବାପା ବି ଆସି ପହଞ୍ଚିଥିଲେ । ଜିଦ୍ କରୁଥିଲେ ଗାଁକୁ ଯାଇ ସତ୍ୟନାରାୟଣ ପାଲା କରିବାକୁ । ସାରା ଗାଁକୁ ଖାଇବାକୁ ଦେବାକୁ । ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ତୁମ୍ଭ ତୁମ୍ଭ ମୋତେ କହିଥିଲେ -

“ଆମର ପ୍ରଥମ ସନ୍ତାନ; ବଡ଼ ପାଟି ଦେବା, ମନ୍ଦୀଙ୍କୁ ଚାକିରା । ତମେ ବାପା ବୋଉଙ୍କୁ ବୁଝାଇ ପୂଜାପାଠ ଏଇଠି କରିବାକୁ କୁହ । ନହେଲେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଅପମାନ ହେବ ।”

ମୋ'ର ଗାଁ ପ୍ରତି ଅତିମାତ୍ରାରେ ଅନୁରକ୍ତି ଥିବା ଜାଣି ବିଶ୍ୱସ୍ତ ବନ୍ଧୁମାନେ ବୁଝାଇଥିଲେ - “ଦେଖ, ତୁ ଦୁଇ ନାଆରେ ଗୋଡ଼ ଥୋଇବାର ଭୁଲ୍ କରନା । ପ୍ରୋମୋସନ୍ ଲତ୍ୟାଦି ପ୍ରତି ତ ନଜର ଦେବାକୁ ହେବ . . . ।”

ବାଧ୍ୟହୋଇ ବୋଉକୁ ବୁଝାଇଥିଲି । ପ୍ରତିଶ୍ରୁତି ଦେଇଥିଲି ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ସନ୍ତାନର ଏକୋଇଶିଆ ନିଃକର୍ମ ଗାଁରେ କରାଇବାକୁ । ଛୋଟ ଶିଶୁପରି ମାନିଯାଇ ବାପା ବୋଉ ହସି ହସି କହିଥିଲେ, “ଏ ଧରକ ନ ହେଲେ ନାହିଁ; ଆରଧରକୁ ନାତି ହେଲେ ନିଃକର୍ମ ଗାଁରେ ଏକୋଇଶିଆ କରାଇବା ।”

ସତେ ଯେମିତି ସେମାନେ ଜାଣିଥିଲେ ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ ସନ୍ତାନଟି ନିଃକର୍ମ ପୁଅ ହେବ ଆଉ ସେଥିପାଇଁ ହିଁ ତପସ୍ୟା କରୁଥିଲେ !

ସଙ୍ଗେ ସଙ୍ଗେ ନିଜେ ଚେଲିଗ୍ରାମ୍ କରି ଗାଁକୁ ଖବର ପଠାଇଲି । ରାତିରେ ବସି ପୁଅର ନାଁ ବାଛୁଥିଲି । ପୁଅର ଏକୋଇଶିଆ ଗାଁରେ ଖୁବ୍ ଜାକ ଜମକରେ କରି ବାପା ବୋଉ ବହୁତ ଖୁସି ହେବେ । ବୋଧହୁଏ ସେହି ଖୁସିରେ ସେମାନେ ଆମ ପାଖରେ ଆସି ରହିବାକୁ ରାଜି ହୋଇଯିବେ । ନାତି ନାତୁଣୀଙ୍କ ମେଳରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଆଉ ଏକୃତିଆ ଲାଗିବନି . . . ।

ହଠାତ୍ ଫେନ୍ ନ ଆସିଲା ଗୋଟିଏ ଜରୁରୀ ଗସ୍ତରେ ପାଞ୍ଚଦିନ ବାହାରକୁ ଯିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ । ଗାଁରେ ଏକୋଇଶିଆ କରିବା କଥା ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କୁ ଭରସି କହି ପାରୁନଥିଲି । ଝିଅ ଜନ୍ମବେଳେ ବାପାଙ୍କୁ ଦେଇଥିବା ପ୍ରତିଶ୍ରୁତି ବିଷୟରେ ସେ ତ ଭଲଭାବରେ ଜାଣିଥିଲେ । ସୁତରାଂ କହିବାଟା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ମନେ କଲିନି । ତା ଛଡ଼ା ଅନେକ ଦିନରୁ ଆମ ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଦେଖା ସାକ୍ଷାତ ଖୁବ୍ କମ୍ ହେଉଥିଲା । ସେ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ସଭା ସମିତି, କୁର୍ କାମରେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ରହୁଥିଲେ ଓ ମୁଁ ଅଫିସ୍ କାମରେ ।

ପାଞ୍ଚଦିନ ପରେ ଫେରିଲାପରେ ରାତିରେ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ ନିମନ୍ତଣପତ୍ର ଗୁଡ଼ାଏ ଆଣି କହିଲେ, “ଆଉ କାହା ପାଖକୁ ବାକି ରହିଲା ଟିକେ ଦେଖି ଦିଅ ତ ।” କାର୍ଡ୍ ଗୁଡ଼ାକ ଉପରେ ସୁନ୍ଦର ଅକ୍ଷରରେ ମନ୍ଦୀ, ସେକ୍ରେଟାରୀ ଓ ଅସଂଖ୍ୟ ଅଫିସରଙ୍କ ନାମଗୁଡ଼ାକ ଝଲସି ଉଠୁଥିଲା । ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ଉତ୍ତରୁ କାର୍ଡ୍ ଖଣ୍ଡେ କାଢ଼ି ପକ୍ତିଲି । ଇଂରାଜୀରେ ପରିକ୍ଷାର ଭାବରେ ଛପା ହୋଇଥିଲା ମୋ'ର ସରକାରୀ ବାସ ଭବନର ଠିକଣା ଓ ନିମନ୍ତଣ କରାଯାଇଥିଲା ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଏକୋଇଶିଆ ଦିନ ଉପସ୍ଥିତ ହେବାକୁ ।

(ମୋର ବୋଧହୁଏ ଉଚିତ୍ ଥିଲା ବାପାଙ୍କୁ ଖବର ଦେବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଶ୍ରୀମତୀଙ୍କ ଅନୁମତି ନେବା । ମୋତେ ଲାଗୁଥିଲା ଯେମିତି ମୋ ଜୀବନ, ମୋର ବିଚାର, ସମ୍ମାନ କିଛି ବି ମୋର ନିଜସ୍ୱ ହୋଇ ନ ଥିଲା । ମୋ ଉଚ୍ଚ ପଦବୀ ଏବଂ ମୋ ସମ୍ପାଦକ ବିବାହର ପ୍ରଭାବରେ ମୁଁ ପ୍ରାୟ ବିକ୍ରୀ ହୋଇଯାଉଥିଲି; ଦୂରେଇ ଯାଉଥିଲି ମୋ ନିଜତ୍ୱଠାରୁ ।)

“ହଁ, ବାପା ବିଠି ଦେଇଥିଲେ ସେ ଗାଁରେ ସବୁ ଜିନିଷ ଯୋଗାଡ଼ କରୁଛନ୍ତି ବୋଲି । ତମେ କେମିତି ଖବର ଦେଇଦେଲ ଗାଁରେ ଏକୋଇଶିଆ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ? ସେମାନେ କେତେ ହଇରାଣ ହେଉଛନ୍ତି ଅଧ୍ୟାୟରେ । ଏବେ ବି ବୁଝାଇବାକୁ ହେବ ତମକୁ ! ମୁଁ କାଲି ମକରା ହାତରେ ଖବର ପଠାଇଛି ଏଇଠି ସବୁ କାମ ହେବ ବୋଲି . . . ।

ବାପା ବୋଉ ଅସନ୍ତୁଷ୍ଟ ହେବେ ବୋଲି ଭାବୁଛି କି ? ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ହୁଅନା, ଆମେ ଦୁହେଁ ଯାଇ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ ଆସିବା ।”

(ଶ୍ରୀ ତାପସ ରଞ୍ଜନ ସାହୁ ପତ୍ନୀ ସ୍ମିତା ଏବଂ ପୁତ୍ର ସମୟ-ଶାଶୁତଙ୍କ ସହ ତାଲାସ୍ ସହରରେ ବାସ କରନ୍ତି । ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମନନଗରରେ ପ୍ରଥମ ଏବଂ ଏକମାତ୍ର ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପତ୍ରିକା ‘ସଂବିତ୍’ (www.sambit.com)ର ସଂପାଦକ ତଥା ସହ-ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠାତା ରୂପେ ସେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା, ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଓ ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ବିକାଶ ଦିଗରେ ସର୍ବଦା ଚେଷ୍ଟିତ ।)

ମୋହିନୀ

ପ୍ରବୀର ଦାଶ

ହେ କାହ୍ନୁ... ଆଉ ବାଜିବି କିପରି
 କାହ୍ନୁ...ବାଜିବି କିପରି
 ତ୍ୟଜି ମୋତେ ବେଶୁପାଶୀ ହେଲ ତକ୍ତ ଧାରି
 ହେ କାହ୍ନୁ ଆଉ ବାଜିବି କିପରି
 ଗଲ ଛାଡ଼ି ଗୋପପୁର ନଗାହିଲ ଫେରି
 ସରିଲାକି ଗୋପଲିଳା ନିକୁଞ୍ଜ ବୀହାରି
 କାନ୍ଦନ୍ତି ଯଶୋଦା ରାଣି ନନ୍ଦବାଜେ ଧରି
 ନବୁଝଇ ମାତାହୃଦ ପୁତ୍ର ନାମ ଝୁରି
 ଯମୁନା ତିରେ ଲୋଚକ୍ତି ରାଧେ ହୃତଶିରି
 ମଧୁବନ ସ୍ଵରୁଅଛି ରାଧାକା ମୁରାରି
 ପତିଛି ସ୍ଥାନେ ମୁଁ ବଂଶୀ ମୋହିନୀ ତୁମରି
 ତୁମ ସ୍ଵର୍ଣ ବିନା ସ୍ଵର ମୁର୍ଚ୍ଛନା ମୋହୁରି
 ହେ କାହ୍ନୁ ଆଉ ବାଜିବି କିପରି
 କାହ୍ନୁ ବାଜିବି କିପରି
 (ଆମେରିକାସ୍ଥିତ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ସୋସାଇଟିର ସାଂପ୍ରତିକ ସଭାପତି)



ଅକ୍ଷକାର ରାତିଟାରେ

ଅକ୍ଷକାର ରାତିଟାରେ
 ରାତିର ଅକ୍ଷକାର
 କବାଟରେ କରାଘାତ କରେ
 “ଘରେ ଅଛୁ?”
 ଘାସ ପୁଲ ଅକ୍ଷରରେ ମିଶି ଯାଇ
 କଳା ଆଲକାତ୍ଵାର ପ୍ରଲେପ ପରି
 ହୃଦୟଗାରେ ଭୟର ସଂସାର କରେ
 ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ ଭୂତର ରୂପ ଧରେ
 କବାଟରେ କରାଘାତ କରେ
 “ଘରେ ଅଛୁ?”

କବାଟଟା ବନ୍ଦ କରି ମୁଁ ଶୁଣି

ଅକ୍ଷରାତ୍ରିର ଭାବନା

ବରୁଣ ପାଣି *

ନ ଶୁଣିବାର ଅଭିନୟ କରେ
 ଘାସ ପୁଲର କଳ୍ପନା କରେ
 ଅକ୍ଷକାରରେ ଶତ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟର ଆବାହନ କରେ
 କଳା କିଟିକିଟି ଅକ୍ଷର
 ଘାସ ପୁଲର କବର
 କବାଟରେ କରାଘାତ କରେ
 “ଘରେ ଅଛୁ?”

ରାତିଟା ବଢ଼ି ଚାଲିଛି
 ଅକ୍ଷକାରର ଛାଇ
 ଆହୁରି ବଡ଼ ହୋଇ ଚାଲିଛି
 ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ ଭୂତ ହୋଇ ଯାଇଛି
 କବାଟରେ କରାଘାତ କରି ଚାଲିଛି
 “ଘରେ ଅଛୁ?”

ବନ୍ଦୀର ଡାକ୍ତରୀରୁ

ରେଲିଂର ଫାଙ୍କ ଦେଇ ମୁଁ ଦେଖୁଛି ଶ୍ୟାମଳିମା
ମୁଁ ଦେଖୁଛି ଅତନୁ ଆକାଶ, ଦୂରେ, ବହୁ ଦୂରେ ମୋର
ପ୍ରାଣର ସେ ପ୍ରିୟତମା

ରେଲିଂର ଫାଙ୍କ ଦେଇ ମୁଁ ପାଇଛି ବସନ୍ତ ପରଶ
ମଳୟ ସୁରଭି ବାଣୀ ଆସିଅଛି ଭାସି
ଦେଖୁଛି ମୁଁ ପ୍ରଭାତର ନବାରୁଣ ଦୃଶ୍ୟ

ବନ୍ଦନର ଯନ୍ତ୍ରଣାରେ ଯେବେ ଆତୁର ଏ ମନ
ଆଶାର ବଚନ ଶୁଣିଅଛି ରେଲିଂର ଫାଙ୍କ ଦେଇ

ଏଇ କାରାଗାରେ ଯେବେ ଚାଲେ ସେଇ ଅତ୍ୟାଚାର
ବିମୁକ୍ତ ମନରେ ଯେବେ ଭାସିଆସେ ଧ୍ରୁବର ଖବର
ଅଜାତ ଓ ନବଜାତ ବେଦନାରେ ଦେହ ଉଠେ ଥରି
ଯାନ୍ତ୍ରିକ ଗତିରେ ଯେବେ ଖିଆଲୀ ଏ ମନ ଯାଏ ମରି

ରେଲିଂର ଫାଙ୍କ ଦେଇ ଭାସି ଆସେ ନୂତନ ଖବର
ଲୟ ପରେ ସୃଷ୍ଟିର ସଂବାଦ
ପ୍ରତ୍ୟକ୍ଷ ନିଦାମ ଶେଷେ ସୁଶୀତଳ ବୃକ୍ଷର ସଂବାଦ ।

* ବିଚ୍ଛିନ୍ନାଞ୍ଚଳ ସିଂହଭୂମିରେ ଜନ୍ମ, ଶିକ୍ଷା ବିହାର, ପଢ଼ିମ ବଙ୍ଗ, ଏବଂ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ

ପ୍ରଭୁ ପାଦେ ମୋ'ର ଅଳି

----- ମମତା ମହାନ୍ତି

ପ୍ରଭୁ ମୁଁ ତୁମକୁ	ଡାକୁଛି ତ ଏତେ	
ମୋ ଡାକ ତ ଶୁଣ ନାହିଁ		
କିପରି ଡାକିବି	କହ ମତେ ଥରେ	
ବିକଳେ ରହିଛି ଚାହିଁ		(୧)
ଏ ଶୂନ୍ୟ ହୃଦୟେ	ଭରି ଦିଅ ପ୍ରଭୁ	
	ତୁମର କୃପାର ଖଣି	
ଧର୍ଯ୍ୟ ରଖିବାକୁ	ଦିଅ ମତେ ଶକ୍ତି	
	ତୁମେ ମୋ ଗଳାର ମଣି	(୨)
ତୁମରି ଆଶିଷେ	ପାଇଛି ମୁଁ ସବୁ	
	ଧନ ଜନ ପରିବାର	
ଦୁଃଖୀ ଜନଙ୍କର	ସେବା ମୁଁ କରିବି	
	ଦୃଢ଼ କର ମୋ ଅନ୍ତର	(୩)
ଲୋଭ ଅହଙ୍କାର	ନିଅ ମୋ ମନରୁ	
	ରଖିଅଛି ମୁହିଁ ଆଶା	
ତୁମ ପାଦ ତଳେ	ଦିଅ ଚିକେ ସ୍ଥାନ	

କରନ୍ତି ମୋତେ ନିରାଶା (୪)
ତୁମ୍ଭେ କରୁଣା ବରଷିବ ଯେବେ
ପାଇବି ମୁଁ ଦିବ୍ୟ ଜ୍ଞାନ
ଅନ୍ଧାର ଲିଭିବ ଆଲୋକ ଆସିବ
ଲଭିବି ମୁଁ ଆତ୍ମଜ୍ଞାନ (୫)
ଏକା ମୁଁ ଆସିଛି ଏକା ଯିବି ଦିନେ
ଏ ସଂସାର ଖେଳଘର
ଆଶା ରଖି କରି ତୁମ ପାଶେ ଯିବି
କରିବନ୍ତି ମୋତେ ପର (୬)

ମୁମୁକ୍ଷୁ
ଶ୍ରେତ ପ ଦ୍ଵା ଦାଶ

(୧)

ମୁକ୍ତିର ଆନନ୍ଦ କିବା ଜାଣେ ପିଞ୍ଜୁରା-ପ କ୍ଷୀ ଟିଏ
ମୁକ୍ତି ନପାଇଲା ଯାଏଁ?
ଜୀବ କି ଜାଣେ ନିର୍ବାଣ ଆନନ୍ଦ
ବ୍ରହ୍ମ ନ ମିଳିଲା ଯାଏଁ?

(୨)

ବନ୍ଧନରେ ବାନ୍ଧି ନାହିଁ ମତେ ଏ ଦୁନିଆ
ମୁଁ ବନ୍ଧା ନିଜେ ନିଜର ଫାଶରେ ।
ଚାବିକାଠି ହଜିଅଛି ମୋରି ଭିତରେ
ନିଜକୁ ପାଇଲେ, ଫାଶ ପିନ୍ଧିଯିବ ଆପଣା ଛାଏଁରେ ।

(୩)

ମୁମୁକ୍ଷୁ ମୁଁ ଅନନ୍ତ ପିପାସୀ ବ୍ରହ୍ମଦରଶନ ପାଇଁ
ଯୁଗ ଯୁଗାନ୍ତ ପଥହରା ମୋହଗ୍ରସ୍ତ ହୋଇ ।
କୋଟି ଜନ୍ମ ପ୍ରତୀକ୍ଷାର ହେଉ ଆଜି ଅନ୍ତ
ମିଳିଯାଉ ଆତ୍ମଜ୍ଞାନ ଆନନ୍ଦ ଅନନ୍ତ ।

ଶ୍ରେତପଦ୍ମ ଦାଶ ସାନହୋଜେ, କାଳିଫଣିଆ ରେ ରୁଦ୍ରା ସେ ଜଣେ ଅର୍ଥନୀତିଜ୍ଞ ଏବଂ ଆଇସପାଇ ନାମକ ରିସର୍ଚ୍ଚ
କଂପାନୀ ରେ ଡାଇରେକ୍ଟର ଅଛନ୍ତି।



ଦୁଇଟି ଭିନ୍ନ ବୟସର କବିତା

ଶଶଧର ମହାପାତ୍ର, ମେରୀଲ୍ୟାଣ୍ଡ

ପ୍ରତିଶ୍ରୁତି

ଏମିତି ଏକ ନିଛାଟିଆ
ଖରାଦିନ ସଞ୍ଚବେଳେ
ଦିଅଁକୁ ମୁଣ୍ଡିଆ ମାରି
ପ୍ରୀତିର ପସରା ଧରି
ସ୍ମୃତିର ପାହାଚେ ଚଢ଼ି
ମନ ଆକାଶରେ ଉଡ଼ି
ପହଞ୍ଚିଲି ତୁମ ଦ୍ଵାରେ
କେତେ ଶରଧାରେ,
ଅଧା ବରବେଶ ସାଜି
ତୁମକୁ ମୁଁ ଖୋଜି ଖୋଜି
ମନ ମୋ'ର ଉଡ଼ୁଥିଲା
ଧଇଁସାଇଁ ହେଉଥିଲା
ଭେଟିବାକୁ ତୁମକୁ
ହେ ତାଲିଂ
କହିବାକୁ ରାଜିବୋଲି
ଅତି ଭଲପାଏ ବୋଲି
ପ୍ରତିଶ୍ରୁତି ଦେବାପାଇଁ
ଆଉ ନିମନ୍ତଣ ତୁମପାଇଁ
ବଧୁ ହୋଇ ଆସିବାକୁ
ଗୃହଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ ସାଜିବାକୁ ।

କିନ୍ତୁ, ତୁମେ କଲବଲ ହୋଇ
ମୋ ମୁହଁକୁ ଚାହିଁଥିଲ
ମୁଁ ତୁମକୁ ଚାହିଁଥିଲି,
ଯେମିତି ତୁମସହ ଚିହ୍ନାଜଣା
ଅଧୁତ ମୁଗରୁ
କେଉଁ ଜନ୍ମ ଜନ୍ମାନ୍ତରୁ;
ଦେଖୁଥିଲି ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରମାଟିଏ
ଲୁଚକାଳି ଖେଳୁଥିଲା
ଏକ ଭସା ବାଦଲର ଉତ୍ତାପରେ,
ସରମରେ ଲାଜେଇ ଯାଉଥିଲା
ମୋ ଚାହାଣୀରେ,
ମୋ ପ୍ରତିଶ୍ରୁତିରେ ।

ଆଉ ଏକ ବର୍ଷାଦିନ ସଞ୍ଚବେଳେ
ପହଞ୍ଚିଲି ତୁମ ଦ୍ଵାରେ
ବାଟ ସାରା ବର୍ଷା ଗାଳୁଥିଲା
ତମର ପଶତ କାନିରେ,
ସେ ନରମ ହାତରେ
ପୋଛି ଦେଲାବେଳେ
ଦେଖୁଥିଲି, ବାମ୍ନା ଶୁଖୁଥିଲି
ଏକ ନୀଳକଇଁଟିଏ
ସକାଳୁ ଫୁଟି ସଞ୍ଚଯାଏ
ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରିଥିଲା
ମଉଳି ଯିବାପାଇଁ
ମୋ ହାତର ଝରରେ,
ଚାହୁଁଥିଲି, ଉପଭୋଗ କରୁଥିଲି
ଅପଲକ ନୟନରେ
ଲାଜକୁଳୀ ସାଧବ ବୋହୂଟିଏ
କେମିତି ଲାଜେଇ ଯାଉଥିଲା
ତା'ର ସରୁ ଓଢ଼ଣା ଭିତରେ ।

ଆଉ ଏକ ଶୀତଦିନ ସଞ୍ଚବେଳେ
ପହଞ୍ଚିଲି ତୁମ ଦ୍ଵାରେ
ଧରୁଥିଲି ଜାତୁଆ ଶୀତରେ
ସବୁ ବେଶ୍ ଫାଙ୍ଗଫାଙ୍ଗ ଲାଗୁଥିଲା
ତୁମ ଧଳା ପୋଷା କୁକୁରଟି
ଅତିହ୍ନା ଆବାଜ ପାଇ ଭୁକୁଥିଲା
ଘର ଭିତରକୁ ଡାକିନେଇ
କାନରେ ଚୁପିଚୁପି କହିଦେଇ
ହେ ବୁଝିଲ, ଶୀଘ୍ର ଆସ,
ତୁମ ଦେହରେ ଲାଗିଥିବା ନିଆଁରେ
ଉଷ୍ମ କରିବାକୁ ମୋ'ର ଦେହକୁ,
ନିଭେଇ ଦେବାକୁ
ଆମ ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ଥିବା ଶୂନ୍ୟତାକୁ ।

ତାପରେ ଥରେ ବସନ୍ତ ଆସିଲା,
ଏକୁଟିଆ କୋଇଲିଟି

ତୁମ ବାଡ଼ିପଛ ଆମ୍ଭ ତାଳେ ବସି
ବିରହ ରାଗିଣୀ ଗାଉଥିଲା,
ସେତେବେଳେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଲି ତୁମ ଦ୍ଵାରେ
ମହୁଆ ପ୍ରେମର ନିଶାରେ,
ଦୁନିଆର ସବୁ ସୁଖ, ସ୍ଵପ୍ନ
ଓ ସ୍ମୃତିକୁ ଜାଗୁଡ଼ି ଧରି
ତୁମପାଇଁ, କେବଳ ତୁମପାଇଁ,
କହିବାକୁ ହେ ତାଲିଂ
'ହୃଦୟର ରାଣୀ' ବୋଲି,
ଅନେକ ଭଲପାଏ ବୋଲି ।

ସେଦିନ ମୁଁ ବହୁତ ଖୁସିଥିଲି
ତୁମେ କିନ୍ତୁ ବେଶ୍ ରାଗିଥିଲି,
ତୁମେ ତୁପ୍ ଥିଲ
ମୁଁ କେବଳ ଗପୁଥିଲି,
ତୁମେ ଅଭିମାନଭରା କଖରେ କ'ଣ କହିଲ
କିନ୍ତୁ, ମୁଁ କିଛି ଶୁଣୁ ନଥିଲି
ହେ ସଖୀ !

କେମିତି ବି ବୁଝାଇବି ?
ତୁମେ ମୋ'ର ସୁଖ ଓ ଦୁଃଖର ସାରଥି
ତୁମେ ମୋ'ର ଜନ୍ମ ଜନ୍ମର ସାଥୀ
ତୁମେ ମୋ'ର ମଧୁଝରା ଜହ୍ନରାତି
ତୁମେ ମୋ'ର ପ୍ରୀତିଭରା ଗୀତି
ତୁମେ ମୋ'ର ଭଙ୍ଗ ବୀଣାରେ
ଭିନ୍ନ ଏକ ସୁମଧୁର ସଙ୍ଗୀତର ସ୍ଵର,
ତୁମେ ମୋ'ର ପ୍ରେମର ମନ୍ଦାକିନୀ
ତୁମେ ମୋ'ର ଆଶାର ମୀନାର,
ଓ ଝର ଏକ ଶେଷ ଶ୍ରାବଣର ।

(ମୁଁ ମୋ'ର ସ୍ତ୍ରୀକୁ ଯେବେ ପ୍ରଥମେ ଭେଟିଲି
ସେତେବେଳର ଅନୁଭୂତି ଓ ତା'ପରେ ଭେଟିବାର
ଅନୁଭୂତି ଯାହାକୁ ଭାଷାରେ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିବା
କଷ୍ଟକର) ।

ଇଚ୍ଛା ଅସୁମାରୀ

ଇଚ୍ଛା ହୁଏ ପାହାଡ଼ଟିଏ ହୋଇ ଛିଡ଼ାହେବାକୁ
 ସହିଯିବାକୁ ସବୁ ଦୁଃଖକଷ୍ଟ ଭାର;
 ଇଚ୍ଛାହୁଏ ଝରଣାଟିଏ ହୋଇ ଝରିଯିବାକୁ
 ବହିନେବାକୁ କଣିକା ସବୁ ଲୁହ ଓ ଲହରୀ;
 ଇଚ୍ଛାହୁଏ ଲମ୍ବଧନୁଟିଏ ହୋଇ ଶୋଭାପାଇବାକୁ
 ରଙ୍ଗାଇବାକୁ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ରାଜ୍ୟ ଏକ ଭଗ୍ନ ହୃଦୟର;
 ଇଚ୍ଛାହୁଏ ଆ' କହିଲେ ଇଚ୍ଛାଧାରୀମାନଙ୍କର ଇଚ୍ଛା ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀପାତ୍ର ଅତି ପୁରୁଣା ସ୍ମୃତିଟିଏ,
 କିଶିନେବାକୁ ମନ ଏକ ବିଦଗ୍ଧା ପ୍ରେମିକାର;
 ଇଚ୍ଛାହୁଏ ପକ୍ଷୀଟିଏ ହୋଇ ଉଡ଼ିଯିବାକୁ
 ଗାଲିଯିବାକୁ ସଙ୍ଗତ ମୁକ୍ତି ଓ ମୌତ୍ରୀର;
 ଇଚ୍ଛାହୁଏ ଜୁଗବିନ୍ଦ ଯାଶୁ ହୋଇ ଜନମନେବାକୁ
 ସହିଯିବାକୁ ସବୁ ଭାର ଅନ୍ୟାୟ ଓ ଅତ୍ୟାଚାରର;
 ଇଚ୍ଛାହୁଏ ଧ୍ରୁବତାରାଟିଏ ହୋଇ ବିରାଜିବାକୁ
 ଦିଗଦର୍ଶନ କରାଇବାକୁ ଏକ ପଥହରା ପଥକର;
 ଇଚ୍ଛାହୁଏ କବିଟିଏ ହୋଇ ଲେଖିଯିବାକୁ
 ତୋଳିବାକୁ ଶବଦର ବୋମା ପ୍ରତିଟି ପୃଷ୍ଠର ।

ଇଚ୍ଛାହୁଏ ନିରୋଳାରେ ଦେଖିବାକୁ
 ଡକ୍ଟର ଶଶଧର ମହାପାତ୍ର ଓ ଶିଂଚନ୍ ହସିପିଟାଲରେ ହେଲେ
 ସପରିବାରେ ବସବାସ କରନ୍ତି ।

ଜନ୍ମ ଓ ତାରାଙ୍କୁ,
 ବେଳ କାହିଁ ? ଯୌବନ ବି କାହିଁ ?
 ଇଚ୍ଛାହୁଏ ବଂଶୀ ବଜାଇବାକୁ,
 ବଂଶୀ କାହିଁ ? ନା ରାଧା କାହିଁ ?
 ଇଚ୍ଛାହୁଏ ନାନାବାୟା ଗୀତ ଗାଇବାକୁ
 ଆବେଗ କାହିଁ ? ବୟସ ବି କାହିଁ ?

ଆ' କହିଲେ ଆସିଯାନ୍ତା ବୁଝିଲା ମନଟିଏ, ହସଟିଏ
 ତେବେ ଚିନ୍ତା କ'ଣ ?
 ଇଚ୍ଛାହୁଏ ଯା' କହିଲେ ଚାଲିଯାନ୍ତା ଦୁଃଖଟିଏ, ଶୋକଟିଏ
 ଯା' କହିଲେ ଚାଲିଯାନ୍ତା ରୋଗଟିଏ, ଯନ୍ତ୍ରଣାଟିଏ
 ଯା' କହିଲେ ଚାଲିଯାନ୍ତା ଭୟଟିଏ, ଭ୍ରାନ୍ତିଟିଏ
 ତେବେ ଭାବନା କ'ଣ ?

ଇଚ୍ଛାସବୁ ଯଦି ଘୋଡ଼ା ହୋଇଥାନ୍ତେ



ଭିକାରୀମାନେ ଆନନ୍ଦରେ ବଢ଼ିଯାନ୍ତେ
 ଇଚ୍ଛାସବୁ ଯଦି ସତ ହୋଇଥାନ୍ତେ
 ଏ ସଂସାରରେ ସମସ୍ତେ ସୁଖୀ ହୋଇଯାନ୍ତେ ।
 ଫିକିସିଙ୍ଗ୍ ଭାବେ କାମକରନ୍ତି ଓ ସିଲଭର୍ ହିଙ୍ଗ୍, ମେରାଲାଣ୍ଡରେ

ଇନ୍ଦିରା ଭାଉଜ

ନିରୁପମା କର ମହାପାତ୍ର ୧

ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ, ପଦ୍ମାକନ୍ୟା, ପଦ୍ମା, କମଳା, ଶ୍ରୀ, ହରିପ୍ରିୟା,
 ଇନ୍ଦିରା, ଲୋକମାତା, ମା, ସୀରାବଧୂତନୟା, ରମା ।
 (ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀପୁରାଣ)
 ଇନ୍ଦିରା ଗୋ ତୁମେ ଆସିଲ ଏ ଘରେ
 ନବବଧୂ ବେଶ ସାଜି,
 ତୁମ ପାଉଁଜିର ରଣୁଝୁଣୁ ସୁର
 କୋଣେ କୋଣେ ଗଲା ବାଜି ।
 ଶୁଭ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ, ଶଂଖ ହୁଳହୁଳି
 ଜଣାଇଲା ଆଗମନ,
 ସରୁ ଅଳତାରେ ରଙ୍ଗନ କରି
 ଆଜିଲ ପାଦର ଚିହ୍ନ ।
 ଶରତ ଆକାଶ ଆଲୋକିତ କଲା
 ତୁମ କୋମଳ ଜୋହନା,
 ମାତୃହୀନ ଆମ ଶୁଖି ଅନ୍ତରେ
 ଝରିଲା ସ୍ନେହ ଝରଣା ।

ଆଗୋ ସାଗରିକା, ସାଜିଲ ସେବିକା
 ହୋଇଗଲ ସର୍ବସହା,
 ଥିଲ ଭଗିନୀ, ହୋଇଲ ଜନନୀ
 ତୁମେ ଏ ଘରର 'ମା'
 ଗୃହଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ ଆଗୋ ଗୃହତ୍ୟାଗ କରି
 ଦୂରେ କାହିଁ ଗଲ ଚାଲି
 ଶୂନ୍ୟ ଏ ସଂସାର କ୍ଷୁଣ୍ଣ ଏ ଅନ୍ତର
 ଅଶ୍ରୁ ପତଲ ଝରି ।

୧ ଡକ୍ଟର ନିରୁପମା କର ମହାପାତ୍ର
 ନରଥ କାରୋଲାଇନା ରାଜ୍ୟରେ
 ଏକ ଜୀବବିଜ୍ଞାନ ପ୍ରଫେସର୍ ରୂପେ କାମକରନ୍ତି ।
 ଏହି କବିତାଟି ସେ ତାଙ୍କର ସ୍ୱର୍ଗତ ଭାଉଜଙ୍କୁ
 ଉତ୍ସର୍ଗ କରିଛନ୍ତି ।

ପଛଘୁଆନାହିଁ ବୀରର ଜାତକେ
 ନ ମରେ ପରା ସେ ପରାଶ ଆତଜ୍ଞେ ।
 ଉଚ୍ଚ ହେବାପାଇଁ କର ଜେବେ ଆଶା
 ଉଚ୍ଚ କର ଆଗ ନିଜ ମାତୃଭାଷା ।
 - ମଧୁସୂଦନ ଦାସ



ତ୍ୟାନ୍ ଭାଇଁ ପାଇଁ ନାନାବାୟା ଗୀତ

ବିଶ୍ୱରଞ୍ଜନ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ, ଟୋରୋଙ୍କୋ, କାନାଡା

କମ୍ପ୍ୟୁନିଟିର ସାହା ଭାଇ, ତ୍ୟାନ୍ କୀର୍ତ୍ତିବାନ୍ ।
 ସ୍ୱାମୀ ତାକିଲେ, ଶୋଧ ତୁମେ ଭାରି ଧୁମ୍ ଧାମ୍
 ଲାଲୁ ଲାଲା ପଶୁପତି ପରମ୍ ତାପମାନ୍ ।
 କାନାଡାରେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ କଲେ ସ୍ଥିତିବାନ୍ ॥
 ଜାତି ଦେଶ ଧର୍ମ ପାଇଁ ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି ଜାନ୍ ।
 ମନସ୍ତୁଣ୍ଡୀ ଆତ୍ମାନନ୍ଦୀ ମହାଜ୍ଞାନୀ ସାନ୍ ॥
 ମନ୍ଦିର ଥାପିଲେ ଗ୍ରାମେ ରାଜା ଗୁଣବାନ୍ ।
 ଚିଠି ଉଠ, ନ ଗାଇଲେ ଏ'ସଭିଙ୍ଗ ନାମ୍ ॥
 ଦିଲ୍ ଖୋଲି କହିଲେ, କୁହ, 'ହ୍ୱାଟ୍ ମ୍ୟାନ୍!
 କାନୋସାରୁ କାନାଡାରୁ କରି ଦେବି ବ୍ୟାନ୍' ॥



॥

କାହିଁକି ବା ଏତେ ରାଗ ଆରେ ଭାଇ ତ୍ୟାନ୍ ।
 ନବୁର୍ସି, ଭାବେ ବସି, 'ହ୍ୱାୟ୍ ମି, ମ୍ୟାନ୍' ॥
 ଟେକିବି କାହାକୁ ବା, ଟାକିବି କାହାକୁ
 ମନ କହେ ଚଢ଼ବାହେ ଟେକିଦେବି ନିଜକୁ ॥
 କଥାରେ ତ ଅତିକ୍ଷଣ, କାମରେ ବି ଗୋଲ୍ ।
 ଟେକାଟେକି ନ ପାରେ ମୁଁ, କରେ ହରିବୋଲ୍ ॥

ତ୍ୟାନ୍ ଭାଇ! ଖୋଲ ଗୋଟେ ଡେଲାଡେଲି ସ୍କୁଲ୍ ।
 ଟେକାଟେକି ଶିଖିବାକୁ ଧାଇଁ ଆସିବେ ପୁଲ୍ ॥

"True Spirituality is not to renounce life, but to make life perfect with a Divine Perfection"

ନୂତନ ପଡ଼ୋଶୀ

ଶାନ୍ତିଲତା ମିଶ୍ର

ଘରର ସବୁ କାମଧାରୀଙ୍କୁ ପଛରେ ପକେଇ ବାଲିଆସିଲେ 'ପଦ୍ମଜା' ଦାଣ୍ଡଘରର ଝରକା ପାଖକୁ । ବାହାରେ କାର, ଟ୍ରକ୍ ଶବ୍ଦରେ ରୋଷେଇ କାମ ତାଙ୍କର ସେଇଠି ଅଧା ରହିଲା । ସାମନା କ୍ୱାର୍ଟରକୁ କେହି ନୂତନ ପଡ଼ୋଶୀ ଆସିଲେ ବୋଧେ ।

ଘରଟା ଚାରି ମାସରୁ ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ୱ ହେବ ଖାଲି ପଡ଼ିଥିଲା । କେହି ଜଣେ ଆସିଲେ ରହିବାକୁ । କିନ୍ତୁ କିଏ ସେ ? ଉକ୍ତି ମାରି ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କଲେ ସେ । ଟ୍ରକ୍‌ବାଲାଙ୍କ ବ୍ୟତୀତ ଅନ୍ୟ କାହାକୁ ଦେଖି ପାରୁନାହାନ୍ତି ସେ । ଜିନିଷପତ୍ର ସବୁ ବୁଝାଚାଲିଛି ଘର ଭିତରକୁ । ଖାଲି ଶୂନ୍ୟ ଘରଗରେ ଭୂତ, ପ୍ରେତ ରହିବା କିଛି ଅସମ୍ଭବ ନୁହେଁ । ସେଇ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ସେ ସବୁବେଳେ ଠାକୁରଙ୍କୁ ଠାକୁଥିଲେ କେହି ଆସି ସେଠାରେ ରହୁ ବୋଲି । ତାଙ୍କ ନିଜର ଓ ଅନ୍ୟ କ୍ୱାର୍ଟରଟି ଦୁଇଟିଯାକ ସାମନା-ସାମନି । ଏକ ଅଣତ୍ରୟାଦିଆ ଇଷତ୍ ଲମ୍ବା ବାରଣ୍ଡା ଦୁଇଟିଯାକ ଘରକୁ ସଂଯୁକ୍ତ କରିଛି ଯାହା । ଦାଣ୍ଡ କବାଟ ଖୋଲିଦେଲା ମାତ୍ରେ ସାମନା ଘରର ଦାଣ୍ଡକବାଟ ହିଁ ଆଉ ଆଖିରେ ପଡ଼େ ।

