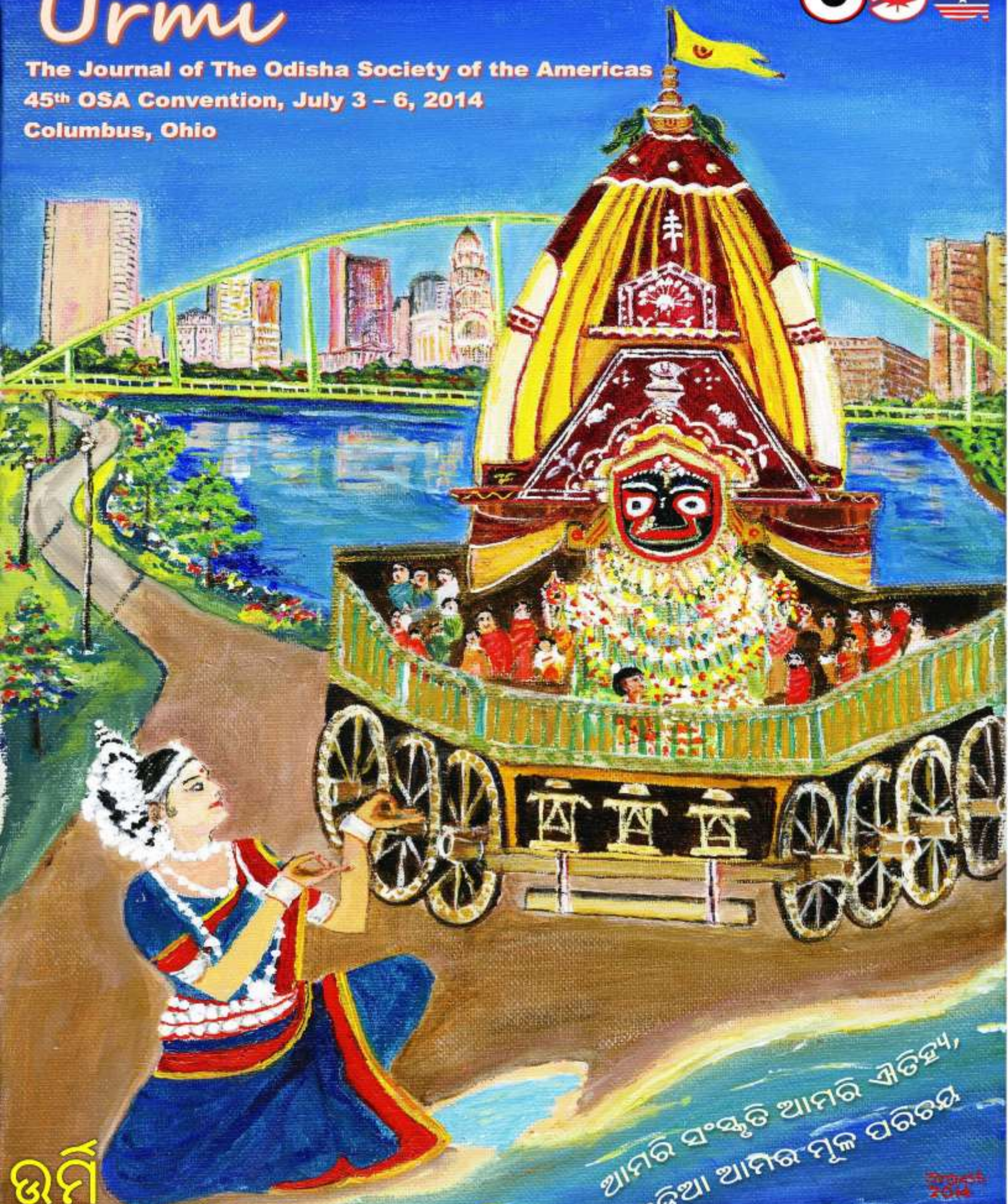


Urmi

The Journal of The Odisha Society of the Americas

45th OSA Convention, July 3 – 6, 2014

Columbus, Ohio



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ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଆମର ମୂଳ ପରିଚୟ

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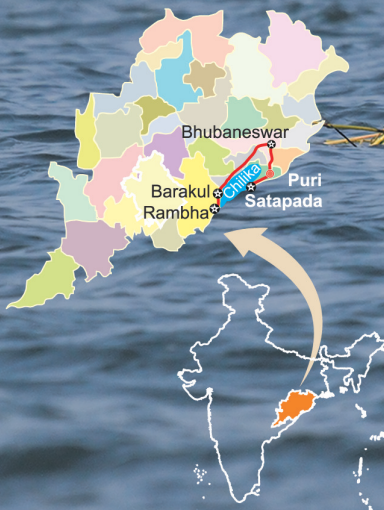
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Naming the OSA Souvenir: *Urm*

The OSA Souvenir dons a new name starting this year: *Urm*

To name or not to name: A name makes the association with an object stronger and brings out a feeling of familiarity and affection. “Naming and counting are the two most basic behaviors in our divided brains. Naming is the atomic act of association, recognition, contextualization and synthesis. .. Vanity and pragmatism wrestle for control of the act of naming*.” Selection of a name is not an easy endeavor, especially with a healthy diversity of opinion. If unanimity or perfection were the goal, most objects would have difficulty finding an appellation! The opinion, by its very nature, will be divided, but the gestalt has to be synthesized into a designation or else indecisiveness and inertia would rule roost.

The Process: As the request to name the souvenir came from this year’s convention team, “...we feel, a nice (purposeful) name would value add to its identity. It does not mean that this won’t survive without a name but we feel that a name would take it to the next level...” The OSA Executive Committee duly considered it, and put forth the issue to the OSA BOG. The BOG agreed with the proposition to name the souvenir. Solicitations from OSA members produced a mixed reaction, with majority opinion in favor. Based on the input we received from the members at large, BOG and a section of Odia writers in the North America, the Souvenir has received its name: *Urm*.

Why *Urm*: Literary journals have an affinity for abstract names, e.g., Rattapallax, Shenandoah, Epoch, Jhankar, as has our journal in “*Urm*.” *Urm* finds mention in our ancient literature, Srimad Bhagavatam in the description of large waves that were caused as Varaha-Avatara entered the transcendental waters. It also finds coinage in our contemporary music as in the melodious voice of Pranab Patnaik, “*urmi adheeraa, rupasee chilikaa...*” *Urm* for OSA Souvenir would signify the ripples of our socio-cultural manifestation during the modern day "Bali-Jatra" in NA that is OSA convention; it would connote the waves that emanate from our activities, dance, music, drama, poetry, awards, and general kinship, which touches us and binds the Odia diaspora in its shared destiny. Let it be the wave of friendship and harmony that connects our dichotomous psycho-physical sojourn between our motherland and the adopted land.

(<http://www.ribbonfarm.com/2012/02/02/how-to-name-things/>)

Sikhanda Satapathy
OSA Vice President

**Journal of the Orissa Society of the Americas
2014 Souvenir Issue**

July 3-5, Columbus, OH



ଆମରି ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଆମରି ଐତିହ୍ୟ
ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଆମର ମୂଳ ପରିଚୟ

Editor-in-Chief: *Debashree Pati*
Editor (Odia Section): *Arpita Basa*
Youth Editor: *Abha Panda*
Associate Editors: *Sikhanda Satpathy,*
Swaroop Mishra

Cover Artist: *Surendra Nath Dash*

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OSA 2014 Convention Organizing Committee



Convener: Satya Pattanaik

Co-Conveners:

Anil Patnaik
Swadhin Pattanaik
Deepak Swain
Sikhanda Satpathy

Chapter President: Arata Rout

Treasurer: Akshay Pradhan

Awards:

Saswata Mohapatra (Chair)
Kumud Mohanty
Shweta Mohapatra

Cultural:

Basant Mohapatra (Chair)
Birendra Jena (Adviser)
Anjan Basa
Arpita Basa
Anup Behera
Mamta Das
Sumitra Hota
Rashmita Maharana
Surit Maharana
Abani Mishra
Geetanjali Mishra
Arpita Mohanty
Asit Mohapatra
Madhusmita Mohapatra

Cultural (contd.):

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Madhusmita Nayak
Sanjeeb Nayak
Itishree Panda
Kakoli Parilal
Anil Patnaik
Dipali Patnaik
Smaraki Patnaik
Mamata Pradhan
Punam Rath
Rekha Rath
Prativa Swami
Dipti Sahoo
Rabi Sahoo
Lusina Satpathy
Ajit Swain
Deepak Swain
Mamun Swain

Decoration:

Nirupam Acharya
Surit Maharana
Rashmita Maharana
Pooja Vyas

Exhibitions:

Surit Maharana
Asit Mohapatra
Swadhin Pattanaik

Food:

Nandita Dash (Chair)
Dasarathi Ram (Adviser)
Manas bhattacharya
Surendra Dash
Rajashree Das
Mamta Das
Kalyanl Jena
Krishna Dash Jain
Peggy Mishra
Leena Mishra
Santhosh Mishra
Geetanjali Mishra
Anita Dash Modi
Annapurna Pandey
Padmini Pattnaik
Roopa Pattniak
Bireswar Pattnaik
Jayanti Pattnaik
Jolly Patnaik
Snigdha Pattanaik
Mamta Pradhan
Pat Ram
Rekha Ratha
Amar Senapati
Prativa Swami

Fund raising:

Sukant Panda (Chair)
Jay Narayan Bhuyan (Adviser)
Dhirendra Kar (Adviser)
Leena Mishra
Akshay Pradhan
Anil Patnaik
Prashant Ranbijuli
Amar Senapati

Grievance:

Bireswar Patnaik
Surya Patnaik
Prasanta Raj

IT & Registration:

Arata Rout (Chair- Registration)
Harlal Choudhury (Adviser -
Registration)
Pravas Parida (Chair-IT)
Mamta Das
Rashmita Maharana
Geetanjali Mishra
Asit Mohapatra
Arpita Mohanty
Smaraki Mohanty
Shweta Mohapatra
Ipsita Mohanty
Arita Mohanty
Sanjukta Parida
Swadhin Pattanaik
Rupa Patnaik
Akshaya Pradhan
Mamta Pradhan
Rekha Ratha
Prativa Swami
Ajit Swain
Pooja Vyas

Inter chapter:

Arata Rout (Chair)
Duryodhan Mangaraj (Adviser)

Logistics:

Ram Patnaik (Chair)
Rupa Patnaik

Programs:

Saswata Mohapatra (Chair)
Dhabaleswar Panda (Adviser)
Kumud Mohanty
Swadhin Pattanaik

Souvenir:

Debashree Pati (Chair)
Arpita Basa (Co-Chair)
Surendra Dash (Adviser)
Swaroop Mishra
Abha Panda
Sikhanda Satpathy

Sports:

Anup Behera (Chair)
Hemant Biswal
Swadhin Pattanaik
Biswa Puan
Biswa Rath
Pradip Tripathy

Stage, Light & Sound:

Anjan Basa (Chair)
Anil Patnaik
Surit Maharana
Sanjeeb Nayak

Seminar:

Deepak Swain (Chair)
Sushant Satpathy (Adviser)
Sagarika Nayak

Video & Photography:

Surit Maharana

Youth:

Utkal Nayak (Chair)
Leena Mishra (Adviser)
Abhipsha Basa
Varun Bhuyan
Madhur Bhuyan
Suman Choudhury
Shweta Mohapatra
Swasti Mishra
Lisa Mishra
Sadyasnata Pattanaik
Lagnajit Pattanaik
Rishav Puan
Anchit Rout
Archita Rout
Girijia Shankar

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Kuku Das
Suchitra Das
Subhendu Das
Sandip Dasverma
Parasar Mishra
Salil Mishra
Swati Mishra

Debasrita Mohanty (Odisha)
Joy Gopal Mohanty
Lalatendu Mohanty
Smriti Panda
Annapurna Pandey
Gagan Panigrahi

Deboo Patnaik (Odisha)
Gyan Pattanaik
Janaki Ballav Pattanaik (Odisha)
Sulochana Pattanaik
Ipsita Satpathy
Krishna Senapati
Pradip Tripathy



OSA Administraton (2013-2015)



OSA National Staff Members

Position	Name	Email	Phone
President	Tapan Padhi	president@orissasociety.org	(469) 544-4295
Vice President	Dr. Sikhanda Satpathy	vicepresident@orissasociety.org	(512) 248-8970
Secretary	Sabita Panigrahi	rgsecretary@orissasociety.org	(416) 223-2756
Treasurer	Prashanta Ranabijuli	treasurer@orissasociety.org	(512) 697-9494
Editor	Satya Patnaik	sppatnaik@hotmail.com	(614) 408-8596
General Counsel Web Administration	Niraj Rath Bikash Panda	niraj.rath@gmail.com bikash@gmail.com	(214) 250-4009 (925) 639-9148

Chapter Presidents/Representatives

Chapter Name	Chapter Head	Email	Phone
California	Sunil Sabat	sunil_sabat@yahoo.com	(510) 364-3903
Chicago	Jhara Das	jharadas@yahoo.com	(630) 904-6208
Grand Canyon Chapter	Simant Misra	misrahome@gmail.com	(480) 515-3841
Maryland – Virginia	Sujata Nayak	esnayaks@msn.com	(301) 528-9702
Michigan	Punyatoya Sarangi	punyatoyas@yahoo.co.in	(248) 991-1344
Minnesota/North-west	Debasis Das	ds.debasis@gmail.com	(952) 476-5850
New England	Arun Mohanty	arunmohanty_05@yahoo.com	(617) 224-3275
New York-New Jersey	Amar Senapati	jagakalia@yahoo.com	(732) 649-1809
Ohio	Arata Tran Rout	arata.Rout@gmail.com	(614) 855-3720
Ozark (central)	Radhagobinda Mohanty	rmohastat@charter.net	(636) 220-6588
Pacific Northwest (Interim)	Priyadarsan Patra	ppatra@seedsnet.org	(503) 617-0667
Rocky Mountain	Sadhu Behera	sadhu.behera@gmail.com	(303) 517-3297
South East	Sakti Singh	sakti_singh@yahoo.com	(919) 412-1228
Southern	Pramod Mahapatra	m_pramod99@yahoo.com	(423) 709-8301
South-West	Mrutyunjaya Pani	mjpani@gmail.com	(281) 712-5422
Washington, DC	Prakash Sahu	prakash_k_sahu@yahoo.com	(703) 689-0591
Canada	Abani Pattanayak	abanip@yahoo.com	(905) 956-0230