ପଦ୍ମଜା ଘରେ ଏକା ଥିଲାବେଳେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଭାରି ମାଡ଼ିମାଡ଼ି ପଡ଼େ । ସାମନା ଘରେ ଝୁଲୁଥିବା ତାଲା ଉପରେ ତାଙ୍କର ଆଖି ଘୁରିଆସେ ଦିନକୁ ଦଶଧର । କେହି ତାଲା ଭାଙ୍ଗି ଘରେ ପଶିନିତ ? ତୋର, ତଙ୍କର, ତାହାଣୀ ବା ଚିରୁଗୁଣୀ । ପିଲାବେଳେ ସେ କେତେ ଯେ ଅଶରୀରୀ ଆତ୍ମା କଥା ଶୁଣିଛନ୍ତି ତାର ଠିକଣା ନାହିଁ । ଏବେ ଏ ବୟସରେ ବି ସେ ସବୁ ଗଳ୍ପକୁ ସେ ସତ ବୋଲି ଭାବନ୍ତି । ତେଣୁ ଅକାଳେ ସକାଳେ ଅକାରଣେ ଅଜଣା ତରଟା ଯେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଆସି ହଲରାଣ ନକରେ ଏପରି ନୁହେଁ । ସ୍ୱାମୀ ସତ୍ୟାନନ୍ଦଙ୍କର ଏ ସବୁ ଉପରେ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ନାହିଁ । ତେଣୁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ବି ସେ କିଛି କହିପାରନ୍ତିନି । ଶୁଣିଲେ ହସିବେ ତ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ । ବିରକ୍ତ ବି ହେବେ । କାମ ଧରା କିଛି ନଥିଲେ ସ୍ୱୀଲୋକ ମାନଙ୍କର ଏଇ ସବୁ ବାଜେ ଚିନ୍ତା । ତେଣୁ ସେ ତାଙ୍କ କଥା, ତାଙ୍କ ଅସୁସ୍ତି ଭାବ ତାଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ହିଁ ରଖନ୍ତି ।

କିଏ ଆସିଛନ୍ତି ସେ ପଡ଼ିବା ଘରକୁ ? ତାଙ୍କର ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଆକଣ୍ଠ ଉତକଣ୍ଠ । ପଛ ଗାଡ଼ିରୁ ବାହାରିଲେ ଦମ୍ପତି ଦିଜଣ ଏକ ଛୋଟ ପୁଅକୁ ସାଥୀରେ ନେଇ । ଓଃ ପୁଣି ଦିଜଣ ଅନଭିକ୍ଷ, ଅଳ୍ପ ବୟସ୍କ ପଡ଼ୋଶୀ । ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତକ ପାଇଁ ଖୁସିରେ ଅଧିର ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଥିବା ମନଟା ହ୍ରାତ୍ କରି ବିଷେଇ ଗଲା । ଯାହା ସେ ଭାବନ୍ତି ତାହା ଯେ କାହିଁକି ଘଟେନା । ଫେରିଆସିଲେ ସେ ଝରକା ପାଖରୁ । ସେ ଭାବୁଥିଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ସମବୟସର ଅବା କେହି ଆସିଥିବେ । ଯାହାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ସେ ତାଙ୍କର ଅଳସ ଅପରାଧ ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ବାର୍ତ୍ତାକାପ ବା ଚା' ଦ୍ୱାରା ବିଚେଇଥାନ୍ତେ ପୁଣି ଥରେ ।

ଶ୍ୟାମଳା ଓ ତାଙ୍କ ସ୍ୱାମୀ କୃଷ୍ଣ ରାଓ ବଦଳି ହୋଇଗଲା ଦିନଠୁ ଗତ ଚାରିବର୍ଷ ହେବ ତାଙ୍କର ଆଉ ସେ ସୁନେଲି ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତ ଫେରିନି । ସେ ଏଇ କ୍ୱାର୍ଟରକୁ ଦଶବର୍ଷ ତଳେ ବଦଳି ହୋଇ ଆସିଥିଲେ ସ୍ୱାମୀ ସତ୍ୟାନନ୍ଦ, ପୁଅ ସମାନ୍ତ ଓ ଝିଅ ଶୁଚି ସହିତ । ସେତେବେଳେ ଏଇ ସାମନା ଘରେ ରହୁଥିଲେ ଶ୍ୟାମଳା, ତାଙ୍କ ସ୍ୱାମୀ କୃଷ୍ଣ ରାଓ, ପୁଅ ବିକ୍ରମ ଓ ଝିଅ ଅନିମିତା । ପ୍ରଥମେ ପ୍ରଥମେ ପଦ୍ମଜାଙ୍କୁ ଏ ନୂଆ ଯାଗା ଏତେ ଭଲ ଲାଗୁନଥିଲା । ଓଡ଼ିଶାଠାରୁ ପ୍ରଥମଥର ପାଇଁ ସେ ବାହାରେ ଗୋଟି ରଖିଛନ୍ତି । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଛଡ଼ା ଅନ୍ୟ ଭାଷା ତାଙ୍କୁ ଜଣାନାହିଁ । ସବୁ ଖାପଛଡ଼ା ଲାଗୁଥାଏ । ପିଲାମାନେ ବି ପ୍ରଥମେ ପ୍ରଥମେ ସେତେ ଖୁସି ନଥିଲେ; କିନ୍ତୁ ପରେ ପରେ ସାଙ୍ଗ ସାଥୀ ପାଇ, ବିଶେଷ କରି ବିକ୍ରମ ଓ ଅନିମିତାଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ମିଶିବା ପରେ ସେମାନେ ପୁର୍ବାସକୁ ଫେରି ଆସିଥିଲେ ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ପଦ୍ମଜା ! ତାଙ୍କୁ ବି କଣ ଏମିତି ଏକା ଏକା ସାରା ଜୀବନ ରହିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ । ଅଳ୍ପ ବୟସରେ ସାଙ୍ଗ ସାଥୀ କରିବାଟା ଯେତେ ସହଜ ହୋଇଥାଏ, ବୟସ ବଢ଼ିଗଲେ ଏତେ ସହଜରେ ହୋଇପାରେନା । ପଦ୍ମଜା ଯେତେବେଳେ ଏ ଘରକୁ ମୁଲ୍ କରି ଆସିଥିଲେ ସେତେବେଳେ ଶ୍ୟାମଳା ନଥିଲେ ଘରେ । ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କୁ ସ୍ୱାମୀଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ଛାଡ଼ି ପଢ଼ାପଢ଼ି ଯୋଗୁ ଯାଇଥିଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ବାପଘରକୁ । ତେଣୁ ପଦ୍ମଜାଙ୍କର ଦେଖା ହୋଇନଥିଲା ଶ୍ୟାମଳାଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ । ଘରେ ମା' ନ ଥିବାରୁ ବିକ୍ରମ ଓ ଅନିମିତା ବେଶି ବେଶି ଆସୁଥିଲେ ପଦ୍ମଜାଙ୍କ ଘରକୁ । ତାଙ୍କ ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ମିଶିବାକୁ । ଯାହାହେଉ ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କୁ ସାଙ୍ଗ ମିଳିଗଲା । କେବଳ ସେ ଚିତ୍ତିତ ଥିଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ସେ ଚିନ୍ତା ବେଶିଦିନ ତାଙ୍କର ରହିନଥିଲା । ଶ୍ୟାମଳା ଯେ ଏତେ ମିଶାଣିଆ ଲୋକ ପଦ୍ମଜାଙ୍କ ଅନୁମାନର ବାହାରେ । ଅଧା ହିମି, ଅଧା ତେଲଗୁ

ମିଶାମିଶି ଭାଷା, ପଦ୍ମଜାଙ୍କର ବି ଅଧା ହିମି, ଅଧା ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ କଥାବାଣୀ ଚାଲିଲା । ସାଙ୍ଗେ ସାଙ୍ଗେ ଇଡଲି, ଦୋଷା, ସମ୍ବର, ଚକୁଳି ପିଠା, ମଧ୍ୟ ପିଠା, ଆରିଣା ପିଠା, ଡାଲିମାଉଁ ବିନିମୟ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇଗଲା । କେଉଁ ଜନୁରୁ ସତେ କି ଚିହ୍ନା ପରିତୟ, ପ୍ରାୟତଃ ଏକା ବୟସ, ଏକା ପରି ପରିବାର । ଏତେ ସାମ୍ୟ ଭିତରେ ସ୍ନେହ, ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧା ସୁତଃ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣିତ ହେବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲା ।

ସକାଳର ରୋଷେଇ ବାସ, ଖାଇବା ପରେ ପିଲାମାନେ ଖୁଲ ଓ ସ୍ୱାମୀ ଅଫିସ୍ ଚାଲିଯିବା ପରେ ବାକି ସବୁ ସମୟ ତାଙ୍କ ନିଜର । ବାହାରେ ଚୌକିଦିଟା ପକେଇଦେଇ ବା ବାଡ଼ିପଟେ ଚାଦର ବିଛେଇଦେଇ ଏକ ନୂତନ ଭାଷା ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ କେତେଯୁଗର, କେତେଗପର ବିନିମୟ କରିଚାଲନ୍ତି ସେ ଓ ଶ୍ୟାମଳା । ସିଲେଇ, ଆଚାର, ବଡ଼ି, ପାମ୍ପଡ଼ ତିଆରି ଆଉ କେବେ କେବେ ପକୋଡ଼ା, ଚା, କଫି ବା ସରବତ । ସେତେବେଳେ ଯାହା ମିଳିଲା । ଛଅବର୍ଷ କଟି ଯାଇଥିଲା ଛଅଦିନ ପରି ।

ଶେଷରେ ଆସିଲା ସେଇ କାଳଦିନଟି । ଯେଉଁଦିନ କି ଶ୍ୟାମଳାଙ୍କର ସ୍ୱାମୀଙ୍କର ଆସିଥିଲା ବଦଳି ଆଦେଶ । ନଦୀ ପରି ଲୁହ ବହି ଯାଇଥିଲା ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କ ଆଖିରୁ । ସର୍ବଦା ଅସହ୍ୟ ବିଦାୟ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତଟି ଦୁଇଜଣଙ୍କ ଛାତିରେ ଏକାପରି ଯନ୍ତ୍ରଣା ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିଥିଲା । ଶ୍ୟାମଳା ଯିବାର ପରଦିନ ପଦ୍ମଜା ମାସକ ପାଇଁ ବାପଘରକୁ ଚାଲି ଯାଇଥିଲେ । ବାପଘରୁ ଫେରିଲା ପରେ ଶ୍ୟାମଳା ରହୁଥିବା ଘରେ ଏକ ନୂତନ ଦମ୍ପତିଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖି କିଛିଟା ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହେଲେ ପଦ୍ମଜା । ଭାବୁଥିଲେ ଦୁଏତ ଘରଟା ଖାଲି ପଡ଼ିଥିବ । ଯିଏ ଦୁଅନ୍ତୁନା କାହିଁକି ପଡ଼ୋଶୀ ତ । ତାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ସ୍ନେହ ସହାନୁଭୂତିର ସଂପର୍କ ରଖିବା ଭଲ । ସେ ଏଠିକୁ ଆସିଲା ବେଳେ ଶ୍ୟାମଳାଙ୍କ ପରି ପ୍ରତିବେଶୀ ଯଦି ତାଙ୍କୁ ମିଳି ନଥାନ୍ତେ ତେବେ ତାଙ୍କ ଜୀବନ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଦୁର୍ଦ୍ଦିପହ ହୋଇଥାନ୍ତା । ଶ୍ୟାମଳାଙ୍କର ଏ ମହତ୍ ଗୁଣଟି ନିଜ ଜୀବନର ଏକ ଆଦର୍ଶ ପଥ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶକ । ସେ ତାକୁ ଏଇ ନୂତନ ପଡ଼ୋଶୀଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରୟୋଗ କରିବେ । ସ୍ୱାମୀ ସତ୍ୟାନନ୍ଦଙ୍କ ଠାରୁ ଅବଗତ ହେଲେ ଯେ ତନ୍ମୁଣୀ ଓ ରଂଜିତ୍ ଏଇ ଦୁଇ ସଭ୍ୟ ହେବ ମୂଲ୍ କରିଛନ୍ତି ଏଠାକୁ । ଖୁବ୍ ଖୁସି ହୋଇଗଲେ ପଦ୍ମଜା । ଯାହା ହେଉ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଆଉ ଏକାଏକା ଲାଗିବନି । କେହି ଜଣେ ମିଳିବେ ତ ଗପିବାକୁ ଟିକେ; ହେଉ ପଛେ ବୟସରେ ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ ସାମ ତାଙ୍କଠାରୁ ।

ନୂତନ ପରିତୟର ପ୍ରଥମ ସମ୍ପାଷଣକୁ ସେ ଗରମାଗରମ୍ ସିଙ୍ଗଡ଼ା ଓ ଚା' ଦ୍ୱାରା ଆପ୍ୟାୟିତ କରିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଥିଲେ । ମନ ଚାହୁଁଥିବା ଭେଟି ସଙ୍ଗରେ ନୂତନ ପଡ଼ୋଶୀ ପାଖକୁ ଗଲେ ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧା ସମ୍ମାନ ଟିକେ ବେଶି ମିଳିବ । ପିଲାମାନେ ତ ଏବେ କଲେଜ ହୁଙ୍ଗେଲେ । ଘରେ କେବଳ ସ୍ୱାମୀ ସତ୍ୟାନନ୍ଦ ଓ ସେ

ସେଉଁ ଲୋକ ସ୍ନେହ, ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧାର ମୂଲ୍ୟ ବୁଝେ, ତାର ମୂଲ୍ୟ ଦିଏ, ସେ ଯେ କୌଣସି ଉପାୟରେ ସ୍ନେହର ରଣ ଶୁଝିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରେ ।

। ସମୟ ହାତରେ ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ । ସ୍ୱାମୀ ଅଫିସ୍ ଚାଲିଗଲା ପରେ ଗରମ-ଗରମ ସିଙ୍ଗଡ଼ା ଛାଣି ବସିଲେ ପଦ୍ମଜା । ନିଜେ ବି ସକାଳୁ କିଛି ଭଲକରି ଖାଇ ନଥିଲେ ସିଙ୍ଗଡ଼ା ଲୋଭରେ । କଲିଫୋର ଚିପିଲେ ପଦ୍ମଜା । ଥରେ, ଦିଅର, ତିନିଥରରେ ହାଇ ମାରିମାରି କବାଟ ଖୋଲିଲା ଝିଅଟି । "ଆରେ ଆଣ୍ଡି ଜି ! ସକାଳୁ ସକାଳୁ ଏତେ କଣ୍ଠକାହିଁକି କଲେ ମୋ ପାଇଁ । ଲାନାୟିତ ଆଖିରେ ହାତରୁ ସିଙ୍ଗଡ଼ା ପେଟ୍ ଓ ଚା' କପ୍ ନେଇ ଘର ଭିତରକୁ ଚାଲିଗଲା ଝିଅଟି ଚେରୁଲୁ ଉପରେ ରଖିବା ପାଇଁ । ବାହାରେ ସେମିତି ଠିଆ ହୋଇଥାନ୍ତି ପଦ୍ମଜା । ବିନା ନିମନ୍ତରେ ଭିତରକୁ ଯିବେ କି ନାହିଁ ଭାବୁଥାନ୍ତି । ଏଇ ଘର ଭିତରକୁ କେତେଥର ଯେ ସେ ପଶିଛନ୍ତି ବିନା ନିମନ୍ତରେ, ଅବାଧରେ, ସକାଳ, ରାତିରେ ତାର ହିସାବ ନାହିଁ । ଘର ଭିତରଟା ଅଧାର । ପରଦା ସବୁ ଖୋଲା ହୋଇନି ଏଯାଏ । ଦିନ ଆସି ଦଶଟା ବାଜିଲାଣି । ତା ପାଇଁ ସକାଳ ହୋଇଛି । କ'ଣ କରିବେ, କ'ଣ କହିବେ ଭାବୁଛନ୍ତି ପଦ୍ମଜା । ଝିଅଟି ଫେରିଆସି ପ୍ରେଟ୍ ପରେ ଫେରଲେ ଦେବ କହି କବାଟ ଆଉକେଇ ଦେଲା । ମନଟା ଦବିଗଲା ପଦ୍ମଜାଙ୍କର । ମୁହଁଟା ରାଗରେ ଲାଲ୍ ବି ହୋଇଗଲା । ଇଏ କି ପ୍ରକାର ଭଦ୍ରାମଣି, କି ପ୍ରକାର ପଡ଼ୋଶୀ ଖାତିର । ଆଉ କେବେ ଏପରି ଆସିବେ ନାହିଁ । ଶପଥ କରି ଫେରିଆସିଲେ ଘରକୁ । କିଛିଦିନ ଗଲା, ମନ ବୁଝିଲାଣି । ମନେ ମନେ କ୍ଷମା କରିଦେଲେ ଝିଅଟିକୁ । ତାଙ୍କ ନିଜ ଝିଅଠାରୁ ଛା/ସାତ ବର୍ଷ ହୁଏତ ବଡ଼ ହୋଇଥିବ । ନୂଆ ନୂଆ ବାହା ହୋଇଛି । ଜଣାନାହିଁ ଆଦବକାଇଦା କିଛି । ଛାଡ଼, ସେ ତା' ଠାରୁ ବୟସରେ ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ ବଡ଼ । କଥାକୁ ଧରି ବସିଲେ କଣ ଚଳିହେବ ? ତାଙ୍କର ତ ବେଶି ଦରକାର ଜଣେ

ଗପ ସାଥୀ । ସ୍ନେହର ଉତ୍ତମ ଝର୍କିବେ କେତେ ଯେ ବରଫ ପାହାଡ଼ ତରଳିଛି, ଇଏ ଜିବା ମାତ୍ର ।

ପୁଣି ଥରେ ପଦ୍ମା ତାଙ୍କର ଦବାନବା ରୀତିକୁ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ କରିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କଲେ । କେବେ ପିଠାପଣା ତ, କେବେ ତରକାରି , କେବେ ବଡ଼ି ତ କେବେ ଆଚାର । ଧୀରେ ଧୀରେ ଝିଅଟି ଆପଣେଇ ହେବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରୁଛି । କିଛିକିଛି ଗପ ମଧ୍ୟ ସମୟେ ଅସମୟେ ଆସି କରିଯାଉଛି । ସବୁଠାରୁ ବେଶି ଭଲଲାଗେ ପଦ୍ମାକୁ ଝିଅଟିର ମିଠାମିଠା ହୁଏ । ଯେତେବେଳେ ଦେଖିଲେ ଆଖିକି କହି ହୁଏଦିଏ । ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣମୀର ଜନ୍ମଠାରୁ ଆହୁରି ସୁମଧୁର ସେ ହୁଏ । ବିନା ମୂଲ୍ୟରେ କିଣି ହୋଇପଡ଼ୁଛି ପଦ୍ମା । ବେଶି ବେଶି ଖାଇବାଜିନିଷ ତିଆରିକରି ଦେଇଆସନ୍ତି ; କିଛି ପ୍ରତ୍ୟାଶା ନରଖି ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ସେଦିନ ହଠାତ୍ ତାଙ୍କ ଛାତି ଧାଉଁକିନା ହୋଇଗଲା ଝିଅଟିର ବାନ୍ଧବୀଗଣରେ । ସେଦିନ ରାତି ନଅଟାରେ ତା ତିଆରି ପାଇଁ ଚିନି ସରିଯାଇ ଥିବାରୁ ସେ ସାମନା ଘରକୁ ଆସିଥିଲେ ଚିନି ଉଧାର ମାଗିବାକୁ । କଲିଫୋରନା ବିପିବା ପୁରୁରୁ ସେ ସେଇଠି ଅଟକି ଯାଇଥିଲେ । ତନୁଶ୍ରୀର ଅଭିଯୋଗ ତା'ର ସ୍ୱାମୀ ପାଖରେ ଯେତେ ଶୀଘ୍ର ପାର ଏ ଘରୁ ଅନ୍ୟ ଏକ ଘରକୁ ଚାଲି ଯିବାକୁ । ଏ ବୁଢ଼ୀ, ମରହଟ୍ଟା ପଡ଼ୋଶୀଠାରୁ ସେ ମୁକ୍ତି ଚାହେଁ । କାହିଁକି ସେ ଗୁଡ଼ାଏ ଖାଇବା ଆଣିଦେଇ ତା'ର ମହନୀୟତା ଦେଖେଇ ହଉଛି । ତନୁଶ୍ରୀକୁ ଫେପାଡ଼ିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ୁଛି ସେ ଖାଦ୍ୟସବୁ । ଅନ୍ୟ ହାତର ଜୀବାଣୁପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଖାଦ୍ୟ ଖାଇବାକୁ ସେ ଘୃଣାକରେ । ଅପକ ଆଉ କିଛି ଶୁଣିବାକୁ ପଦ୍ମାଙ୍କ ଦେହରେ ପ୍ରାଣ ନଥିଲା । ବହୁକଷ୍ଟରେ ଅଟକି ପାଦକୁ ନେଇ ସେ ଫେରିଥିଲେ ଘରକୁ ।

ସେବେଠାରୁ ସେ ପଡ଼ିଶା ଘରକୁ ଆଡ଼ୁଆଖିରେ ବି ଚାହିଁ ନାହାଁନ୍ତି କେବେ । ଯଦି କେବେ ଏକାକୀ ଲାଗେ ସେ ଚାଲିଚାଲି ଯାଆନ୍ତି ପଛେ ସୁଖବିନ୍ଦର ମା' ପାଖକୁ ଚିନିମହୁଲା ଉପରକୁ ଚଢ଼ି ଆରପଟ ବିଲଡିଂକୁ, କିନ୍ତୁ ପଡ଼ୋଶୀଘରକୁ ନୁହେଁ । ସୁଖବିନ୍ଦର ମା'ଟି ବୁଢ଼ୀ ହୋଇଗଲାଣି । ତେଣୁ ଚିନିମହୁଲା ଉପର ଓଲେଇ ପୁଣି ଦୁଇଟା ବିଲଡିଂ ପାରହୋଇ ପଦ୍ମା ପାଖକୁ ଆସିବାକୁ ତାଙ୍କୁ କଷ୍ଟହୁଏ । ସେ ଆସିପାରନ୍ତିନି ସତ; କିନ୍ତୁ ସୁଖବିନ୍ଦର ହେଉ ବା ନାତି ଅରବିନ୍ଦ ହେଉ, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ହାତରେ ଯୋରିଷଶାଗ ତରକାରୀ, ମଞ୍ଜାରୋଟି, ମୁଳା ପରାଠା ପଚୋଇବାକୁ ଭୁଲନ୍ତିନି ।

ଯେଉଁ ଲୋକ ସ୍ନେହ, ଶୁଣାର ମୂଲ୍ୟ ବୁଝେ, ତା'ର ମୂଲ୍ୟ ଦିଏ, ସେ ଯେ କୌଣସି ଉପାୟରେ ସ୍ନେହର ରଣ ଶୁଣିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରେ । ଏତକ କେମିତି ତାଙ୍କ ମୁଖରେ ପଶିଲାନି । ସେ କେବଳ ସ୍ନେହ ଚିକେ ପାଇବାପାଇଁ ନବୁଝି ନବିଚାରି ପଥର ହୃଦୟ, ସ୍ନେହର ମୂଲ୍ୟ ନ ବୁଝିଥିବା ଝିଅ ଉପରେ ତାଙ୍କ ସ୍ନେହଶ୍ରୀକୁ ଅଗାଡ଼ି ଚାଲୁଥିଲେ । ସେ ଚାଲିଚାଲି କଥା ଦି ପଦ

ଏବେ ବି ମନେପଡ଼ିଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ଆଖି ଓଦା ହୋଇଯାଏ । ଶ୍ୟାମଳା କଥା ବି ମନେ ପଡ଼ିଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ଆଖି ଓଦା ହୋଇଯାଏ । ଏ ଆଖିଟା ଯେ କେଜାଣି କେମିତି ? ଯାହାକୁ ଭଲ ପାଇଲା ତା ପାଇଁ କାନ୍ଦିଲା; ଯାହାକୁ ଘୃଣାକଲା ତା କଥାରେ ବି କାନ୍ଦିଲା; ଠିକ୍ ପଦ୍ମାଙ୍କ ପରି ।

ତେଣୁ ଆଜି ଏଇ ତରୁଣ ଦମ୍ପତ୍ତିଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖି ତାଙ୍କର କୌଣସି ପ୍ରତିକ୍ରିୟା ହେଲା ନାହିଁ । ଘରଟା ଖାଲି ପଡ଼ିଥିଲା । ଆସନ୍ତୁ, ରୁହନ୍ତୁ ଯିଏ, କ'ଣ ମିଳୁଛି ତାଙ୍କୁ ସେ ପଡ଼ୋଶୀ-ଫଡ଼ୋଶୀରୁ । ଅକାଳେ, ସକାଳେ ଲୁଣ, ତେଲ ସରିଗଲେ ଯିବେ ପଛେ ଆଉ କାହାଘରକୁ ଧାରଉଧାର ପାଇଁ; ନିକଟତମ ପଡ଼ୋଶୀ ସହିତ ସଂପର୍କ ବଢ଼େଇ ଆଉ ଅପମାନିତ ହେବେ ନାହିଁ ।

ସେମାନେ ଆସିବାର ମାସେ ହୋଇଗଲାଣି, ଯାଇନାହାନ୍ତି ପଦ୍ମା ଦେଖାକରିବାକୁ । ସେମାନଙ୍କ କବାଟ ଖୋଲାହେବାର ଶବ୍ଦ ଶୁଣିଲେ ହିଁ ସେ ବନ୍ଦ କରିଦିଅନ୍ତି ନିଜ କବାଟ, ଝରକା । ସେଦିନ କିନ୍ତୁ ତାଙ୍କ କଲିଫୋରନା ଅବେଳରେ ଶୁଣି, କବାଟ ଖୋଲି ସେ ଆଖ୍ୟର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହୋଇଥିଲେ ସାମନା ପଡ଼ୋଶୀ ମାଧୁରୀକୁ ଦେଖି । ନମସ୍କାର ପରେ କହିଥିଲା ମାଧୁରୀ, “ଆସନ୍ତୁ ନା ମାଉସୀ, ଭଲ ସିନେମା ଦେଖାଉଛି ଟିଭିରେ, ଦେଖିବେ ମୋ ସଙ୍ଗେ । ଘରଟା ଭିତରେ ଏକାଏକା ବସି କ'ଣ କରୁଛନ୍ତି ? ମତେ ବି ସାଙ୍ଗ ମିଳୁଛି ଏକାଠି ବସି ସିନେମା ଦେଖିବାକୁ ।” ଏଣେ ତା' କଥା ନ ସରଣୁ ଚାରିବର୍ଷର ପୁଅ ତା'ର ହଠାତ୍ ପଦ୍ମାଙ୍କ ହାତଧରି ଚାଣିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲାଣି । ବେଶୀ ସମୟ କ'ଣ ଲାଗେ ପଦ୍ମାଙ୍କୁ ସ୍ନେହ ନଦୀ ସନ୍ତରଣ କରିବାକୁ ?

ମାଧୁରୀର ଘର ଭିତରକୁ ପଶିଯାଇ ଆଖ୍ୟର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହୋଇଥିଲେ ସେ । ଟିଭି ପାଖରେ ଆଗରୁ ସଜଡ଼ା ହୋଇରହିଛି ଅନେକ ପ୍ରକାର ଖାଦ୍ୟ, ପାନୀୟ, ମିକ୍ସଚର, ଫଳ, ମିଠା, ବିସ୍କୁଟ୍ ।

ଚାଲିଲା ଦିଆନିଆ ପୁଣି ଥରେ । ତରୁଣବୟସ ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ତାଙ୍କ ମନରେ ଯେଉଁ ଭୁଲ୍ ଧାରଣା ଥିଲା ତା' ସତ ନୁହେଁ । ସ୍ନେହ, ଶୁଣାଟା ବୟସର ସୀମାରେଖାରେ ଆବଶ୍ୟ ନୁହେଁ । ସେ ଯେ କେତେ ଦୁର୍ମୂଲ୍ୟ, ତାହା କେହିକେହି ଅନୁଭବ କରନ୍ତି ; କେହିକେହି କରିପାରନ୍ତିନି ।

ଆଜି ଯଦି ପାଖରେ ଶ୍ୟାମଳା କେଉଁଠି ଥା'ନ୍ତେ ତେବେ ଜମିଯା'ନ୍ତା ତାଙ୍କର ଅଳସ ଅପରାହ୍ଣ ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଅନେକ ମିଠାଗପର ଗୁଞ୍ଜରଣରେ । ତା ପରଠୁ ମାଧୁରୀ ଓ ପଦ୍ମାଙ୍କ ବନ୍ଧୁ ନିବିଡ଼ତର ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲା ସ୍ନେହ, ସମ୍ପ୍ରାଣର ଆବାନପ୍ରବାନରେ । ବୟସର ଏ ବ୍ୟବଧାନର ସୁରୁଜ ବନ୍ଧିତ ଭୁଷ୍ଟି ପଡ଼ିଥିଲା ସ୍ନେହ, ଶୁଣାର ବନ୍ୟାଜଳରେ । ସେଦିନ ପଦ୍ମା ବୁଝିଥିଲେ ସ୍ନେହ, ଶୁଣାର ମୂଲ୍ୟ ବୁଝିବାକୁ ହେଲେ ହୃଦୟ ଦରକାର, ବୟସ ନୁହେଁ ।

(ଶାନ୍ତିଲତା ମିଶ୍ର ରୋଚେଷ୍ଟ, ମିନେସୋଟାରେ ରହନ୍ତି । ଓସା ବାର୍ଷିକ ସଂକଳନରେ ତାଙ୍କର ଲେଖା ପ୍ରତିବର୍ଷ ନିୟମିତ ଭାବେ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ ହୋଇଆସୁଛି ।)

ପ୍ରକୃତି ସୁମିତ୍ରା ପାଢ଼ୀ

କି ବିସ୍ମୟକର ଅଟେ ଲୀଳା ତୋର ହେ ସୁନ୍ଦରୀ ପ୍ରକୃତିରାଣୀ
କାଳ, ସ୍ଥାନ, ସମୟ ପ୍ରଭାବେ ବିରାଜୁଥାଉ ଧରି ଭିନ୍ନ ଭିନ୍ନ ଠାଣି ।
କେବେ ସଜେଇ ହୋଇଥାଉ ତୁହି ମନୋରମ ସବୁଜ ପୋଷାକରେ
କେତେ ରଙ୍ଗ ସଦ୍ୟପୁଷ୍ପ ଶୋଭା ପାଉଥାଆନ୍ତି ତୋର ଜୁଡ଼ାରେ ।
ସାଧବ ବୋହୂ, ଭ୍ରମର ଓ ପ୍ରଜାପତି ତେଉଁଥାଆନ୍ତି ତୋ ବୁକୁରେ
କେବେ ଅବା ଶୋଭାପାଉ ଫସ୍ତୁଆ ରଶ୍ମି ଓ ମୁକୁତା ବିନ୍ଦୁରେ ।
ପୁଣି କେବେ ଉତ୍ତମ ହୋଇ ଭରୁ ଆମ୍ବୁକୂଳେ ଓ କୋକିଳ ଗହଣେ
ବର୍ଷାର ଆଗମେ ଝଲକୁଥାଉ କେକୀରାଣୀର ନୃତ୍ୟ ସ୍ୱନ୍ଦନେ ।
ତୁଷାରାଛନ୍ନ ହୋଇ କେବେ ଉପୁଜାଉ ସ୍ୱର୍ଗୀୟ ଅଲୌକିକ ଶୋଭା
ବରଫଗୁଣ୍ଡ ବୃକ୍ଷେ କାଚ କାଞ୍ଚନର ସଂଯୋଗ କରୁଥାଏ ରବି ଆଭା ।
ତୁହିନି ପର୍ବତ ଶିଖରେ ଘନବନେ ବିକଶିତ ହୁଏ ବହୁ ରମଣୀୟ ଛବି
ସତେଜି ସୁରଶିଳ୍ପୀ ତୁଷାର ରେଖାରେ ଆଙ୍କେ କେତେ କଅଣ ଭାବି ।
କ୍ଷଣକେ କୋପ ହୋଇ ଧରୁ ପୁଣି କରାଳ ବିଭିଷିକାର ରୂପ
ଭୂମିକଂପ, ଜୁଆର ଓ ଭଙ୍ଗାରେ କରିଦେଉ ମାନବ ସୃଷ୍ଟିକୁ ଲୋପ ।

ସୁମିତ୍ରା ପାଢ଼ୀ ବର୍ଲିନରେ, କାନାଡ଼ାରେ ରହନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କର ଲେଖା ନିୟମିତ ଭାବେ ଓସା ପତ୍ରିକାରେ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ ହୋଇଆସୁଛି ।

ଜନ୍ମ ଏକ କବିତାର

ବେଳେ ବେଳେ, ମନେ ଜଳେ,
ଅଗ୍ନିଶିଖା-ବିଦୋହର ନିଆଁ,
ଏତେ ଜଡ଼ ଉଦାସୀନ,
ହୁଅ ତୁମେ କିଆଁ ?

ଏତେ ପ୍ରେମ ଆରାଧନା
ଶୁଭା- ନିବେଦନ,
ଉତ୍ତର ମିଳେନା କିଛି,
ନାହିଁ ପ୍ରତିଦାନ ।

ଶୁନ୍ୟରେ ବିଲୀନ ହୁଏ
ନାହିଁ ପ୍ରତିଫଳ,
ନିରୁତ୍ତର ନିରୁଦ୍‌ବେଗ,
ହେ ପରମେଶ୍ୱର !

NANDA KISHORE SATPATHY

ସ୍ମୃତି ତୁମେ ଅଛ ମୋର ସାଥେ ସାଥେ
ଜୀବନର ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ପାହାଚେ,
ସମୟର ତାଳେ ତାଳେ ଦେଖା ହୁଏ ତୁମ ସଙ୍ଗେ
ଉଭୟ ଆନନ୍ଦ ଓ ବିଷାଦ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତେ !!!

ସ୍ମରଣ କରାଅ ମୋତେ ତୁମେ ବାରମ୍ବାର
ସୁମଧୁର ସେଇ ଅଭୁଳା ଅତୀତ,
ପିଲାଦିନେ ଗାଁ ଦାଣ୍ଡେ ବାଲିଘର ଖେଳ,
ଗ୍ରୀଷ୍ମଛୁଟି, ରଜଦୋଳି, ସାଙ୍ଗସାଥୀ ମେଳ,
ଅଜା, ଆଇ, ମାମୁଁଙ୍କର ସେନେହ ଆଦର,
ସଞ୍ଜବେଳେ ବୁଢ଼ୀମା'ର ଗପର ଆସର,
କେତେ ଆନନ୍ଦରେ ସତେ ବିତିଗଲା ଜୀବନ ସକାଳ!!!

ଏଇତ!! କାଲିପରି ହୁଅଇ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟୟ,
ପ୍ରତିଯୋଗିତାର ସଙ୍ଗେ ସଙ୍ଗେ ଅନ୍ୟନ୍ୟ,
କୃତ୍ରିମ ପ୍ରଦାନ କଲା ଅସୀମ ଆନନ୍ଦ,
ସୀମାହୀନ ତ୍ୟାଗ, ନିଷ୍ଠା ପିତାମାତାଙ୍କର,
କର୍ମର ପ୍ରେରଣା ତାଙ୍କ ଅଦମ୍ୟ ଉତ୍ସାହ,
ତା ସଙ୍ଗେ ମ୍ନେହାଶୀଷ ଗୁରୁଜନଙ୍କର,
ମଧୁର ସପନ ଭାଇଭଉଣୀ ବନ୍ଧନ,

PRIYADARSIN SATHPATHY, Imperial Valley, California

ସତେ କି ନିଃସ୍ୱଳ ସବୁ,
ବ୍ୟର୍ଥ ସବୁ ଶୁଭାର ଆବେଗ;
ଯନ୍ତ୍ର ପରି, ମୁଢ଼ ପରି,
ଆଚରଣ ତବ !

ତେବେ.....?
ତୁମ ସହ ମୋ ଚିନ୍ତାର ଏ ଯେଉଁ ସଂଯୋଗ
କିପରି ସୃଜିଲା ମନେ,
ଅତୀତ୍ରିୟ ଏଇ ଭାବର ତରଙ୍ଗ;
କିଏ ଚଳାଇଲା
ହାତେ ମୋର ଲେଖନୀର ଧାରା ?
ଜନ୍ମ ନେଲା ଏଇ କ୍ଷୁଦ୍ର କବିତାଟି ;
ମଧୁମୟ ଦିବ୍ୟ ତୁମ ପ୍ରତିଧ୍ୱନି ଭରା ।

ସ୍ମୃତି!!!