Committees and Associated Members 2013-2015

Social

Pramod Mahapatra
Mamata Mishra

Youth

Sadyasnata Patnaik
Tapannita Padhi

Senior Citizen

Pratap Das
Hari Arjun Patro

Awards

Saswata Mohapatra (Chair)
Sridhar Rana
Purna Patnaik
Sikhanda Satapathy (ex- officio)

Fund raising guidelines

Prakash Sahu
Pramod Mahapatra
Prashanta Ranabijuli

Finance

Prashanta Ranabijuli (Treasurer)
Akhileswar Patel
Loknath Patro

Let's Learn Odia

Kuku Das
Satya Patnaik
Sikhanda Satapathy

OSA Website

Bikash Panda

Regional Drama Festivals

Sandip Kumar Dasverma
Priyaranjan Mohapatra

Cultural

Purna Patnaik
Niranjan Tripathy

Organizational

Sushant Satpathy
Loknath Patro

Odissi Committee

Anu Biswal
Purna Patnaik
Pratap Das
Niranjan Tripathy
Ipsita Mahapatra
Niharika Mohanty

Odisha Development

Sukant Mohapatra (Chair)
Amiya Nayak
Annapurna Pandey
Leena Mishra
Abani Patra
Jay N Bhuyan
Dhirendra Kar
Safaquat Khan

Membership Drive

Manoj Padhi
Leena Mishra
Prashanta Ranabijuli

OSAnet Moderation

Manoj Padhi
Sunil Sabat

OSA Web Content Upgrade

Rupananda Mishra
Susant Routray
Prashanta Ranabijuli



Message from the President of OSA



Greetings,

Warm welcome to the 45th Annual convention of the Odisha Society of the Americas (OSA). This year venue at Hotel Sheraton at Capitol Square, Columbus and Ohio Theatre, Columbus, Ohio, during July 3-6, 2014, will house all our convention activities, dining, seminars, workshops, executive meetings and organized sports. The cultural programs will be held at World-Class Landmark grand Ohio Theatre with 21 foot high chandelier and opulent Spanish-Baroque architecture and design. I am sure this will make your experience pleasurable with this unforgettable event. Keeping in view of its enormous importance, our 2014 convention preparation is in full swing. We are planning a wholesome experience for you - with an indigenous Ohio style. You will see a few events probably for the first time in the history of OSA. Yes, we will have cultural programs to entertain you, seminars/discussions to enlighten you, delicious food to satisfy you and a great ambiance to meet friends and new faces. This time, the organizing committee will make sure that all your expectations are not just met, but exceeded.

This year OSA annual convention brings together over three hundred families, serving as the largest social meeting place of Odias outside of Odisha. The OSA convention offers several seminars and symposia to help members discuss social, cultural, economic issues for us here and in Odisha, and to provide opportunities for collaboration in joint endeavors. Traditionally, distinguished artists or groups have been invited to perform as part of our cultural program; speakers address the audience about Odisha's art, culture; and a delegation of political leaders and high level officials represent the Government of Odisha to present economic opportunities for foreign investment in the state. As a result, in recent years, many local city and state leaders have been joining us at the convention to explore trade opportunities such as imports/exports with Orissa.

In order to carry forward this effort, on the eve of the OSA convention, Odisha Development Day is planned on July 3rd, 2014 with a one-day Invest Odisha Symposium with a goal to promote Odisha's potential as a favorable destination for foreign investment. Some of the key goals for Invest Odisha Symposium are:

- Promote Odisha as one of the best places in India for investment in different sectors like Information Technology, Biotechnology, Education, Healthcare, Green Energy & Infrastructure etc. Bring entrepreneurs from overseas & Odisha and help in networking, collaboration, exploration of business opportunity for mutual benefit and benefit of the state at large

- Forum for meeting and collaborative initiatives in higher education/research and between inter-governmental entities/agencies (e.g. City, State, Country, International Organizations)

Invest Odisha Symposium 2014 is expected to have large participation of entrepreneurs, investors, business thought leaders from North America. We expect this to facilitate a dialogue between them and a high level Government, business delegation & entrepreneurs from Odisha. In this context I would like to invite you to attend symposium starting on July 3, 2014. Your personal presence will contribute significantly to our efforts to showcase Orissa as a place for tourism, culture, and business as cities such as Bhubaneswar are emerging as software hubs in India. Orissa is poised for growth as its old traditions transition into new fields of discovery and growth, and we believe this convention will serve as a milestone in accelerating that transition.

I am also glad to report that The OSA has grown into more than 1100 life members today. On behalf of OSA executive committee, I convey our congratulations and best wishes to each one of you. I would like to give you an update on current OSA activities. We have continued to follow weekly meeting among OSA executive committee members every Wednesday, Monthly meeting among BOG members on second Sunday of every month. We request members to send your suggestions to: secretary@orissasociety.org.

Activities:

1. Cyclone Phailin -
 - a. Fund: Our members have generously donated funds to the tune of \$60K which has been sent to Chief Minister's relief fund. Phailin fund raising committee did an excellent job.
 - b. Utilization: Although CM relief fund donations are completely controlled by CM without any influence of donors' suggestions, OSA has been able to meet with CM, CS, Secretary Finance, Secretary GA dept and Special relief commissioner to request targeted utilization of OSA's donation. A committee has been formed to discuss options of utilization of this fund in Phailin affected areas. Based on the recommendation of the committee of volunteer OSA members, a proposal has been sent to Government of Odisha to consider utilization of the fund in Phailin affected areas to establish/rebuild public libraries. For further details, please contact or send your comments to: president@orissasociety.org
2. OSA Higher Education Symposium at Bhubaneswar -
 - a. OSA conducted a successful seminar on Higher education, career opportunities in USA. About 250 students and faculties in Odisha attended the seminar.
 - b. A detail report has been published in: <http://www.orissasociety.org/odisha-higher-education-open-house-2013/>
3. Community Service hotline – As our community has grown, our social responsibility has increased and expectation from both members and non-members from our trusted, socio-cultural organization is lot more now-a-days. A hotline number has been established, however, in order to make it more effective and properly circulate the message among members and non members, we need more community

volunteers to come forward to help. For further details, please contact or send your comments to: treasurer@orissasociety.org

4. Emergency Fund - We faced few tragedies in our community. The unexpected death of Mr Shreerajan Kanungo, Mr Jyoti Patnaik, Mr Ambika Kar and most recently an young engineer in Edmonton, Canada, Mr Ashok Nayak. His death devastated life of his wife Sudha and her two children. She had never needed access to her husband's finances but found herself unprepared in a precarious condition with her husband's untimely demise. OSA members came forward to help and within no time approx \$3000/- was donated which could be sent before the funeral. Total donation of more than \$15K has been raised by OSA for Sudha and her children. OSA is exploring the option of group life insurance for its members. Please contact or send your comments to: treasurer@orissasociety.org

5. OSA Membership Drive - As we have seen the growth of Odia population in NA is increasing, the expectation from OSA as the oldest community organization has been increased tenfold as well. We have faced recent instances in sad demises, cyclone and social issues. Needless to say, we need to make the membership base stronger and need to increase our membership. We expect each one of you to come forward to help. We have initiated the membership drive for OSA members and providing 25% discount on life membership. Please contact: treasurer@orissasociety.org

6. Champu, Chanda, Odissi initiative - OSA has supported the initiative of Mrs Lata Misra and has produced a new audio CD containing CCO songs by professional singers from Odisha. This CD will cost \$15/- for its members. For further details, please contact vicepresident@orissasociety.org

7. Odissi Steering Committee – I am glad to announce the launch of Odissi Steering Committee of OSA comprising of following passionate promoters of Odissi in North America. Lot of our young children and adults learn Odissi in many cities across US and Canada. The popularity has also spread amongst other communities. However after Mancha Pravesh or graduation many of the practitioners do not continue their hobby. OSA Convention is the ideal platform to conduct training sessions, teach the original principles of Odissi dance, conduct competition and above all create that networking opportunity, connect with all of our Odissi practitioners. Odissi Workshop can be an on-going OSA sponsored event during the convention every year. I request following steering committee members under the chairmanship of Mrs. Anu Biswal to discuss amongst them and publish guidelines to conduct workshops during the convention.

Anu Biswal - biswal1@verizon.net

Purna Patnaik - purna@global-analytics.com

Pratap Das - pratapdas1@gmail.com

Niranjan Tripathy- niranjan.tripathy@gmail.com

Ipsita Mahapatra - imahapatra@gmail.com

Niharika Mohanty - gurushradha@gmail.com

For further details, please contact: vicepresident@orissasociety.org

8. Website - We have formed a committee who are working on a test website by adding new features and redesigning the look and content. Please send your comments to: treasurer@orissasociety.org

9. Regional Drama Festival - OSA has raised the RDF contribution to \$800/-. Some chapters have successfully planned to host RDF soon. Some large chapters have announced the date of RDF to be in the month of October. For further details, please contact: treasurer@orissasociety.org

10. Classical Status:

a. Odia as Classical language – OSA is proud that Odia language has received a classical language status, but without usage the language will not flourish. OSA has discussed with coordinator of the Odia language committee, Shri Subrat Kumar Prusty in Bhubaneswar on how to influence Odisha Government to ensure that Odia language can be made a mandatory subject at all schools in Odisha.

b. Classical status of Odissi Music – OSA wants to support and lead the effort in initiating the drive to get classical status for Odissi Music.

11. We are requesting members to come forward to volunteer. There are many ways anyone of you can help. Your time and help will go a long-way to translate lot of plans to actionable items. Please contact: secretary@orissasociety.org

12. Rocky Mountain Chapter – I am proud to inform that OSA has formed a new chapter in Devnver Colorado under the leadership of Mr Sadhu Behera as Chapter President. Please join me in welcoming all 15 new life members to OSA community. Please contact: sadhu.behera@gmail.com or secretary@orissasociety.org.

I believe the launch of "Urmi" magazine is a truly meaningful event, marking a significant and exciting moment in our passion of publishing annual OSA journal representing our cultural traditions. This magazine serves as a window for learning about our own people, culture, custom, tradition, literature and encourages the young writers. I am sure it will truly act as a bridge with second generation and will go a long way towards promoting literary understanding.

On behalf of the executive committee and Board of Governors of the OSA, I would like to thank all the volunteers of OSA to continue to build a strong foundation of OSA for the road ahead. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Editors of URMI for undertaking such a worthwhile task.

ଟପନ ପାଢ଼ୀ

Tapan Padhi
President, The Odisha Society of the Americas



Message from the Convener



ପ୍ରିୟ ବନ୍ଧୁଗଣ,

ଓସାର ୪୫ତମ ବାର୍ଷିକ ସମ୍ମିଳନୀକୁ ଆପଣମାନଙ୍କୁ ହାର୍ଦ୍ଦିକ ସ୍ୱାଗତ । ଓହ୍ରିଓ ଚାପୁରକୁ ଯେତେବେଳେ ଓସା ସମ୍ମିଳନୀ ଆୟୋଜନ କରିବାର ଗୁରୁ ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ଦିଆଗଲା ଏଠିକାର ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କ ମନରେ ଏକ ଶଙ୍କା ଜାତ ହେଲା । ଭୌଗଳିକ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିକୋଣରୁ ଅନ୍ୟ ରାଜ୍ୟ ମାନଙ୍କ ତୁଳନାରେ ସୁବିଧାଜନକ ସ୍ଥିତିରେ ଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ, ଲୋକମାନେ ମୁଖ୍ୟତଃ ତିନୋଟି ସହରରେ ବାସ କରିଥାନ୍ତି । ସେ ସହର ମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଦୂରତା ଥିବାରୁ, ଲଢ଼ିଷ୍ଟିକ୍ଷ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ କନ୍ଭେନସନ୍ କରିବା ସୁବିଧାଜନକ ନୁହେଁ । ତଥାପି ଓହ୍ରିଓର ବାସିନ୍ଦା ଦୃଢ଼ ମନୋବଳ ସହ କନ୍ଭେନସନ୍ ଆୟୋଜନ କରିବାର ଗୁରୁ ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ନେଲେ । ଅନେକ ଝଡ଼ ଝଞ୍ଜାର ସମ୍ମୁଖୀନ ହୋଇ ପରିଶେଷରେ ଆମେମାନେ କନ୍ଭେନସନ୍‌ର ଶେଷ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟାୟରେ ଆସି ପହଞ୍ଚିତେ । “ଅତିଥି ଦେବୋ ଭବ” ମୂଳମନ୍ତ୍ରକୁ

ଆଧାରକରି ଓହ୍ରିଓର ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପରିବାର ଆପଣମାନଙ୍କୁ ସ୍ୱାଗତ କରିବେ । ଆପଣମାନେ ଆମର ଆତିଥ୍ୟ ସ୍ୱୀକାର କରିବେ ବୋଲି ଆଶା ।

ଓସା ଏକ ସଂସ୍ଥା ନୁହେଁ - ଏହା ଆମର ପରିବାର । ଏଇ ବର୍ଷକର ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତିରେ ମୁଁ ଜାତୀୟ ତଥା ଆନ୍ତର୍ଯାତୀୟ ସ୍ତରରେ ଅନେକ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ସହ ବନ୍ଧୁତା ସ୍ଥାପନ କରି ପାରିଛି । ଅନେକଙ୍କ ସହ ଅନ୍ତରଙ୍ଗ ହୋଇପାରିଛି । ମୋ ଅଜାଣତରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଗୋଟେ ସଂପର୍କ ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହୋଇ ଯାଇଛି । ସେଇଥିପାଇଁ ଆଗରୁ ବି କହିଛି, ଏବେ ବି କହୁଛି - ଓସାର ବିକଳ୍ମ ନାହିଁ ।