ଭୁଲିନାହିଁ କିଛି ମୁଁତ ଅଛି ସବୁ ମନ ।

ଜିବନର ରଙ୍ଗମଧ୍ୟେ କରି ଅଭିନୟ,
ବାଲ୍ୟ, କୈଶୋର, ଯୌବନ କଲି ଅତିକ୍ରମ,
ନିଭାଇଲି ପତ୍ନୀ ଏବଂ ଗୃହିଣୀର ଧର୍ମ,
ପୁଲକଭରା ମାତୃତ୍ୱ ଲଭି ହେଲି ଧନ୍ୟ,
କେତେ ପୁଣି ଝଡ଼ ଝଞ୍ଜ ଉତ୍ଥାନ ପଞ୍ଚନ,
ସର୍ବତ୍ର ଦିଶଇ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ତୁମ ପଦଚିହ୍ନ ।

ହେ ସ୍ମୃତି!!!
ତୁମେ କେତେବେଳେ ଭରିଦିଅ ଉଲ୍ଲାସର ଢେଉ,
ପୁଣି କେତେବେଳେ ବୁଢ଼ାଅ ଅଶ୍ରୁର ଝରଣା,
କେତେବେଳେ ଦେଖାଅ ତୁମେ ଆଶାର ଆଲୋକ,
ପୁଣି ଭରିଦିଅ ହୃଦୟରେ ଭୟ ଓ ଆଶଙ୍କା ।
ବ୍ୟତୀତ ସମୟ ଆଉ ଫେରିବାର ନାହିଁ,
ଭୁଲିବାକୁ ଚାହିଁ ମନ୍ଦ୍ୟ ଭୁଲିହୁଏ ନାହିଁ,
ସ୍ମୃତି, ତୁମେ ଚିର ସତ୍ୟ ଅକ୍ଷୟ ଅମର,
ତୁମେ ହିଁ ପ୍ରେରଣା ମୋର ଆଗାମୀ ଦିନର ।



Oriya Poetry Quotes

ଦୁନିଆର ହାଟେ କୋଟି ହୀରା ନୀଳା,
ମୋତି ମାଣିକର ତୁଲ
ମାଟିର ପିତୁଳା ଗଢି ରଖି ଦେଲି,
କିଏ ପଚାରିବ ମୁଲ

- **କାଳିନ୍ଦୀ ଚରଣ ପାଣିଗ୍ରାହୀ, ମାଟିର ମଣିଷ**

ଝଟ ଠାରୁ ସେ ଯେ ବଡ଼,
ମେଘ ଠାରୁ ଆହୁରି ସେ କଳା
ସାନ ଦେହେ ଖେଳେ ତାର
ଜୀବନର ଅଲିଭା ଚପଳା
ରାତି ପରି ହୁଏ ବାଟ ବଣା
ପଥ ଭୁଲି ଏଣେ ତେଣେ ବହିଯାଏ,



ସେ ପରା ଝରଣା
ଛୋଟ ପୁଣି ଏତେ ସେ ବିରାଟ
ଜୀବନ ପାରିଲା ନାହିଁ ରଖି ତାକୁ,
ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ତାରେ ଛାଡି ଦେଲା ବାଟ
ଲୁହାର ଫଉଜ ଗଲେ ଫାଟି
ମାଟିର ମଣିଷ ସେ ଯେ କାହିଁ ଗଲା
ମାଟି ଖାଲି ମାଟି

- **ସଚ୍ଚିଦାନନ୍ଦ ରାଉତରାୟ, ବାଜି ରାଉତ**

କାହିଁକି ଅନଳରେ ସଲଭ ଜାଣୁ ଜାଣୁ ଝାସଇ
ଆଖିରେ ସ୍ଵୀତ ରେଖା ଜଳାଇ ଦମ୍ଭରେ ଭାଷଇ
ମରଣ ମରିଯିବ ହୃଦୟ ମୁଲକରେ
ଗୋଟିଏ ପଲକରେ, ଚିକିଏ ଝଲକରେ

- **ରାଧାନୋହନ ଗଡନାୟକ, ବିବି ଖାନୁନ୍ ଓ ଶିଳ୍ପୀ**

ପରିବାରୀ-ଜନେ ଦେଖନ୍ତି ସୁହାସ,
ନ ଜାଣନ୍ତି ସେହୁ ବେଦନା ତିଳେ;
ଗ୍ରୀଷମ-ସଂତାପେ ଶୁଖଇ ପଲବ;
ବାଧଇ କି ତାହା ପତତି-ନୀତେ ?

- **ପଣ୍ଡିତ ନୀଳକଣ୍ଠ ଦାସ**

ତୃତୀୟ ସର୍ଗ - ମାୟାଦେବୀ (କୋଣାର୍କେ)

ଜାତି ଇତିହାସ ଜାତିର ନିର୍ଝର
ତହିଁ ବହେ ସଦା ଜାତି ପ୍ରାଣଧାର । ୧।
ସେହି ଧାରୁ ନୀର ପିଏ ଯେଉଁ ନର,
ନିଝେ ହେବ ସେହି ଜାତି କର୍ମବୀର । ୨।
କଳ କଳ ରବେ ଧାଇଁଛି ସେ ଧାର
ଅତୀତ ଗୌରବ ଗାଇ ନିରନ୍ତର । ୩।
ନାଚଇ ଉଦୟେ ଭାବୀ ଉନ୍ମତିର
ଯେହ୍ନେ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରୋଦୟେ ନାଚେ ରତ୍ନାକର । ୪।



- **ମଧୁସୂଦନ ଦାସ, ଉତ୍ପାହ ଓ ପ୍ରେରଣା**

ସମ ବଇଭବେ ଅଛଇ କି ସୁଖ
ବିଷମେ ସିନା ଏ ପରାଣ ଖେଳେ;
ଦିବସେ ହସଇ କାନନ ଧରଣୀ
ରଜନୀ-ତାମସ-ସୁରଣ-ବଳେ ।

- **ପଣ୍ଡିତ ନୀଳକଣ୍ଠ ଦାସ**

ଉପସଂହାର - ମାୟାଦେବୀ (କୋଣାର୍କେ)

ଦେଇଥିଲେ କ୍ଷମା ମିଳେ ତା ଅଧିକ,
ବୁଣିଥିଲେ ପାଇ ଫଳ,
ଅପୂର୍ବ ଏକାକୀ ଜୀବାତ୍ମା ତରଇ
ମୃତ୍ୟୁନଦୀ କ୍ଷମାବଳେ ।
ଦୋଷ ପିପୀଲିକା- ଦଂଶନ ପରାୟେ
ଘଟିଥାଇ ଅନୁକ୍ଷଣ,
ଏକକୁ ମାଇଲେ ଇତର ଦଂଶଇ,
ଜୀବବଧ ଅକାରଣ ।

ଏକ ଅନ୍ତେ ଆସେ ଆନ ପିପୀଲିକା
ମାରିବା ହୁଏ ବିଫଳ,
ପ୍ରତିହିଂସାରୋଗେ ନ ହୋଇ ବିକୃତ,
ହୃଦୟ କର ନିର୍ମଳ ।
କହିବା ଲୋକ ତ ମହତ ନୁହଁଇ,
ମହତ ସହିବା ଜନ,
ସହିଷ୍ଣୁତାହୀନ ବାଳକ ବାଳିକା
ହୁଅନ୍ତି କ୍ରୋଧେ ଅଜ୍ଞାନ ।



- **ନନ୍ଦକିଶୋର ବଳ, ଗର୍ମିଷ୍ଠା**



Flowers of Love

Swadha Rath*¹¹

Forgive me God
For all the times
I have forgotten to thank you

Forgive me Lord
For many a times
I have tried to blame you

I have ignorantly and arrogantly
Questioned your intentions
And doubted your actions

I have childishly and selfishly
You have so patiently and selflessly

Forgiven my mistakes
And forgotten my impertinence

You have kindly and unconditionally
Showered me with love
And blessed me with happiness

I thank you God for your kind support
For filling my garden with flowers of love
Let my love for you be there for ever
Throughout life's joys and sorrows

Demanded your attention
And expected immediate gratification

Beginning and End

Swadha Rath*

For every end there is a beginning
Every beginning has an end
So an end is not really an end
It is just a beginning waiting to happen

As little babies we learn to crawl
We end that when we start to walk
We leave our homes and go to school
Ready to tackle a brand new world

We love our parents more than life
Yet we leave them far behind
We take our spouse's hand in our own
Ready to sing a brand new tune

We leave one city and go to the next
Start our lives all over again
We miss our friends and remember our past
Yet are anxious for a brand new start

We leave our jobs and seek new ones
Ready to prove we are the one
We make new friends and learn new trades
Eagerly looking for brand new breaks

Wonder on the final day
When curtains fall and we leave the stage
Will it be an end without a beginning?
Or just another beginning without an end?

¹¹ An Information Technology Project Manager at Las Vegas.

A Tribute To An Unknown Soldier

- Sachin Shankar Rath *

In the bitter cold of the cruel heights,
You set forth, with the pinnacle of victory in your sight.
Stabbed by the bitterness of a betrayal,
You prepared to fight a battle royale!

Armed with anger and vengeance,
You swore to burn the enemy, in a deathly dance!
Your courage was enough, to inspire many,
But fear, you did not have any!

The enemy was cowardly and invisible,
But your might was simply indestructible!
Carrying on your shoulders, the nation's pride,
None could match your mighty stride!

With bare arms, you prepared to throw them out,
The enemy faced nothing but complete rout.
As the battle to free the motherland began,
“Sarvada Shaktishaali” was your mighty slogan!

The enemy had several, for every bullet from your gun,
But as you moved forward, they were on the run!
They stopped at nothing, to push you back,
But with guns blazing, you stayed on track!

Many a friend fell, and died by your side,
But nothing could stop the human tide!
As the guns boomed, and the bullets sang a frightening number,
You put your foe, to a fatal slumber!

At last, the tricolor flew atop the heights,
And you tasted victory, a soldier's delight!
But even as you shone with all your might,
You cried for those, who were not going home tonight.

We may forget your face and forget your name,

But we will never forget, how you put the enemy to shame!

We will always remember, day after day,
That for our tomorrow, you gave your today.

Lotus Talk

By Vikas Patnaik*

Talk to me...

Talk to me now.

Look into my eyes
And let me know I'm here.

Let our souls interlock
Even if just for a moment,
Like the coupling
of freight cars.

Talk to me...

I care that you're there.
Isn't it good that we're all here,

The myriad petals of
a fragrant Lotus?

Talk to me now

And we'll put
the petals together again,
Breathe the fragrance
for the rest of the day.

International Festival

By
Prativa Mohanty*

The party goes on with loud noises
Many people pass by and many people
change.
The melodies rise and fall along with noise
Dancing goes on with children's voices.
Displays of food from distant lands
Decorated the tables with colorful flags.
Beautiful ladies with beautiful hands
Serve their food that we've never even
known.
People of color from distant lands
Gather around with embracing hands.
Different language of unknown accent
Seems so strange to mingle at the end.

- Board Member, Thrive

The party goes on for hours but four
Beautiful ladies with make up more.
The costumes are bright in colorful shades
It brightens the moment to mingle ahead.
The colorful light that flashes on the face
It brightens the stars on the decorated stage.
In rhythmic dances never one stopped
People enter slowly to line up.
In the new event people of distant lands
To cherish our wishes and to extend our
hands.
Many people we meet in life and many
people go
Few become life's friend and few fade away.



The Immigrants

By
Nirbachita Dash*

We creatures of forgotten lands,
dusting the film of nostalgia from our skins
march on bravely,
white ghosts of living memories
haunt us by daylight
thus our eyes restless, roving
search for a clue
each morning we wake up
with a bundle of frozen longings,
our steps falter and huddle together
and poke the earth gently to
recall the land we came from
envy the things that are rooted

whereas we have evolved into forms
of no feet, but our wings
carry us at our whims
from the familiar landscapes
of narrow alleys and concrete houses
through the hazy layers of time
to the present of unsure hopes
a creature of in between lands,
with faltered and restless eyes.

* has published her poetry in various Journals.



DREAM OR REALITY?

By Twisampati Mitra *

People got together and someone said,
"Let us dream." Dream of a show,
never seen before.

Someone had wild dreams;
Lots of dreams.
Of stars lighting the stage
Of a glitter that could only be dreamt.
Of the moon as spotlight,
that could melt a rock
with its soft light. Someone even dreamt -
he was a leprechaun!
Others prodded, "Dream some more!"
For dreams are not bound.
They are free.

It always starts with a dream...

People had wild dreams.
Dreams that soared higher and higher
And, in all directions.
Dreams of creating a sensation!
Some even split into halves
in their imagination.
One half enjoyed the other
in utter glorification.

Dreams got wilder and noisier.
They even collided with each other.
For the dreams are bound to
The dreamers forever.
The dreamers and the dreams
feed each other.
Does it matter if dreams
don't bear?

In the noise and the din
of dreams and dreamers
people whispered,
"Let's get real" -
People who had dreamt before
And, failed.
People who had become crueler,
with each failure.
In the midst of dreams

The whisper of reality grew louder,
For no reason.
Dreams got mixed up with reality
And people with their roles.
For the day was nearer
and people were anxious
their dreams would soon come
to land on reality.

Will the stars glitter?
Will the moon shine?
Will the bells tinkle?
Will the flowers bloom?
Will they see the rainbow?
Will they see the leprechaun in me?

Today is the day.
The day dreams are supposed to come true.
But, where is dream? Has anyone seen it?
I don't have time. Can you please find it?
I have a role to play and stage to clean,
so others can play.
I have no dreams. I never had one!

Epilogue

They came, they saw and they were happy!
The show is now over.
We played our roles.
We created history;
and now history, will create us
in our thoughts.

As I drove back home,
for a brief time,
I had no thoughts.
Action had exhausted all thoughts.

But soon I saw
A chameleon changing colors;
And I thought
Was it a dream or was it real?



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On Nachiketaa's Third Wish

By Markandeswar Panda*

First of all, I, not being a scholar or a preacher, doubt the codification of religions to fit into an academic discourse or a preaching gospel. However, my understanding of the Indian literature, especially of the Vedas, Maha-puraaNas, Upanishads, and other systems of the orthodox philosophy, lumped together as Hinduism is not that bad. At least, I have read many of the texts in their original language. In general, most scholars have been stuck with the religious aspects of every philosophy they encounter in the ancient Indian literature. Many did not realize that ancient Sanskrit texts are mainly secular philosophical thoughts, which are usually not understood by the staunch supporters of religious orthodoxy. Fortunately, I have trained myself with hard core science, atheism, theosophy, along with a good understanding of other major religions including Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam, Gnosticism, and the Avestaan beliefs. As it is meant for the general readers including very young minds, I would attempt to limit my discussions to the meanings that can be easily comprehended by any English speaking person. Although it would be nice to refrain from citing too many Sanskrit slokas, the necessity of a small number of these need not bother the reader. My translations are not exact but meant to provide some guidance. Neither would I interpret anything beyond the equivalent meaning, nor would I provide strict religious views on the metaphysics. Since there are too many verses in the dialogues, we will skip many without losing continuity. Before discussing the important wish of Nachiketaa, let us introduce ourselves with Upanishads in general, and then with the Kathaa Upanishad that contains the dialogues between Yama and Nachiketaa.

In the sequence of ancient Indian literature, the first list consists of the four Vedas (Rig, Yajur, Saama, and the Atharvan) followed by the BrahmaNas, the AraNyakas, and finally the Upanishads. PuraaNas have a special meaning, and have been regarded as the history of metaphysics rather than the metaphysics itself. When we pass from the Vedic hymns to the Upanishads, we can experience the philosophy moving from nature (objective) into the inquiry of mind (subjective). The specialty of Upanishads is that it is much rigorous in the attempt of exposing the universal laws governing the 'Man' and it's 'Mind' rather than evoking any religious emotion. For reasons of secularism, a better way to unite the common humans and prepare them for the real knowledge, the Upanishads pretend to be universal. In my view, these are preliminary lessons that would prepare a human being for the final truth. However, most of the philosophers had called the combined knowledge as the Vedanta, the end of the Vedas. In fact, these are the beginning of the understanding of the Vedas. Even to date, in the Slaavik languages, Vedas mean science. It is difficult to put an age for the Vedas and PuraaNas, but many scholars have dared to put the period of the Upanishads (at least, the available ones) to be around 900 BCE.

There are many texts available in translation and many in their original Sanskrit texts that are considered as the Upanishads. Scholars ranging from Sankara to Max Muller and all the way to Dr. Radhakrishnan have defined these as principal and ancillary texts. It appears that one can be wise enough to include many texts from the East and West into this group with appropriate arguments. The list would increase beyond the limits of a common mind, which has been limited by nature for the sake of its sanity. One reason is that one cannot transmit data faster than the speed of electronic or photonic vibrations. Also, the numbers of atoms in the universe are limited to record all the events that would happen at the singularity.

Coming back to the story of Nachiketaa, there is a reference about him in the Rig Veda (the Tenth ManDaLa), where Nachiketaa was given to Yama by his father. Then the story comes in the Taittiriya BraahmaNa (III, i, 8). For reasons unknown, the Taittiriya School of the Yajur Veda sets the story in vivid detail, later expanded in the Kathaa Upanishad, also called the Kathakopanishad.

The beginning of the story tells that the Rishi Vaajasravaa, after renouncing everything, was annoyed by his son Nachiketaa. He responded in irritation that he had given his son to Lord Yama. But in reality, Yama, as a great teacher was looking for a deserving student. However, he was not sure whether Nachiketa possessed the subtle knowledge. Therefore, he tested his receptivity. The lord was taken aback when he first met him, because he was away when the young Brahmin was without food for three days at his gate. He addresses Nachiketaa with a prayer granting three boons in exchange of forgiveness. Because the student arrived at his gate in living form, he wanted not to take him in. Fulfilling the first two were easy as these were as follows.

‘That my father be relived of his anger and promise, and accept me gracefully in my living form. Oh lord, this is my first wish’.

‘In the mortal world, as you know, O death, that fire is the aid to heaven. Describe it to me regarding the procedure by which the inhabitants of heaven gain immortality. This I choose, as my second boon’.

Nachiketaa poses the third wish as a question to Yama:

*Yeyam pre'te' vichikitsaa manushye'stity eke' naayam astiiti chaike';
Etat vidyaam anusisTas tvayaaham, varaaNaam eSa varas tritiyah.*

Meaning: For a human being who has departed (from the physical body), there is a belief of his existence and some doubt that. I would be instructed by your knowledge on this; of the three boons this is my third one. (Note 1)

Yama: Even the ancient gods have doubt in this regard and it is not easy to understand that branch of knowledge. Nachiketa, skip this and choose another boon.

Nachiketaa: This you say is not easy to understand and even the gods have doubts about it. Instruct me on this as I would not be able to get a teacher like you, and no other boon would be equivalent to that I have already asked.

Yama: Ask me the things that cannot be attained on this earth by mortals such as the heavenly, unimaginable wealth, and a very long-life. I pray you Nachiketaa; do not seek the knowledge on death. (Note 2)

Nachiketaa: Any mortal on this earth who has a sense of immortality, has meditated on it, cannot delight either in earthly riches or long life. I still seek this knowledge than anything else.

Yama was convinced that he has the right student and starts answering. The following are only the essence and simplistic views of the meaning behind the answers.

The teachings of Yama:

Good and pleasant are two different aspects of one and the same thing, and have different purposes. Both 'good' and 'pleasant' approach a man. The wise chooses the good in preference to the pleasant.

What lies beyond is incomprehensible by those who are deluded by the glamour of wealth. He becomes convinced that this world exists and there is no other, falling again and again into my power. Therefore, wisdom is superior to both earthly and heavenly riches.

Through self-contemplation (known as Adhyaatma yoga) God can be realized in one's heart. The wise realizes this and leaves behind both joy and sorrow.

'Om' is the word, which all Vedas declare; all austerities speak of, and for which students practice bramhacharjya (refraining from sensual thoughts). (Note 3)

The 'knowing self' is never born and the 'self' does not die. It did not evolve from anything and nothing evolved from it. It is eternal (primeval) and is not destroyed when the body is destroyed. (This is later highlighted in the Bhagvaat Gita, II, 20). Smaller than the smallest, and greater than the greatest, 'self' is set in the heart of all living beings. Through the tranquility of mind and senses (dhaatu-prasaadat) one can visualize the greatness of the Self.

*Naayam aatmaa pravachane'na labhyo na medhayaa, na bahunaa shrutena
YamevaiSa bhRuNute', te'na labhyas tasyaiSa aatmaa vivRNute' tanUm svaam.*

Katha Upanishad 1.2.23.

It means that preaching, intellect, or listening to knowledge, one cannot realize the self. The one chosen by it spontaneously self-reveals. According to Radhakrishnan, 'self' as a personal god teaches the doctrine of divine grace.

There are two selves, the inner-self (individual) and the supreme-self; both of them dwell in close relationship with each other (Note 4).

The physical body is the chariot, Atman (self) is the rider, intellect is the charioteer, and mind is the control. The senses are the horses. The paths are many, therefore only those with control over their minds can reach the goal of eternal bliss.

The sequence of what is beyond what it is in the order, objects, senses, mind, understanding, great self, the un-manifest, and the spirit. Beyond the spirit there is nothing and this is the final goal.

The first goal is to find the great self, one need to look inside and not outside to seek it. By mind alone this can be perceived. There is no variety here. It is analogous to the statement that multiplicity of the world does not touch the unity of the Supreme.

The individual self is the swan of the sky, the ether (space between earth and heaven), the priest at the altar, the guest in the house. It dwells in humans, in gods, and in the principles of the cosmos. It is all that born of water, earth, and is the necessary principles of creation.

Some souls seeking embodiment enter into a womb and some enter into stationary objects according to their thoughts and deeds. As the universal fire, that takes a different shape and meaning depending upon the object it burns, the one self within all beings appears different according to whatever it enters.

The thing that stays awake, when others are asleep, shaping desire after desire, is the immortal Brahman. In it the entire world rests and none goes beyond it.

I will conclude it now with a statement from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (IV, 4. 10).

*Andham tamah pravishanti yo'vidyaam upaasate'
Tato bhuuya iva te' tamah ya u vidyaayaam rataah.*

Meaning: Those who practice ignorance enter into blind darkness but those who delight in knowledge enter into even greater darkness.

Note 1: Nachiketaa had no doubt about the meaning of living a life but had doubts regarding the future of the liberated soul.

Note 2: Temptation of Nachiketaa by Mrityu (death) is similar to Buddha's temptation by Mara. The difference in Hinduism and Buddhism regarding this situation is that Yama later becomes the teacher whereas; Mara is evil (temper) and was conquered by the Buddha. It appears that Nachiketaa is already in the path leading to immortality but does not desire it. Instead he is seeking the knowledge of self (atma-vigya), which is beyond the power of death.

Note 3: Om or Aum is a symbol and not a word. It first occurs in Taittiriya Samhita of the Krishna (black) Yajur Veda. In the Aiteraya Brahmana, it is a mystic syllable representing the essence of the universe. It is the symbol of manifested, non-manifested, and un-manifested Brahman.

Note 4: The nature of Supreme-self is discussed in the 5th Brahmana of Brhadaranyaka Upanishad. The *Katha Upanishad* deals with the detailed discussion on the individual self.

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Divine Justice

By
Manoj Panda*

It was middle of a night during the war of mahAbhArata, almost to the end. Ashwatthama, the son of DroNa, was sitting under a banyan tree. With him were Kripa and Kritavarma. He was restless, angry, pensive and dejected. His father DroNa was already killed. MahArathI Karna was no more. He just came back from fatally injured Duryodhana whose thigh was broken by Vrikodara.

Suddenly they saw an owl came and started killing the numerous sleeping crows in the tree. This scene roused the evil thought of killing his enemies while sleeping, in the mind of Ashwatthama. Hence one should be very careful what the sense organs perceive with the help of mind. Nobler they are, better are the results.

He approached Kripa. But Kripa advised him no to do it. He quoted the shAstras as one should not slay kine, brAhmaNas, kings, women, friends, one's own mother, one's own preceptor, a weak man, an idiot, a blind man, a sleeping man, a terrified man, one just arisen from sleep, an intoxicated person, a lunatic and one that is heedless. But Ashwatthama was seething with revenge and was in no mood to listen.

Ashvatthama said, "Without doubt, it is even so, O maternal uncle, as thou sayest. The Pandavas, however, have before this broken the bridge of righteousness into a hundred fragments. In the very sight of all the kings, before thy eyes also, my sire, after he had laid down his weapons, was slain by Dhrishtadyumna. Karna also, that foremost of car-warriors, after the wheel of his car had sunk and he had been plunged into great distress, was slain by the wielder of Gandiva."

"Similarly, ShAntanu's son Bhishma, after he had laid aside his weapons and become disarmed, was slain by Arjuna with Shikhandi placed in his van. So also, the mighty bowman Bhurishrava, while observant of the praya vow on the field of battle, was slain by Yuyudhana in total disregard of the cries of all the kings! Duryodhana too, having encountered Bhima in battle with the mace, hath been slain unrighteously by the former in the very sight of all the lords of earth. The unrighteous and sinful Pancalas, who have broken down the barrier of virtue, are even such. Why do you not censure them who have transgressed all considerations?"

"Having slain the Panchalas, those slayers of my sire, in the night when they are buried in sleep, I care not if I am born a worm or a winged insect in my next life. That which I have resolved is hurrying me towards its accomplishment. Hurried as I am by it, how can I have sleep and happiness? That man is not yet born in the world, nor will be, who will succeed in baffling this resolution that I have formed for their destruction."

Ashwatthama conveniently forgot what kauravas have inflicted on pAndavas. A selfish person only sees his own interest, which paves the path of destruction. Such was the fire of anger, which could put the angry person into ashes. It is said in Bhagavad Gita:

*tri-vidham narakasyedam , dvAram nAsanamAtmanah
kAmah krodhastathA lobbastasmAdetat trayam tyajet*

It means that "Lust, anger, and greed are the three gates of hell leading to the downfall (or bondage) of jIva. Therefore, one must (learn to) give up these three."

The power of one's "karma" is very difficult to counter. Kripa, Kritavarma and Ashwatthama marched towards the camp of pAndavas. The gate was secured by three-eyed Rudra. When all his weapons failed to overpower, Ashwatthama supplicated him by worship. Then all three of them killed mercilessly the sleeping warriors, which included Dhrustadyumna, Shikhandi, five sons of Draupadi by pAndavas (Prativindhya, son of Yudhishthira; Sutasoma, son of Bhima; Shrutakirtti, son of Arjuna; Satanika, son of Nakula; and Shrutakarma, son of Sahadeva), Uttamouja and many more.

pAndavas who were in another camp came to know about it later by the charioteer of Dhrustadyumna. Draupadi was inconsolable. All the five brothers were dejected.

Draupadi distressed at the death of her sons, brothers and father resolved to kill herself by fasting. Then Bhima, resolved, to please her; promised to kill Ashwatthama. The son of Drona from fear of Bhimasena and impelled by the fates and moved also by anger discharged a celestial weapon saying, 'This is for the destruction of all the Pandavas'; then Krishna saying, 'This shall not be', neutralized Ashwatthama's speech. Then Arjuna neutralized that weapon by one of his own.

Ashwatthama was captured and brought before Lord Krishna. Bhimasena had promised to kill him already. But Lord said:

Brahmabandhurn hantavya AtAtAyI vadhArhaNah | (Srimad Bhagavatam)

It means that “Even a fallen brAhmaNa ought not to be slain and a ruffian surely deserves to be killed. I have said that. Hence carry out both these commands of Mine. Also redeem the promise you made while consoling your beloved consort; at the same time do what is agreeable to Bhimasena and Draupadi as well as to Myself.”

It was a tricky situation. Commands are contradictory to one another.

Arjuna could understand the mind of Sri Hari. He instantly cut-off the gem on Ashwatthama’s head with his lock. After that he expelled the brAhmaNa from the camp. Shaving of the head as a token of disgrace, seizure of property and expulsion from the place where one happens to be, is a form of capital punishment for the BrahmaNas.

In this way “dharma” was preserved – the Blessed Lord’s sayings were respected, Bhimasena’s vow was kept. And thus divine justice was dispensed.

The delineations of shAstras are very often difficult to understand if followed literally. Hence it is best to follow the life of great Masters who are living examples of shAstra. “mahA jana yena gatasya panthAh” – That is the path, which is blazed by the Realized.

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Seven-and-a-half minutes in Godhra

By

Mujibur Rehman*

November 2, 2004. I arrived at the New Delhi railway station half-an-hour prior to the Paschim Express’s scheduled departure at 5 pm. I was heading for Vadodara (Baroda) to meet with I. G. Patel, former chief economic advisor to Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi, and also the former director of London School Economics (LSE). Mr. Patel is a longtime resident of Baroda. He cited his fondness for this city as a reason for declining former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao’s offer to become India’s finance minister, which went to the present Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh.

The railway station was full of activity. There were passengers everywhere --on the over bridge, the platform, the steps. There were all kinds of noises: vendors went about their business: a young man walked around with clusters of long chains hanging around his neck and arms (these chains are used by passengers traveling long distances to tie their belongings when they go to sleep in the train); a middle-aged man was selling English and Hindi magazines; a boy hawked chai (tea); coolies (porters) wandering around showing enormous confidence in their muscle power, as if they carry the Mother Earth on their shoulder, some of them wearing red shirts over what was once a white dhoti. Others wore untidy trousers with their uniform. Their hunger to earn a living was evident in their eyes. There was another vendor selling water bottles, and a few others wandering around. These people on the platform, representing almost a mini-India, were conversing in numerous languages: some in Marathi, others in Gujarati, Bengali, Hindi and other languages including the most prominent Indian language, English, in its various forms like Hinglish, Benglish, Gujulish, Punjlish and others.

Standing slightly away from this crowd were two Western tourists, occasionally sipping water from their bottles, but constantly attracting sharp gazes from passersby. While I was looking around, I noticed a

group of Sardarjis (Sikhs) comprising of nearly 20 people of different generations on the platform. The group was made up of three or four gray-haired well-built Sardarjis, an identical number of women of the community, some pretty, young girls and half-a-dozen young kids. For a while I felt like as if I was not in Delhi but in Amritsar. They were talking loudly to each other.

A young Sikh, possibly the strongest among them, had a well-groomed, luxuriant moustache that he caressed frequently with pride. Perhaps they all were saying in unison: “This is INDIA 2004, not 1984. India matters because we matter. Our man, Dr Singh, a Sardarji, is at the top. Sikhs are also called Sardars.

The platform’s noise level abruptly escalated with an announcement on the public address system. “Train number 2624, Paschim Express, is about to arrive in a few minutes on platform 9. “ The voice continued, “: the train will travel through stations such as..Godhra and Baroda ” The announcement was repeated. When I heard the word Godhra, my heart stopped for a moment. I realized I had heard this name several times over past two years or so, but never before that even once in my entire life. The repeated announcements confirmed that there was no mistake about my train’s route. It was definitely passing through Godhra, the place where two compartments were set ablaze and 59 passengers burnt alive, not long ago in 2002. It had led to the Gujarat genocide, the worst in modern Indian history. Many gory scenes of the documentary I had watched in Austin at Texas, USA, The Final Solution (by Rakesh Sharma), based on the genocide, came to my mind: a scene where a Hindu girl said in a remorseful voice how she was trying to concentrate on her studies after her mother was burnt alive on the train in Godhra, the face a young Muslim boy who was revealing how he would kill Hindus once he grew up; the scene of a young Muslim man kneeling before the mass-grave, telling the world how that grave had 12 members of his family, who were burnt alive in their home. Then there was a scene in which an elderly man stood by the roadside pointing towards the bushes where his two daughters were raped and murdered. These are real people, not cast members of a documentary. These harrowing scenes played again and again on my mind. Godhra is the place where it all began. I would be passing through that station in a few hours. I was anxious, afraid and unusually nervous. While I was under the grip of these troubling thoughts, I realized that it was too late for me to change my travel plans. When the train arrived, I hired a coolie to help me carry my luggage to the train. No other boarding experience is as fiercely competitive as that on an Indian train. My coolie assisted me dutifully in settling down at my seat. Within minutes, my co-passengers took their respective places. Everyone waited for the train to leave. The compartment was packed. There were relatives and well-wishers to lend some passengers helping hand. A familiar refrain was flowing from all directions, “ Apna khayal rakhana (Please take care of yourself).” The train left New Delhi railway station. The sun was yet to set, and with an impending long journey ahead, we were all overpowered by the sound that arose from the tracks of our train.

I was sitting by a window. My fellow passengers included Manish, a third grade student at Guru Nanak School, Mumbai, and his mother who taught English at the same institution. There was Mr Ahuja and his wife, visiting their daughter in Mumbai, and Mrs Trivedi, a short, stolid woman in her fifties who was visiting her relatives. In the seat located in front of me, a businessman from Haryana was traveling to Vadodara. The train began to gain speed. Through the window, I got an uninterrupted view of India’s rich but endless landscape, looking magnificent in the rays of the setting sun. After a while, I resumed reading Charlotte Bronte’s Jane Eyre. I was on Chapter 21. It read: “Presentiments are strange things! So are sympathies; and so are signs; and three combined make one mystery that humanity has yet to found the key. I have never laughed at presentiments at my life, because I have had strange ones of my own. Sympathies, I believe, exist (for instance, between far distant, long absent, wholly estranged

relatives asserting, notwithstanding their alienation, the unity of the source to which each traces its origin) whose workings baffle mortal comprehension. And signs, for ought we know, may be but sympathies of the Nature with man. ”My attention was disrupted by a worried voice coming from the elderly passenger, Mrs. Trivedi. She realized she had been allotted an upper berth and had to climb the ladder to reach it. Since she had never climbed berths before, she had reason to be worried. Mr and Mrs Ahuja were advising her not to worry because it was not very difficult. Yet she went on saying repeatedly: “How can I travel now?” After some time, I intervened and offered to trade my lower berth with her. After she was assured that I was speaking in earnest, she gave family, my relatives and me several ounces of blessings. Now conversation among my fellow passengers began to flow on a variety of themes, though mostly on domestic matters.

New Delhi, the capital of India, has a disproportionately high number of critics. It is a city which people visit, but no one likes. It is known to disappoint its visitors, or they lack the sense of appreciation. Even longtime residents barely defend it. This is not true about other major Indian cities like Bombay or Calcutta. One has to have courage to criticize Calcutta. Even Nobel Prize-winning German writer Gunter Grass had a sharp dip in his popularity after giving an abysmal portrayal of Calcutta in his book *Show Your Tongue*. I have grown familiar with criticisms of Delhi. The worst ones often come from Bombayites. They hate the capital, its pollution, its transport system, its scooterists, and above all, the impolite Delhiwallas. They find everything in Delhi expensive, even the air. No one defends Delhi: it is indefensible, and its vices are more than any encyclopedia could contain. Its stories are never written. These criticisms are always perceived as fair, and yet Delhi attracts people of all walks of life as many from other metros, small towns, villages of India as from abroad for numerous reasons: for being capital of India, for its history, for being the power center, for being a center from where major media operates, and for being a place that prides itself for having some of the best Indian universities, colleges, and schools. My co-passenger, the Bombay based schoolteacher, aired her caustic views about Delhi. No one disagreed with her. There were chaiwallahs, coffee vendors, and others selling biscuits and snacks in the compartment. The sight now resembled a miniature India: it had everything, a small business center, a coffee house where people could mull over their concerns, and a luxury coach where everyone aspired to pleasantly travel to their destinations. It is one such rare place where India meets with its naivety and brutality, along with all its diversity and complexity.

There is no parallel that could mirror India better. My eyes skimmed the pages of *Jane Eyre*. The running train’s normal life, without any interruptions, moved on: there was the chaiwallah, ticket collector and occasionally a few railway policemen on night duty. And most of my fellow passengers were having some sort of conversations on themes of mutual interest. I realized that Manish, the schoolboy, was staring at me. Perhaps he was wondering what I was reading with such rapt attention in a running train! I also felt the need to take a break from reading. So I began to chat with him. When I learnt that Manish was returning after attending his uncle’s wedding, I inquired why he was not married yet. He said he was too young. I told him that he better find a spouse soon, or else, all the beautiful girls would be taken away by other men and he would remain a bachelor like Abdul Kalam, the Indian president or Atal Bihari Vajpayee, India’s former prime minister. I praised Manish for being able to pass the second grade and move on to third grade, and told him how I found it very hard to survive the second grade when I was his age. I told him how my parents were worried and eventually asked me to quit study and take up a job as a domestic help at a professor’s place in Baroda which was why, I said, I was visiting the city. The other passengers, including Manish’s mother, began to laugh at the story, and Manish immediately argued that a domestic help was not literate enough to read a “big book.” I told him I was not reading the book but only looking at pictures. We became friends as the night wore on. While I was speaking to Manish, I noticed Mrs. Trivedi attempting to climb to the upper berth. Another

passenger helped her in her endeavors. After a successful attempt, she looked down and gave a delightful smile. I could not figure out why she did not take my offer to trade places with her seriously. During the entire night I saw her climbing the berth and then getting off, repeating what she considered a sport several times. By early morning, she had become a veteran climber. I never asked her why she did not take my offer to trade berths, but was impressed by her determination not to depend on others, as well as her sense of learning and her attitude to life. The night wore on. We all went to bed one after another.

Passengers occasionally walked past my seat to use the restrooms; a few policemen patrolled the compartment, ensuring everyone's safety. Gradually, the voices quietened and the only sound was that of the train running on its tracks. One felt like being inside a huge machine. Before my businessman friend dozed off, he told me that Godhra would arrive around 6 or 6.30am. I realized I might have the chance to see what the station looked like. But my fears remained. November 3, 2004. It was sometime around 5.30 am that I woke up to some noise. I noticed some passengers transferring their luggage close to the exit to get off at Godhra. I felt confused. I sat up straight on my seat. I noticed there were more than half-a-dozen passengers who were preparing to disembark. I ordered some tea and after sometime, the train slowed down. Then it stopped completely. It was 6.15 am. Godhra had arrived. I peered out of the window. When all the Godhra-bound passengers got off, I decided to take a stroll on the platform. I had no inkling whether those burnt compartments were still at the station or not, but the images from the documentary, *The Final Solution*, were on my mind. I got off the compartment hesitantly. I took my first step and then a few more, and then gradually moved to the middle of the platform. The morning activities were in full swing. There were people everywhere; in clusters of three or four, either surrounding a tea vendor or mobile breakfast restaurant, or the person selling bread and omelets. A big Sardarji, almost 6.6 foot tall, walked past me. He was moving towards a group of people like magnet dragging an iron, fast and well-directed; then he stretched out an arm and picked up a cup of tea from the chaiwallah, ignoring the other customers who had been waiting for chai long before he arrived on the scene. No one complained. After paying for the tea, the Sardarji went and stood quietly a few yards away, enjoying his morning cuppa. He occasionally looked around and caressed his huge moustache. His conspicuous turban was missing, his head wrapped in just a white piece of cloth. Two Muslim-men in Islamic attire chatted nearby, with little sign of any fear or concern. Both had well-groomed beards, but very different from the Sardarji's. There were several vendors at the windows of various compartments.

In a few minutes, the train began to pull out. Passengers who had got off the train scrambled back to their compartments, and the vendors moved away. I jumped into my compartment but chose to stand near the exit so that I could get a complete view of Godhra station. It was not easy to see all sides of the platform. I did not see the remnants of the compartments that led to genocide, although I remained curious.

There were people and vendors still getting off the train; there were also people who were waving to passengers whom they had come to see off. There were others who were running alongside the train so that they could see their relatives/ or friends as long as possible, even though they knew they would eventually fall behind. These signs of intense affection that are displayed on Indian platforms make me often wonder how this country that pours out such love and affection often returns to extreme violence of the kind Gujarat experienced.