“ଆମରି ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଆମରି ଏକିତ୍ୱ, ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଆମର ମୂଳ ପରିଚୟ” - ଏଥରର ଶ୍ଳୋଗାନ୍ । ସିଧା ସାଧା ଲାଗୁଛି ହେଲେ ତାର ଅନ୍ତର୍ନିହିତ ଅର୍ଥର ଗାମ୍ଭୀର୍ଯ୍ୟକୁ ମାପିପାରିଲେ ଦେଖିବାଯେ ଆମେ ଆମର ପରିଚୟକୁ ସଫଳତାର ସହ କେତେଦୂର ଧରିରଖିଛେ । ଗ୍ଲୋବାଲ୍ ଭିଲେଜ୍ ପରିପ୍ରେକ୍ଷୀରେ ମଣିଷର ପରିଚୟ ହେଉ ଅଥବା ଜାତିର ଅସ୍ଥିତା - ତାକୁ ସୁଦୃଢ଼ ଭାବରେ ଧରି ନରଖିଲେ ସମାଜ, ସଭ୍ୟତା, ଜୀବନ - ସବୁ ସ୍ଥିତିହୀନ ହୋଇଯାଏ ।

ଏଥର ଯୁବପିଢ଼ୀକୁ ପ୍ରାଥମିକତା ଦିଆଯାଇଛି କନ୍ଭେନସନ୍ ରେ । ସମୟ ଆସିଲାଣି ଯୁବପିଢ଼ୀ ଆମେରିକା ଓଡ଼ିଆ କମ୍ୟୁନିଟିର ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ କାମରେ ହାତ ଦେବାକୁ - ଲିଡ଼ରସିପ୍ ନେବାକୁ । ଓସା ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସହ ସଂପର୍କ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିବାକୁ । ମୂଳକୁ ଚିହ୍ନିବାକୁ । ତାର ବାସ୍ନା ବାରିବାକୁ । ସର୍ବୋପରି ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପାଇଁ କିଛି କରିବାକୁ । ଆମେ ସେ ଦେଶରେ ଜନ୍ମ ହୋଇନେ ତା ମାନେ ନୁହଁ ଯେ ଆମର ସେ ଦେଶ ପ୍ରତି କିଛି ସାମାଜିକ ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ନାହିଁ । ମୋ ବାପା, ଜେଜେବାପା ଯେଉଁ ମାଟି ପାଣି ପବନରେ ବଢ଼ିଛନ୍ତି, ସେ ଦେଶ ପାଇଁ ମୋର କିଛି ତ କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ ରହିଛି । ଯେ କଥା ଯୁବପିଢ଼ୀ ଯେତେ ଶୀଘ୍ର ବୁଝିବେ ସେତେ ଭଲ ।

ଏଥର କନ୍ଭେନସନ୍ ରେ ପ୍ରାୟ ପଚାଶ ପ୍ରତିଶତ ପ୍ରଥମ ଥର ପାଇଁ କନ୍ଭେନସନ୍ ଆସୁଛନ୍ତି । ଓହ୍ରିଓ ରାଜ୍ୟର ପ୍ରାୟ ସମସ୍ତ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପରିବାର ରେଜିଷ୍ଟ୍ରେସନ୍ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଯେଉଁଠି ହୋଷ୍ଟ ଚାପୁରର ସମସ୍ତ ପରିବାର କନ୍ଭେନସନ୍ କୁ ଆସନ୍ତି - ତାହାକୁ ଏକ ସଙ୍କ୍ଷେପ୍ଟୁଲ୍ କନ୍ଭେନସନ୍ ନିଶ୍ଚିତ ଭାବେ କୁହାଯାଇ ପାରିବ ।

ଆମର ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛାସେବୀ ମାନେ ବଡ଼ ଆତ୍ମୀୟତାର ସହ ସବୁ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକୁ ତଦାରଖ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ତଥାପି ଆମର କିଛି ତ୍ରୁଟି ରହିଯାଇଥାଇ ପାରେ । କ୍ଷମା କରିଦେବେ । ଏଇ ତିନିଦିନ ଆପଣମାନେ ସେବାର ଅବସର ଦେଇ ଆମକୁ ଧନ୍ୟ କରିବେ । ଆପଣମାନଙ୍କର ଏଇ ତିନିଦିନ ସୁଖମୟ ହେଉ, ମଙ୍ଗଳମୟ ହେଉ । ଏକ ଅନନ୍ୟ ଅନୁଭୂତିକୁ ସାଥରେ ଧରି ଆପଣମାନେ ନିଜ ନିଜ ଯାଗାକୁ ଫେରନ୍ତୁ ।

ପୁଣି ଥରେ - ସମସ୍ତ ଓହ୍ରିଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପରିବାର ମାନଙ୍କ ତରଫରୁ ଆପଣ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ୪୫ତମ ଓସା ସମ୍ମିଳନୀ କୁ ହାର୍ଦ୍ଦିକ ସ୍ୱାଗତ କରୁଛି ।

ନମସ୍କାର ।

ସତ୍ୟ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ



Messages from the Co-conveners, 2014 OSA Convention



Namaskar,

It is a great honor for me to welcome each of you here at Columbus, Ohio for the 45th OSA convention. You will find our team members and volunteers receive you and host you at the convention with an open heart and a big smile.

We are humbled by your support and goodwill and we will ensure that you experience a perfect convention that you deserve. Our convention team is working diligently to make the convention experience a truly memorable.

While at the convention you will experience top class cultural events in a theater that is truly spectacular. Throughout the day you will have plenty of things to do. You can start the day with Yoga/Bhajan/Keertan, then go out to cheer your favorite cricket team or listen to Odia Kabita, attend a seminar, enjoy Dance/Drama competitions in the afternoon, catch prime time with invited guests and local talents and finish the day with Mehfil. While you are enjoying these events we will make sure to serve you delicious foods and drinks to keep you going. Anytime if we can do anything to make your stay more pleasant and enjoyable, please let us know.

I hope to meet many of you personally at the convention and your presence will undoubtedly forge common bonds and initiate friendships lasting a lifetime. Thank you for joining and it is you that make our convention a truly special event.

With Best Regards,

Deepak Swain
Co-Convener, 45th OSA Convention



Dear Friends,

Namaskar and greetings on behalf of the Odias of Ohio from the land of “birthplace of aviation.”

OSA Convention is a celebration of our Odia or Odishan root—be it our culture, food, literature, history or developments in our motherland—all under one roof. Our programs are designed to encompass every aspects of our community through well-planned fun-filled cultural events, seminars, exhibits and activities. Please don't miss the convention's inaugural song that sums it up

ଝେଉଁଠିଦି ଥାଏ, ଝେମିତିଦି ଥାଏ, ମୁଁ ତୋତେ ଭଲପାଏ

Odisha... I love you, Odisha... my heart beat...

[*This song is written by Nizam, music composed by Sri Abhijit Majumdar, and it will be enacted by OSA chapters.*]

To celebrate our evolved community with a sizable 2nd (and even 3rd) generation youths, we will have a youth convention “of, by and for” the youths. Many youth-centric panel discussions are planned to inclusively grow our community with our beloved sons and daughters while cherishing our Odisha root.

It has been an incredible and blessed journey of several months, associating with wonderful people of Ohio and around the world, serving as a co-convenor of the convention. We look forward to welcome you here at Columbus, and to make your stay and convention experience a memorable one.

Jai Jagannath.

Dr. Anil Patnaik

Dayton, OH



Dear Friends,

We are excited to host all of you for 45th OSA Convention here in Columbus, OH. The entire convention team is working hard to deliver all the members and their families days packed with fantastic programming. We are trying to accommodate all your favorites – such as Seminars, Exhibitions, Workshops, cultural programs and above all many delicious foods. A great convention hotel, Sheraton and the historic Ohio Theater known as the “Official Theater for the State of Ohio”, located right in the heart of downtown Columbus, OH has been reserved to house and host this event. We’re looking forward to a wonderful convention.