I was still standing close to the exit. The train had picked up speed. I saw a child sitting on the lap of her mother and waving to everyone inside the train. I waved back. The mother, who helped the kid wave back to me, noticed this. The station was a medium-sized one. I noticed two owners of mobile

restaurants at the end of the platform with piles of warm pooris, one counting his earnings and other relaxing after his first round of business for the day. I noticed a policeman standing with a rifle only a few yards away. There were clusters of people standing in different parts of the platform. When my train left the platform completely, I saw some muddy lanes, running parallel to the track, little away from the platform. There were pedestrians, cyclists, and others who had started their day; there was a sadhu, half naked, sitting below a tree. Further down, I saw four minarets of a mosque: colorful, rounded, slim and tall, standing distinctly, bearing evidence of Muslims still living around the place. I did not see any remnants of the burnt compartments, however.

Gradually, Godhra station disappeared from view. There was only the landscape, which unfolded. I heard noises of the running train, and through them heard the screaming voices of women burnt, children maimed, girls raped, elderly men mutilated, and those other voices that accompany a riot, a genocide, or killings. And occasionally, the loud laughter of chief minister Narendra Modi. The images from *The Final Solution* came back to me -- the young Hindu girl trying to forget the fact that her mother was burnt alive, the young Muslim kid taking a vow to avenge the killings of Muslims, the young man kneeling before his family's mass grave and that father who was showing the world where his daughters were raped. These frightening images returned to haunt me. I chose to retreat towards my seat and get ready to get off at the next station, Baroda, my destination.

While I was approaching my seat, I saw Manish looking through my copy of *Jane Eyre*. He was shuffling through its pages with great attention. When he saw me, he said rather angrily, "There are no pictures here. You are a liar. This is just a book full of words and sentences," I smiled at him and said, "Words are the most beautiful pictures; they record facts for ever; they reveal more than any paintings; and they reflect more than the brightest mirrors in the world." Manish's mother interrupted our conversation with a question, "How long did the train stop at the station?" "Perhaps seven-and-a-half minutes," I answered. We had left Godhra behind, but it stayed with me and will remain forever.

- A graduate student at the University of Texas, Austin.

On Women and Traditions

By

Mamata Misra*

Once, as part of my volunteer work for SafePlace, I was talking to students at a local high school about dating violence and date rape prevention. The teacher of that class was amazed that a woman from India, a country where women are generally perceived to be shy and submissive, would feel comfortable talking about such things in public. After the presentation, she asked me, with a mixture of hesitation and admiration, if it wasn't unusual for a woman coming from an Indian tradition to do so. I answered her with a "yes and no", saying that my culture is very diverse, with room for many kinds of people and attitudes. My American friends have often been puzzled by the apparent contradictions found in the position of women in Indian culture. The fact that South Asian countries have had female Prime Ministers contrasts with the fact that women in these countries often don't have a voice, aren't heard, or are in other ways oppressed. People here are impressed when I tell them that in my religion, revered deities that represent power, wisdom, and wealth have female images. And then I see the unasked question in their faces, "Then why the burning brides?"

Perhaps, contradictions exist in every tradition. I was shocked when I first discovered battered women in America in the 80's, when my son's baby-sitter, a very loving and caring white American, explained her black eye and later showed me a beautiful blouse her husband gave her to "make up for it". My illusion of the liberated modern American woman was shattered that day. It took a few more years for the illusion of the South Asian immigrant community as a model minority group (educated, affluent, and free of problems) to be shattered when I discovered domestic violence in this community as well. I could no longer sit in my comfortable corner eating my rice. I had to do something. The volunteer training and work on women's issues that followed gave me an opportunity to explore the link between women and traditions with more depth. Inquiry is an essential part of learning in the Vedic tradition that I call my own, even though "Don't ask too many questions" is what I heard often while growing up. More contradiction!

Once, when I was visiting India, I was introduced to an elderly gentleman, who was a neighbor of a relative. Often, people accompanying me feel compelled to mention my western connection during introductions probably because it is not obvious from my appearance or speech in my native language and they feel that it is worth mentioning. The stranger, unsolicited, advised me to keep the Indian tradition preserved in the western land. I resorted to silence suppressing an urge to politely ask which Indian tradition he had in mind. Of course the decision to do so was based on the Indian teaching of considering the appropriateness of place, time, and person in any action.

The word "tradition" flashes a plethora of images, some pleasing and some frightening, like in the Vishva Roopa (cosmic view) of God described in the Bhagavat Geeta. But like the blind men of a folk tale who described an elephant as a fan, a tree trunk, a python, a rock, and a rope, we often have a narrow view of our tradition. Like the blind men, we fight over what our tradition is and who is untraditional. We fear losing our tradition or culture against the opposite influences of foreign cultures. With our narrow view, we fail to see the presence of opposing forces within our own traditions.

Often, our narrow view of protecting our culture is limited to restraining our women from being independent. This view was demonstrated by one gentleman who once visited an information booth I was attending at an Indian cultural event. Among other things, our booth contained a book called "You Can! A guide for the immigrant woman to live independently in the US." The book was developed by volunteers who saw a need for a guide to help women help themselves when the protected environment in which they are used to living suddenly changes because of migration, marriage, death of spouse, or divorce. The title of the book seemed to greatly disturb the gentleman. He lashed out, "Independent!" with disgust that would have been appropriate for some four-letter words, "These women, back home, they are nice. Bring them here, and they learn all bad things; they want to be independent!" The stress on the word "independent" was particularly noticeable. Obviously, to this man, 'nice' and 'independent' were mutually exclusive. Trying to vent his anger, I asked, "Really? What sorts of bad things do they learn?" "Bad things!" he answered, "smoking, drinking, and killing children!" The only smoking Indian women's images I could recall were in an Indian landscape, either in the high society or among the urban women laborers. Had the gentleman ventured lifting the cover page of the book to examine the contents, he might have noticed the differences in his view of an independent woman and those of the authors. But his unfounded fears did not allow this to happen. Fifty years after the independence of the country, fought by both men and women together, this man saw the word "independent" as untraditional, negative, and destructive when applied to women. Is this view an exception? Unfortunately not. Women's advocates often encounter in their work such attitudes to protect "tradition" and the destructive effects of these attitudes on women. Moreover, they see these attitudes in families from many different traditions.

Another fear that stands against women's freedom and equal rights is the fear of lack of their safety. Women's rights and women's safety are mutually exclusive, goes the argument. Therefore, women should give up some of their rights in order to be safe. They point to some of the practices in their tradition such as women living within the walls of their home, under the protection of the male members of their family-- father, brother, husband, and son. It is women's safety and well-being, they feel, which is at the root of such traditional family structure. At the same time, we find that women are not always safe in their own homes and the isolation is a roadblock to their safety. In some cases, the people who are supposed to protect them are the ones who hurt them.

Furthermore, tradition not only shows bondage for women, it also gives us glimpses of freedom and equality for women. In ancient Vedic tradition, we find examples of women's freedom to intellectual and spiritual pursuit in the gurukula with men. During Buddhist period, large numbers of women left their homes and became nuns. Some of them composed poetry with messages of freedom. This tradition continues through the middle ages where women bhakta poets like Avvaiyar, Andal, Akka Mahadevi, and Mirabai left the confines of their homes and did as they pleased without fear. These women have been given the place of saints in our tradition and their compositions are sung with love and devotion. This tradition of saying 'no' to the confines of home and to rebel continues in the modern history of women's participation in the independence movement and post independence women's movements in India such as the Chipko movement to save our forests, women's movements to protect men from alcoholism and women and children from men under the influence by rebelling against government policies regarding the sale of alcohol.

Often, I speak to my fellow domestic violence workers in Texas about the cultural context within which domestic abuse occurs in a South Asian family and about the obstacles a South Asian battered woman in the US faces to free herself. I talk about the joint family structure and hierarchy, arranged marriages, dowry, types of abuse, isolation, financial dependence, faiths and taboos, everything that entraps the South Asian battered woman. However, just as tradition can trap, it can also provide a way out. Many of the battered women I've worked with, who have taken the courageous steps to live independently a life free of abuse, have drawn strength from their own traditions. The various South Asian traditions offer women inspiration through the voices and actions of women of ancient times, women from mythology and history, and women of today. There have been and are women scholars, women warriors, women saints, women poets, women in the freedom struggle, women in the environment movement, women in the anti-alcoholism movement, women activists, and like our grandmothers, apparently ordinary women with extraordinary strengths. I strongly believe that it is up to us to delve into the depths of our own traditions and find the things worth cherishing and the things worth questioning and changing. It is up to us to enrich our traditions as we come in contact with other cultures. My view of tradition is not static --- rather, it is, to me, like a river flowing through generations. It can take in both rich, nourishing soil and pollutants as it flows. It can change its course over time. What we accept from it, what we reject or change, is for us to choose! Even this I borrow from the teaching in my own

tradition that says, "You have the choice to do, to not do, or to do differently."

** lives in Austin, Texas and volunteers at SAHELI, a support and advocacy organization for Asian survivors of domestic violence. See www.saheli-austin.org for more information about SAHELI. This article has been published before in the South Asian Women's Forum (www.sawf.org).*



Right Or Wrong

By Prajesh Nandini Dash*

The few pictures of Terri Schiavo published in the newspapers and internet sites are emotionally nerve-wrecking. We feel our hearts are laden with compassion, sorrow, and pity, and at the same time our minds are overburdened with the search to justify living from dying, morality from immorality, eternal peace from cruelty, and finally, right from wrong. Our mental quest is independent of any legal or social advice. Rather it is a personal soul searching experience. While following Terri Schiavo's ill fated story I have put myself numerous times in that hospital bed or even worse, to imagine my loved ones in that similar situation, where I play the role of the decision-maker of life and death. Well I have never reached the right decision yet. I am also positive that most of us experience the same mental agony of finding the correctness in us.

Mrs. Terry Schiavo's ill fate has forced her to live a life from 1990 which she never wished for nor would she have ever wished on any enemy of hers. Now whether she wants to die or not none of us will ever know. According to the physicians testimonies "her brain damage was so severe that there was no hope she would ever have any cognitive abilities." She suffered brain damage in 1990, when her heart stopped briefly because of a chemical imbalance. Now the experts agree that she is in a persistent vegetative stage with no chance of recovery. However at the same breath, we want to believe miracles could happen where she could successfully come out of that vegetative stage and live a productive life.

We live in a time where science has broken the boundaries and let us touch the sky and beyond. We also live in a time where genetics have come to a point where scientists are discussing about reproducing clones of human beings after being successful with certain strains of plants and animals. However, we are not yet successful in dealing with mortality in physical and psychological levels. The eternal truth is he who comes to this earth in any living form or shape will leave this earth one day. No parents, husbands, doctors, or lawmakers can save their loved ones.

In spite of all religious differences in this world, we as human beings will unanimously agree on one aspect of life. Each of us want to live a life so successfully that we will be recognized and remembered by others, even when our physical forms have left this material world. If that is the final goal of mankind, Mrs. Terry Schiavo has already achieved it. It is only a matter of time when she will leave this earth, with or without the re-insertion of feeding tubes. Her present condition of living is not preferable to anyone of us. But those fifteen years of her life have made her immortal in a different sense. Her physical appearance may or may not be there tomorrow, but to me, she has already fulfilled a greater purpose in life. The very identity of her name is proof of her immortality. Her unusual situation has created an awareness regarding the quality of human life and our right to die. Her case has also shown the true manifestation of hate and conflict in the name of love. Her family members have successfully lacerated her pride and the meaning of existence.

Sadly but surely, Mrs. Terri Schiavo has taught us that it is imperative that we need to give serious consideration to our last wish with reference to our "right to die."

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CHANGING THE ORIYA MINDSET

By
Duryodhan Mangaraj*

It is sad to acknowledge that Orissa is one of the poorest states in India. This is in spite of our enormous natural resources, both organic and inorganic, our huge coastline and a rich history of craftsmanship and entrepreneurship across the oceans. Oriyas are intelligent, talented, competitive and hard working. After India became free, Orissa had the first large scale steel mill and the hydraulic project. But where as the momentum of industrialization and entrepreneurship made a rapid progress in many states in India, including Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, Gujrat and Maharastra, small-scale business and industry never took off in Orissa. Although we produce the finest filigree works in Cuttack and beautiful Sarees at Sambalpur, they have never reached the world market for large scale consumption. We do not have any modern industry that produces consumer products, either for our internal use or exporting to other states.

Although lack of capital and infrastructure has been always blamed for this malady, I feel that the lack of technological consciousness and business acumen contributes a lot to this problem. People in general, both young and old, do not know much about the modern industry and modern business. In short, Oriyas in general do not have the mind set for business, like Gujuratis and Punjabis. We always look for jobs, either private or state, which are hard to come by. The state government is poor and there are not many large or small-scale industries in Orissa to provide jobs.

Since personal income and consumerism growing all over India, there is a vast potential for the growth of small-scale industries in Orissa and thereby alleviate the age-long poverty of Oriyas. Is it possible to kindle the imagination of Oriya people in general and the young generation in particular, about business and entrepreneurship as an alternative to the limited number of clerical jobs provided by the poor government of Orissa. Can we make an Oriya child to imagine starting and succeeding in a business of his own, either making polyethylene bags in the suburbs of Bhubaneswar or processing chromites ores in Keonjhar forests?

We Oriyas in Western countries, particularly in America are working largely for modern industries, either as engineers, technologists or in their business planning, sales and marketing. Can we not share some of our knowledge, some of our dreams, some of our acumen to the young minds in Orissa and build the technological elite that are so fundamental to the growth of industry and business in this poor state?

When I was very young, I grew up in a small remote village, often devastated by flood and cyclones. I used to walk four miles to the nearest school every day. I had no access to any library or any other source of information. Fortunately I had access to a lot of Oriya books and journals, which my uncle, late Jadumani Mangaraj had collected and left in the village, before going to Hazaribag jail as a political prisoner. I remember how reading these articles and the literature kindled my imagination not only to think, write and fight my way out of poverty but also to shine in many endeavors I undertook in my chequered life. I strongly feel that we can influence and inspire both the young and old minds in Orissa and redirect their imagination towards business and technology through easy availability of literature on

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modern technology, business skills, innovations and entrepreneurship. We can include our own experiences as well as those of our coworkers and countrymen regarding different facets of businesses and business acumen to the school children in the remote villages of Orissa and let them dream, let them innovate and let them fight their way out of poverty. If Gujratis can own 67% of Motels and Hotels in America, it is quite possible for young men in Orissa to exit out of the dreams of government and private jobs and create jobs for themselves and their fellowmen.

In past there have been attempts by NROs to start industries and institutions in Orissa with collaboration from the state government. They have either failed or have limited success due to lack of collaboration. It would be better if we can do something on our own, without depending on help from the state government.

I recommend that we should plan to start a magazine to discuss the above-mentioned subjects for the young people at the middle and high school level as well as the population in general and circulate it free to the schools. We may later on put them on a website for growing number of internet users. We can always take help and suggestions from the local experts, publishers and the Educational Institutes of this country as well as those in India and Orissa in particular.

The objective of this grass root movement is to kindle the imagination of the young people. This can be done by discussing various types of small businesses and technologies involved there, incase histories of starting and succeeding in small businesses, business fundamentals such as market survey, business planning, raising capital, marketing and networking etc. Since many of our young people in this country have gone through reputed business schools, they can enrich this journal and communicate with their fellow brothers and sisters in Orissa, through letters to the editor or guest columns. Let us build this bridge between us and our less fortunate brothers and sisters. I am sure with globalization and outsourcing spreading over the remote corners of the world; we will succeed in providing a much needed helping hand to the young generation in Orissa.

I feel we Oriyas living in this country owe to do some thing for our mother state. We can contribute our talent, experience and out-look. Most of all we will build a relationship between us and the young generation in Orissa and we can do it without depending on the resources of Orissa government. It may be necessary to start a Foundation to develop this concept, to organize the publication and to mitigate the financial need, as well as to attract the scholastic contributions of NRIs, mainly NROs in America and Europe and leading experts in USA and India

All spiritual disciplines are done with a view to still the mind. The perfectly still mind is universal spirit. —
Swami Ramdas

In actual life every great enterprise begins with and takes its first forward step in faith. — **Schlegel**



Orissa 2005 – A Personal Observation

By
Jnana Ranjan Dash*

India2005: The India of 2005 is a very different country distinguished by its vibrant economy, a fast rising middleclass (larger than the population of USA), and a world-class exporter of “knowledge” to the Information Technology sector. As per a Goldman Sachs report on India, “India’s economy could be

larger than all but the US and China in 30 years – that is, India could be the 3rd largest economy in the world before 2035”. Just catch a flight to India these days and the evidence is there to see. Many young people carrying laptops and backpacks ferry back and forth on work assignments to the USA and Europe alongside a larger number of non-Indian business people flying to India every day on business errands. Often you run into delegations from Silicon Valley on a visit to check out the new economy and companies.

You arrive in Bangalore airport (these days with many direct flights from Europe and Asia) and the large size billboards hit your eye with well known brand names like Motorola, Nokia, GE, Phillips, and the like. Step into one of the top hotels like the Leela Palace or the Taj Westend, and you are shocked to see the price-tags, sometimes more expensive than those in Paris or even Tokyo. Taj Westend charges \$350 a night for rooms if you are lucky enough to get one. Huge indoor shopping malls have cropped up and the high-rise apartment complexes are popping up everywhere with rocketing price-quotes.

Looking down from fabulous concrete structures you see diminutive gadgets in the common man’s hand: the cell phones. Even a visitor from the USA feels like coming from a less developed country – everyone from the auto driver to the fruit vendor has a cell phone. India sells nearly 2 million cell phones every month, second only to China. School and college kids are often seen communicating via SMS, a technology still uncommon in this country. After a drive on Hosur road to the Electronic city you see sprawling campuses of the likes of Infosys and Wipro (with video walls, Domino Pizza, International food court, and trees planted by names like Bill gates and Craig Barret), better than many office complexes one finds in USA. However, despite all this technological glory one faces simultaneously the brunt of poor road conditions and airport infrastructures that get worse day by day. There you see the convergence of the two faces of India– one pulsating with the new economy and dynamism, and the other struggling under antiquated bureaucracy. Someone joked that “we are a country of smart people run by buffoons”.

It is not just Bangalore; similar pictures can be seen in many other cities like Chennai, Hyderabad, Pune, Gudgaon, and Trivandrum. It appears as if India is divided between North and South. While most of south India is marching at great pace the North, specifically the north-east is either static or degenerating with the exception of new Kolkata with its fast progress in infrastructure and outside investments.

Companies like Accenture, IBM, Wipro, and Infosys are setting up large offices there. If you step into the new hotels like Sheraton or Hyatt on VIP road, it is hard to believe that you are in Kolkata.

In a recent trip to Kerala, this author was struck by the remarkable development of tourism there. The huge Vembanad Lake near Cochin has been developed with 2900 waterways (backwater) with lush greenery all around representing a scaled-up hybrid model of Venice and Hawaii. Then one sadly thinks about a lake called Chilka in Orissa which could be developed as beautifully as the one in Kerala for tourism.

So the India of 2005 is very different from the India we expatriates have seen over the last 3 decades.

Gone are the days of rare foreign travel by Indians and gone are the days of poor telecommunication services within India and from outside to India. Gone are the days of two models of automobiles (Ambassador and Fiat) with Maruti appearing as a new revolution. The further south one goes in India, the babus and the bureaucracy of the north and north-east seem to get much weaker.

So where is Orissa in this milieu?

Orissa2005: So one lands in Bhubaneswar’s new clean airport and notices a desolate picture, given its sparse air traffic. It’s still hard to go to major cities from Bhubaneswar. There are no direct flights to Bangalore. The only flights operating between Delhi and Bhubaneswar are exorbitant in fare (Rs. 25,000 for a return fare: almost \$600 thanks to the weakening dollar to the rupee). Air Sahara stopped all its flights for a month in February/March for unknown reasons and that took away some discount-fare

options to Mumbai, Kolkata and Hyderabad. The most popular private airline in India, Jet Airways does not even touch Orissa. So air-connectivity remains a problem.

Bhubaneswar, a beautifully planned city like Chandigarh, after India's independence, has become crowded, polluted, and chaotic. At many crowded intersections there are no traffic lights and humans still have to guide traffic causing much confusion and delay. Yet, the city has grown immensely as one sees new hotels and posh apartment complexes coming up everyday. Real estate prices have been going up at par with high-growth cities. One hears Hindi as a language of conversation often, indicating the increase in non-Oriya settlers. For that matter, Bhubaneswar does not feel like Orissa...it's a miniature Delhi, full of local bureaucrats. While Bangalore's new royalty is Narayan Murthy or Ajim Premji, Orissa's royalty are still the ministers and the secretaries. The discussions often center on local politicians and bureaucrats. Corruption has penetrated into the DNA of the system so much that, people even boast about their wealth and the properties they have amassed during their 30 plus years of government career where normal salary could never afford such accumulation. A stop at the venerated Bhubaneswar club and one sees the flow of alcohol and hangout of bureaucrats and business people for networking and deal making. In a bizarre way, however, Cuttack reminds one of the cultural Orissa of the past. The radio station, Kala Vikas Kendra, Barabati Stadium, Ramachandra Bhavan, Cuttack Chandi temple, SCB Medical college, Ravenshaw college; all these bring back nostalgia of a cozy and shy Orissa of the past.

Orissa2005 also shows a government interested to make industrial progress for the state. Never before have had so many steel companies lined up to set up plants. They have come on their own, thanks to the demand of steel and Orissa's rich natural resources (squandered over last 50 years by politicians). The world's largest steel plant, Pohang Steel (Posco) of Korea, has a proposed \$8 Billion project in Orissa. Here the competition to Orissa was Brazil. What clinched the deal was the Dhamra port facility. Tata Steel is already working on their new plant. One reads in the papers about some litigation by opposition party on the current government for not awarding the contracts properly. Many folks commented that we are a state of the infamous "crab culture" – a habit to pull someone down when progress is being made. In a casual conversation with a young member of Parliament, this author was told that besides the top six or seven steel companies, there are almost a hundred small to medium scale outfits (\$5-\$10 Million size) setting up plants in Orissa. A drive from Bhubaneswar/Cuttack towards Keonjhar will bear testimony to that statement. The industrial landscape of Orissa will change for ever in another 3-5 years, as per this young leader. But interference by local politicians remains a hindrance. The current chief minister projects a "clean" image and gets very high rankings in national polls. Last year he was judged the best chief minister of Indian states by India Today and this year, he was number two by the same poll. Clearly this chief minister has taken a tough stand on corrupt practices, but others question its effectiveness through the ranks.

In the high-tech sector, there are small steps of progress. Both Wipro and TCS have decided to set up branches in Bhubaneswar. The proactive role of the government to entice outside investment has gone up, but not at par with what Bengal and Kerala are doing. But one must appreciate the effort however small it might seem. On a flight from Bhubaneswar to Hyderabad and then to Bangalore, this author saw a group of seven young hires from Infosys on their way for training. Skilled IT people from Orissa's colleges are being hired faster than before, many absorbed by Satyam, Infosys, and TCS Kolkata. Orissa still lacks the aggressive lobbying for an IIT, when seven new names have been proposed in other states. One is reminded of the very first IIT in India that was offered to Orissa during early 1950s. This idea was rejected by the then government for the amount of land required by the campus. As a result, the first ever IIT was set up in a decrepit unknown railway junction in Bengal, named Kharagpur. What a shame!

Orissa still feels very backward when compared to other progressive states like Karnataka and Kerala. There is an attitude issue, that of negativity and laziness. The question one asks is – who loses sleep over Orissa’s lack of progress? Is there a leader like Madhu babu or Gopabandhu Das who passionately cared about the state? The “let-me-get-rich-at-the-state’s- expense” mentality still pervades the high ranking officials. Any government contract assumes a certain percentage as bribe to the engineers, starting from Chief engineer to the one in the bottom rank. Last year, in a keynote speech to the Institute of Engineers at Bhubaneswar, this author asked– when would the engineers wake up to such negative perception by the society? Someone remarked that only 20% of the engineering population brings such ill repute to the entire community. Corruption is not an Orissa-only phenomenon; it’s a national cancer for India. Some final thoughts: Orissa must ride the current euphoria of the steel industry romance. The government must re-issue the mining lease agreements for state’s benefit and use the revenue for infrastructural development. As it is the state lacks basic facilities of water, healthcare, and education and the rural Orissa is blissfully unaware of the India2005. The tourism model of Kerala must be blindly copied. After over-used spots like Goa and Kovalam beach, there is a hunger for new tourist spots and Orissa often appears as a romantic mysterious place to visit. This must be taken advantage of. Hopefully, the new industrial influx will create lots of new employment, increasing per capita income (one of the lowest in the country).

Fundamentally, a change in attitude is required and that is the hardest and most difficult transition. Someone once said that people of Orissa have the most “Bhagabat Prem” within India. A big statement like this refers to the culture of Lord Jagannath immersed in our daily lives. The first ever translation of Srimad Bhagabatam into a regional language was done in Oriya by Jagannath Das. Spirituality is supposed to be part of our DNA, but a lack of that gives rise to weakness in character and negativity including corruption. In a recent visit to Puri, this author wanted to have the darshan of Lord Jagannath during early morning. So by 5am, when we arrived at the Singhadwara, the doors were still closed. The empty Bada-danda suddenly looked so filthy with garbage all over. How can the place of worship of Lord Jagannath be so dirty? This reflects our character. External cleanliness leads to internal cleanliness. We all must look deep inside and ask – am I clean inside my heart with virtues like truthfulness, honesty, and goodwill? Our heritage reminds us everyday that humility is the key and we must surrender to the Lord for His grace.

Orissa had been a center of great tradition and human values in the past and these cultural rudiments need to be resurrected, especially at the governance level, in order for all the Oriyas to re-live that noble heritage. The image of a new Orissa would emerge only when more of Oriyas lose sleep over their state’s cultural, industrial and entrepreneurial impoverishment. This calls for an utter selfless passion to create and to sacrifice, just as Bhima Bhoi, the blind poet of Orissa wrote nearly 150 years back – “Mo Jeevana pachhe narke padithau, jagata uddhara heu” (Let my life rot in hell as long as the world gets redeemed). How better can someone express “selflessness”?

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Memory Lanes in Balasore, Orissa

By
Abdul Hamid Khan*

Sometimes, when I can see the stars on a clear evening in Los Angeles, I remember Balasore, my hometown, far away, because, the stars I was watching while lying down on a mat outside my parent's house at Balasore looked so similar (or is it my imagination?). On the other hand, all the stars have not changed or moved. The same stars are looking at Balasore and Los Angeles, connecting my past with my present!

When I close my eyes and start walking down my childhood memory lane, I remember growing up at the edge of Balasore, called Manikhamb-Mahapatra Sahee, near a small river, across which there was a village where farmers lived. There were lots of children in the neighborhood. We used to play lots of games like kite flying, badminton, marbles, soccer, and kabbadi. The most fun we had was when the river used to overflow after a spell of heavy monsoon rain. Then the floodwater would almost touch my front porch. We used to float paper boats just like the paper boats festival we observed for the ancient Oriya sailors. I wonder if the Oriya sailors were the pioneers in spreading Buddhism and Oriya culture to the nearby overseas countries like Indonesia and Thailand?

Next, I remember the very first Independence Day celebration. There was a big parade. We went to the street in front of the cinema (this was the name for the movie house). Cinema was the main place for hanging around. We heard scary rumors of religious riots, which never took place. I heard about terribly ugly riots in other towns; but none in Balasore. On the other hand, when we got hit with tsunami-like monsoon floods and other such natural disasters, nature did not distinguish between temples, churches and mosques. They got all destroyed by natural disasters one time or other. Is it possible that nature is blind to religious differences? I recall reading a Japanese poem that said "The wind can not read".

My first memory with my dad was of going to movies with him (he used to call it talkies since he grew up watching silent movies) and then going for a small bag of chana-choor snack and a cup of tea. The snack was sooo hot and sooo tasty! I used to cross the river in a boat and then bicycle behind my dad to visit the farmer's houses whom my father had crop sharing arrangements with. I remember my mother telling me the stories of Ali Baba and forty thieves and goddess Nima Kali. There was a Nima Kali mandir about seven houses away. Once when a cholera epidemic broke out (it happened about three times while I was growing up in schools), the neighbors did puja at the mandir. The goddess took control of the Dasee's body and spoke to the Brahmin pujari about the trespasses and violations, which were made causing the epidemics to occur. My mom told me that sometimes Nima Kali walked after midnight on the streets of Manikhamb-Mahapatra Sahee with jingling anklets. If any man tried to touch her or bothered her he died right then and there with a heart attack. I learned to respect women. Why is there no concept of goddess in the West?

Then, I remember getting tutored by a Bengali teacher I did not like, because if I made a mistake in writing English or doing a problem in Mathematics he used to slap my head. After a while I feigned having a fever on the days he was supposed to come. I do not know for sure if my parents changed the tutor because they realized that I did not like the teacher or there were actually some other reasons! Finally, I finished my high school at Balasore Zilla High School and then completed my Intermediate Science degree at Fakir Mohan College and departed for the Marine Engineering Training and Research

Institute in Calcutta. My favorite teacher in high school was Satyapathi Roy (if I remember correctly), a Bengali from Calcutta. He was a very stylish cricket player as well as an excellent inspiring high school mathematics teacher. While I was in Calcutta, I realized that many of the gardeners and cooks came from Orissa, and that we remained under the shadows of Calcutta!

When I talk to strangers where I come from while traveling within India, I find that the strangers recognize Puri quicker than they recognize Orissa. When I travel outside India, the strangers recognize Orissa only as being something south of Calcutta. When I talked to strangers about Buddha, Ashoka, chariot festivals and Jagannath (is more known as Juggernaut; but it also reflects the accomplishments of Oriya engineers), they recognize Orissa vaguely. When I saw the Hindi film Ashoka that was based on the Kalinga war in Orissa I was wondering whether the film reflected the historical importance of Orissa. Nostalgically, I also remembered Balasore and its own stories – especially the story of Balasore (Bala Asur or the giant monster) and Manikhamb (the golden post)!

When we get together for the Oriya annual picnics in the Los Angeles area, my international family (my wife being a Chilean-American) finds everybody so nice and so education-minded. My brothers, sisters and friends have mostly scattered away from Balasore. Education gave us the leverage to jump out! But...

Balasore, I still remember you – most of all whenever I look at the stars!

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Stoker in Bhubaneswar

By
Tarun K. Tripathy*

If I did not get some sleep during the wee hours of the morning my day usually got spoilt. I used to do my homework and then read a book late into the night almost everyday. I deserved those hours of sleep. I think it was around 7 am as I could hear the familiar clatter of the pan that Bou made tea in. There was also a rhythmic swishing of the broom that marked the beginning of a new day. Bou was already up and doing her numerous chores while her children slept.

I was a shy seventh grader in D. M. School then. Our house in Acharya Vihar in Bhubaneswar was a few miles from the school. I used to go to school with my mother and sister. My mother taught Oriya in the school but emphasized on reading books in both Oriya and English. As a result, by fifth grade, I had devoured almost all books ever written by Enid Blyton. I was now in my incessant conquest of the Hardy Boys, Nancy Drew along with Alfred Hitchcock and the Three Investigators. I had been introduced to various classics of Oriya and English literature but always found the abridged versions that came in small "*chawti bawhi*" forms easier to comprehend at that age. In Oriya, Fakirmohan Senapati left the biggest impressions. Even today I get goose bumps recollecting his memorable stories.

I had discovered that the mind is a powerful thing. It had made the characters in these stories real, living around me. I could imagine Frank Hardy solving a case in Saheed Nagar or the village pest Anada saving a flooding village in Puri. I could imagine Mandrake gesturing hypnotically in the Mahabharata

so that the maces of the Kaurava soldiers turned to flower pots. I could make Phantom live in the Khanda Giri caves with his two kids, Bubuni and Rubuni. Nothing stopped me from imagining the wildest scenarios where characters from various books milled together and scenes from various books juxtaposed to form strange backdrops to my emerging dramas.

"Get up, you lazy bum!", Baba's voice faded in my semi-conscious disposition. On that Sunday morning, I knew I must get up eventually but I just loved the daily ritual of the phrase "*gaalei ki padichi; jete daakiley bhi uuthuni*" being exchanged between my parents. I felt something huge tugging under me. As I reached for the object, I remembered a senior at school had lent me a book. *Dracula* by Bram Stoker. The book had 700 pages in it. That was the only reason why I did not start reading it the night before. I dreaded the number of pages and I knew that once I started it, I would be in a reading frenzy. Bram Stoker was an Irish writer and best known for this vampire novel that he wrote in 1897. After breakfast I started reading the book. By 10 PM, I was at page 500. I could not put the book down.

It was a book that was different from all others that I had read. It introduced me to a dark and abstruse world. The very idea of a vampire petrified me. The spine-chilling descriptions that unfolded in the story were in the subtle form of letters and newspaper clippings which made the story seem very realistic. Copious details about the Count disturbed me in a consequential way. Picturizing the words in that book was easy but the fears that they instilled were difficult to remove. Little did I realize then that for a long time those fears would stay in a coffin in my mind getting out in the nights to haunt me.

By the time I completed the book 2 AM, I was shuddering. I felt groggy and dreaded looking at the window. Fortunately, the window was closed and served as a small consolation. Small noises in the backyard amplified into abominable sounds. At one point, I could swear I heard scratching noises coming from behind the wooden window.

As I wiped the beads of sweat forming on my forehead, I jumped up and sat on my bed. There was a sound of running water outside my room. It was a tap in the garden and it was running now. The room that I was in had a room upstairs. Baba had renovated our house and that room had just been added. I wasn't very familiar with the room and that room became the center of my imagination. As I tried to sleep, I kept imagining footsteps in the room above. I distinctly remember hearing those footsteps even now. Were they real? Who would be in that room in the middle of the night. Besides, the room was locked. Implausible fear gripped me as I wrapped myself tightly in my blanket. The reassuring darkness within the blanket shielded me from the darkness outside of it. The water ran and the footsteps were feeble but they were there.

Childhood and fear go hand in hand. Before I understood rules of the world, it seemed not only entirely possible but altogether likely that there could be a vampire in the room above. Our childhood fears may be illogical, but they are, at the time, entirely real to us.

Unfortunately, Bou had forgotten to censor this book since it slipped through the plethora of books that she found OK for me to read. The book had messed with my head already. "Read books and lead a life of the pious mind!", she used to advise me, unbeknownst to her what a book I read and what a life I led! By day, I played *tennis ball cricket* in the streets, sweating under the hot Indian sun, throats dry from screaming, often clad in completely anti-sports attire, while salivating dogs and cows rummaged nearby for leftovers in the garbage. By night, I was catapulted to another world - running panicked and blindly, through moonlit snow filled forests, sweating and panting, pursued by the vampiric stranger in the room upstairs. Along with him were hungry wolves, their fangs dripping with blood. For years afterward, my nightmares continued. My mind had filled in the gaps with amazing creativity and it made complete and utter sense at the time to believe that the garden tap was probably running blood.

Anyway, I was groggy and utterly confused on Monday. Later that week, I shared my horrific experience with my friends at school. I found that I owed the various story-telling effects that I created (while telling them the story) to Mr. Stoker. Many of my friends wanted to read the book (desperately).

I latched onto the notion that crucifixes and garlic would ward off vampires. Besides, Dr. Van Helsing used them in the book. Utilizing the incredible power of a mind devoid of logic, I made my own talisman out of a medicine capsule into which I packed some garlic. I kept it in my compass box.

Last December, we went to India for my brother-in-law's marriage. My 8-year old son, Nimitt was having a gala time with his cousins Neel and Nikki.

One night, I asked them to come close to me and listen to a story. They loved my stories because I always made some special effects while narrating them. I asked them, "Hey, do you want to hear a scary story?". The three immediately agreed and snuggled up closer. "Yes, yes, yes!", shouted little Nikki. I thought about telling them about Dracula. "Do you know the story of Count Dracula?"

"Yep!", snapped Nimitt. "Remember the last time at Universal Studios, we went to the Van Helsing studio? That was way scary! Dracula has his own lab and he drinks blood. Bob was dressed up as Dracula last Halloween, right? Oh, he looked scary all right." He paused and then he declared, "but Lord Voldemort is cooler."

"Oh yeah!", I said thinking to myself that these kids were way ahead. By 8 years, they were made comfortable with ghosts, monsters, witches and skulls. Scary notions were cheaply "comoditized" and associated with candy. Harry Potter movies are filled with three headed monster dogs, slithering serpents and *The Dark Lord* (or *He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named*). If I told them the story it would be dismissed like a tawdry Halloween trick. Will they believe the horror that I lived through when I read the story and experienced every word?

Carefully, I weighed the story so that it had a reasonable scare factor. Somewhere between "*fun scary*" to "*fun*". I did not want to have these kids have an indelible impression of a blood-sucking vampire. I wanted them to dismiss the story as yet another story. I trivialized the story but sprinkled in ample scares to make the kids jump up from their seats.

I told them about the journey of a young Englishman, Mr Harker, who travels to Transylvania to do business with a client, Count Dracula. At the end of that part, Nimitt had gone off to sleep and Neel and Nikki were staring at me in admiration. "Uncle, go on. What happens after that?", queried Nikki. I said, "We will continue tomorrow. See Nimitt has already fallen asleep".

Perhaps, I had stopped deliberately. Was it my own fear that forbade me to proceed further and meet Count Dracula, a creature of fathomless evil? I could sense the same primordial fear that had overpowered me when I was in the seventh grade on that fateful night. I was "*scaredier*" (!) than the kids. After the kids were all tucked in and I tucked myself in, I lay pondering. It was twenty five years later but the sounds of footsteps were fresh in my mind. As the fear crept out of the coffin in my mind, I realized that I was in a bed in the same room that I dreaded. We were now staying in the second floor and the ground floor was occupied by tenants. I strained my ears and listened carefully for any footsteps whatsoever. Nothing. I was soon fast asleep.

At 2 am, I was startled by the sound of water running. I jolted out of bed and opened the window to look down at the garden. *Yes, the water was running.* The same garden tap! I felt it was a strange coincidence indeed. At that crucial moment, my adult ego state must have kicked in because I just shrugged my shoulders and without any fear whatsoever went downstairs and opened the door to go outside. I went out to the garden and closed the tap. I came back upstairs and slept like a baby.

The marriage went well and we all had a lot of fun. Two weeks passed by in a jiffy and I was ready to head back to California. The day before I was to board a plane at the *Biju Patnaik* Airport, I took Nimitt aside and told him about how I was scared as a kid and that I had finally put a lid on a childhood fear (the closing of the garden tap marked it). As I hugged him, he took out a small photograph from his pocket and said, "Papa, look it's you." It was a childhood photograph of mine.

I asked him, "Where did you get that?"

He held out a compass box which I immediately recognized and fondly took from him. I opened it and smelled it to go back in time. The pencils were weathered but still worked. In between the bunch of pencils lay a small medicine capsule. I picked it up and showed it to Nimitt and laughed a whole lot.