Here’s to a great convention.

Swadhin Ranjan Pattanaik

Columbus, OH



Message from the Vice President of OSA



Convention musings...

In a journal like this, not many open the pages looking for the executives' message. We know what the standard lines would be. Especially now-a-days, with regular emails and discussions on OSANet, there is perhaps nothing new to learn from these perfunctory messages. Like morning shows the day, if you read the first email in the threads, you can guess what the next ten would convey in the chain! You can even guess the contents of the message in the souvenir without reading it...welcome to

the convention to be held at a unique place selected by OSA and the wonderful site selected by the convention team; kudos to the hardworking team that put together a wonderful program for us sacrificing their valuable personal and family time; thanks to you all attendees who make such get together successful year after year by attending, encouraging your children to participate, etc. etc. I will renege if I didn't say so...so I am saying all of that sparing you specific rigmaroles.

Now, as you page through the souvenir, you can choose to step into the authors' shoes and try to experience the vista through his or her mental window. Then, if you meet the author in the corridor, won't it be wonderful to ask what that thought was behind a specific line, or which event inspired the article? Similarly, as you run into the convention team that emailed you, called you and made sure that each "i" was dotted and "t" was crossed, won't it be nice to shake the hand, pat the back or just say that our community is richer for their kind deeds? In the process you would delve into discussion of your village, college, family in Odisha and realize that your Kevin Bacon index is about 3!

I view this congregation as a check point in our collective journey, where we check with our co-travelers about their sojourn so far, tell our small stories and share the joy and pain for a while. I know, the little foot-steps that we create together in the sand of time is evanescent, and makes no difference to the incessantly crashing waves, or perhaps to the folks who follow with their bags and bundles a while behind. The pictures that we take with the camera of our mind, the fragrance we store in the hippocampal neurons, the time that stands still for a three days, all add up to shape our collective psyche and unburden our complex journey through the life. It's for us.

Enjoy the moment, share the joy and retain the fond memories.

Sikhanda Satapathy
OSA Vice-president



Message from the Secretary of OSA



There is an age old saying: “Time and tide wait for none”. It feels like yesterday that we drove to Chicago to attend the 44th OSA National Convention this time last year. With the glitter of light and rhythms of sound, the new executives took charge and shouldered the responsibility to move OSA forward for the years 2013-2015. One year has passed by so quickly and here we are waiting anxiously to go to Columbus, Ohio to attend the 45th Convention. Ohio Chapter volunteers are working hard under the leadership of Satya Pattanaik as convener and Arata Rout as chapter president. The historic Ohio Theatre will be the venue of the cultural program. The number of registered attendees has surpassed expectations and we all are excited and waiting to witness the greatest Odia get-together outside Odisha. I take this opportunity to wish all the very best to the volunteers of convention team.

Since we took charge, a lot has happened here and back home in Odisha. On October 11, 2013 the super cyclone Phailin struck coastal Odisha and brought continuous rain devastation. Thousands and thousands of people lost their belongings and houses, and as a result, many became homeless. The damaging flood destroyed crops and cattle. Hands from every direction came to help the needy at the time of the catastrophe. Here in North America, OSA executives and members could not sit idly by. Immediately we swung into action and raised approximately \$60,000 for the cyclone and flood victims of Odisha. I thank all the donors and volunteers who came forward to help at the time of need.

Life does not flow smoothly. At times it moves up and at others it goes down. One after another we faced three untimely deaths in the community. One of the tragedies struck one of our American Odia families. Ambika Kar of Colorado passed away in August 2013 leaving his family. OSA members in the area helped the family at the time of need and raised funds (approximately \$6000) to support the family. Mr. Jyoti Patnaik, a young immigrant in Toronto, lost his life to a heart attack on December 29, 2013 leaving behind his pregnant wife and four year old daughter. OSA members started a fundraising effort and through OSA, we raised around \$11,000 for the immediate needs of the family. It is heartening to see that the bereaved family is doing its best and overcoming the tragic moment of life. A few days later, another tragic incident occurred in Alberta, Canada. On February 10, 2014, Mr. Ashok Nayak faced his untimely death. OSA members helped raise around \$16,000 to help the family immediately. I would like to point out here that OSA went out of its way to help these Odia families even though they are not members of OSA. I would like to convey my sincere gratitude to the volunteers for raising the funds and the families nearby for their helping hands.

I am glad to announce that a new chapter called Rocky Mountain has been formed in the Colorado area. I congratulate and welcome the new Chapter president, Sadhu Behera and its members to the OSA family. In the last 7 months, the New England, New York-New Jersey, South East and Canada Chapters conducted their elections to elect their new representatives. I encourage all other chapters due for elections to elect their new representatives in a fair and democratic manner.

OSA has released the third edition of Odissi, Chhanda, and Champu with a karaoke option. I thank Lata Mishra for taking the initiative to propagate traditional music among youth. Drama festivals in different chapters have either finished or are being organized. I had the opportunity to witness the festival in Flint, Michigan. It definitely brings together the interaction and community spirit between members of different regions.

The OSA membership has crossed the 1100 mark. I encourage each and every member of OSA to spread the message of the organization and help educate fellow Odias to become members of OSA. I also request all of the OSA parents to encourage their children, who are above 18 years old, to become OSA members.

As you may know, we conduct the monthly BOG meeting among chapter presidents and OSA executives every second Sunday to discuss all aspects of OSA affairs. We post the minutes on OSAnet, the OSA website as well as in Utkarsha. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns you want shared. We will add them to our agenda.

Again, I request each and every one of you to become actively involved in OSA activities and help OSA grow as a community, whether it is through arts, culture, humanitarian or Odisha community development.

With warmest regards,

Sabita Panigrahi
Secretary, OSA



Message from the Treasurer of OSA



Dear Friends,

As we are celebrating the 45th OSA annual convention one cannot help but notice how far OSA has come since it's inception. When many of us were yet to be born or were in our early childhood years, the Odia pioneers in North America had the grand vision of bringing together Odias in a far away land under the umbrella of this great organization. Slowly and steadily OSA has grown in strength. Now OSA is 1100+ members strong and its financials have improved significantly in recent years.

OSA has been at the forefront of promoting Odia culture in North America, through the Annual Convention, Regional Drama Festival, CCO activity, Odia Language development, and various Chapter level activities. In addition, OSA has been supportive of development in Odisha, Higher Education and so on. There is always opportunity to do more, and I am sure OSA members will take the organization to new height in coming years.

Several disasters struck us in 2013-14. But as always OSA members have come forward to help fellow Odias and victims of natural disasters in Odisha. As you will see in the Account Statement below, OSA conducted several successful fundraising drives in 2013-14.

Jiban Patra Fund	-	\$12,329.54
Ambika Kar Fund	-	\$5,678.40
Phailin Relief Fund	-	\$50,539.85
<i>(more than \$60K including Chapter contributions)</i>		
Jyoti Patnaik Fund	-	\$11,129.18
Ashok Nayak Fund	-	\$15,789.79

In total OSA raised more than \$100K through various fundraising drives. This would not have been possible without generous donations from its members. However, we have learnt that disasters are bound to happen and we need to be prepared for them. As of this writing a proposal for “**Annual Fundraising**” is underway. This proposal will help OSA play a proactive role and allow OSA to provide consistent support for various disasters. I request you to support this proposal and help make the ensuing Annual Fundraising drive successful.