"You know something? I made this talisman to protect myself from Dracula!", I said.

"Wow! Why don't you take it with you?", asked Nimitt.

"Why not?", I said as I kept it in my pocket.

Soon we were at the airport and I said goodbye to my family as I went on to security check. The plane was going to Delhi where I would catch an international flight. I got into a comfortable position so that I could relax and catch a few winks.

Hopefully, I had conquered my childhood fear during this trip. Today I can rely on my imagination to write stories and poems of my own, design software and write nifty code. It's probably the same imagination that created that fateful night. I don't know when I drifted off to sleep but I woke up with a start, my heart pounding. "*But who had opened the garden tap in the middle of the night?*"

A chill ran up my spine as I sat up in a quandary. I pulled out my garlic talisman and a smile, "Whatever!"

* Uses his creativity to architect software and write nifty code in Fremont, California.

11 Minutes

By
Leena Dehal*

What is 11 minutes? The time it takes to get to work if you make all the lights and there is no traffic. The time it takes to boil water, steep and enjoy a cup of tea. The time it takes you to run into the store to pick up a few groceries to make dinner.

What is 11 minutes? The time it takes for your life to come to a crashing halt when you are told that is how long the heart of your newborn baby boy had stopped.

What is 11 minutes? The time when you hold hands with the father of your baby boy and pray to every greater force you can think of to spare your child, the one you carried and wondered about for 39 weeks.

What is 11 minutes? The time it takes to realize what is truly precious to you.

What is 11 minutes? The period after which time begins to pass again as your baby boy's heart begins to beat on its own.

What is 11 minutes? The reason you will love your baby boy and enjoy every minute he has been allowed to bless your lives.

(Jeevan Dehal was born on December 30th, 2004. After a traumatic start, he is now a happy and healthy 3 month old.)

*A middle school teacher in Toronto, Ontario, Canada



Bollywood Reality

By
Joyshree Mansingh*

“To follow the plots of a Bollywood movie, an ignorance of Hindi isn’t much of a hindrance, because they’re like Elvis Presley movies: a guy with important black hair, surrounded by adoring women, fights off gangsters and finds true love, all the while singing and gyrating”

Anthony Weller in “Days and Nights on the Grand Trunk Road”, 1997.

I grew up with the *Binaca Geet Mala* in the sixties, a radio program of Hindi film songs that was being broadcast by Radio Ceylon (now *Sri Lanka*). The term Bollywood was not even coined then! **Every Wednesday night, to my father’s irritation, I would wait impatiently for it to begin, ignoring my mother telling me to study or go to bed.** Days before my examinations, I was forbidden to listen to the radio and it was sheer torture not to listen to *Binaca Geet Mala* and the voice of *Amin Sayani*, the DJ. The songs from the films used to be hits before the films came to my hometown of *Bhubaneswar*. Radio was a lifeline for *Oriya* teenagers in those days.

My father was an aristocrat and a poet, inclined to the more refined things of life; Hindi films to him were certainly not refined. He preferred to watch quality *Bengali* movies from *Calcutta* and only took us to see those. When our *Badabapa* came to visit us during *Puja* vacations with his entourage of servants and peons, he took us to see Hindi films. I remember we went to see *Do Bigha Jamin*, a tearjerker with the late great actor *Balraj Sahni*, there were no dry eyes at the end of that film. I also remember *K. Asif’s* classic *Moghul-e-Azam*, with its dance numbers in dazzling color, millions of tiny *Madhubalas* swirling in tiny round mirrors to the tune of “*pyar kiya to darna kya*”. The last movie I saw when I left *Bhubaneswar* to come to America was “*Tere Ghar ke Samne*” where *Dev Saab* was at his comical best. More than the acting, it was the music that tugged at the heartstrings of every teenager. The sublime lyrics of unrequited and unconditional love were composed by *Shakkel Badayuni* or *Hasrat Jaipuri* and made popular by the lilting tunes of *Shankar Jaikishan* and *Laksmikant Pyarelal*.

I was too young to pay any attention to the social commentary of those movies; only the song sequences of the films caught my attention. I had an epiphany the other day when I was watching the old movie *Bhabhi* with *Balraj Sahni*. It was not the “happy ending” or the popular songs, but it was the role of the true *Bharatiya Nari* that caught my attention. The all suffering Indian woman, with her *anchal* over her

head, *sindur* in the parting of her hair, tears in her eyes, who was forever making hot *chapattis* and sacrificing her happiness for her husband and children. Oh, why oh why did I not learn how to be a good Indian wife from *Pandari Bai*! Then again, the man I was married to was no *Balraj Sahni*!

What was it about the reel or real life that made women so dispensable in India! It seemed that in movies women's role was to suffer, it did not matter if they were guilty or not. Men could kidnap them (*Umrao Jaan, Pinjar*), rape them, or make them into prostitutes or wives. Parents of the women would never accept them after that as they had brought dishonour to the family. Women suffered for love in almost every movie, just as they suffered for losing their children. The film that was the par excellence of these "suffering women" genre was a seventies gem "*Amar Prem*". *Sharmila Tagore's* husband, who marries another woman, throws her out of house. She is disowned by her mother for bringing shame to the family, forced by the bad man of the village to prostitution and becomes a servant in her old age. At the end of the movie, by sheer chance of only a Bollywood plot, she encounters her husband, now a lonely, blind and sick man. She looks after him, without telling him who she is. When he dies, she cries while she breaks the glass bangles on her hand, symbols of the end of her married life! That is the epitome of a good *Bharatiya Nari*!

It seems men have license to mistreat women in the name of love and marriage. Once a woman leaves the threshold of the marital home (even if she is beaten and thrown out of it), she is bad and destined to suffer, and the more she suffers for others, forgetting her own happiness, the better she is. The ultimate good woman is a dead woman. Even in 2004, an average of eight thousand women are burned in dowry deaths in Delhi. Sainly men, who are paragons of society and feel it is their moral duty to help the poor and the unfortunate, but they can punish and make women suffer who are not considered good Indian women, even if the women are their wives and the mother of their own children (*Shakti, Chhalia, Dhool ka Phool*). However, I digress.

After I came to North America, I gradually let go of my attachment to Hindi films but got attached to Hollywood movies. When I was in New York City in 1995, I rediscovered Hindi movies all over again! I was working as a librarian with the New York Public Library and discovered that it had a vast wealth of old movies, not only the old black and white Cary Grant comedies of the forties and fifties which I love, but also old Hindi movies of the fifties and sixties as well! This was when I had a hermit-like solitary life in Manhattan, watching an old Hindi film from my childhood on the weekend was a wonderful way to escape to my halcyon days of my past. I only got the old movies from the fifties, and sixties. After the seventies, the new crops of Bollywood stars were strangers to me and the songs, the main attraction for me, were not familiar for me to feel nostalgic.

The movie I saw in 2000, after skipping the decades of the eighties and nineties, was a *Yash Raj* extravaganza *Dil To Pagal Hai*. It was typical of *Yash Raj* film, hallmark of what has come to be known as the *Yash Chopra* style: heroine-oriented, romantic, emotional films, depicting the lifestyle of the super elite, with super hit music, and beautiful people frolicking in exotic foreign locations. None of the actors were familiar to me. It was fascinating to see how all the dance sequences looked like well-rehearsed and uniformed aerobic classes in my local gym! When did Indian actresses get so thin with no childbearing hips, and wore less clothing than that of women on beaches of South of France! However, there was overacting and songs galore with several outfit changes in one song.

Unlike the vintage Yash Chopra movies *Dhool Ka Phool* or *Woqt*, where women suffered and cried, the current Yash Chopra heroines were gutsy and fun loving. They worked, worked out, loved without suffering and mostly had fun and rarely cried. This was a revelation for me! Instead of making hot *chapattis* they were working out in gyms! Instead of being the victim, they were calling the shots and rejecting men! But, one thing had not changed; they still cared for the *izzat* of the family and sacrificed their own happiness for others.

Four years after *Dil To Pagal Hai*, in the winter of 2004, when I was researching for this article, I found a video rental store nearby that stocked plenty of Indian movies. Islam, a jovial Bangladeshi with an effusive personality, owned the video store. He knew a lot about Hindi films and was full of useful suggestions for me. I would have much preferred if the video store had old movies from the fifties and sixties, movies that I like. However, he mostly had plenty of current Bollywood and Hollywood hits. I soon realized that the current Bollywood movies are a genre by themselves. As well as absurdly bad acting with myriad twists in plot, every film demonstrates a blatant disregard for logic and has the obligatory fights, murders and lots of spilled blood and guts. In those fights, even with guns, people, especially the hero, does not die quickly. The fights go on and on until the hero is covered with blood but still alive to kill all the villains single-handedly!

One needs a lot of patience to sit through the three hours of melodrama, singing, and the numerous twisted sub-plots. Martha Tysner of the CBS Sunday Morning had a keen observation of Bollywood movies when she said it is MTV meets Busby Berkely! One has to let go of any sense of reality and watch it with fascination like an accident scene, it is too ghastly but you keep watching. I wondered what kind of convoluted minds think of these stories, and what kinds of people take this seriously! To me, they were simply hilarious but they were not intended to be. I realized that I was a minority to think of every film as a comedy. I usually fast-forwarded through the fights, knowing fully well that the hero is going to survive till the *de rigueur* “happy ending”.

When the initial shock of the absurdity in the plot wore out, I realized that the ideas for these films are products of Indian minds, from the same gene pool that concocted the great epics of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*. The sub-plots of these epics can only be imagined by extremely fertile minds!

The major theme of Bollywood hits seems to be “misunderstanding”, and sacrificing for misunderstanding! It is the misunderstanding that keeps the plot alive and the star-crossed lovers separated until the end. I could understand that it must have been the case in the fifties and sixties when there was no DNA testing for paternity and murder. However, in this millennium, the Bollywood movies are still based on “misunderstanding”, even with emails and the state-of-the-art cell phones everyone carries in current Bollywood hits. Matter of fact the cell phones and emails add a new dimension to the “misunderstanding”! *Kamal Hai!* That made me feel better, I am not the only one who is paying the price because of misunderstanding in real life. The real and reel life is not too far apart when it comes to the Indian culture!

Shah Rukh Khan is the current king of Bollywood. I observed that except for *Dil To Pagal Hai*, one can be sure that in every movie, *Shah Rukh Khan* will cry copiously with quivering lips, get beaten to a pulp with blood streaming all over his face, and/or die at the end. Even if the films with a happy ending like “*Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*” and “*Pardes*”, he still has to get beaten up before he gets the heroine at the end of the film with blood pouring out of his face. No one ever hands him a Kleenex and he never

seems to wipe his face of the copious amount of blood! The poor guy was in his element in *Devdas* where he went through an incredible amount of suffering and misery, got drunk and cried almost all through the movie, and died at the end without getting his love *Paro*! If I was *Sanjay Leela Vansali*, I would certainly do a remake of *Moghul-e-Azam*, with *Shah Rukh Khan* as Prince *Salim*, and *Madhuri Dixit* as *Anarkali*, played in the original film by *Dilip Kumar* and *Madhubala*, and, of course cast *Amrish Puri* as *Akbar*. *Amrish Puri* is the quintessential villain of current Bollywood. In my days, it was *Pran* or *Prem Chopra* but they cannot even hold a candle up to *Amrish Puri*!

The facts about India one can learn from watching Bollywood movies:

- Its all about LOVE: unconditional love, misunderstood love, unrequited love, wrong love, right love, love of money, love of power, love between parents and children, matter of fact it is love that makes the Bollywood world go round and round.
- There is no poverty in India. All the people in Bollywoodland live in palatial homes that look like English castles and drive fancy cars.
- “Misunderstanding” seems to be a big theme in every movie, people in these movies go through an incredible amount of misery by not clearly communicating with each other!
- *Farida Jalal* has to be a mother in every film, with a few exceptions to *Rakhee*, *Jaya Bachan* and *Rati Agnihotri*.
- *Johnny Lever* has to be in every movie. I think there is a law in Bollywood that he has to be in every movie produced in Bombay! He is hardly funny and certainly no match for *Johnny Walker*.
- *Amrish Puri* has to be either a stern father who does not want his daughter to marry the man she loves or a villain with lots of evil men around, which usually includes *Kadar Khan* and *Gulshan Grover*.
- *Anupam Kher* is usually a jolly father, but sometimes a villain as well.
- *Sanjay Dutt* always has to be a Bombay underworld Don, sometimes with a heart of gold.
- *Amitav Bachan*, who was the “angry young man” in the 70s is now the “angry old man”, proudly displaying gray stubble in every movie.
- *Salman Khan* must take his shirt off several times to expose his impressive pectorals in all his movies.
- In every movie, there will be a scene where the heroine, with long flowing hair blowing in the wind runs towards her lover in slow motion lifting her *lehenga*.
- Movies will have a tune playing through all the key scenes, it usually starts with *he heh heh heh haa haa* or *la laa la la* or *aaa aa aaa*.

- All the women must have a flat stomach to expose their navel in several outfits. Must also have highlighted hair and light colored contacts. They must also have shapely legs (a very unlikely thing for Indian women to have unless they spend every day with a personal trainer). Matter of fact, saris are only worn by mothers in the films. The stars either are always in western clothes or wear designer *salwars Kamiz* and *lehengas* that cling to their figure and expose the maximum amount of skin.
- There has to be some exotic locations. Switzerland seems to be the most popular, but London, New Zealand and Malaysia also come up frequently. I wonder, what do the reserved Swiss think of the Indian stars frolicking on the streets, even dancing in the snow without a coat, exposing their midriff with flimsy outfits!
- That brings me to the next point. Why do all the foreigners in Bollywood films speak English with such a peculiar accent!
- Most popular names for men in Bollywoodland: *Raj* (SRK's name in almost all his movies).
- Most popular names for women in Bollywoodland: *Pooja* (*Madhuri Dixit's* name in almost all her movies).

Most Bollywood movies are a variation on the “Romeo and Juliet” theme. There are also added *masala* themes thrown in, most popular being, amnesia, family vendetta, mistaken identity, corrupt police and politician, rape, sacrificing love for friendship, love for mother, and of course: *khandan aur izzat ki sawal* (question of family honor). Plots from Hollywood are blatantly copied and made in an Indian context and never acknowledged. Within four months, I had seen almost two dozen.

The most recent Bollywood hit I saw was *Veer-Zara*, a *Yash Chopra* extravaganza with SRK. I was fooled for a moment and thought, has *Yash Chopra* gone back to his days of tearjerker movies like *Dhool-ka-Phool* in his sunset years! However, the star-crossed lovers united at the end when the misunderstanding of twenty-two years was cleared up by a gutsy woman lawyer played by *Rani Mukherji* and all lived happily ever after in the rippling green wheat fields of rural *Punjab*.

A man I knew once told me that his wife watched Bollywood movies all the time. They had TVs in every room of the house, including the kitchen. The Bollywood movies are the opiate of the lonely and unhappy, be they middle-aged women in Canada or *rickshawallahs* in rural India. True love always wins, no matter what the obstacles, misunderstandings, or objections of the family. The lovers always unite at the end. The errant children realize their mistake and reunite with their parents. It is not only an escape from one's reality, but also it is seductively addictive.

- A Librarian at Toronto, Canada



Blessings Wrapped in Cloth

By
Sobhi Mohanty*

The Jagannath Temple, situated by the seashore in Puri (in the eastern Indian state of Orissa), is one of the four main pilgrimage sites, and one of the most sacred temples in India. The temple traditions have remained virtually unchanged since the temple was built in the twelfth century (A.D.). One of the oldest traditions is that of tying scarves or “*patkas*” (as they are called in Oriya – the tongue native to Orissa) to a pole on the peak of the two hundred and fifteen feet high dome of the main temple building. These scarves or *patkas*, are usually red or yellow (which are considered auspicious colours) and can be made of almost any material, although the ones sold in shops are either made of thin cotton or of silk. The *patkas* are brought to the temples by devotees who want a special wish fulfilled or have a special prayer to make. Tying a *patka* is like petitioning the deity to answer one’s prayers. However, these *patkas* are not tied by the petitioning devotees. They are instead, tied by members of a group of families called the *sevakas* – the Oriya word for the temple workers who are the ‘servers’ of the deity.

These *sevakas* are divided into sub-groups, with each group comprising a few families who live near the temple and perform very specific duties. The male members belonging to eight or ten particular families form the group of *sevakas* whose duty is to climb the temple dome daily and tie these *patkas* to the pole.¹² The climbing process is especially intricate and dangerous, firstly, because two huge loads of *patkas* (weighing several pounds) have to be carried to the peak by a single individual and secondly, because the climbers do not use any safety ropes or other climbing apparatus. The ritual of climbing takes place every evening, with each evening bringing the turn of a different *sevaka* family. New *patkas* are tied to the pole every evening, and those from the previous evening are untied and brought back down. The *patkas* that are brought down have usually been tied into tight knots by the wind and are thus now called *ganthi* – the Oriya word for ‘knots’. *Ganthis* are considered sacred because they are now a symbol of the deity’s blessings. These *ganthi* are given to the devotees who then take them home and keep them either in their prayer-rooms near the idols or in any other clean, personal space. I was told I could keep my *ganthis* in my clothes cupboard for example (provided the clothes were clean and laundered).

Some distinctions need to be made between *patkas* / *ganthi* and regular offerings made to the temple deities or other objects involved in temple rituals. While offerings (which may include food items, money and sundry other items) are given up to the deity, the *ganthis* are taken back home by devotees a day later. A comparison might be made with the strings that devotees tie on the branches of a particular banyan tree in the Puri temple. These are what one might call “wish-threads”. It is believed that if one ties a string and makes a wish, the wish comes true within a year, at which point the person must return to untie the string. However, apart from the difference of the time frame associated with each ‘tying and untying’ (a day for a *patka*, and a year for a string), the major difference between the

¹² To be an official temple climber, one has to fulfill numerous criteria of eligibility. First, one has to belong to the *sevaka* community and has to be certified by the temple authorities as being a satisfactory climber. In addition, he has to be married to a partner from within the same community. Although the climbers start training at a very early age, a young boy like Babula for example, would only become an official climber later in his life. At this time he was allowed up the temple dome only if accompanied by an older, certified temple climber. An important eligibility criterion is also that of good conduct and good ‘character’. It is only when a *sevaka* has convinced the temple authorities of his good character and pure intentions that he is finally allowed to become an official climber.

two lies in the fate of the untied cloth or string. The untied string is not usually a sacred symbol, and may even be discarded in the temple. The *ganthi* however undergo a complex process of ownership and symbolisation.

As the *sevaka* climbs down the temple dome and reaches the ground with the *ganthi*, a huge mass of devotees surrounds him. The *ganthi* are then scattered into the crowd by the *sevakas*. The few lucky devotees manage to scramble and acquire a *ganthi*. Some of the *ganthi* are kept by the *sevakas* and later, sold to devotees for sums of money that commonly reach a thousand rupees. The important thing to note here is that the sacred *ganthi* are not returned to the devotees who had them tied in the first place. This is rather unusual because though it is common to have objects included in a religious ritual and thus have them sanctified, once the ritual is over, these objects are always taken back by the same person and not distributed amongst the general public in a temple. In this case however, once the prayer has been made and the *patka* tied, that particular devotee now no longer has anything to do with the object. The *patka* moves on from symbolizing a personal desire, to becoming a *ganthi* – an object of ‘general sacredness’ meant for acquisition by the general public. Apart from randomly distributing a few *ganthi* in the mass of people and later, giving a few to other devotees in exchange for money, the *sevakas* sometimes give a few *ganthi* to special devotees, such as devotees that they are close to or who might have made a special request. This was how I acquired my *ganthi*.

I spent a part of this summer with one of these ‘climber’ *sevaka* families in Puri. It all started when I read an article about this ritual and about the newest addition to this group of temple climbers – *Babula*. *Babula* was a mere nine year old boy who had just started accompanying his older brother, one of the ‘official’ temple climbers, up the temple dome. The article having piqued my interest, I decided to investigate this ritual and understand its anthropological significance. Soon after meeting *Babula* in Puri I found myself on an intimate level of interaction with his entire family; a family of extremely warm and affectionate people.¹³ The patriarch of the family, Kunja Behari, was one of the most respected members of his community of *sevakas*. He no longer climbed the dome, yet any *ganthi* that the other male members of the family brought home were presented to, and kept with him. On the day I was leaving to go back home he gave me ten *ganthi*; ten knots that had been tied in a single *patka*. It was an overwhelming gesture. First, very few people were fortunate enough to ever get any *ganthi*. People would pay much more than a thousand rupees for as many as ten *ganthi*. Second, it was a very personal gesture because it was at his house, not at the temple, and I didn’t have to stand in a crowd of devotees

¹³ All the *sevakas* get a regular school education and usually pursue professional careers. Of *Babula*’s cousins for example (who are all actively engaged in the ritual of temple climbing), one owns a restaurant, one is a homoeopath doctor and yet another is studying engineering at college.

¹³ⁱ (babu being a term of respect, like ‘sir’ in English)

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* This essay, thanks to Kunja Babu, was for an Anthropology class at Yale (Yale Class of 2005)

to receive it. Finally, these *ganthi* were special in themselves for two reasons. First because they had been tied on one of the most auspicious days of the year. Second, he personally blessed me through the *ganthi* and said that he had only given it to me because he sensed something special in our relationship. Thus the *ganthi* now seemed more sacred on account of the way I had received them.

In his essay, 'Introduction: commodities and the politics of value', Arjun Appadurai (1) talks of the 'commodity phase' of objects. According to him it is important that "the commodity is not one kind of thing rather than another, but one phase in the life of some things." (Appadurai 1985:17) The commodity phase of the *ganthi* starts at the beginning of its life, when it is sold as *patkas* in shops. These shops are usually located around the temple, but may also be found in neighbouring cities or in places which are the starting point of religious pilgrimages in general. *Patkas* are priced differently according to the value of their material or embellishments. For example, a silk *patka* would cost more than one made of cotton and a *patka* embroidered with gold thread would be more expensive than a plain one. The prices governing these *patkas* are similar to the prices of comparable cloth materials sold in regular textile shops. Sellers raise the prices unfairly and buyers haggle over the same, in a process that is equivalent to the process of buying any other commercial commodity. This blatant commodity phase, as it were, ends once the buyer has acquired the *patka*. By Appadurai's classification, the *patka* would thus be placed in the category of *terminal commodities* – "objects which, because of their context, purpose, and meaning of their production, make only one journey from production to consumption. After that, though they are some times used in casual, domestic ways, they are never permitted to re-enter the commodity state."

(1.Appadurai 1985:18).

After this, the *patka* enters the 'exchange-phase' of its life. The role of money in this phase of the *patkas* or *ganthi* is very interesting. In the following discussion, I shall focus on such exchange specifically between a devotee and a *sevaka*. When a devotee asks a *sevaka* to tie a *patka* on the temple dome, he gives the *sevaka* money (though other valuables like gold coins for example are probably given too) in return for this favour. When another devotee makes a special request to the *sevaka* to save him some *ganthi* which he can take later (i.e. instead of standing with the crowd at the temple), this devotee also gives the *sevaka* money (as has been mentioned earlier) in return. After I was given the *ganthi* by Kunja babu¹⁴, I gave him a certain sum of money in gratitude for the favour bestowed. However, I was not in the position of the usual devotee and I had not *asked* for the *ganthi*. Kunja babu gave me the *ganthi* of *his own will* and hence this was not the usual exchange. These *ganthi* were a gift, representing Kunja babu's blessings. Respecting this, when I gave him money, I told him it was for the *seva* (for the purpose of 'serving') of Lord Jagannath, thus giving him the status of being the mediator in an exchange between the deity and me. The example of this exchange between Kunja babu and me does not, however, reduce the nature of exchange of *ganthi* for money between other devotees and *sevakas*, to mere material transaction. The *ganthi* is not merely an 'exchange – commodity'. The money given in exchange for acquisition of the *ganthi* cannot equal the value of the *ganthi* itself, which is a sacred, religious symbol and hence, invaluable. Similarly, the money given to the *sevaka* when requesting him to tie the *patka* cannot equal the value of what the *sevaka* does in return – climb the holy dome and tie the *patka*, thus allowing one's prayer to be heard by the deity. The money is thus in keeping with the ancient tradition of "*dakshina*" according to which no truly valuable object can be acquired without giving or sacrificing something in return. For example, a teacher has to be given "*gurudakshina*" in

return for his teaching. Learning for free is an insult, both to the teacher and to learning. ‘*Dakshina*’ is a thus a token; a formal symbol that stands for acknowledgement of the precious value of the object being acquired in exchange and for the status of its giver.

The final phase in the life of the *ganthi* is spent with the devotee who acquires it from the *sevaka*. This is an interesting phase and more complex than it first seems. When I first acquired the *ganthi* from Kunja *babu* at his house, one of my aunts was accompanying me. We assumed that the *ganthi* would be split between us. Back home, out of the ten *ganthi*, she cut and took three, I kept four (as a sign of my privileged status perhaps since I had received the *ganthi* personally) and we gave the remaining three to another aunt who had stayed behind during this journey. The cutting of the knots was an intricate process and we had to make sure they did not come undone, for that would have diminished their importance. Once this distribution was done, the *ganthi* were put away and not brought out again. The last time they were handled was when I cut my four *ganthi* into two halves, kept one half at home with my mother, and brought the other half back to my college room. As seen in this example therefore, I did share the *ganthi* given specifically to me, with other people, of my own free will. I did not need to ask the *sevakas* for permission to do such a thing. In fact, such distribution of holy or sacred objects amongst family or friends is fairly common. Often, people come back from pilgrimages with objects like talismans for their friends. In the case of the *ganthi* however, devotees can only give them to certain people within a certain time frame. That is, a devotee would not distribute the *ganthi* indiscriminately amongst the general public like the *sevakas* do at the temple. The receivers are personally close to the devotee and he must wish to share with them the blessings he has received. However, a devotee cannot suddenly decide two years later, to gift the *ganthi* to one of his friends who is going through say, a bad phase in his life and might need the deity’s blessings. By this time, the *ganthi* are already a possession of the first devotee, and as such, cannot be given away to others. This is a difficult concept, especially as the notion of a time frame is understood intuitively rather than explicitly stated. However, for present purposes it suffices to say two things. First, the *ganthi* must be given by the devotee, if at all, as soon after the initial acquisition as possible. Second, as opposed to the devotee, the *sevaka* has the traditional privilege of being allowed to keep *ganthi* with him, and distribute them whenever and to whichever devotee he wants. Another difference that emphasizes the difference in the religious status of the devotee and the *sevaka* is that the devotee cannot accept money in return for giving away his *ganthi* whereas a *sevaka* necessarily does. This can be understood in the context of ‘*dakshina*’ that has been explained earlier. The *sevaka* is the direct mediator between the deity’s blessings as enclosed in the *ganthi* and the devotee. He gives up his entire life to the deity and to performing rituals that make him worthy of acquiring this position. The devotee on the other hand occupies a more lowly position. He has not had to maintain a rigorous and ritualistic lifestyle in order for him to acquire the *ganthi*. Hence he does not bestow a *ganthi* upon another person; he merely passes it on, an act that is less valuable than the giving of the *sevaka*. Thus the devotee does not command the token of money in exchange for the *ganthi*.

This idea of being privileged enough to give can be analysed in the context of Annette Weiner’s essay titled “Inalienable Wealth”(2). In her essay she talks about how certain objects, even if circulated amongst others, remain attached in significance to their owners and are ‘inalienable’ from them. Such a concept does not directly apply to the giving of the *ganthi* by the *sevakas* even though the *ganthi* is a religious object and the *sevakas* are associated with the deity. The concept is inapplicable in this case primarily because the *sevakas* are considered the ‘servers’ of god, not his representatives on earth. The *ganthi* in turn are not a property of the *sevakas*. Unlike in the Kula system that Malinowski(3) wrote about, here the devotees do not acknowledge the *sevaka* while passing on the *ganthi* to another person. However, Weiner’s idea can be stretched to apply to the privileged act of giving that the *sevaka*

performs. Weiner says, “The value created through keeping must be seen in relation to the constant threats and needs of giving. Replacement allows the keeping of things to others. For replacement allows a person to retain some part of inalienable possessions or some degree of inalienability.” (2. Wiener 1985: 212) In the exchange with the devotee, the *sevaka* replaces the *ganthi* with the devotee’s respect for the fact that it is the *sevaka* who he must turn to should he need to tie *patkas* or acquire *ganthi* in the future. This act of exchange thus reinforces the privileged rank of the *sevaka*, even though the *ganthi* in itself, as has been stated, does not stand for the power or status of the *sevaka*.

Thus ends the journey from shop to temple to home, from *patka* to *ganthi*, and from shopkeeper to devotee to *sevaka* to another devotee. In conclusion therefore, it is intriguing to note that the biography of the *ganthi*, a symbol of divine blessing, cannot be dissociated from the biographies of the people who mediate its earthly exchanges.



Indians vs Americans

Two Youths Different?

By

Pratyush Panda*

India and America: one could probably not conceive another pair of two giants with starker differences in values, culture and way of life. From religion to diapers (or lack thereof), the differences can be seen everywhere. The streets of urban America crawl with every imaginable race, ethnicity and color, while Indian streets have a relatively homogenous tinge. Urban America has window shopping, pawn shops, strip clubs, bars, and gangs. Urban India has roadside vendors selling food that, if Vegas were to put odds on the chance that you would have dysentery that night, they would probably be around 2 to 1. Urban India has open markets similar to the incredibly rare swap meets of America, sari shops, and street corners caked with red spittle from pan chewers. Even the rural portions of both countries seemingly couldn’t appear any more different. Middle America has cows they raise to eat. Indian villages have cows they raise for milk. Rural America has barns, trucks and cowboys; rural India has straw huts, roaming cattle and natural toilets. With all these disparities, it appears impossible for the people of these two nations to coexist harmoniously. However, when one takes a closer look, a more complex picture can be seen.

Some might think that a nation’s urban youth culture stems from a country’s “pop culture.” If this were the case, Indian kids should be little angels compared to the youth in America. Bollywood can hardly be considered risqué when compared with Hollywood. Compare Sharukh and Aishwarya prancing around on some beautiful “hill station” (magically transporting themselves to a double-decker bus in London the next moment, amazingly in new outfits every other minute, unable to actually kiss each other on the lips) to Britney’s attire, or shall I say, lack thereof, in every music video. If pop culture plays as much of a role in shaping our societies as it seems to have done with the American “MTV” generation, it should be safe to assume that the relatively modest Indian pop culture should produce very innocent and wholesome young people. Indeed, this could not be further from the truth.

In my most recent visit to India this past December, I found myself at a party with my cousin in Bombay. I was curious to see what type of “truth or dare”-type juvenile events occur at such soirées, so I agreed to go with my cousin. When I got there, much to my surprise, the first girl I met had a tattoo extending the length of her arm, piercing all over her face and definitely no “traditional” nose rings. She

was smoking cigarettes and completely inebriated. This sort of thing seemed to be the general trend throughout the party. People would drink whiskey in between bites of the delicious lamb biriyani that was on the table. There were boys and girls making out, and I don't mean just pecking each other on the cheeks. The whole scene was definitely a sight that would shock most Indian parents, especially those who think such debauchery occurs in the States, but never in good old, innocent *Bharat*.

The point of the little anecdote above is that Indian urban youth culture is in fact not very different from American urban youth culture, despite the great disparity between the media content in the two countries. In fact, although the media content, food, smell and fashion are incredibly different in the two countries, the people themselves couldn't be any more similar. Young people don't care about politics in both countries. Old people don't understand young people in both. Rich people don't care about poor people in both. Parents care about family values in both. Kids care about partying in both. The majority of people believe in God in both. Kids hook up with each other at parties in both. Young people have long-term relationships, and even go to bed. Money and power motivate the capable in both countries. Sustenance and contentment drive the less capable in both nations.

Essentially, the incredibly different cultures that we observe are simply external appearances, just like how each of our homes look different from the outside, but on the inside live loving families, dysfunctional families, rebellious kids, goody-goodies, geniuses and complete morons. We are similar because we are all different. Culture doesn't necessarily define who we are, and pop culture certainly does not define us. Who we are defines who we are and culture is something important that accompanies that identity.

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Bonding

By
Nanu Das**

I barely heard the farewell from the airline stewardess as I left the plane; too excited to be back. As I stepped out the door, I felt the embrace from the cool night breeze, a welcome change to the musty airplane air that I had grown accustomed for over the last 18 hours. It had been eight years since I walked down this very same pathway. Upon going down the airline stairway, the memories of my last visit inundated my consciousness, coursing through every vein in my body, becoming more and more vivid with each step. When my feet finally touched down on the chipped asphalt, I looked eagerly toward the arrival lobby ahead anticipating who would be standing there and what would they think of me, what would I say, and how would I react. As I walked toward the lobby, trying not to break into a run, I felt as if something from around was calling, urging me to slow down. Stopping temporarily, I instinctively took a moment to run my fingers through the soil, to hear the hum of the crickets buzzing in the air, to see the instantaneous flashes from hovering fire flies and the small seedlings that had sprouted their way through the asphalt. It came to me then that it was not only the people that I had missed but also these simple expressions. It was these sights, these sounds, this feel that reminded me, even when I could barely recollect them, of home. I was overcome by the constancy of these essences, these reminders that hadn't changed one bit even though the whole world seemingly had. Finally, now inside

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the lobby, I heard the crescendo of familiar voices. But before I could even make out the faces, I could feel the warmth they exuded. After the flurry of tears, hugs, and kisses from many loved relations and friends, internally things began to become static.

I began to finally understand the importance of my parents' words, which seemed so repetitive to me before. So many times my parents had told me to always speak our native tongue at home, to continue to be in contact with my cultural identity through song and other mediums, to always be proud of my rich heritage. It was only now that I really began to understand why they did so.

After all, it was this identity that continued to tie me, a wayward native, to my native dock, despite the passing of years; it was this identity that allowed me to connect with those whom I had seen so long ago, and who seemed were so far away a little before in mere moments; it was this identity, so obvious to me at that moment, that had drawn me back to my roots.



Odissi – A Reflection of Three Young Ladies

By
Laboni Patnaik*

I looked out at the sea of curious faces and tapped the microphone to ensure it was functioning. “How many of you have taken ballet, tap or jazz dance lessons?” I began. Several hands shot up. “Well today, I will be teaching you about a classical dance form from India, one that is 2,000 years old!” I continued with a dramatic emphasis on the word *2,000*. The hands from my question had come down and I saw several raised eyebrows as many of the children (ranged 4th to 6th grade) leaned forward in anticipation. I always enjoyed their reaction to that question and comment.

It was a Tuesday afternoon, and I was at an elementary school in South San Diego for a lecture demonstration on Odissi as part of their Asia Week. This was a little different from my normal week-day routine at my office, where I usually spend my time lobbying foreign governments on my company’s wireless telecommunications technology. At the same time, addressing two hundred elementary school students was very much in line with one of my favorite activities, sharing an exquisite and complex part of my heritage, Odissi Classical dance. I continued the hour by sharing the history of Odissi, showing them the basic movements and postures unique to Odissi (*Chauka, Tribhangi, Bakhya*), explaining the various complexities of the dance form including a video, and presenting for them an entire item. The lecture demonstration, as always, culminates with a ‘question and answer’ session, which never fails to be the most amusing and fun-filled part of the session for me. The most common questions, that children of all ages ask are: “Don’t the bottom of your feet hurt?”, “What was it like to dance with Madonna?”, “How long have you and your sisters been learning for and do you always dance together?”, and “How long does it take to finish learning this kind of dancing?” Each time I am approached with the latter question, I emphasize that there *is no end* to learning classical art forms.

For as long as we can remember, Odissi has claimed the fascination and reserved the life-long dedication of my sisters and I, whether it be through performing, teaching, choreographing, researching or, of course, never-ending learning. At times, it’s been all of the above simultaneously. These factors are precisely how Odissi has molded us to become who we are, enriched our lives, and allowed us to share our culture with others. In addition to guidance from parents and grandparents, it was dance that led us to be fluent in our Oriya language, (even to learn the intricacies of reading and writing it and being able to recognize different dialects), making each Odissi item more meaningful and natural to us.

It was dance that played a role in ensuring our insight and understanding of our great Hindu epics, mythology and literature and prompted us to seek additional knowledge of aspects of the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and other master pieces that we have not yet covered within our dance tenures. And of course, it was dance that has allowed us to focus on a very special part of our culture and share it with others from different cultural backgrounds and walks of life.

My sisters, Shibani and Shalini, and I, have led very unique lives since tender ages, until now, as young adults. Our parents have always encouraged us to dedicate as much attention and importance to learning dance and music as they have for academics. We learned to take a ‘no nonsense’ attitude to our practice from day one of learning. As youngsters, we would return from school, put our school bags away, have a quick snack and immediately turn our attention to at least an hour and half of serious practicing. Not practicing where we simply closed our bedroom doors and did what we wished in the ‘name of practice’ to make mom and dad happy, but practice that was consistently monitored by our mother who would review our steps according to her carefully written notes from dance classes in order to make sure our mistakes and imperfections were addressed properly. Commitments such as birthday parties, after-school projects, swimming, tennis, soccer, violin recitals, Girl Scouts, etc. (which later turned to university papers, midterms and finals and subsequently to work deadlines, deliverables and business trips), were all addressed, but we managed our time around such commitments and practiced. *PRACTICE* was a discipline we learned well and made a consistent part of our daily routine.

The three of us were still in elementary school when we began to be invited within the community to share our art from and teach others about it. Soon, on a professional level, we were paying routine visits to several libraries, magnet schools, inner city schools, community colleges, and universities in an effort to teach the sociological, religious and aesthetic aspects of Odissi dance. This was the beginning of being cultural ambassadors and sharing our culture and representing India to American audiences. We learned the skill of customizing the material to be of interest to impatient first and second graders at an elementary school, or serious Ethnomusicology, World Religion and Ethnic Studies students at universities. The overwhelming response and enthusiasm from our audiences was an encouragement to us that our time was well-spent, and that American audiences were indeed fascinated by our culture, and in particular, by Odissi. We recently extended our teaching activities to a dance workshop in Bali, where we taught Odissi fundamentals to a group of students from various parts of the world.

Our commitment as youngsters influenced us greatly and provided us with the urge to continue with Odissi and activities relating to it. Shibani is a living example of this during her tenure at Stanford University. She introduced Odissi dance to the Stanford Dance Department; this was the first time Indian classical dance was offered as part of the curriculum. Shibani developed the syllabus and taught part of the course. As a recipient of the Chappell Lougee Scholarship, Shibani conducted research on Odissi dance in Orissa for two months. Shibani’s dedication and commitment to propagate Odissi led to her representing Stanford University in the American College Dance Festival, where she choreographed her own piece titled “*Bajrakanti Pallavi*.” Because of her endeavors, she was awarded the Stanford Asian American Performing Arts Award in 2001.

Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of our dance life has been our commitment to fund-raising, something we will actively pursue in the future. In conjunction with organizations such as the Center for World Music, we have organized and participated in several benefit performances. For example, in November of 1999, in San Diego, we raised \$15,000 to help the cyclone victims in Orissa. Part of the funds we raised was used to build a large school room in Chatrapur, which was divided into sections to accommodate a classrooms and an area, where in times of disaster, could be used as a shelter. Another portion of the funds raised was used to restore a convalescent home at Gopalpur and our dance school in

Konark (Guru Gangadhar Pradhan's *Natya Mandap*). We have also done benefit programs for the Gujarat Earthquake, 9/11, and most recently for the Indian Ocean Tsunami. Each of these events has provided us with the comfort that during times of such disaster, when little can be done; we have been able to use our skills to contribute our piece.

Along with these activities has come an ability to nurture our commitment to Odissi administratively as well. With the guidance of our father, we have learned the skill of writing grants and budgets (city, and state) in order to obtain funding from the National Endowments for the Arts, California Arts Commission, and Commission for Arts and Culture to carry out various projects related to Odissi. These projects include performances, fundraising and benefit events, programs at schools, and having the privilege of our gurus come from India and stay extended periods of time in our home for intense training. These sessions have greatly enhanced our experiences of Oriya traditions such as in depth knowledge of Jagannath culture (making our visits to the *Puri Mandir* incredibly meaningful), and utmost appreciation for mouth-watering Oriya cuisine! (*pakhala*, *watered rice*, *machha bhaja*, fish fry, *aloo bharta*, messed potatoes *ambula*, dried mango, *paan*, beetle leaf to name a few).

What often draws more attention and curiosity than the tedious aforementioned activities is our participation in the 1998 MTV Music Video Awards with Madonna, where we choreographed the *Shanti* piece in her "Ray of Light" album and performed with her. Of course in many ways, it was a dream comes true for any performer, and that evening was by far the most thrilling in our entire lives. However, the most amazing and rewarding part of that event was that 20 million people who were watching television around the world were able to catch a glimpse of Odissi. It also made us proud that a person like Madonna, with countless themes, dance forms and performers at her reach, deemed Odissi to be perfect for the part. As someone who knew very little about the technicalities of Indian classical art, she conducted research and saw several different dance forms before reaching out and inviting us to enrich her performance. She still continues to be an encouraging and inspirational figure in our lives and continues to be charmed by Odissi. She has invited us to perform at private gatherings on several occasions at her homes in Los Angeles and New York, in one case requesting *Shankara Varanam Pallavi* as her birthday gift. I find it rather ironic that being part of flashy, glamorous Hollywood, it was this ancient dance form that enticed her and has lasted longer than a short phase or trend. My sisters and I often discuss how what started as Odissi content to Madonna's music as a presentation to the masses may one day become a pure Odissi performance.

Apart from intensive training, while most of our activities surrounding Odissi take place here in the States, we have had some valuable experiences in India that constantly remind us how important and enjoyable it is to tie our activities to India. More importantly, in order to most effectively grasp the fundamentals of an art form so complex and so ancient, it is crucial to return to the source of it, which in this case is Orissa.

The Orissa Dance Academy has been an instrumental part of our upbringing as dancers. Here, we learned the discipline of the *guru-sishya* (teacher-student) relationship and attempted perfecting an extremely difficult art form by undertaking training several hours a day in Bhubaneswar's grueling summer heat. We learned that perfection could only be attained by intense attention to minute details. Examples would be hitting our foot in a particular way over a hundred times before integrating it into the larger sequence which would then be repeated a hundred *more* times, forming specific hand gestures (*mudras*) and transitioning to different gestures continuously until our teachers were pleased with the continuity, or relaying a certain emotion through facial expression so intensely that after awhile we were actually transformed into experiencing the emotions themselves.

Some days were easier than others. An incident that fondly comes to mind where it proved helpful to be learning in India, was when we were rehearsing *Srita Kamala* (one of Jayadev's compositions), and were perfecting the *Kaliya Vishadara* stanza, in which we were trying to gracefully portray the movement of a Cobra snake. As our teacher was patiently trying to guide us through each movement, he kept muttering, "Haven't you girls seen how a cobra moves?" Aside from knowing they are incredibly graceful animals, I could not easily remember the last time I had seen one! Precisely at that moment, we heard a noise outside the door. Ironically, there was a snake charmer with three cobras at the door. He was visiting Bhubaneswar from the near-by village where the snake charmers reside and wondered if we would be interested in seeing a quick show. Our teacher resorted to the actual cobras to take over his teaching for that day!

During a recent short visit to Orissa, Shibani partook in a national Doordarshan program on Orissa's very own Jayadev, father of the Gita Govinda. Along with our teacher, Aruna Mohanty, and several dancers from the Orissa Dance Academy, the troop traveled to a small village outside of Puri, where they attempted to portray Krishna and the gopis. They actually held clay pots (*matias*), and danced on the bank of a running stream to various Gita Govinda compositions. In order to secure a location to get ready for the shooting, they knocked on the thatched roof huts in the village! This was certainly a novel experience for Shibani and it was valuable for her to participate in this type of project that could not be replicated at home.

Similarly, a few years ago, we fulfilled one of my dad's long term visions for us to perform in Berhampur, our home town in Orissa. What we thought would be a small gathering and a nice treat to perform with our live orchestra, over one thousand people gathered and were incredibly interested and touched to see the "three sisters from America" present a two hour Odissi repertoire. Overall, being involved in dancing and learning in India has advantageously enhanced our experiences as dancers and provided us with valuable training.

Our countless experiences that have been possible through Odissi, whether it be teaching, performing, or learning, have molded us into the adults we have become. Paralleled with college education (in my case graduate school as well), challenging and hectic careers, and a fun filled social life, Odissi will always be an integral part of who I am. It has not always been simple. It's been painful, as classical dancing is anything but easy and I have battled severe tendonitis in both my knees for several years. It's been demanding, as we are constantly juggling work, play and dance, wanting to do justice to *all* of it and wanting to miss out on *none* of it. It's been challenging, as it is impossible to wholeheartedly please our gurus with the perfection they expect without unwavering and unconditional dedication and perseverance. However, it has provided us with a profound understanding of our heritage and it has instilled great pride in our culture and our roots, to the point that we have made it an integral part of our lives to share what we know and educate the culture and society we live in on our Oriya culture.

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What OSA Means To Me

By Snigdha Das, M.D.*

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 (don’t think I don’t know 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. 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. 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 encouraged me to succeed and celebrated with me.

In truth, they are my family. My Dad always tells stories of the first OSA gatherings. The 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 had to feel 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 even 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 that we will always remember the times when people cramped into small apartments sharing a bathroom with several other families. I hope we can remember the joy the OSA founders felt at feeling at home thousands of miles away from their homeland. 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. Das is currently completing her residency at Loma Linda University Children’s Hospital.



Oriya ABCD

By Barnali Dasverma*

I'm confused. Don't worry – that's not a typo – you read correctly. I'm incredibly confused. Many of you have probably heard the term ABCD, which stands for “American Born Confused Desi” - I think I fit the bill pretty well. Those who know me might be quick to think, “Barnali has done all the right things up until now...she earned both a BA and an MA from Stanford University and at age 23 has a prestigious and well-paying job with a management consulting firm...what the heck is she confused about?” The truth is, I'm extremely confused about money, and it's distinctly because I'm an Oriya American.

Yes, I'm confused about money. The big question is - do I want a lot of it? A few moments ago, you learned that I have good job with a consulting firm - I get paid two to three times what my peers in public service make, rack up the frequent flier miles with my constant business travel, and have brand-new car that I purchased without any help from Mom and Dad. So, what's the problem? The problem is that I'm not so sure I'm pursuing a career path that is going to make me happy. Remember those Stanford degrees I was telling you about? They're in Political Science, Cultural & Social Anthropology, and Sociology. As for my college internships, four out of five were spent at the U.S. House of Representatives, The Carter Center, the US Department of State, and Swanirvar (a village-based NGO in India). Do you see a pattern here? A life of service, in which I continually give back to the community and strive to make the world a better place, is something that is extremely important to me.

How is this related to my being an Oriya American, you ask? That's the part I'm not confused about. Being the child of immigrants who were born and raised in Orissa, it has been quite natural for me to value a life of service. I have seen the impoverished street urchins of Bhubaneswar, visited the orphans of Cuttack's *Basundhara*, and heard stories about the uneducated masses in the interior of Orissa. My mother has told me of her early experiences as a doctor in Orissa's family planning camps working with villagers who knew nothing about human reproduction, much less anything about contraception. My father has told me about the schools in Orissa's tribal areas where the teachers never reported for duty, but dutifully collect their paychecks. Thus, it seems obvious that I, as a relatively privileged Oriya American, have an obligation to try to improve the lot of those less fortunate. It is this perspective that makes me think that the accumulation of wealth is unimportant and that I should pursue the career in international development or public policy that my education and college work experiences prepared me for.

Significantly, my Oriya American heritage also provides me with another perspective that makes a life of service decidedly undesirable. Growing up first in the Bay Area Oriya community, and later on, the Southern California one, I have been instilled with a need to be “comfortable.” I have grown up seeing Oriya immigrants who arrived in America with very little, slowly but surely strive to become “comfortable.” Certainly, in its essence, being comfortable in the Oriya community simply means homeownership and financial stability. However, in reality, being “comfortable” has often meant trading up from the Toyota Corolla to the Camry and finally to the Mercedes, and moving up from the 1500 square foot starter home to the 3200 square foot California dream house, complete with a

swimming pool and three-car garage. The reality is that a family's social standing in the Oriya community often goes up when they purchase an impressive home and a fancy car, or send their child to an elite private university. And isn't it reasonable to want to be respected and admired within one's community?

So, that brings us back to my original question – how much money do I really want? Being an Oriya American has shaped me such that I feel compelled to pursue a career in public service, and at the very same time, achieve financial success (as it is measured by the engineers and doctors that largely comprise the North American Oriya community). In other words, I'm the epitome of the Oriya ABCD – I'm confused. I'm definitely trying to figure things out. Do I want to continue down the path I'm currently on, get an MBA in a couple of years, and simply give back to society through charity? Or do I want to get a law degree and engage in advocacy for those without a voice? I'm still trying to determine what career path I want to follow in the long-term. I don't think I'm doomed to being confused forever...but I do wonder, could I have avoided being so overwhelmingly confused in the first place, were I not Oriya American?

**Associate Editor, JOSA, resides in Millbrae, California.*



A Filmmaker's Journey in Mumbai

By Arati Misro^{*}

"What is it like to be an Oriya American filmmaker?" an Oriya American asked, This is a loaded question with a lot of layers, but I will do my best to answer by sharing my recent experiences exploring the film industry in Mumbai, India. I just came back from a two month visit to Bollywood. During many moments there, everything in life just made sense.

Being a filmmaker may be a blessing or a curse. I fluctuate. I feel the constant need to exercise my own vision and expression, and I still have the passion to change the world. This is not easy! Every time I go back to India, my life is changed profoundly. Each trip has made me more focused and driven to accomplish my dreams and ambitions. Life is too short and we have to make the most of it. I feel that even if I make a small mark on humanity before I die, my life's purpose will be fulfilled.

I have watched many of my friends get married, start families, and buy houses and nice cars. I have come to accept that my path is different and I hold different ambitions and goals - goals that will take me more time and diligence to achieve. It's not easy being a woman who not only wants a nice beach house in Malibu, California some day, but also wants her ideas to be on a screen where thousands of people will be moved and their lives be changed forever.

My filmmaking career started in Orissa five years ago where I documented women's voices on an old video camera. This piece captured the hearts of the admissions board of my graduate school. Before I started my Master of Fine Arts degree, I was fortunate enough to go back and work in South India.

^{*} Working at a feature film post production house as a supervisor of marketing and publicity campaigns. Arati is also spear-heading Women in Film India with Nandita Das. arati@misrofilms.com

There, I discovered India's new Silicon Valley in Bangalore through a new cable TV show. Four years later, after training in Film Production and working in the industry with reputable producers, I found some time and money to finally visit Mumbai. I had dreams about Mumbai prior to leaving and those dreams became a reality far beyond anything I ever imagined.

I was fortunate enough to travel with a friend who was familiar with the city. I caught on to Hindi pretty quickly, and before I knew it, I was traveling by an auto rickshaw all over town. We stayed in Juhu Beach with my uncle in his production office; it was old, dusty and dark. I could barely see what I was wearing in there, but it was a place for me to sleep and bathe. That in itself was a humbling experience.

Since I worked on a crossover Bollywood film before I left the States, I had forged many relationships with established actors. Before I left, I was already in touch with many filmmakers based in Mumbai through various colleagues I have in Los Angeles, New York City and San Francisco. What an adventure! I am so proud that I was able accomplishing so much in Mumbai/ Bombay on my own. I met the top Bollywood directors, actors and producers. I met independent filmmakers of our generation that had the same challenges in life I do. I visited a theater group where I literally bumped into Nasi Shah. I ended up having a meeting with him about my feature film project. I also went to my first Bollywood film set and met Amitabh Bachchan, Sharmila Tagore and Sanjay Dutt - what a powerful experience! I finally saw in person an actor I grew up watching half way around the world, an actor who is a legend to me... I am no longer a fan but a fellow artist and colleague. The producers of the film welcomed me and I was amazed to learn that they were traveling all over the world shooting films with Indian content. (Do keep in mind many of my experiences in Mumbai happened by chance.)

I visited the Pune Film Institute, where I had an eye-opening experience. I feel fortunate to have been trained in America because the Pune Film Institute does not teach about the film industry as a business. I tried to discuss the importance of this with the director of the Film School and was still trying to promote the teaching of this subject.

During my trip I also went to Goa, where many Bollywood stars and top producers went to vacation. What an experience to be there during New Year's! It's just like Europe, only with incredible beaches. These made me realize that in India there are many successful individuals in the film industry who had worked hard and know how to enjoy life. Unfortunately, if you are not one of those lucky ones, the struggle continues and your lifestyle is not as comfortable as that of a struggling filmmaker in Los Angeles. We have more resources here in Los Angeles. Even with fierce competition, I feel LA has more outlets to tap into, especially for women.

The fashion and nightlife in Mumbai is way ahead of any place else. The colors and styles of clothes just blew my mind, as did the jewelry. Let's not forget Mumbai's amazing night life. The clubs and bars are out of this world. I ran into fellow Oriya Sarita Misra in Colaba and we had an unforgettable time with the hottest Hindi music blasting. We had met up earlier at a writing seminar a colleague of mine was teaching.

The food in Mumbai was also amazing. I had the best dosa across the street from where I was staying for one dollar; the best Indian food I have had is in India. You cannot beat the freshness and that extra spice, all while paying no more than two or three dollars for a meal.

Let's face it, Mumbai is a pretty happening. I became a filmmaker because I wanted to bring our stories not only to American audiences, but also to International ones. At this time, I am blessed to be a part of this new era of Indian film. It's a time where Hollywood is location scouting all over Mumbai. It's a time where Indian talent is getting signed on with agents here in L.A. Our films are being nominated for Oscars! I feel our history and struggles are finding their audiences. This is just the beginning and I hope to be an instrumental part of this trend. India is going global with entertainment. This is what continues to inspire and drive me towards success.

I have forged friendships with people who see the world the way I do and want to truly make a difference by story-telling, teaching, and visual art. I have built many relationships in Mumbai which I am confident would flourish. Being a filmmaker, educator and a businesswoman, it is a tremendous responsibility; one must understand how important it is to exercise it everyday.

I have realized that India is not a part of my past. It is my future. I was not born there but I feel so attached. Why? This continues to be a huge mystery to me which is unraveling as I write. I have learned that you have to take India for what it is and not compare it to the U.S. You simply cannot. They are two countries with very different histories, people, and resources. I am fortunate to have a future with both. I hope to provide a bridge for people



Picasso Inspired Dog

By Aditi Patnaik*



* Age 9, 3rd Grade.

(This art was selected for an exhibition at the Laguna Beach Art College among all the public and private schools at Irvine, California. This was also recognized for its special coloring patterns with Crayons and Markers)

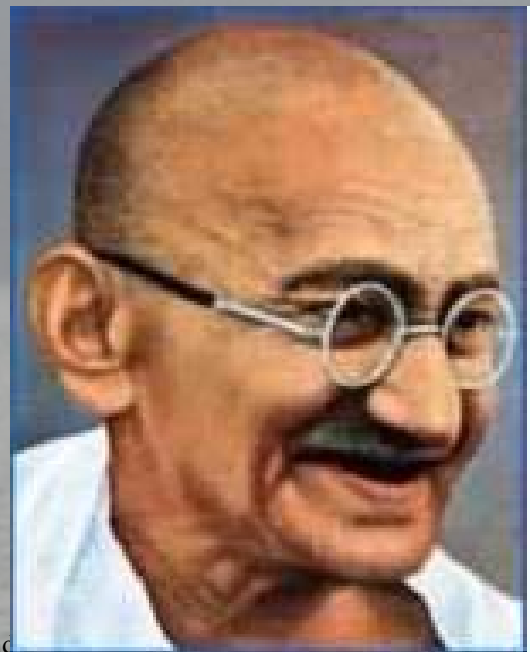


Gandhi: The Great Soul

By
Amit Pujari*

My hero, Mohandas Gandhi (Mahatma Gandhi), was born on October 2, 1869 at Porbandar, near Bombay, India. He was the youngest of six children. In 1882, at the age of 13, he got married to Kasturbai. On September 4, 1888, he sailed to England to study law. On June 12, 1891 he returned back to India and began to practice law. In 1893 he went to South Africa to become a lawyer and later he became a leader of Indian people living in South Africa. In 1911 he returned back to India and helped Indians fight for freedom from English rule. He was killed on January 30, 1948 at a prayer meeting. Gandhi was a courageous leader. He wrote his autobiography The Story of My experiments with Truth. He never lied and ate vegetarian food only. He drank goat milk as he wanted to save milk for calf where as goats had plenty of milk always for its little goats.

Also known as Mahatma, great soul, Gandhi, he was a national hero of India. He tried to make the world a better place by teaching people to fight for their rights without violence. Even if he made a lot of money by becoming a lawyer, he decided to live a simple life and help poor people. He taught people how to forgive each other and love and respect each other. He prayed all religions hymns and wanted to unite all faith. Gandhi taught India and the world to fight for freedom and fairness without weapons. Before Gandhi, Indian people believed in the caste system, but Gandhi wanted people in the new and free world to be equal. Gandhi taught Indian people not to take orders from British people in their own country. Mahatma Gandhi helped bring independence to India after 190 years of British rule without blood shed and only by civil disobedience. He taught non violence and peace to the world. Following his methods Martin Luther King started his racial equality movement and Nelson Mandela of South Africa revolted peacefully against apartheid. Both of them received Nobel Prize for peace. We should practice his method to bring peace and harmony in this world. So Gandhi is my hero.



* • 2nd Grade Student, Richmond Street Elementary School, El Segundo, CA. This is a project in the class.



Morning Walk

By
Bagmi Das*

The hot Indian sun hinted at its power by extending little arms through our intricately carved window. As I felt its warmth hug me, I blinked my eyes open and stretched to greet its greatness. I turned around to find that Nini apa was still asleep. Not a problem. Shaking her seemed like the intelligent thing to do, but resulted in a deep groan and a roll to the other side of our straw covered cot. It seemed as if I would be making my first baby steps back to Indian life by myself. Yay!

I placed my *payal* laden feet down and giggled at the soft tinkling. Each step made me a better musician, and when I ran, a symphony resounded off the walls. I was Bach, Beethoven, and Ravi Shankar. I twirled and twirled in the embrace of the sunlight only to fall over. This made a different sound and added some bass notes to my orchestra. Delighting in my new discovery, I walked into our kitchen, falling every four steps, trying to keep the audience riveted. Dazed in my own musical world, I was snatched out of it by a deep chuckle. I lifted my head off of the floor to see a man sitting, fully dressed in brown pants, a blue dress shirt, and *Bata chapals*. “*Namaskar Bapa.*”

Afraid, I began to gradually back away from this unfamiliar situation, now regretting and cursing each traitorous chink of the bells. Just as I lifted aside the stringed-shell curtain that veiled the doorway, Bapa called me back with a deep grunt. Overcome with guilt, tears began to fill my confused eyes, but Bapa just smiled and wordlessly clutched my tiny hand in his age worn palm. “*Chalo!*”

With this began my first tour of Bhadrak. I scrambled to keep up with his long strides, creating little staccatos of dinging with my *payals*. Stumbling over the makeshift wicket, I let go of Bapa’s hand to reach for the cricket bat, which stood proudly at half my size. Trying to hit the little red ball that lay beside it, I fell over from the effort. Again Bapa chuckled and after dusting me off, he grabbed my youthful fingers. Engrossed in the bounty of alien objects that lay behind me, I twisted my wide-eyed head around to watch the dust gather atop the cricket bat while I was pulled, barefoot onto the rocky driveway. There, I found *bhai’s chapals* and slipped my feet into them stealthily, so that Bapa would not think of me as a wimp for not bearing the pain of the pebbles on my tender feet. As I raised myself to my full six-year-old height, I noticed that we were not the only ones awake. I saw an old lady, barely covered in a raggedy magenta *sari*, collecting dried cow dung cakes off the side of the road and placing them in a wheelbarrow. I knew Bau would be purchasing these later in the day. Bapa did not say anything as we passed many unopened shops, selling sundry such as combs, wristwatches, and cards with pictures of Bollywood stars. I glanced at Sharukh Khan’s dimpled smile on the front of a birthday card and shrieked with delight, making Bapa gift me with a silent smile. Now comfortable with the former “silent stranger,” I started talking about all the different sights on our journey, the best of all being the billboard with an advertisement for Bau’s medical practice. Still nodding and smiling, he led me in a circle, back to the forgotten wicket and its sand-blanketed comrades.

I ran into the house, hearing pans and spoons that slowly added their own riffs into my formerly solitary tinkling, and inhaled a whiff of the fresh *parota*. Bapa let out a deep chuckle as I ran into the kitchen and Nini apa walked groggily towards the bathroom. He had shown me his world with only a few steps, and I would later come to thank him for this first walk that bridged the gap between my American upbringing and Indian heritage. Before I disappeared through the waterfall of stringed-shells, I turned back, thanking Bapa with my smile. “*Puni kali jiba?*” Of course.

- A graduating senior at Hammond High School, currently resides in Columbia,MD.

WATCH

Watch your Words
Watch your Action
Watch your Thoughts
Watch your Character
Watch your Heart
----- Sai Baba



Mehndi

By
Sulagna Misra *

_____ (1)

A store bought cone
Filled with disgusting green gunk
Original homemade designs
Cover my palm and fingers
Dabbed with the sticky mixture
Of lemon and sugar
The fetid substance
Darkens and hardens
Pieces crackle as they are brushed away
To reveal dark red stains

At first showing up like dried blood
Stained on my skin



* *Sulagna is in the Grade 9 at Basting Ridge, NJ. She is a cute artist.

(2)

When I come to school,
Everyone looks at my hand and says,
“Whoa, what happened to your *hand?*”
“Is it permanent?”
“Does it come off?”
“Wash it off, quick!”
“Is it marker?”
“No, it’s paint, right?”
“Oh my gosh!”
“Is that *blood?* Are you masochist?!”
“Ew, what IS that?”
To which I snap in aggravation,
“It’s *henna.*”

A few girls smile and say they know of the
tattoo like markings,
And to my amazement,
Every female teacher looks at my hands
and smiles at me and says,
“Henna, right?”
“Did you go to a wedding?”
“Oh, let me see!”
“Did you do that yourself?”
When I say yes, they smile and exclaim
over my petty design
And I wonder how one day work of
applying henna
Can cause such commotion.



Tiger

By
Sameet Mohanty*

Which hands of thy god or man,
 Could have such symmetry?
Of whose eyes constrict fear naturally
 Its stripes look so noble and royal
Of who's sight catches the drop of a pin
Whose teeth are like razor sharp murderers
 Of who's feet are so swift,
 that not even a bat can hear
Whose eyes twinkle like a star at the night
 Its coat of yellow and white stand in the
 light,
 with all its might

With all these personalities,
there's nothing to complain
 But do not forget,
The hands that made the goat,
 made thy tiger too
Then why did he put so much glory into
 the tiger,
 and make the goat so plain
Then why did he make the tiger so vicious,
 And the goat so calm
It's all Mother Nature's
 True secret

* Born in Boston, 10 years old, 5th Grader, USA Embassy School, New Delhi



Why is Arthur Ashe, a Legend?

By Amreet Mohanty*

Have you ever heard of a leader in a pack? Well, Arthur Robert Ashe, Jr., was one, from the moment he laid foot on the earth on July 10, 1943. He was born in a blacks-only hospital and almost instantly showed his traits of being the next legend in sports. Arthur was a product that contained perseverance, hard work, and the trait of his management of time. As the bombs of World War II exploded far away squeals were being heard from a baby boy. Already, Arthur was “raising a racket” He lit up the eyes of Africans and others, of different backgrounds. If it weren’t for him, I probably wouldn’t be playing tennis. Using his fame, Arthur raised public awareness of racism in America. After all, what did the whites have that the blacks didn’t? Practically everything. He was a legend in the works!

Despite oppression, Arthur always managed to succeed. Arthur spent much time on the tennis courts, but he still managed to receive straight A’s at Baker Elementary School. Arthur continued to impress the tennis world with his amazing skills and fast reflexes. At the same time, Arthur continued to maintain the highest grade point average in Sumner High School. In return, he was the first African-American to be offered a tennis scholarship to UCLA. His motto was “For every hour spent on the playing field, two should be spent with a book.” Wonder why I’m writing this essay? Because of this, of course! He started professional tennis when he was sixteen. His debut was quick getting to the third round of Wimbledon and at the same time preventing racial problems. In many of the tournaments he played, he didn’t hold up tournaments because of those unfair racial rules. Despite the fact that Arthur attended very few tournaments because of skin color, he made the most out of the tournaments that he was allowed to play.

In 1992, the tennis legend who had been battling the world’s top players for over 800 tournament wins faced a room full of media to report that he had AIDS. He told People magazine, “You’re not going to believe this but AIDS is not the greatest burden I’ve had in my life. Being black is.” In 1993 Arthur died of AIDS in New York City. But everyone from all different cultures and skin colors will remember the African-American tennis legend that refused to let the color of his skin limit the scope of his dreams. And I’m proud to be an Indian-American with unlimited dreams. For Arthur Ashe’s image will always be carved in my heart.

- A Sixth grader at Hyde Middle School at Cupertino, California, a John Hopkins University GATE Student, and a top California ranked Junior Tennis Player
-

A Somber Struggle For Life

*By Sunny Tripathy**

“I would like a lemon chicken with sweet and sour sauce, and she will have the spicy salmon, with the pork fried rice on the side.”

Your waiter at the Chinese restaurant took your order before he hurried off into a large kitchen, in which the meal was to be prepared...

* * * *

The newborn chick tries to keep up with her mother, as they head towards the seed for the morning feast. This newborn chicken, Daniel, was born about 3 weeks ago, and his eyes are now prepared to bring him the sights of the world. Yet, all he could see was a fence, between his family and the world. The brilliant sun would strike the sky with red and orange each morning, yet it rose and set behind the fence. The free ducks would soar high above the trees, singing with the bloom of spring but, it too was on the other side of the fence. Daniel tried to understand the good things in life, his mother Henny and his two brothers, yet his story was a sad one:

A day when the frozen wind of winter bit upon our defensive feathers, my mother was walked out of her cage by some giant creature which had the power to open and close the fence. Petrified, I desperately tried to slip through the gate with her, but I was kicked back in, and only my mother went out.

My young eyes, twinkling with fear, grew blurry from my gathering tears and made it difficult for me to follow their path. Finally, after about 100 yards, the man stopped, and held my mother against a tree stump, and held a large object close to her neck. He held it back, and swung with might, and my mother's head rolled onto the grass while her loving blood soaked into the dark soil. Her precious head bounced and lolled across the dirt raising dust, and landed near my feet. Her hazel almond eyes lay staring at me, and her handsome red head lay vibrantly contrasted against the mahogany pale dirt. My eyes grew increasingly moist, and thunder jolting pain shocked my body. Like snowflakes, my invisible tears glided to the ground, making dark spots on the dirt. With every bit of muscle and strength, concealing the pain, I was able to lift my head and my eyes groped for an explanation.

My mother's body and flapping wings were taken to a small booth, upon which they ripped off her feathers as a deer rips the grass, and peeled her bleeding skin off her precious body. They knew not the virtue of her wings, and they knew not her soul within. They sliced her body into pieces, parting her organs from her body, recklessly washing off her blood along with her pride. And without bother the blood that Henny spent years building, the blood that was given to her from her parents, and the blood in which lay her dignity and soul, now swished down the drain.

Henny's body parts which lay asunder, were placed in a plastic bag and shipped off to a market, from where a Chinese restaurant bought it. And Henny now lies in pieces in a freezer, waiting for her precious muscles to be fried and mixed with spices, so it may be served to a hungry human.

* * * *

“I would like a lemon chicken with sweet and sour sauce, and she will have the spicy salmon, with the pork fried rice on the side.”

* * * *

The raging stream fought ferociously against her, but a young mother salmon fought back, and she used every muscle in her body to reach her nest upstream in Alaska. The stream bought her pain and fatigue, but in the hopes of allowing her eggs to hatch, and to ensure her progeny, she put her final strength into a powerful jump and finally found herself in her nest. She prepared to lay her eggs, completely oblivious to the giant who sat patiently above her. Not having eaten in weeks, when the mother saw a juicy worm dangling in front of her, she couldn't help but feed her growling stomach. Her mouth opened and as she put her mouth over the worm, a sudden wince of pain came upon her, as a wide, long, sharp hook drove its way through the top of her mouth. The pain a thousand lightning bolts could not bring ripped at her mouth, and she was lifted out of the water by the hook in her mouth. Like a drowning human in a pool, she tried her hardest to break away, but she had a nail in her mouth, heavy eggs in her body, and no oxygen in her lungs. She was finally taken off of the hook, lifted further away of her home, and dropped onto the hard ground. There she shuddered from lack of oxygen. A giant grabbed a large marble pole, probably ten times heavier than her, and bashed her head, shattering her skull, and damaging her tiny brain, until her blood had stained the ground, and her poor life was destroyed. Her young children that lay inside of her would never have a future.

The salmon's body was cut into pieces, and her head sliced off from her body. And that tail that had battled a raging river as a mother was also violently parted from her. The pieces were again placed in a plastic bag and sold to a market. And this bag too was sold to a Chinese restaurant, which stores this courageous mother in the freezer, so she may be served with chili and spice to another hungry human.

* * * *

“I would like a lemon chicken with sweet and sour sauce, and she will have the spicy salmon, with the pork fried rice on the side.”

* * * *

I need not explain the story of the pig, or any animal for that matter, for a point is to be made. I am 15 years old, and had not understood the importance of other animals' lives until recently. I had gone to a market, and came upon a young goat hanging by its intestines, with head left for the flies. I came upon chickens who killed for their meat. Since then, I have become a vegetarian and have not eaten meat.

“Eat some salmon, it is nutritious and good for your body,” say my friends.

“Sorry, but I shall not take the life of another to help benefit my own,” is my only reply.

One often goes to a restaurant and just orders something, but never thinks about where it has come from. One rarely thinks about the lives that have gone into his full stomach. A helpless bird with brains the size of a nut, who cannot even defend itself from a vicious human loses its life. Were we

humans given the bigger, smarter brains to use guns and weapons? Were we humans given the bigger, smarter brains to kill and do crimes? Were we humans given the bigger, smarter brains to *eat* other *lives*? If that is true than I shall ask for a smaller, stupider brain for I shall not wish to be a part of this species.

It is understandable for a lion to eat deer, for God has designed it with a brain whose thoughts are meant to be such. Yet, God has not made humans *smarter* so they will eat animals, kill animals, and destroy nature! Let Henny, the salmon, and all animals for that matter, live in peace.

There shall be a day where the villain of today will lie the victim of tomorrow, but that day is not today and a chance has been given to make tomorrow the way it should be. That future is in your hands during animals' SOMBER STRUGGLE FOR LIFE.

* * * * *

“I would like a lemon chicken with sweet and sour sauce, and she will have the spicy salmon, with the pork fried rice on the side. Wait... *actually* I'll have the spicy, garlic green beans, and she will have the tofu curry with the stir-fry vegetable on the side...”

Mum. McChicken sandwich. Crisp, warm and juicy. Who wants it? Here you are. Go ahead and eat it.

“What’s in it?” (*Sunny looks onto the burger as Katy takes a bite.*)

Bread, Lettuce, Cheese, Another creature’s life, and tartar sauce. In case you’re wondering what kind of life went in to your stomach... (*Take out a live baby chick in hand.*) It was her mother and the McDonald’s you’ll be going to in three weeks will be serving her. Can you honestly look into her eyes and explain to her why she doesn’t have a mother? Imagine if you were without your mother, and better yet, if your mother was killed in front of you to be fried and eaten by another. (*Put baby chicks in little box in front of Katy.*) Imagine - if a group of beings from another planet were to land on earth, and slaughter humans for their meals, would you concede them the rights over you that you assume over animals?

I do not mean to offend anyone, and my goal is not to criticize, but to educate. No creature should have to give its life to feed our hungry stomachs. I will tell you about the lives of these innocent animals and about being vegetarian. I do not expect readers to suddenly proclaim themselves vegetarian. However, I ask that the next time you chomp on your chicken burger, or any meat for that matter, remember the precious lives that were killed and take a moment to be grateful for their sacrifice.

Millions of people such as Steven Spielberg, Orlando Bloom, Alicia Silverstone, Richard Gere, Brad Pitt, Michael Jackson and Oprah are now becoming vegetarian; they have been influenced by a range of factors including health reasons, ethics, and religion. Whatever the reason may be, it is better late than never to become vegetarian. I understand that every reader knows that an animal had to die for our food. I used to be a fan of Chinese chicken just last year, but after realizing how the meat was derived, I became a strict lacto-over-vegetarian. However, I am not completely deprived of the taste of meat. I enjoy *Morning Star’s Chickless* nuggets, corndogs, hot dogs, chili dogs, turkey less breasts, and

bacon just as much as normal meat. And the taste has even a better sensation when you know that no one had to die or suffer for it.

Modern research has shown that meat eating is linked to killer diseases like cancer and heart-disease. Vegetarians are about 50% less likely to get strokes and have about a 25% - 50% lower chance of arthritis, prostate cancer, and kidney failure and colon cancer.

Other than personal health reasons many people are vegetarian due to their religion. “Thou shall not kill,” says the Bible. The great Hindu epic, Mahabharat¹ also says, “He who desires to augment his own flesh by eating the flesh of other creatures, lives in misery in whatever species he may take his birth.”

Personal ethics also lead people to abstaining from meat. These poor animals that we devour are cramped into small cages and then overfed. Cows are tied up in little corners and not allowed to move so their muscle will be soft and not too fibrous. The chicken you eat is not an old one that passed away, but usually a newborn baby chick that is overfed and fattened to increase its body mass about 50% a day. This obesity causes the chickens to have much trouble breathing and weak bones. During the killing process, the chickens are hung by their legs by large machinery, and an assembly line of hanging live chicks get their throats slit one by one, while they are still conscious. The upside down chickens continues down a large assembly line, slowly dying, with their blood oozing down from their throat into large gutters. After about a minute of most painful suffering, the chickens are finally decapitated. A similar process is used to kill cows, goats, and pigs. Can you imagine such a life? For the sake of some little mouthfuls of flesh we deprive animals of the sun, light, and life they were born to enjoy.

Close your eyes. Take a minute to step away from your gourmet meals, warm beds, computers, TV's, and mp3s, and look deep into the eyes of any animal, and then for a moment, trade places. Their life becomes as precious as yours, and you become as vulnerable as them. Then who can you hurt? What harm can you do? Now smile if you believe they deserve to live, for in a way, they are us, and we are them.

For the love of God, or the love of them...we must stop. For some dirty flesh, would you really want to stoop to such sin? Would you eat your dog? You love your cat, your bird...but what's different about a pig, chicken, or turkey? They're animals too. You say they're wild...but dogs can be ferocious monsters with big teeth as well. Any animal is capable of being loved. Have compassion for them...stop this inhumane murder.

Animals will continue to die and suffer until we take action. We don't really understand the cruelty until we see it for ourselves. I never knew what animals had to go through for us. Look at a meal. You go to some restaurant, and order a meal: pork fried rice, grapefruit juice and Jell-O for dessert. You think you know what you're eating. It's clean now, and looks well. But stop and analyze your food. The pork fried rice – the pork was from a living pig. This pig was beaten, shocked, stunned, kicked, thrown, tortured, and then bled in a slaughterhouse. The pig thrashed as it bled all over the floor. These floors were filled with rats and bacteria. Many of those pigs were diseased, and near green with tumors and fungi. They were tossed with the clean meat, and the bacteria spread rapidly. The blood was lightly washed before the meat was frozen and sent to a market. Eggs were also added to the fried rice. The hens who laid those eggs, were crammed into cages smaller than your arm length. Often, more than eight fat chickens were stuffed in cages with less than two square feet. These chickens were frequently

electrocuted to increase egg production. They never saw sunlight...never breathed fresh air. Those chickens were often starved to agitate them for an egg. Most, if not all, of these chickens suffered from disease, injuries, and other fatal cancers. Once they died in those harsh conditions, they were slaughtered. And their fly-eaten bodies with worms were mixed with other clean chicken. Okay, so you avoid the fried rice, what about the rest.

Grapefruit juice – sounds great. It sure is a beautiful red color. Wonder why? CARMINE. Carmine is derived from ground up red beetles. They are dried, and crushed for their red color, and added to foods such as candies, juice, cookies, yogurts, and other “natural” foods. I sure hope you enjoy a nice cold glass of beetle blood. ICK! Thank god you got that Jell-O to fall back on. Not so fast... That Jell-O is held together with gelatin. Gelatin is made from animal tendons, bones, and skin. Most of the gelatin in Jell-O comes from pig bones and hooves, and is used to make the Jell-O thick and bouncy. Yum, I can’t wait to have bones, tendons, skin, and HOOVES for dessert. Sounds so appetizing... You think this is all far-fetched? Think again. Find out for yourself...do some research and be stunned. I was too.