Membership

I am happy to inform you that we have crossed 1100 mark for membership. Achieving this milestone was possible because of persistent effort from many volunteers. Special thanks to the following teams for bringing in new OSA members: Chicago convention team, newly formed Rocky Mountain chapter, Southwest Chapter, NY/NJ Chapter, New England Chapter, Ohio convention team, and Canada OSA members.

Here is a snapshot of membership increase from last year.

Membership Category	As of June 10th 2013	As of May 31st 2014	Increase in membership
Life members	806	921	115
Benefactors	41	42	1
Patrons	51	51	0
5yr members	53	51	-2
Annual members	33	40	7
Total	984	1105	121

Please find the Treasurer's report towards the end section of the journal.

Regards,

Prashanta Ranabijuli
Treasurer, OSA
512-917-4715 (Mobile)
ranabijuli@gmail.com



Message from the President, OSA Ohio Chapter



Namaskar my dear fellow Odias!

It is my great pleasure to extend you all a warm invitation for the 45th Annual Convention of the Odia Society of the Americas (OSA) on behalf of the Ohio Chapter. We, the Odias of Ohio, are grateful for this opportunity to host you as our honored guests. We are also very happy and excited to host our guests from Odisha and the whole world who are attending this convention.

Over a hundred families from all over Ohio are working tirelessly to make this one a historic, entertaining, and successful convention and your stay in Columbus a comfortable and enjoyable experience. I am grateful to all the sponsors, the donors, and the guests for their support and humbled by their confidence in us. We also have been honored by the support from the Odia diaspora, Odisha residents, and the Government of Odisha. And we couldn't have done this without the constant encouragement and guidance by the OSA Executives. I thank the entire convention team for their flawless planning and dedicated efforts towards making this a successful convention in the wonderful state of Ohio. Meaning “great river” Ohio is filled with many warm hearted people and many fun and exciting activities. Let your mad scientist out at COSI (the Center of Science and Industry) where you can see live demonstrations of any science field of your choice or make a splash at the Columbus Zoo’s Zoombezi Bay water park where your whole family is sure to have fun or lastly visit the one and only Cedar Point, one of the most famous amusement parks and a home to over 15 roller coasters and counting. Though Ohio may not have huge buildings that tower over each other, it does have a rich history in science and arts.

The convention is offering an excellent venue, the Ohio Theater. The Theatre is one of the state’s busiest performing arts facilities with its breathtaking details and opulent Spanish-Baroque architecture. It is very close to the hotel where the guests will stay. The convention promises to have quality events, seminars which matter to the Odia American diaspora, exquisite shows, and great food. We have also organized a unique pre-convention symposiums and meetings. Besides bringing to you a one-of-a-kind cultural extravaganza with mouth-watering food, to remind us where we came from, the convention will be an excellent opportunity for everyone to meet old friends and make new ones. We are making sure that there are opportunities for everyone to meet and mingle and network in a pleasant setting.

Like last year, this year too the convention will focus on the next generation Odias in the Americas. The objective of this kind of convention is to help our next generation learn our culture and about our heritage

so that they could always remember where they came from. There are programs and events, especially geared towards them, but will definitely be an enjoyable experience for all.

We, the host families of Ohio, are extending the famous Buckeye warmth and hospitality to our esteemed guests. Come, enjoy a fun-filled, memorable convention, and carry away some wonderful memories with you! This souvenir and the Convention website osa2014.org will help you cherish those memories.

Again, on behalf of the Ohio Chapter, I welcome you all to the 45th Annual Convention of OSA.

Thank you.

Arata Tran Rout

President, OSA Ohio Chapter





JOHN R. KASICH
GOVERNOR
STATE OF OHIO

July 4, 2014

Greetings,

Karen and I would like to extend our sincere congratulations to the Odisha Society of the Americas as you host the 45th Annual Convention in Columbus, Ohio.

The Odisha Society of the Americas was established in 1969, and incorporated in 1981 in Tennessee, by Odias for the purpose of promoting a better understanding of Odia culture and better exchange of information between Odisha (the eastern coastal state of India), the United States, and Canada. Your efforts to increase the awareness of the Odia culture, tradition, literature, music, and dance are admirable. We commend the OSA for your focus on positive educational development in Odisha, the United States, and Canada.

It is exciting to hear that Ohio is hosting the convention for the first time. We extend a hearty Buckeye welcome to all conference participants and hope that you will have the opportunity to partake in the many attractions that Central Ohio has to offer.

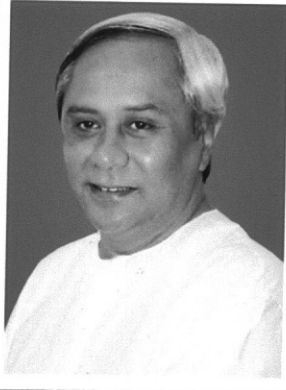
Best wishes for a successful and memorable convention!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John R. Kasich".

John R. Kasich
Governor

NAVEEN PATNAIK
CHIEF MINISTER, ODISHA



Telephone { (0674) : 2531100 (Off.)
(0674) : 2591099 (Res.)
Fax { (0674) : 2535100 (Off.)
(0674) : 2590833 (Res.)
E. Mail-cmo@ori.nic.in

D. O. No. 232

BHUBANESWAR

Dated 19-6-2014

MESSAGE

I am glad to know that the Odisha Society of the Americas is organizing Odisha Development Day with a one day Invest Odisha Symposium on July 3, 2014 during its annual convention in Ohio from July 3 to 6, 2014.

Odisha in the last decade has made remarkable progress in various socio-economic fields. It is now one of the most favoured states in the country to attract investment. The keen interest of OSA in promoting economic ties between Odisha and the North American countries is very encouraging. Support from organizations like the OSA will certainly be very helpful to our economic pursuits. Improved socio-cultural and economic ties will also contribute to better understanding of cultures, and promote international peace.

I wish the OSA convention and its endeavour great success.

(NAVEEN PATNAIK)

JUALORAM



मंत्री
जनजातीय कार्य मंत्रालय
भारत सरकार
शास्त्री भवन, नई दिल्ली-110001
MINISTER OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
SHASTRI BHAWAN, NEW DELHI-110001

Date: 22.06.2014

Message

I am glad to know that **The Odisha Society of Americas** is celebrating **45th Annual Convention** at Columbus, Ohio, during July 3-6, 2014. To commemorate the event a souvenir is also being published.

Our state Odisha has rich cultural heritage which requires no introduction. The celebration of 45th Annual Convention of Odisha Society of Americas will strengthen the sense of enduring friendship and mutual empathy. While rejoicing with the spirit of the celebration every effort has to be made to present culturally as well as minerally rich Odisha in most attractive manner and simultaneously make Odisha an attractive destination to explore not only for the tourists but also for the investors. I am sure that Odisha Society of Americas will go a long way in bringing the creative and appreciative elements, both into fruitful contact.

I extend my best wishes to the organizers and participant on the occasion.