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A feel of Heaven and Fear

By
Shreyak Das *

I: The Way to Heaven

In a sacred land far far away,
Across the mountains near the bay
Lay the magical town of love
Where sweet angels hovered above.
From here to there
Is a long way though,
But take the directions
And try to follow
Sure you'll be there before you know.
Go straight from nowhere
And take the first right
Keep going on
Till you're out of sight.
Take a sharp left from there
And stop around a street called 'nowhere',
Then keep going on if you dare.
For the road now gets
Steep and icy
Oh! The harsh weather shows no mercy.

Now take a left and a right,
Down the sloping path there,
Along 'who knows where'

And there is heaven
Painted on a mirror
With your face and limbs
And your fair hair.

Try to see through the air
Flames of that invisible fire
For the heaven remains within you

As love does too.

II: Never Look Behind For Fear

From time to time I go
Close to a haunted house I know
I never look behind for fear
For ghostly figures would appear.

Sometimes I have to take a street
Spooky and shadowy and dimly lit
I never look behind for fear
For something scary could allure.

When I walk through the park
When it's very late and dark
I never look behind for fear
For lonely skeletons might chase me from
the rear.

If I walk late in night
A howling dog gives me a fright
I never look behind for fear
For I might see a werewolf trying to bite
my ear.

As I hustle my way under shadowy trees
A rustling sound gives me the creeps
I never look behind for fear
For if I did I'd actually see that nothing's
there.

* A 8th grader, has won trophies in tennis matches



Until it was Gone

By
Mrunali Das*

It was always there
Right in front of her eyes
She never realized its importance
Until it was gone

She never appreciated it
Or acknowledged its presence
She never even cared about it
Until it was gone

It may never come back
And she may never see it again
Just because she never liked it
Until it was gone

Now she hopes to return
And wants it in her life
But she didn't have regret
Until it was gone

She never realized its beauty
Or thought that it needed care
She thought she would never miss it
Until it was gone

She will now appreciate it
And acknowledge its beauty
But now she has to wait
Until it returns

- 7th grade home work assignment in school, Columbia, Maryland.



ANGEL'S WINGS

By
Pratik Dash*

To one who has touched angel's wings
From one who still reaches
To one who has learned all
From one who knowledge beseeches
To one who has peace
From one who fights for pride
To one who is always in the center
From one who sits on the side
To one who is always carried
From one who must always walk

To one who is always spoken to
From one who must always talk
To one who everyone adores
From one who needs love
To one who is never below
From one who is never above
To one who is perfect
From one makes mistakes
To one who always wins
From one who risks the stakes

To one who always knows
From one who must always learn
To one who never worries
From one who is always concerned
To one who has created the world
From one who lives on this Earth
To one who has never been sad
From one who has never had mirth

To one who always smiles
From one who always frowns
To one who always hears prayers
From one who hears horrid sounds
Hear my prayer to you God
To help me learn Your teachings
To You, who has touched angel's wings
From me, who is always reaching

- *Pratik, son of Prajesh and Prabir Dash, of Franklin, TN, is in the 11th grade.*

After the Rain

By Ananya Mishra*

Each night when the moonbeams shine,
The stars twinkle like diamonds
I tuck you into your warm bed
And wish you a good night.
I sit and sing lullabies
About places undiscovered,
Except by young children
Sailing the ocean of fancies.
You are sweetly slumbering,
Wandering with creatures
Far, far away in the forest of fairies.
Swimming with dolphins
And flying with eagles,
And riding astride a unicorn.
O, child of rosy cheek
And innocent smile as you lie
Upon your magical bed of clouds,
I beg you to take me with you.
But I know that no matter

If I try my hardest,
I shall never be able to find
Your secret fantasies.
But as you dream, I wonder
What your boat is powered with,
For I would like to find one
To take me to the shores of dreams.
Now the sun is transforming
The clouds into golden wisps.
Dawn is arisen,
O, my child, hasten back,
For your boat will leave you
On the shores of dreams forever.
I need not worry more though,
Because now you are stretching
And sitting up in your bed.
Good morning, you say to me,
And smile a charming smile.
Yet I cannot hear you,
For I am fast asleep.

(I wrote this poem after the death of my best friend. She died in a boating accident last summer. We were very close and had known each other since we were five)

* 7th grade, attending Talented and Gifted program at Deerpark Middle School in Austin, TX.

The Suspicion



By

Prerana Pradhan*

A gentle breeze drifted through the village carrying the thick aroma of Indian spices with it. If we followed the breeze, we would notice how it carried on without end through houses, over trees, past the barren playground, over the village river and right to the routine meeting place of two close friends, Laxmi and Saarang. Usually, they would sit for long hours under the cool shadow cast by the large neem (*Azadiracta Indica*) tree between their white brick houses, discussing their everyday problems and exchanging stories about their long gone husbands and their traveling children. On this day, however, the two old women would not speak to each other. You see, both of the friends had something very heavy on their minds.

Both widows were very poor - they barely had any belongings that were of any value. They were happy with whatever they had, and were content with whatever came their way, whether it was something precious or not. However, both of their houses had been robbed of their meager possessions the previous night. Laxmi and Saarang sat side by side, their faces hidden from each other, working on their suppers, and recalling each other's longing for the other's belongings. Laxmi remembers the day she showed Saarang the golden necklace her beloved son had sent her from New Delhi two months ago. She somehow recalls the greed and envy in her friend's eyes. "Yes," she thinks with a heavy sigh. "No one else knows of that necklace except for Saarang. Who else could have stolen my necklace?"

Saarangi is thinking about the robbery at her home in a similar way; she suspects Laxmi of stealing the silver anklets her sister had given her so long ago. She remembers the way Laxmi had fingered the colored gems longingly. “I have no choice,” each upset widow tells herself. “I have to tell my friend that I can no longer be friends with a thief.” The two friends experience many emotions. They feel hurt, because they never would have thought that their closest friend would stab them in the back. They feel confused about what to do, and sad that they soon may lose their best friend. Thus, facing away from each other, the two friends decide to break the news to each other.

“Laxmi...”

“Saarangi...”

“Dear mothers! Did you hear the news?” cries a young man.

The two widows look back inquisitively at the voice that has interrupted them.

“What is it, Suresh?” Saarangi asks the young man at the end of the alley as she and Laxmi stand up and brush the dirt off of their brightly colored saris.

“Did you hear? We caught the robber who has been stealing so many of our peoples’ belongings. He is no other than our local drummer man. The man had sent his small monkey to go and steal from so many of our homes. Several of the younger children found the stolen goods stashed away in a nearby cave. The thief was caught a couple of minutes later, apparently coming back to stash some more of his stolen goods in the cave,” Suresh says.

The two friends feel a great tingling sensation in their hearts. They don’t have thieves as friends.

“Laxmi! So you didn’t steal my anklets!”

“And you didn’t steal my necklace, Saarangi!”

“I am so sorry I ever suspected you, Laxmi!”

“I should have known that you would never do something like that, Sarrangi!” The two friends smile and embrace each other happily. They looked at each other with twinkles in their eyes, and thank God for saving them from destroying their friendship over suspicion.

Prerana Pradhan is a 10th grade student in Edison, New Jersey.





Cloud and Moon Dance

By Ayesha Misra (Richa)*

I Cloud

I live in the sky
and I am as white as can be.
I've traveled the world
and seen every sea.
I give people shade
when I'm under the sun,
so they can hide from the heat
and have some fun.
I'm fluffy and small,
I'm round and bumpy,
and sometimes change shape,
and one of my funniest moments
was when I looked like an ape!
The wind blows me places
and I'm not very loud.
If you haven't guessed what I am,
The answer is..... a cloud!

II Moon Dance

I look out my window at night,
and what do I see?
A silvery moon,
gleaming at me!
Dancing among the thousands,
of tiny glittery stars,
shining upon houses,
in windows, and on cars.
Beams shining through
tree branches and leaves,
reflecting on the pond and
shimmering on tiny dew beads.
I look to the east
and see a peek of sun,
the night is over,
the moon dance is done!

* 6th grade, received several awards,



Thank You

By
Shashwati Das*

It passed by so quickly,
That no one knew what had occurred.
Planes flew through the air
And took the lives of so many people
Falling from heights
And landing on the solid ground
Was not pleasant at all

Taking our soldiers and giving them death
For no reason at all
Therefore we shall remember our losses
And our loved ones that are gone
The sight we saw should not be haunting you
Because death does not exist
For they will live in our hearts forever

Some donated their hearts so others could live
Those people should be very grateful
That the pain did not strike them as hard as others
Our troops risked their lives so we could have freedom
For they are our heroes

We may not be standing here at this very moment
If our military did not exist
Imagine what our country would be like if they did not fight
Wrecked, unpleasant, and terrible is what it would be
For we should be glad that we have freedom and liberty and our lives

- *A ten-years old and lives in Columbia, MD.*

Love

Sourav Panda*

Love feels like my mom giving me medicine when I'm sick.
Love smells like my dad's after-shave when he goes to work.
Love tastes like my mom's chicken soup on a cold day.
Love sounds like people cheering for me when I play soccer.

Love looks like a beautiful painting of a lion.

- *1st Grade at Baylis Elementary School in Woodbury, NY.*



There is a world...

Lipsa Panda*

There is a world
far beyond mortal imagination.
Beyond the swirling maelstroms of greed,
beyond the vast tundra of hatred,
beyond the raging current of jealousy,
beyond the hideous jungle of anger,
lies a land where even the gods cannot
dwell.

There is a world,
ruled by a sovereign mightier than the
earth itself,
His name, peace,
Its courtiers,
their names, fairness and justice,
Its queen,

her name, love,
Its subjects,
their name, freedom.
There is a world,
where the trees grow tall,
with absolute peace and harmony,
tranquility,
the essence in the air,
where everything fits in,
like pieces of a puzzle,
Ebony and Ivory,
There is a world I dream of.
And all you have to do,
is turn the key.

* *7th Grade at HB Thomson Middle School in Woodbury, NY.*



How does smoking affect lungs?

By
Manisha Misra*

Lung cancer is one of the leading causes of death in the United States. The number of estimated deaths caused by lung cancer in 2004 is 160,440. Lung cancer is strongly linked with cigarette smoking. Almost half of the U.S. teens start smoking at around the age of 13. They start smoking from peer pressure.

We all know that smoking causes respiratory problems, but what we don't know is what ingredients in the cigarette are most harmful to our lungs. Tar, which is also the stuff that we pave our roads with, is one of the most dangerous ingredients in cigarettes. When you smoke a cigarette, tar from the cigarette goes into your lungs and fills your lungs with it making it hard for smokers to breathe. Cyanide, a deadly poison, causes severe respiratory problems which will eventually lead to emphysema. Emphysema, Figure 1, is a lung disease in which the alveoli or the oxygen holding sacs in your lungs become damaged or destroyed. Benzo pyrene is one of the substances in the cigarette that causes cancer. Now you know some of the major lung cancer and emphysema causes in a cigarette.

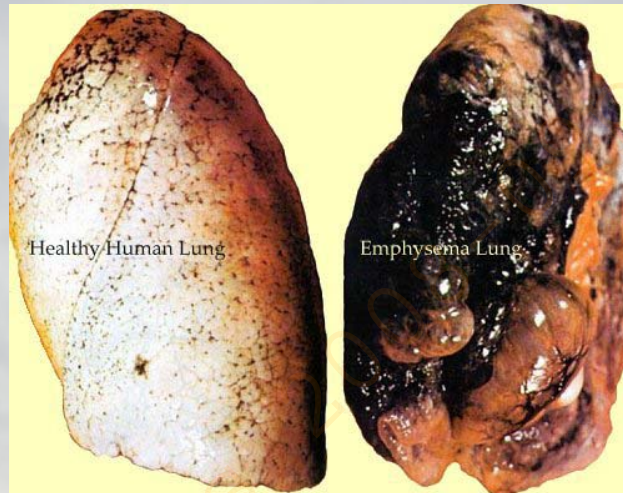


Figure 1: The picture shows how a lung affected by Emphysema looks

Cancer is a type of abnormal growth of cells called tumor. This tumor kills healthy cells in your body and thus spreading to other parts of the body. Lung cancer is one of the most common types of cancer. Over 90% of lung cancer patients were smokers. 7% of people diagnosed with lung cancer managed to survive for 5 years although most people die within 1 year of diagnosis.



Figure 2: Lung without and with Cancer

Emphysema is a very dangerous respiratory disease. It kills the alveoli therefore, greatly decreasing lung capacity. Basically it makes it so that a person who has emphysema overexerts themselves just by walking. Those are the 2 major lung diseases caused by smoking.

Second-hand smoke, also known as involuntary smoking, is more dangerous than smoking. It is so dangerous because cigarettes have a filter where the smoke goes through and it filters out some of the dangerous chemicals in smoke. In second-hand smoking there is no such filter therefore in second-hand smoke you get all the chemicals in the smoke instead of the filtered version of smokers. Every year about 3000 people who die of lung cancer, Figure 2, are nonsmokers.

The longer you smoke the higher the risk of lung cancer becomes. There are many dangerous chemicals in cigarette smoke which can lead to severe respiratory problems. Lung cancer and emphysema are the most common respiratory diseases. Smokers get a double dose of smoke; they get first and second hand smoke. You can greatly decrease your risk of respiratory problems by quitting or never starting.

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* 3rd grade at the University Park elementary school. She holds a blue belt in tae-kwon-do. She won a second prize for this article in the Science Fair of 2005



One Day in Terror Ville

By Soumya Misra*

My mom and dad said we were going to a place called Terror Ville. I wondered why it was called Terror Ville. When we got there my question was answered. The place was creepy, scary, and wrecked, but I couldn't help feeling that I had been here millions of years ago. I ignored the feeling. Suddenly a piece of paper flew into my face. I didn't have the time to read it, so I just folded it and kept it in my pocket, I might need it later, I thought. Then I saw my parents walking towards a huge sign. I shouted out "Wait for me!" When I reached there the sign talked. It said "Hello! Welcome to Terror Ville". I freaked out. Then I remembered that it was Halloween. I told my parents that it was a prank that some other kid had done just to scare us. They didn't seem to mind. Suddenly the sign talked again. This time it said "Close the gate and you will see why this place is called Terror Ville". I had a bad feeling about this. I tried to tell my dad but he didn't listen. Soon it was too late. My dad closed the gate. Suddenly black dust surrounded us. Then black figures swirled around us. I managed to escape just in time but then I heard two blood curdling screams.

When the figures were gone I realized my parents were gone too. I ran to the gate and screamed "Give them back! Give my parents back!" I tried to open the gate but it was locked. What will happen? I thought. There was no way for me to escape. I lost my parents but will I lose myself? I walked a few steps but then a big house appeared out of nowhere. Then some force pulled me into the house. Inside the house I saw jack-o-lanterns, costumes, candy and trick or treat bags. I felt a chill down my spine. Suddenly I felt a hand touching my shoulder. When I turned around I saw a green, scary and slimy monster. I screamed and ran as fast as I could until I was sure that the monster was gone. Five minutes later I heard footsteps. That was the end of me. I thought. Then I fainted. When I woke up I saw that I was being carried by the black figures. I looked at my watch- it was 11 P.M. When we reached the place where the black figures wanted to go, I saw a kid running around. I wondered who it was. I ran to the kid and asked him who he was. "Hi. I'm Jake", he said. "Hi. I'm Christy", I said. Then some people

came out of nowhere chanting spells. I thought they were witches but before I could ask who they were, Jake pulled me back. “SShhh”, He said. Then he told me that they were evil witches that haunt this place. Then he told me that he was a good ghost. I was kind of scared. Jake told me that his parents were taken also but he couldn’t save them and the only way to save all the people is to go to the end of the house and blow out the old black candle, before midnight. So I went. When I was halfway there, the room turned black and before I knew what was happening I fell to the ground. I woke up 15 minutes to 12. Oh my goodness! I ran to the end of the house as fast as I could. When I got there it was 11:55 P.M. suddenly, the black figures appeared. I ran to the candle and tried to blow it, but I couldn’t. Then I remembered the paper I found. I quickly took the paper out of my pocket and read it. I shouted the words out “Kreptos thundiris, Kreptos fragilious, Kreptos windnias”. The candle was blown out. Suddenly Terror Ville turned into a village. All the monsters turned into people and all the people who were captured were set free including my mom and dad. Then I took the black candle but there are 5 more evil people left and they want there revenge.

Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha. Ha.....

*Grade 4 in Bayside, NY



Letters to the Editor

Sacred Grove of Ugra Tara

Orissa is a dotted with beautiful ancient little known sanctuaries. Nobody remembers who originated worship there, who established it, or who are the carvers of these beautiful images. But in typical Oriya way they keep worshipping there and look after the place with reverence and humility.

We, long time residents of Bhubaneswar, were not even aware that this beautiful grove of *Ugra Tara* is only sixty kilometers away from our city located near Bhusandapur. There is a sign on Bhubaneswar-Berhampur highway showing direction to "Ugra Tara - Pitha." We went there as a part of our curiosity and a part to offer our prayer.

When one leaves the highway and enters the narrow road shaded by canopies of green trees, it feels like a different reality of a very different world. The highway is getting widened. It is jammed with modern road building equipments, vehicular traffic and occasional oxcarts. The small hills close to the road are dynamited and huge stones crushers that are turning rock to stone chips needed for road building. The roadside trees are covered with fine white dust. The land around is arid and the blinding hot sun burns the eyes.

As we entered the grove, the noise stopped, the dust disappeared, and the soft golden lace of sunlight filtered down through dense green branches of shady trees. There is a natural spring that flows to a lake and the temple is situated on one side of this miniature lake. The temple is a brick and cement building, not anything like the decorative stone temples of Bhubaneswar, but the image inside is beautiful and

unusual. In front of the temple there is a small pavilion with sculpted images of uncoiled moving King Cobras on its roof. Usually this pavilion is used as fire altar to perform "*Homa Ceremony*."

When we entered the inner temple, we saw the young priest sitting on meditation before starting the sacred rites of worship. We sat quietly waiting for him to speak.

The image in front of us is that of a young Goddess standing firmly in a warrior pose (*pratyaldha*) holding a sword, a drinking cup made of skull, a pair of scissors (not found as weapon in Hindu deity), and a lotus. There are two lions on two sides. The image is carved from black granite and is an exquisite piece of ancient sculpture.

Before we asked any question the priest gently told us, "this is a Buddhist Goddess but we worship her in a Hindu way as one of the *Maha_Vidya_s*." (There are ten manifestations of Great Goddess known as transcendental wisdom *Maha_Vidya_s*. They are *Kali, Tara, Sodasi, Bhubaneswari, Tripur Bhairabi, Chinnamasta, Dhumabati, Bagala, Matangi and Kamala*.) He said this image was at least 2000 years old. There are many folk-stories about the protective power of the Goddess. It is believed that she is always merciful to her devotees. Nowadays, mostly people come here looking for a place for nice picnic spot to get temporary relief from urban squalor and congestion. Then there are devotees who come to offer special worship when the children recover from illness, for a wife to bear a desired child or they have come with gifts for the Goddess in gratitude for a good harvest, made money in business. She is seen as a village deity who is worshiped by her simple folks.

The priest has much grander vision of the Goddess. He recited a beautiful Sanskrit hymn that tells who she is. *Maha Kali* is total darkness. She is the time when time is not divided into past, present and future. She is the limitless space that has no form. She is the energy that is beyond imagination. She is the Night before creation. Then her energy appears in the form of the first star, *Tara*. *Tara* is the first light form that splits the darkness; created day and night, awaken the conscious from the stupor of sleep. She stands on the corpse of old creation and reveals the new creation with her radiant light.

She has two aspects. On Her beneficent aspect, she is the blue Goddess of knowledge (*Nila-Saraswati*) who gives worldly knowledge as well as guides towards transcendental wisdom.

For Her wrathful (*ghoro-rupa*) aspect, she is the ferocious Goddess who rules over all the stars, planets, sun and moon and leads the army in War. She is born from the battle cry (Hum- Ka_ra) of *Maha Kali*. She can scorch the Earth with her solar power and create drought and famine. Seeing her fearful form, the enemies tremble, but those who seek refuge in her, she protects them for eternity...

The priest was quite happy that we cared to listen to his recitation of this beautiful hymn and saw the Goddess the way he sees her, as the great Goddess of Cosmos.

We left *Bhubaneswar* to come back to Canada. Our visit to Orissa ended. On our way back, again we could see *Tara* in a Chinese Temple in Singapore. We could take one of those city tours that most tourists do when they are in a new city. We could go to see this temple of Goddess of mercy. She is also known as the rescuer from the world (**Bhava Sansara**) equivalent of *Tara--Tarini* in Orissa.

In Chinese she is known as *Guanyin or Kuan-in*. She is the Goddess of mercy and compassion. She was born from the teardrops of *Bodhisattva, Avolokiteshvara*. When *Avolokiteshvara* looked at the suffering of the world, teardrops fell from his eyes. One teardrop became Green *Tara*, other one turned to Red *Tara*. She in Her primal form helped all beings on Earth to attain enlightenment. In this aspect, she is a like *Arya- Tara* who is worshiped in Tibet, Mongolia, Nepal and most parts of Central Asia and as *Kanon* in Japan.

Many women come to seek her blessings for conceiving a child. She is sometimes depicted holding a child in her arms. Sometimes she is also represented as Bodhisattva with a thousand arms (*Sahasrabahu*) and a thousand eyes (*Sahasraksha*). But most of the time she is seen as a beautiful woman sitting on a wide divan (*pariyanka*) with a serene face and loving eyes as mother of all Buddha and savior (*Tarini*) of all earthly beings.

There are many myths about her in Chinese folk tales. She is the third daughter of King Miao Zhong. She joined the Buddhist religious order against the wish of her father. When the King failed to dissuade her, he decided to kill her. The Lord of death came to her rescue and led Guanyin away to the underworld, where the hell exists. There Guanyin saved the damned souls and transformed the hell!

In Tantric Buddhism Tara is represented in many different colors. Common color is green (*Shyam - Tara*) but there are red, yellow, white, blue and black Tara as well. Each image has specific symbolic meanings for the worshipper. Those who seek worldly benefits, or power or super natural skills, worship her specific images according to the prescribed rites. Those who seek spiritual enlightenment they follow the path of meditation and practicing Asta-Sila and other Buddhist spiritual practices.

Tara images in Orissa Numerous Tara images have been found. One is found in a small village *Ajudhya near Nilgiri (Balasore Dist)*. She sits on a lotus throne in royal pose with a smiling face and kind eyes. On her left side are a lotus bud and a lotus in bloom, and in other side a lotus with seed symbols of three stages of life: beginning, actualization, and transformation. Her hand gesture is that of blessing.

At *Ratnagiri*, a life size image of *Arya- Tara* was found with depiction of eight great perils on its stone framework. One of the perils is shipwreck. It brings back the memories of Oriya traders and merchants who used to do overseas trade and might have supported building the temples for Tara.

Another beautiful black stone image of Tara is located at *Achitrajpur*, near *Banpur*. This image is now lodged at *Godavarish Vidyapitha*. This image has a South Indian style high crown sitting on a rectangular throne with a blooming lotus on her side. Unlike the Balasore image, this image is heavily decorated with ornaments and jewelry and has exquisite smile on her face.

Near Berhampore is the well-known *Tara -Tarini* temple. It attracts large numbers of worshippers.

The colossal Buddha statues at Barniyan, Afghanistan were destroyed to establish supremacy of one religious view over another. In contrast, Oriyas accepted the Buddhist images of Tara as their own and keep continuing to worship her in their own way. They do not quarrel over theology or doctrine but see the image of Great Mother in a very local deity.

--- **Gita Das** (author of several books), Edmonton, Canada

Reflection and An appeal

Many, if not most of us have a lot of satisfaction in seeing India as a secular democracy. Besides, we have treated guests as someone special. History and scriptures like Ramayana and Mahabharata remind us of a very rich heritage. Contrast this to the entrance policy in *Jaganath* Temple at Puri. None other than Hindus are allowed to visit.

No church or cathedrals in the USA, Europe, Latin America or India require any religious credentials for entrance. Even mosques don't restrict entrance to people of other religions. People of all faith or no faith do go inside the Vatican daily either to pray or merely for sightseeing alone. There were times

when people of so called low castes were not allowed inside the temples. Isn't this the last gasp of a society, which cannot seem to get rid of our differentiating people by caste or religion? I do wonder as to how and why I am a Hindu? My understanding is that the Hinduism is one of the most open and least restrictive of all religions and we are judged according to our actions on this life (KARMA YOGA). An open temple, like an open society is a sign of tolerance and magnanimity. Long before any religion was in practice, Hindus pronounced, "the world is one family," - *Vasudebam Kutumbakam*.

Next, why are the NRIs made to pay more than the natives? Hotels, airlines, and even entrance fees to monuments are priced higher for NRIs. Both public and private enterprises practice these policies which must have been the Law of the Land.

Brit Rail and the French National Railroad are heavily subsidized by the government of the UK and France. That has never been advanced as a reason to have a two tier fare, one for the locals and the other for outsiders. In communist USSR, there was no dual fare for their airlines, hotels and shops, and they were all state owned. If the rationale for such a policy is to increase revenue, then certainly it is a short sighted one. More visitors, not less, be they foreigners, NRIs or locals, boost the economy through spending. Instead we should be providing all legal incentives to attract people of all caste and creed, and demonstrate our legendary hospitality.

Consider for a moment, the foreigners getting charged a higher price in the United States. I don't have to tell you that all hell would break loose. More important to me is that we all who are indeed elites of this society have not expressed our indignation and disgust. But I have heard arguments in support of such policy.

I leave it to all of us to rethink if these attitudes are indeed worth pursuing, merely because it is done in Orissa or India. --- Santosh Mohanty, M.D. Chief General Surgeon, Huntington Beach, California

India as I see It

We went to India on December 27th, 2004 and came back on January 15th, 2005. We visited these cities: New Delhi, Jaipur, Bhubaneswar and Cuttack. The reason, why we went, was to see our cousins. We only get to see them every 4 years. What was it like? India was way different from America. However, India did have fast food restaurants, market shops, and regular houses. If you lived in a village, you would be living in a mud house. The weather in some parts of India was very humid, but in Delhi it was cold. Cars, bicycles, elephants, and camels all have to share the same road. People actually made a living having elephants, because they have painted faces, and ride people. In India, there are many kinds of food, like chapati, curry, tandoori chicken and rice. Chapati is an Indian bread made out of ground wheat. Indian clothes aren't much different from ours, but Indian women wear saris.

--Rani Mohanty, 10 years old, is in 5th grade at Oakview Elementary in Maple Grove, Minnesota

What Kind of Creature is Your Teacher?

Your teacher is some kind of creature
She teaches you and then she says boo!!!
She makes you to do stuff you don't want to do
She makes the best student in the class to do
Well, she is nice but sometimes filled with spice.
Wow, that is really nice.

--Shewta Pratyasha Sahu, a 4th grade student at Cottonwood Intermediate School, Liberal, Kansas, and winner of the Seward County Spelling Bee Competition.

Life of Rose

A delicate pink,
As soft as a pink,
With a smell so sweet,
It will beat a bird's tweet,
Alas! In winter
The rose will fade away,
And become nothing but a splinter,
Wait, Wait! Hooray! Hooray!
The familiar fragrance of a rose is everywhere,
For it will be back again in May!

---Anya Rath, a 6th grader at L'anse Creuse Middle School
North, Macomb, MI

Odissi Dance

When I was younger I dreaded going to an Odissi dance recital. I went to many recitals with my parents and never saw anything special in any of them. I saw the dance as a decadent and very boring routine that I did not like at all. I would pretend to enjoy the performances to make my parents happy and free myself from any lectures that I might receive about the essence and values of Odissi. I received the lectures anyways and always tried to zone myself out and transcended my thoughts elsewhere.

The turning point in my views occurred when I was fourteen years old. The famous Patnaik sisters had come to my town, Santa Cruz, and they were going to perform Odissi. I have always loved the sisters and considered them to be my own sisters, but to tell the truth, I was not looking forward to spending two hours watching them perform Odissi. I reluctantly walked into the hall expecting the usual routine and the usual reaction. As the recital began I was flabbergasted. I had seen the sisters before but for some reason this time was different. I followed each segment with a keen eye and pondered over each move thinking about its significance. I saw things that I had never seen before, such as two hands becoming lotuses and timeless expressions reenacting events from the incarnations of Vishnu to Krishna, stealing milk from the Gopis. I loved the performance and for the first time, I truly saw the beauty of Odissi.

Odissi is a timeless dance of our Oriya culture that helps keep our culture alive. Even though I resisted for the first fourteen years of my life, I finally have realized that Odissi has a greater purpose than just being a dance like that of Usher, Michael Jackson, or Beyonce. The dance of our ancestors that has been passed down from generations to generations for hundreds of years represents our Oriya identity. The preservation of the dance alone shows the strength of our culture, with many schools of Odissi prospering in a country twelve thousand miles away from Orissa. Although the types of dances the youth of America enjoy today are very different from Odissi, we must encourage children to watch and learn Odissi. Even though they may not like it with time, they will come to see it as I see it today, a priceless jewel that must be taken care of forever.

- **Alok Pandey**, 11th Grade, Santa Cruz, California

Halloween

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 G. MISRA**, Grade 2 in Bayside, NY

The Sun

The sun is bright, It gives us light.	The sun causes day and night It's far from sight.
--	--

The sun is a star, It's really far.	The sun helps us to survive Without it, there is no light.
--	---

The sun helps us grow, It has a bright glow.	The sun is good to Hindus It shines upon Sindhus.
---	--

The sun is really hot,
Sometimes it has a spot.

The sun is in our galaxy,
It gives us a lot of energy.

----**Animesh Mohapatra**, A 3rd grader at Huntsville, Alabama.

Should We Go Back To Orissa?

A few weeks ago, I attended a Federal Seminar on Retirement Planning. I am in that phase of my life, when I have to decide the when, how and where to spend the rest of my life. After 44 years of work life and almost four decades in the United States, the answer should be simple. But it is not. The traditional thought process is that when you retire, you go back to your home. The big question is what home. In the past half a century, ever since I left my little village in Orissa, I have lived in more than a dozen cities in India, Germany and USA. Since 1995, I am working 150 miles away from my permanent place

of residence in Charleston, South Carolina, going home only on the weekends. During the work week, I live in an apartment near my work place in Aiken. I know more people in Aiken than in Charleston. From the late sixties to mid-nineties, we lived in Pennsylvania. In USA, I know more people in the western Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh Area) than anywhere else. Our children are scattered across America from South Carolina to Nevada and California. But our main concern is where we can spend the last phase of our lives without being a burden on our children, and within our retirement income.

United States is not the friendliest place for the aging and elderly population. Surely, there are excellent doctors, hospitals and other medical amenities. However, the complicated medical insurance plans (including Medicare) can easily drain our savings with one serious illness. The greatest concern is the possible abuse and neglect in the hands of the caregivers in a rest home. Knowing from our own experience, our children will be too busy with their jobs and families. They cannot be our caregivers, when we get less mobile.

Here comes the big question. Could we or should we go back to Orissa, our homeland we left years ago? We can hire a full-time help at Cuttack or Bhubaneswar. The medical care and drugs are not cheap, but our employer sponsored Blue Cross/Blue Shield plans will cover most of the expenses. There are many pros and cons in retiring in Orissa. Can we find our place in our once familiar landscape, which is now altered and unrecognizable? We imagine the Oriya life style the way it was half a century ago, a picture frozen in our memories. We do not know the present. Of course, there will be many old familiar places and some old familiar faces. Many of our high school and college class mates have now retired and living in the Cuttack-Bhubaneswar area. Several of them have children and grand children living in USA and Canada. Perhaps the commonness ends there. Most of our friends and relatives have a different mindset. Also, during our prolonged stay abroad, we have gone through some significant socio-cultural changes. Can we adjust to the Oriya custom of some one showing up at our door without prior notice? How will we be received by our old friends and new neighbors as retired NRIs? Being affluent in a poverty-stricken society can be a set back unless we reprogram our mannerism. Ordinary people on the street will not know the difference if we are native Oriyas or NRIs. I am confident of my proficiency in Oriya and Hindi languages to haggle and bargain with the local merchants. My wife has certain doubts, if she would be able to pass herself off as a simple girl from Kasarda or Gunpur. Only time will tell, if we can effortlessly blend in to the society or will be outcasts. The biggest obstacle may be if we can mentally prepare ourselves to cross the barriers to our life-style changes. There will be problems in adjusting to the lack of public sanitation facilities, and possible electrical power failures. Can we really manage to survive the oppressive May heat and the July Monsoon deluge?

On the negative side, we will miss the clean environment, the spectacles of the change of seasons, the snowflakes, the spring blossoms and the fall colors. I will miss my convertible ride on the open roads of rural South Carolina watching the cotton fields, peach orchards, the watermelon patches, and herds of red and black cattle grazing on family farms. My wife will miss her morning walk on the magnificent Kiawah beach, the abundance of waterfowls, deer and alligators on the Kiawah Island. We will not be close to our grand children for their birthdays and graduations. Maybe they will find more excuses to vacation in India.

A very positive outcome of this daring adventure could be a unique opportunity to serve our place of birth as a volunteer to the community. Orissa needs volunteers in the fields of education, health and agriculture for millions of families surviving on daily wages of less than dollar a day.

The decision time is approaching fast for those of us who are about to retire. Should we stay here or go back to Orissa?

--**Ghanashyam Mishra**, General Engineer with the U. S. Department of Energy at the Savannah River Plant.

We are all a prisoner of US

Unspoken words
Feelings unknown
The truth unable to surface
Hiding amongst societal bonds
I created them
In my head
And now my heart
A prisoner to them
So here I am
Escaping the truth
Happy with myself
Life will go on
Whichever way I view it
Life WILL go on.

-**Ankuta Jena Philip**, Product Manager, Ontario Service Safety Alliance, Canada



International Educational Cooperation

Agreement Between

California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) and Utkal University

By Jyotsna Pattnaik* *

In the fall, 2004, a proposal was submitted to the International Education Committee (IEC) of the California State University, Long Beach to establish a student/faculty exchange program between the Master's program in Early Childhood Education of the College of Education at CSULB and the Post Graduate Diploma Program in Early Childhood Education, of the Dept. of Psychology, Utkal University, Orissa, India. The IEC passed the proposal and California State University, Long Beach and signed an agreement for international educational cooperation with Utkal University, Orissa, India. The agreement is very comprehensive and it includes a host of opportunities for faculty and students in both institutions. Faculty in both institutions will be able to conduct research and teaching in the host institution. Faculty from both institutions may attend the host institution as visiting scholars for the

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purpose of research, consultation, and short-term teaching. The agreement also includes exchange of students between the two institutions. There are some important aspects of this international exchange agreement that need careful attention: (a) The exchange program covers all academic disciplines, provided that both the institutions have an active program in an academic discipline of interest to student and faculty; (b) All expenses for travel, living, and medical coverage of the exchanged student/faculty will be shouldered by the parent institution and or the individual; (c) In case of an exchanged student, the student will pay tuition fee for the exchanged semester to his/her own institution, not to the host institution; in other words, exchanged students from Utkal University will not pay tuition fee to CSULB and vice versa and (d) the duration of an exchange is limited to a maximum of one semester.

It is appropriate to point out that while CSULB has signed international education cooperation agreements with selected universities world-wide, this is the first ever exchange agreement signed by CSULB with an Indian institution. At present, I am involved in a planning process with the India Studies Program at CSULB to explore possibilities of establishing more exchange programs between CSULB and Universities in India. A selected group of faculty and the Deans of the College of Education and the College of Liberal Arts will visit some reputed universities in India in January 2006 to facilitate such collaboration.



The First Orissa Heritage Day

By
Nita Panda*

Southern California Oriya community proudly put together the 1st Orissa Heritage Day in Southern California on October 9th, 2004 at Hope International University Auditorium, Fullerton. The program was attended by more than 400 people from Southern California and beyond. The day started with exhibitions, from Orissa, including arts, crafts, paintings, stone works and saris. There were food stalls and mehendi booths. There was a travel booth, which displayed places to visit in Orissa. At the end, there was a beautiful cultural program performed by the Patnaik Sisters and the Odissi Dance Circle. The highlight of the cultural event was the video presentation on Konark, titled “Poetry on Stone” and “Orissa: the soul of India.”

The purpose of the event was to “Promote Orissa art, craft and culture to the World.” The organizers were able to achieve their goal.

Rebecca Tayles from Corona, CA said, “I was surprised to see the beautiful handicrafts, rich history and excellent dances, Orissa has to offer.”

Victoria Finney, from Riverside CA said, “My teenage daughter was amazed to see the beautiful dancers on the stage.”

Asha Ball from Mission Viejo CA, said, “I loved the entire program. I did not know Orissa had such beautiful handicrafts, temples and dances.”

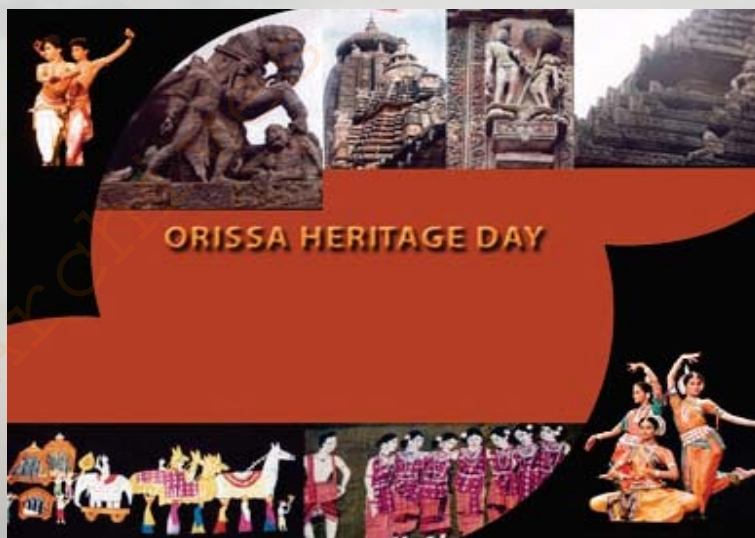
* A Senior Financial Officer at Finance America, California, and the organizer of the Orissa Heritage Day

Depali Doshi from Cerritos CA said, “I loved the costumes of the dancers. It was a job very well done.”

Eileen N Yap from Laguna Niguel CA said, “I realized that (night) Orissa has 4000 temples, which dates back to few hundred years!”

The organizers were able to donate \$1000.00 profit to Prasanthi School, an orphanage in Puri Orissa, operated by World Family Foundation, California.

Overall, the Orissa Heritage Day was a great success, one of its kinds. It will be organized with more spectacle, programs, and participation every year in Southern California



OSA's Tsunami Fund Raising: A Report

By
Sri Gopal Mohanty*

The world was rudely awakened by the shock of Tsunami disaster that hit Southeast Asia towards the end of 2004. While massive help and fundraising efforts were underway by individuals, groups, institutions and countries, the OSA decided to join others in that effort as a duty to the humanity, knowing well that many might have already contributed through other organizations. Laxmi Narayan Bhuyan, the President, formed a committee consisting of Gopal Mohapatra and myself as chairperson, and we three sent an appeal in January. The outcome of the drive was the collection of \$2017 (US) and \$140 (Can) with the following break-up.

Kirti Mohapatra

100

Sanjoy Satpathy

100

Kastury Mohanty-Black	100	Raja Epsilon	100
Anonymous	101	Sanjeev Das	20
Binayak Mohanty	25		-----
Kula C. Misra	200		2017 (US)
Kirtan Behera	200	Sri Gopal Mohanty	100
Gopal Mohapatra	50	Suvankar Mohanty	40
Darshan Patra	20		-----
Nirode Mohanty	1001		140 (Can)

It is decided that the total amount will be divided into two halves, each half to be donated to Unicef and AID (Aid India Development). On behalf of OSA, I and Gopal Mohapatra take this opportunity to thank the donors for their support, knowing fully well that they might have donated on various occasions for the same cause. It is also my privilege to report that Canada Chapter of OSA raised \$3300 (Can) and donated to Canadian Red Cross. Other chapters might have raised funds, but we are not aware of.

* Professor Emeritus, McMaster University, Hamilton, Canada



The OSA Awards

By

Birendra Jena*



1. Distinguished Oriya Award

Recipient: Dr. Jagannath Prasad Das, Alberta, Canada

Presentation: plaque, Certificate of Honor

Orissa Society of Americas: Certificate of Honor

The Distinguished Oriya Award for the year 2004 is presented to Dr. Jagannath Prasad Das in recognition of his outstanding accomplishment in his area of expertise and service to the people of Orissa.

Plaque:

Orissa Society of Americas honors Dr. Jagannath Prasad Das by presenting him with the 2004 Distinguished Oriya Award, its highest award. Dr. Das has been acclaimed as one of the world's foremost cognitive psychologists and has made significant contributions to cognitive psychology research. He has also authored several books that have been translated into a number of international languages. His efforts in raising awareness of learning disability and other intellectual problems among the people of Orissa and his salutary work to boost learning efficiency of the underprivileged children of Bhubaneswar is also duly recognized.

DAS, Jagannath Prasad, M.A., Ph.D., Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada; university professor emeritus; b.Puri, India, 20 Jan. 1931; s. Sri Biswanath and Nilomoni (Mohanty) D.; came to Canada 1968; e. Utkal Univ. B.A. 1951; Patna Univ. M.A. (Gold Medallist) 1953; Univ. of London, Inst. of Psychiatry, Ph.D. 1957; m. Gita, d. R.C. Dasmohapatra, Jamirapalgarh, India 1955; children: Satya, Sheela; UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY, UNIV. OF ALBERTA; former Dir., Developmental Disabilities Centre now named the J.P.Das Developmental Disabilities Centre, Univ. of Alberta; began teaching in India; subsequently at George Peabody Coll. and Univ. of Calif. at Los Angeles before present position; rec'd Kennedy Foundation Fellowship 1963-64; Nuffield Fellowship 1972; Harris Award of International Reading Assoc.; University Rsch. Prize 1987; Fellow, Am. Psychol. Assn.; Am. Psychol. Soc.; Cdn. Psychol. Assn.; Royal Soc. of Canada 1999; author The Working Mind 1998; Das-Naglieri Cog. Assmt. System 1997; Cognitive Planning 1996; Assessment of Cognitive Processes 1994; Theory and Research in Learning Disabilities 1982; Intelligence and Learning 1981; Simultaneous and Successive Cognitive Processes 1979; Mental Retardation for Special Educators 1978;

Verbal Conditioning and Behavior 1969; Manasika Byadhi (Mental Illness) 1962; Samaja (Soc.) 1956; also numerous scient. articles in learned and prof. journs.; his books and tests translated into Finnish, Spanish, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean; Home: 11724-38a Ave., Edmonton, Alta. T6J 0L9; Office: Univ. of Alberta, Edmonton, Alta. T6G 2E5
J.P. Das

Research Professor
JP Das Developmental Disabilities Centre
Education Building 6-123
University of Alberta
Edmonton Canada T5G2E5
FAX 780 492 1318
Phone: 780 492 4439
Website: <http://www.quasar.ualberta.ca/ddc/INDEX.html>

2. Kalashree Award

Recipients: 1. Mr. Arun Das; 2. Mrs. Banalata Misra

Presentation: Plaque, Certificate of Honor.

Recipient No. 1. Mr. Arun Das

Orissa Society of Americas - Certificate of Honor

The Kalashree Award for the year 2004 is presented to Mr. Arun Das in recognition of his contribution for the promotion of Oriya art and culture in North America.

Plaque:

In recognition of his demonstrated artistic talents as a painter, graphic designer, art director etc. and his efforts in promoting Oriya art and culture in North America, the Orissa Society of Americas honors Mr. Arun Das by presenting him with the 2004 Kalashree Award. His continued service to OSA in organizing cultural events at annual conventions and designing of OSA logo is also duly recognized.

Recipient No. 2. Ms Banalata Mishra

Orissa Society of Americas - Certificate of Honor

The Kalashree Award for the year 2004 is presented to Mrs. Banalata Misra in recognition of her contribution for the promotion of Oriya art and culture in North America.



Plaque:

In recognition of her pioneering efforts in promoting Oriya art and culture in North America through vocal performance, radio programs, sponsoring artists from Orissa and organizing cultural events, the

Orissa Society of Americas honors Mrs. Banalata Misra by presenting her with the 2004 Kalashree Award. Her continued service to OSA in organizing cultural events at annual conventions is also duly recognized.

3. Utkalamani Gopabandhu Das Memorial Award

Recipient: Mrs. Jayashree.(Ranu) Mahanti

Presentation: Plaque with a picture of Gopabandhu Das, Certificate of Honor.

Orissa Society of Americas - Certificate of Honor

The Utkalamani Gopabandhu Das Memorial Award for the year 2004 is presented to Mrs. Jayashree (Ranu) Mahanti in recognition of her outstanding contribution to Orissa in areas of humanitarian and community services.

Plaque:

The Orissa Society of Americas honors Mrs. Jayashree (Ranu) Mahanti by presenting her with the 2004 Utkalmani Gopabandhu Das Memorial Award in recognition of her outstanding dedicated volunteer service to the underprivileged people of Orissa. For past nine years, Mrs. Mahanti has been involved in several humanitarian projects such as child welfare, healthcare, vocational education to women etc. in various parts of Orissa. She has also been involved in fundraising efforts in North America to finance these projects. Her accomplishments and exemplary selfless service to humanity will be an inspiration for others to take up voluntary work in Orissa.



4. Subrina Biswal Memorial Award for High School Graduates

Recipient: Mr. Abhisek Chandan Khandai

Presentation: Certificate of Honor., A onetime scholarship of \$1000.

Orissa Society of Americas - Certificate of Honor

The Subrina Biswal Memorial Award for the year 2004 is presented to Mr. Abhisek Chandan Khandai in recognition of his outstanding accomplishment as a graduating High School Student.

5. Youth Volunteer Award

Recipient: Mr. Dharendra Kar

Presentation: Plaque, Certificate of Honor.

Orissa Society of Americas - Certificate of Honor

The Youth Volunteer Award for the year 2004 is presented to Mr. Dharendra Kar in recognition of his outstanding voluntary service.

Plaque:

The Orissa Society of Americas honors Mr. Dharendra Kar by presenting the 2004 Youth Volunteer Award in recognition of his outstanding voluntary service. Since his childhood, Mr. Kar has been actively involved in various community activity events both in Orissa and United States. Most notable is his involvement during the devastating supercyclone of 1999 in which Mr. Kar not only did raise funds, he also was involved in rescue and cleanup operations in the cyclone affected area. His efforts in improving science education in high schools of Orissa are also duly recognized.



6. Yuva Kalavikash Award

Recipient: Miss Priyanka Patnaik

Presentation: Plaque, Certificate of Honor.

Orissa Society of Americas - Certificate of Honor

The Yuva Kalavikash Award for the year 2004 is presented to Miss Priyanka Patnaik in recognition of her outstanding contribution for promoting Oriya art, literature and culture.

Plaque:

The Orissa Society of Americas honors Miss Priyanka Patnaik by presenting her the 2004 Yuva Kalavikash Award in recognition of her outstanding contribution to promote Oriya art and culture in North America. Miss Patnaik is a talented artiste and has been promoting Oriya art and culture since her childhood through Odissi dance performances, vocal recitals and artwork. She has also represented Oriya culture in various multicultural community events in Canada.

* Co Chair, The OSA Awards Committee



A Team Effort Vol.III- 2005

By Joyasree (Ranu) Mahanti*

As an NRI (non-resident Indian) from the USA with a mission to provide the basic needs (water, food, basic education, and basic health care) to the most deprived people of Orissa, even at a minimum level, I have found it to be a difficult dream to achieve. With time I have realized that it is a team effort and each team member is equally responsible for the success of the mission. The **donors**, without whose concern, kindness, trust, encouragement and financial support, projects can't even start. The local **Non Governmental Organization** (NGO) like **BISWA** (Bharat Integrated Social Welfare Agency), without whose hard work, follow up, trust and expertise, projects cannot be successfully implemented. Particularly, the developmental work in rural areas needs tremendous amount of hard work and dedication of the employees of the BISWA. The **villagers**, without whose acceptance, involvement, cooperation, and understanding, the projects will not sustain; they would fail in a short period of time. Last but not the least, is the **Government**. After all, the Government is for the people. The other team members can work hard and help the Government to create a better world for the people of Orissa. Without the Government's support, progress will be very slow and minimum impact. The collector of the Sambalpur district has been very helpful and encouraging. He has promised to help us to bring these 15 villages as a model village cluster. He and his staff visited few villages to evaluate the condition while I was in Orissa. It is important to work with the local organizations, villagers, and Government as a partner, where we all take the responsibility for the projects and share the success equally.

With our team effort, here is the progress in the 15 interior villages and in the town of Sambalpur district from the year 2002-2005:

- Established 15 schools in 15 villages (Asha for education supports 4 of these) and one slum school in Sambalpur town
- Installed 24 drinking water tube wells (4 were supported by the friends from U.S.) and the rest 20 were installed by the government (Central Government's Rural Water Supply – Swajaladhara scheme) with 10% contribution by us on behalf of the villagers with the condition that the villagers would pay back the money after installation of the tube wells. We have recovered most

of the money and have applied for 20 more tube wells for the year 2005. Hopefully, the drinking water problem will be solved in a few years, in the area I am working. This is a great contribution on behalf of the Government. The cost of installing one tube well in this area is over Rs 40, 000.00 due to deep boring.

- Started 4 water harvest projects. Due to the high cost, it was not possible for us to complete these projects. The BISWA has received funding for completing one of the structures this year, from different agency.
- Reduced common illnesses by supporting frequent small health camps, community based drug centers in the villages, and sending the health workers for training program through Orissa Voluntary Health Association.
- Supported several eye camps, providing eye glasses and helping the villagers to have cataract surgeries.
- Started Oddissi Production center in Sambalpur town which employs about 28 women. We hope to market our *Badi and Pampad* (Oddissi) nationally, which will open the door for more job opportunities for the urban women.
- Established a washing soap making unit in a rural village, which will be run and managed by the women's self help group.
- Started supporting different trades (tailoring, brick kiln, bee keeping, goat farming, and piggery) in 15 villages through self help groups

My personal observations and analyses of working in the rural and urban areas:

There are multiple problems. Needs are vast and situations are different economically and geographically from village to village. My mission helps me concentrate and focus with limited resources without getting confused and carried away with different problems. I have realized with time and experience, that all the social problems are intertwined and interdependent. I strongly feel that women can change the world in a better way. This is not a biased opinion; it is my own experience.

The awareness of education is extremely important. Once the parents (specially the mothers) feel or see the effect of school on their children, they will come forward to support the idea with time. Providing a morning meal is very attractive and it encourages the mothers to send their children to school at least for the food. It has its own problems. More children come to the school without enrolling, which affects the budget. At least they don't wander around or don't get involved with child labor. Besides being taught how to read, write, and do basic math, the children must learn how to create a better place for living with sanitary values, and community feelings. Parental involvement is extremely important even if they themselves don't have the basic education.

I believe nothing should be given free. Even the poorest parents contribute some amount (as little as five cents/month in the first year) for their children's education so that both the parents and the children feel responsible for the school. This year we have provided some school uniforms and slippers where the children have paid about 5cents for the slippers and less than 50cents for the dress (*contribution by children). I feel, this is a dignified way of helping the children and parents.

The rural women are different from the urban women. A rural mother's main focus is to provide two meals a day to for her family. Education is her last interest, and also, she does not know the importance of education. We have to teach the mothers, explain to them, involve them and feed the children so that

they can come to school. With time, the rural mother understands the importance of school and education. The urban mother knows the importance of being educated and does not like her child to be uneducated. She has the taste of better life. Her problem is how to get the money to send her child to school with an alcoholic husband who spends all his earnings on alcohol. The other problems I find in the urban settings are that many young boys who do not go to school and get involved in drugs, alcohol and gambling; and the young girls get involved in prostitution. To eradicate this problem, I think, urban slum schools are needed where the children need strict monitoring and mentoring. In some cases, the young girls need to be trained for different trades so that they don't sit at home and practice prostitution. Instead, they can earn money for living in a dignified way. They need to be occupied with some vocation instead of sitting and waiting to get married. Financial independence opens the door to opportunity, gives a sense of confidence and the girls realize marriage is not the only option for a girl to survive in this world. In fact when they are financially independent, many men come forward to marry an earning woman verses non-earning woman. Beside education, rehabilitation is extremely important. Again, I found that the most difficult part is to identify livelihood possibilities in the concerned localities.

At present the financing sector in Western Orissa is mainly dominated by Nationalized Banks, Rural Banks and Private Banks, mostly operating in urban sectors serving higher income group people. The facility of credit extension by these formal financing institutions is a distant dream for the lower income group or the people living below the poverty line. The only choice is left for the low income group to be dependent on the money lenders for advancing finance for the emergency need at a very high interest rate (120% or more per year). In such case, the borrower will never pay back the principal. They can barely pay back the interest every month with great difficulties with their limited income. The pro-poor approach to the extension of credit facilities in micro financing is perceived as one of the most effective tools in poverty alleviation programs in India and particularly in Orissa.

My involvement started with *Basundhara* (Cuttack based NGO) in 1995 and continued until 2002. Currently, I have completely dedicated my time and resources to a rural/tribal area of Sambalpur district and working with the *BISWA* (Sambalpur based NGO). It has been long 10 years, but the years have gone by very quickly. With time, I have gained considerable experience working in different parts of Orissa, by getting closely involved with the villagers, listening to them and understanding their problems and needs. These experiences have brought back to me my lost history, my geography, and my beautiful past. Also, it has changed my perspective of life. I don't regret coming to this country anymore. This country has taught me many good things, which have helped me work efficiently in spite of many difficulties one faces in India. What charms me most is the impact of very minimum help (sometimes less than 15 dollars) on a woman and who returns her gratitude with a smile and tells me "Nani, my life has changed and I am doing well". Five dollars increase in her monthly income has given her new hope and strength. I get my reward which money can't buy for me and encourages me to start my journey with renewed hope. The frail bodies of those village women with endless dream and enthusiasm and the powerful and needy eyes of their children make me restless until I make my next trip to Orissa.

* A social worker and activist based at East Lansing, Michigan with her husband, Prof. Subhendra D Mahanti (ranumahanti@yahoo.mail).

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

By Debendra Kumar Das**

INTRODUCTION: I have read from time to time from the Orissa Society of Americas literatures that many of you are involved in various community service projects in Orissa. Two organizations from Orissa have asked me on numerous occasions to spread their requests to solicit help from Oriya communities from overseas for them. They are: Lutheran Mahila Samity (LMS) and Municipal Blind School. I have been involved with these two organizations for a number of years and whenever I visit Orissa I make it a point to visit these two organizations to give them my support and to learn how they are doing.

LUTHERAN MAHILA SAMITY : This organization is located in Patalipank of Kujanga area about 7 kms from the sea. It is about 3 kms from the Express Highway that goes to Paradeep Port. This area is frequently affected by cyclone, flood and draught.

LMS is a women's organization dedicated to social service with special attention for the development of women and children. It is registered under the societies registration act of the government as a non-profit organization and has been providing service to their community since 1982.

LMS has started a branch named Nivedita Ashram in 1989 to handle an orphanage and together they have been performing the following service projects.

- non-formal education for school dropouts in many centers in nearby blocks
- orphanage for girls
- a home for abandoned children
- vocational training center for needy women and orphans
- old age home and day care center for helpless senior citizens

Over the years many needy women, children and people of old age who have no social support have benefited from this organization.

I visited this organization in the mid-nineties and I was impressed with their operation. They had a brick building serving as office and training center, a thatched old age home and day care center, a thatched house for orphans, a kitchen and storage room and beautiful gardens growing vegetables and flowers. There was also a poultry farm and a cow shed.

The super cyclone of October 1999 was devastating to this area. The brick building provided shelter to many people of the village during the cyclone. The orphanage, day care center, vocational training center, school, cow shed, poultry farm and spice production unit were severely damaged. Help was slow in coming and they are still recovering and rebuilding it and need substantial help for rebuilding.

They were gratified to get some assistance from OSA after the super cyclone, but a great deal of needs remain to be met.

Though their initial estimate for orphans was 60 girls, immediately following the cyclone that number swelled to nearly 220 children. The government has not provided a proportionate amount of additional

* Professor of Mechanical Engineering at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, Alaska
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grants to take care of these extra children. The children's age range from 4 to 18. For humanitarian reasons, nobody is turned away from this institution. Therefore, many destitute women, men and abandoned children are given shelter at this organization when they are desperately in need of help.

Their goal is to be self-sufficient. Therefore, their organization has been trying to develop sustainable sources of income to run their institution. These income-producing units are: dairy farm, poultry farm, pisciculture pond, spice production units, handicrafts production units and coir production units. The farms will produce milk, egg and fish for the consumption of the children and the surplus amount will be sold in the market.

Under vocational training the LMS is already teaching: typing, doll making, tailoring and appliqué work, making coir products and various types of handicrafts. They are also embarking upon giving training in computer application and information technology.

Please consider the impact of these projects on the society there in Orissa. With the success of these projects, the children will be skilled in different trades and can be self-sufficient in the future. Sale of finished products will provide a continuous flow of funds to run the projects under the guidance of LMS on a sustainable mode. Poor and destitute children and women of Orissa will have the opportunity to learn a skill and find employment and be proud of themselves. Wouldn't you be interested in helping such an organization, which aims at providing the needy children and women a secured future? I strongly believe that with our assistance they can lead a meaningful life.

It is the sincere request of LMS that whenever any OSA member visits Orissa, please come to their organization. It is very easily accessible being near the Express Highway leading to the Paradeep Port.

As a proof of their success, in the year 1999-2000 they imparted non-formal education at 100 centers to nearly 2500 children who had dropped out of schools. Out of these, 95 centers were at the primary school level and 5 were in the upper primary school level. Vocational training at their center continues for needy women.

They maintain a small library and a reading room with books, magazines and newspapers in their main building. They are conducting seminars and awareness camps throughout the year on women's rights, ill effects of the dowry system, health and sanitation education, literacy, non-formal education, formation of self-help groups and adverse effects of drugs in nearby villages and blocks.

LMS has helped in forming 15 self-help groups in 4 villages and 3 panchayats. The groups are involved in small savings and small business activities mostly for women.

They have been providing food, residence, health care and recreational facilities for the elderly people. They have many noble objectives, which are listed below.

- promote and develop awareness among the people to eradicate social and caste barriers, customs of dowry, gender discrimination and prejudice.
- promote educational, art, cultural, literary, and scientific consciousness among people with special emphasis on women and children.
- arrange vocational training for economically weaker segment of the population.
- provide medical and sanitation facilities and related education for the poor
- assist and facilitate the advancement of formal and non-formal education, improved agricultural methods and technologies, traditional arts and handicrafts for development of the rural areas.
- organize and manage orphanage, child welfare center, old age home, short-stay home, women training center for destitute, maternity center, residential schools for poor children

- provide training in shorthand and type writing, computer application, tailoring, knitting, toy making, making handicrafts with golden grass, bloc printing and screen printing
- provide health clinics in rural, semi-rural and urban areas and training in basic hygiene and leprosy and Aids eradication program
- educate and encourage people for family planning, maternity and child care and family welfare
- provide training in conserving the environment through plantation, prevention of soil erosion, use of smokeless chulas and promotion of use of non-conventional energy sources such as solar and wind power systems.
- establish drug counseling centers to help people with addiction

Each of these goals, even when partially achieved, will have great beneficial effects on the lives of people of their community and may spread to other places of Orissa. Please extend your kind help in assisting them in some of these projects.

Contact Information for LMS: If you need additional information on LMS please feel free to contact: Ms. Pramila Tripathy, President, Lutheran Mahila Samity, At/PO: Patalipank, Via: Kujang, Dist: Kendrapara, PIN: 754141, Orissa, INDIA

MUNICIPAL BLIND SCHOOL (MBS): The MBS, Kendrapara is located in Santa Sahi of the town area and was started in 1989. It has been running from a rented house, as it has no building of its own. When I visited them in last January there were 30 students in this boarding school. The state government provides a meager sum of Rs. 300 per month per student for food, housing, clothing, study equipment and other day-to-day materials. Paying the house rent out of that is a big burden on them. The Kendrapara municipality has arranged a plot of land for the school and the hostel. But due to lack of any grant money they are not able to build a building of their own. One head mistress, one music teacher, one trained blind school attendant, one cook and three laborers attending to the activities of the school are presently managing and running the whole institution.

With the help of the teachers, the students are developing their physical, mental and intellectual capability. Some staff may have received training in the old and well-known “Muka Badhira Vidyalaya” (The Institute for Deaf and Dumb) in Bhubaneswar.

Students are learning handicrafts and reading and writing through Braille system.

Students are also learning musical instruments such as harmonium, tabla, mrudunga and tanpura. Their students have distinguished themselves by participating in cultural programs made by All India Radio and TV on several occasions.

When I think of the success of American musicians such as Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder and the chorus group of Blind Boys of Alabama I cannot but wonder if there are some kids from MBS, Kendrapara with inborn talent in music, who some day might become very successful if they are given the opportunity of good training.

They have needs for Braille machines, Braille slate, arithmetic board, abacus and special geometric instruments for the blind. Their main need now is to build a permanent building for their blind school.

Contact Information for MBS: If you are interested in learning more about this blind school and have some tips to help, please contact: Ms. Pravati Gantayat, Headmistress, Municipal Blind School, At: Santa Sahi, PO/Dist: Kendrapara, PIN: 754211, Orissa, INDIA



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Do you want to pay your Debt to Orissa?

IAFF can help you

By

Subhash Mohapatra*

Orissa is among the last state in the Union in almost every category except natural resources. The vast majority of Oriyas who come to Orissa become prosperous while Orissans' progress towards prosperity

is spotty at best and almost nonexistent at worst. Because India is progressing rapidly, it is bound to have a "drag effect" on Orissa. Therefore, all the progresses that can be identified, especially through the government efforts can be attributed to this "drag effect".

Those of us who are enjoying prosperity in this country and other countries owe a debt to Orissa, where we were born and received the educational foundation that has put us in our current positions. Whether you wish to help Orissa out of compassion, love, sense of duty, or a sense of indebtedness, IAFF (Indo-American Friendship Foundation) can facilitate this process if you feel you have the desire and resources but no time or assistance. The IAFF was founded in 1989 to accomplish these objectives to the extent possible. It is the oldest charitable organization in the USA by an Oriya for the benefit of Orissa.

While the Govt. of Orissa is economically meager, there are considerable financial resources in the private sector. If methods can be developed to harness this untapped resource, much progress can be accomplished without the need for NRO funds or even government funds. In collaboration with various NGOs based in Orissa and other institutions IAFF is attempting to mobilize the non-Government sector towards rural development in Orissa.

The IAFF's activities in Orissa's rural development emphasize agriculture, education and health care. In the health care front, the IAFF has chosen to limit its activities to pediatric health, including prenatal, postnatal and neonatal maternity care. While activities in the area of agriculture and education are moving forward at the pace money and manpower permit, rural health care is severely handicapped because of acute shortage of doctors willing to extend their services to rural Orissa. The following are highlights among many activities that were undertaken through the IAFF in the year 2004. More details can be found in "The IAFF FORUM" available free of cost at this convention. To learn more about the IAFF please refer to its web site: www.iaffl.org. If you have any questions about donations that you wish to make for Orissa's rural development, please write to iaffl@aol.com

* Dr. Mohapatra is **President, IAFF, 1413 Boxwood Lane, Apex, NC 27502, USA**

Orissa's Contribution To The Grand Mosaic

Of Indian Culture And Tradition

By Kabi Prasad. Misra*

Orissa, which was earlier called Kalinga or Utkal, is wonderfully placed in the middle of India on the East Coast, thereby becoming a bridge between the north and the south. It is said, "Civilization is the result of geography". This is perhaps very much true in case of Orissa which is geographically located on the coastal region at the confluence of two types of culture – the northern and southern (not to call this Aryan and Dravidian respectively). This favorable location of the landmass of Orissa brought wonderful synthesis and harmony and developed a unique blend of cultural mosaic reflected in the lives and culture of Oriya people. Even the alphabets of Oriya language exhibit a rare synthesis of the northern Devanagari script and the southern round topped script. Almost in every alphabet in Oriya the lower part resembles the Devanagari script whereas the upper part is rounded as in most southern languages, saving the palm leaf base from being torn by the iron stylette which was used in writing Oriya script. In various aspects of life including art and culture, dance and music, food and habits, temple sculptures and architectures, one can find the cultural synthesis of the northern and the southern

traditional cultures. In this way, Orissa has really contributed in various ways to the mosaic of Indian culture and tradition.

Let us now elaborate in each field (in alphabetical order) Orissa's unique contribution developed over many centuries. All these may not be known to the present generation of Oriyans, especially the second and third generation of migrant Oriyans.

Art and Handicraft :Orissa is very famous worldwide for its silver filigree work of Cuttack and the applique work of Pipli. In fact, they are so popular among the tourists and visitors that hardly anyone fails to buy these items from the local shops. Even, the stone work and the statues of Bhubaneswar and Puri are equally famous and are exported to various countries all over the world. The artisans of Orissa, even today, carve out most beautiful and artistic figures on stone in the same style as depicted in the Odissi dance and temples of Orissa.

The sarees of Orissa are very famous for their design, colorful patterns and intricate weaving, done both by handlooms and machines. They are called “BOMKAI” and “SAMBALPURI” sarees in India.

Another artistic creation of Oriya people is the Pattachitra which is the painting with vegetable dye drawn on palm leaves, tassar silk or similar items. This style of painting is also done on the temple walls inside the sanctum sanctorum and other places, which add to the beauty of the temple. Similarly, Adivasi paintings (Tribal art) are unique among tribal people of Orissa, especially Saura paintings which are being popularized now. These paintings are done by the tribal people on the walls of their mud houses and they express the tribal beliefs and customs in a very artistic manner.

The other form of art, which is now dying, is the Jhota (Kolam) or Rangoli pattern done by young girls with powdered rice and other grains, turmeric etc., which are not only colorful but very attractive in front of the houses on special occasions. It is a pity that modern girls have not learned this beautiful form of art from their mothers of the past generation.

Astronomy and Mathematics: Orissa was quite advanced in ancient times in the field of mathematics and astronomy. The legendary Samanta Chandrasekhar of Khandapada became famous when Orissa was under the British rule in early 20th century. He not only calculated the inter-planetary distances and various other astronomical data but also wrote a unique book on astronomy in Sanskrit called “SIDDHANTA DARPANA”. The father of modern Oriya nation, Mr. Madhusudan Das, almost worshipped Samanta Chandrasekhar for his depth of knowledge in mathematics and his ability to make precise astronomical and astrological calculations. In fact, Samanta Chandrasekhar predicted his own time of death and decided to proceed to Puri to die exactly at the same time, determined years earlier, while praying to Lord Jagannath. Amazingly, he did all astronomical calculations only with the help of two small sticks, which are still preserved in the museum at Puri. Even today, all timing of eclipses, tithis and auspicious times are determined in Panjika entirely by Samanta Chandrasekhar's methods and calculations. It's a pity that he is not known outside Orissa because his works have not been translated and reviewed in other languages.

Culture and Lord Jagannath:The culture of Orissa is almost synonymous with the great that of Lord Jagannath. Lord Jagannath is not only the presiding Deity of the entire Oriya population but also worshipped with reverence by millions of people including the present day ISKCON devotees all over the world.. Jagannath represents the supreme Brahman and brings into harmony and synthesis all the sects, divisions and branches of all denominations in the Hindu tradition. His abstract form was from the tribal people of Orissa and it represents the Formless (Nirakara), in an impressive yet attractive colorful

form (Sakara). This mystique God is the symbol of infinite Brahman not resembling any other being in creation. No wonder, great saints, seers and prophets of various sects and religions came to Puri over millennia to worship Lord Jagannath, who gave them a mystic experience of the infinite Brahman. From AdiSankara to Ramanuja, Chaitanya to Kabir, Tulsidas to Gurunanak, everyone came to visit Puri which is considered one of the four most important places of pilgrimage in India (Chaturdham). Adisankara established one of his original Mutts at Puri called Govardhan Peetham. There are even today innumerable mutts and temples in and around Puri representing every sect and community and system of philosophy prevalent in India.

The main Puri temple itself has hundreds of small temples inside the campus and observes hundreds of rituals and Pujas everyday in the most mystique and symbolic ways written in ancient scripts. The kitchen of Lord Jagannath has about 500 employees and prepares food everyday for about 20,000 to 100,000 people by a unique method of steam cooking of most delicious of dishes at most affordable costs. The place where these food items are sold in the campus, called Anand Bazaar is also unique in the sense that even a high class Brahmin cannot refuse food to a low caste Pariah by the dictate of the tradition and custom in Puri temple. Thus Jagannath culture represents the most beautiful synthesis of conflicting sects and divisions bringing unity, harmony and love among all people. It certainly propagates universal brotherhood among mankind transcending all manmade divisions and sects.

Dance and Music: Odissi is one of the six forms of classical dances in India. It is a blend of most artistic and beautiful postures depicted on the walls of the temples of Orissa. Its uniqueness lies in the posture of Tribhangi (body with three bends) which is the basis of Odissi dance. This dance form consists of 3-4 parts, starting with Mangala Charan (Invoking a God) proceeding through Pallavi, Abhinaya and ending in Moksha which is the finale of Odissi dance asking for liberation through rhythmic postures of the dancer. Orissa also has a rich tradition of various folk dances as well as classical music, which are not known to many outsiders. But thankfully, both Odissi dance and classical Odissi music are being revived by some dedicated artists and patrons of art over the last few decades.

Food and Recipes: Orissa has some unique type of preparations and recipes in food items. They are called Besara, Chhenchda, Dalma, Ambila etc., which are prepared even today on special occasions. Orissa also has the unique variety of indigenous cakes (Pitha) which are nearly of fifty types. Some of them are called Manda, Chitou, Poda Pitha, Chakuli, Gaintha Pitha etc., which were made in almost every home until 30 – 40 years ago. Again it is a pity that these special types of cakes embodying taste of traditional Oriya cuisine are not known to the modern Oriya girls.

Literature: Orissa started its formal writings of poetry in and around 6th/7th century. The climax of ancient and medieval Oriya literature came in late 17th and early 18th century. Upendra Bhanja was the greatest among all literary figures and poets of Orissa during that period. Bhanja's works numbering about 70 individual poetic compositions reached the zenith of perfection and brought Oriya poetry to the level of Sanskrit poetry and in some respect excelled masters in Sanskrit literature too. Unfortunately, he wrote only in Oriya language and refused to write in Sanskrit having a tremendous sense of pride and self-respect for his own mother tongue.

Jayadev of Gita Govinda fame was Orissa's greatest contributor to the Vaishnava literature of India. His immortal work 'Gita Govinda' was the first one of its kind in Sanskrit tradition making Sanskrit poetry most simple, musical, mellifluous and rhythmic in its depiction of the divine Leela of Krishna and Radha. This legendary work is famous for its Ashtapadis, which are practiced with reverence all over the country.

It is very significant that Orissa has the distinction of having six JNANAPITHA & SARASWATI SAMMAN Award winners in the field of literature. They are Late Gopinath Mohanty, Late Sachi Routray, Shri Ramakanta Ratha, Shri Sitakanta Mohapatra, Smt. Pratibha Ray and Shri Manoj Das. It is indeed a matter of pride for Orissa and its literature, as these awards are the highest literary awards in the country.

Fakir Mohan Senapati was not only the pioneer prose writer in Oriya language in the 20th century but also one of the greatest storywriters and novelists of the entire South – East Asia. Some modern writers and a few of his grand children have fortunately made wonderful translations and documentaries of this great literary figure.

Maritime activities: Orissa was very famous for its maritime activities and many Oriya people from the state of Kalinga traveled to distant places like Indonesia, Java, Borneo, Bali and Sumatra many centuries ago. Most of the inhabitants in the island of Bali in Indonesia are originally from Kalinga and even today they speak a form of Oriya dialect and worship Lord Jagannath in one of its famous temples. Every year, on the Kartik Purnima day, thousands of Oriyas celebrate the occasion in the name of ‘Bali Jatra’ floating lamps in the rivers and seas in memory of the voyages made in the past. The merchants from Orissa, in those days traveled to far away places like Bali and Sumatra in the ships built along the coastal belt of Orissa. It is interesting to note that the Gujarati culture and language and even some temples in Gujarat have some resemblance to those found in Orissa. This could probably have resulted because of the maritime activities between the East Coast and the West Coast of India.

Natural Beauty: Orissa is abundant in mineral wealth and natural beauty too. It has some of the best beaches (at Puri), lakes (the Chilka lake, being the biggest in India), forests and animal sanctuaries full of grand variety of flora and fauna. The Shimliepal forest was the abode of the world famous and the only pet tigress, Khairi who was found as a cub and brought up by her loving human parents as a domestic animal until her death. Orissa is also famous for the migratory birds from Siberia, who visit the Chilka Lake in thousands every winter. This event marks a spectacular and impressive sight every winter to the thousands of visitors who come to watch them.

Religion and Spirituality: In the field of religion, Orissa has both followers of Saivism and Vaishnavism. The Lingaraj temple at Bhubaneshwar is the tallest temple of Orissa built in 11th century is a Shiva Temple and the world famous Konark temple was built for worshipping the Sun God. There are numerous shrines and temples in Orissa worshipping Goddess Durga, Kali and also equal number of temples for worshipping various avatars of Vishnu. Of course, the Jagannath temple at Puri is the physical, spiritual and mystical symphony and synthesis of all traditions of Hindu religion and culture. There is hardly any God or Goddess, not worshipped inside the Jagannath temple complex.

There are two other unique traditions in the religious field in Orissa. One is really unique to Orissa called Mahima Dharma, whose followers worship the Nirguna Brahma (Formless and Attributeless God) and do not visit any temple nor worship any God. The other tradition is the Tantric cult mostly prevalent in the north eastern part of India, especially in Assam and Bengal. Thus, Orissa followed and enriched all the religious traditions of India.

Temple and Sculpture: The Orissa style of temple architecture is somewhat different from those of the north and the south. Unlike the majestic structures in southern India, in Orissa temples the sanctum sanctorum called Garbha Griha is the tallest structure and is always rounded on the top with a Kalasam depicting Vaishnavite or Saivite tradition depending on the Deity being worshipped. The artistic beauty of each statue in stone in the RajaRani temple of Bhubaneshwar and the famous Konark temple has few parallels in the world. Even after centuries of erosion and destruction, the emotions and

feelings depicted in the statues stand out in lively splendor in most life like manner. The half-ruined Konark temple built in the 13th century with the help of 1200 sculptors working for 12 years, day and night, represents the zenith of perfection in temple architecture and sculptural beauty.

Tradition and Values:The Oriya people are traditionally docile, tolerant and mild in nature. Their values are dominantly humane and in fact, fairly based on non-violence and peace. In 3rd century B.C., Emperor Ashoka who attacked Kalinga got converted to a peace loving, non-violent king from a warrior king (Chandashoka to Dharmashoka). He accepted Buddhism at the Kalinga Battle immediately after the war and spread the message of non-violence, peace and brotherhood among mankind. Being a follower of Lord Buddha, he became totally non-violent and benevolent and spread the message of Buddhism to far and wide regions of Asia from Japan to Srilanka and China to Thailand. Thus, Orissa contributed to the spread of Buddhism in the world and message of peace and non-violence almost 2500 years ago. Today, the famous Dhauli Stupa (the Pagoda of Buddhism) at Bhubaneswar stands in memory of the Kalinga battle and the conversion of Emperor Ashoka from a figure of aggression to that of sublimation. Even today the Stupa's peaceful ambience pacifies the turbulent mind and soul of any visitor.

Now there is a new popular theory that Lord Buddha was born in Orissa in a place called Kapilas near Cuttack and there are numerous excavations in and around Cuttack district of the old Buddhist culture and monasteries dating back to 3rd century B.C. At Bhubaneswar, the two famous hills with caves called Khandagiri and Udayagiri still show Ashokan inscriptions on stones in Pali language dating back to 2nd and 1st century B.C. In conclusion, Orissa really represents geographically, culturally, spiritually, artistically and traditionally the greatest synthesis of all the best traditions of Indian culture and heritage. It is truly a significant contributor to the grand mosaic of Indian culture and heritage.

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MUSIC TO THE SOUL

By
Arpita Mohanty*

THE rain is falling over you
Refreshing your body,
You stick out your tongue and slurp in the sparkle
You dance around with bare feet on the cool concrete of
the sidewalk.
The rain falls harder and harder and you spin around faster
and faster
You fall fast to the soft grass and listen the soft rumbling of
the thunder,
You run to the open door gazebo and suddenly out of thin
air.
LIGHTNING!
Coming down in amazing force and glow,
You see different colors coming in and out of the landscape
a kaleidoscope
Listen and hear the music...

Pit pat pit pat...rumble...rumble
You sit on a chair and wonder .
Wonder what it would be like without the thunder and the
rain and the lightning
You close your eyes and think of all the sadness and hope
that would be lost.
God gave us rain, lightning, thunder to be grateful for.
Suddenly it's all over...the color blends in with the blue,
bright sky creating a rainbow of dazzling colors.
The thunder murmurs off- waiting for another
thunderstorm to rumble for.
So every time you hear rain, the thunder,
and see the kaleidoscope of color
Run outside and dance
like no one's watching and listen...listen to it all.

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