(Jual Oram)

Editor's Note



Dear Readers,

Namaskar and Greetings! Every year, since the past 45 years, we Odias living in North America have eagerly looked forward to the annual OSA event that brings together our folks from all over the continent and beyond to celebrate our rich heritage and enjoy the company of family and friends. For three whole days, in the first week of July, we set aside our differences and immerse ourselves in the merriment unfolding at a bright and festive setting. Living thousands of miles away from Odisha, with only a few hurried days of visit during vacation time, generations get to feel the presence of

that nostalgic distant place and revel in it.

While waiting for the next year's convention we continue to cherish those lovely memories through the pages of this souvenir. Our talented youth get to express themselves and connect with their peers through this journal as well.

Each year the souvenir team organizes a creative writing competition for the young writers in honor of Meghna, who left an indelible impression in everyone's heart during her short span on this earth. This year's competition has fortunately seen an unprecedented large number in participation. While perusing through the brilliant expressions of these young minds ranging from the age of 7 through 18, one cannot escape the feelings of awe and admiration. What a potpourri of writings these are! From the sweet and playful writings of the little ones to the highly philosophical, inspirational, and analytical articles, or stark portrayals of the real world that the teens try to fit into, these variety of stories and poems are sure to invoke a multitude of emotions in the reader's mind. So, for the first time, we decided to compile all the youth submissions into a Youth Souvenir and present it to each of the young aspirants as a keepsake.

A new section that we introduced into our journal, this year, is 'Odisha's Pride'. The pages in here recounts the astounding life stories of several of Odisha's literary giants such as Pandit Nilakantha Das, Dr. Gopinath Mohanty, Laxmidhar Nayak, and the like, as observed through the eyes of their children and grandchildren. These are excellent reads. Please don't miss them. The conglomeration of other articles capture the ideas and emotions of people, like you and I that gets collected while weaving our path through this maze of life. They sometimes, talk nostalgically about their motherland like Lalu Mansinha's 'Sublimation of Memories', express their passions like in Biswajit Puhan's 'Searching inside Maya

Miriga', or amaze the readers by relating experiences that only few like us ever have had in 'Memoirs of my life so far' which relays the experiences of a young Odia lady as a US Army reserve. These are just a few samples of what's coming up as you turn these pages.

As I went about working on my tasks at hand, excitement, challenge, and frustration became my constant companions. I have been fulfilling a myriad of seemingly indomitable tasks which involved designing the layout of the souvenir, creating the graphics for each section and articles, formatting and editing the articles, actively communicating with the competition applicants, awardees, judges, writers, publisher, and others; proof reading and yet more proof reading; designing the cover pages, and many more....I am certain you get the picture.

Without abundant help from family and friends I could not have accomplished all of this and I am extremely grateful to these admirable individuals. I sincerely thank all the judges (*Girija Shankar Mishra, Krishna Snigdha Senapati, Shailen Mishra, Barun Pani, and Triloki Pandey*) who un-hesitantly took up the grueling task of evaluating a large number of articles in a short turnaround time. I thank Mrs. Arpita Basa for taking sole charge of editing all the Odia articles. Mr. Sikhanda Satpathy and Mr. Swaroop Mishra extended some much needed help in editing and I express my gratitude towards them. My daughter, Abha Panda, was a huge help in multiple tasks and most importantly serving as the youth editor of the Youth Souvenir. A huge thanks goes to Mr. Satya Patnaik who was ever available to attend to any of my requests in a moment's notice. Starting from arranging for the judges, editors, publisher, funding for the youth journal, artist for the cover page, discussing ideas and giving feedback on layouts and designs, he simply took care of the entire process thus letting me focus on finalizing the journal.

I feel fortunate and humbled at once upon successfully completing this responsibility. With the magnitude of this work, inadvertent lapses are a certainty for which I ask for your forgiveness.

Best wishes,

Debashree Pati
Columbus, OH



ସମ୍ପାଦକୀୟ



କୀର୍ତ୍ତୀ ଅକ୍ଷର ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧା
ସ୍ଥିରା ଭବତିଃ ଭୂତଳେ ।

ମୋର ପ୍ରିୟ ପାଠକ ଓ ପାଠିକା ମାନେ,

ଆଜି ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଆନନ୍ଦର ବିଷୟ ଯେ ଆମେ ସ୍ୱଳ୍ପ କେତେଜଣ ପ୍ରବାସୀ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାରତଭୂମି ବିଶେଷକରି ଆମ ମାତୃଭୂମି ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ଆସିଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଏହି ସୁଦୂର ଆମେରିକାରେ ଦୂରନ୍ତ ପକ୍ଷୀ ପରି ନୀଡ଼ ନିର୍ମାଣ କରି ରହିଛେ ।

ଯେପରି ଆମ ରାଜ୍ୟର “ଚିଲିକା ହ୍ରଦ” କୋଳରେ ବହୁ ଦୂରନ୍ତ ପକ୍ଷୀ କଳରବ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରନ୍ତି ଠିକ୍ ସେହିପରି ଆମ୍ଭମାନଙ୍କର ସ୍ୱର ସେହି ନିନାଦ ପରି ଏହି ପରିବେଶରେ ମଧୁର ଗୁଞ୍ଜନ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିଛି । ପତ୍ରିକା ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ନିଜ ନିଜ ଅନ୍ତରର ବ୍ୟାଧି, କଥା ଏବଂ ଗାଥାକୁ ଏକତ୍ରିତ କରି ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିବା ଆନନ୍ଦ ତଥା ସୌଭାଗ୍ୟର କଥା । ଯେପରି ଉପବନରୁ ଭିନ୍ନଭିନ୍ନ ପୁଷ୍ପ ଏକତ୍ରିତ କରି ଗୋଟିଏ ସୁନ୍ଦର ବନମାଳା ଗ୍ରନ୍ଥିତ ହୁଏ ଓ ତାହା ବିଦ୍ୟାଦାତ୍ରୀ ଦେବୀ ଶାରଳାଙ୍କ ହୃଦୟ ମଣ୍ଡନ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଆମେ ଅର୍ପଣ କରୁ, ଠିକ୍ ସେହିପରି ଆଜିର ଏହି ସ୍ମରଣିକା ଏକ ଏକତାବଦ୍ଧ ଆନନ୍ଦ ଓ ଭଲ୍ଲାସର ଉପହାର ।

ଆମେ ବହୁ ଦୂରନ୍ତ ପୁତ୍ରକନ୍ୟା ହୋଇଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆମ ମାଆଠାରୁ ଦୂରେଇ ଯାଇନାହିଁ, ତାହା ଏହି ସ୍ମରଣିକା ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଭାଷା ଜନନୀଙ୍କ ଆମ ପ୍ରତି ଆଶୀର୍ବାଦର ପ୍ରତୀକ । ଏହା ଆମ ମାତୃଭୂମି ପ୍ରତି ନିଜନିଜର ସମର୍ପଣ । ସେ ଯେ ଆମ ସହିତ ଚିରକାଳ ରୁହନ୍ତୁ, ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଆମେ ବାରମ୍ବାର ଏହି ପ୍ରୟାସ କଲେ ସଫଳ ଏବଂ କୃତାର୍ଥ ହେବା ।

ଅର୍ପିତା ସୁନନ୍ଦା ବାସା





2014 OSA Convention Sponsors



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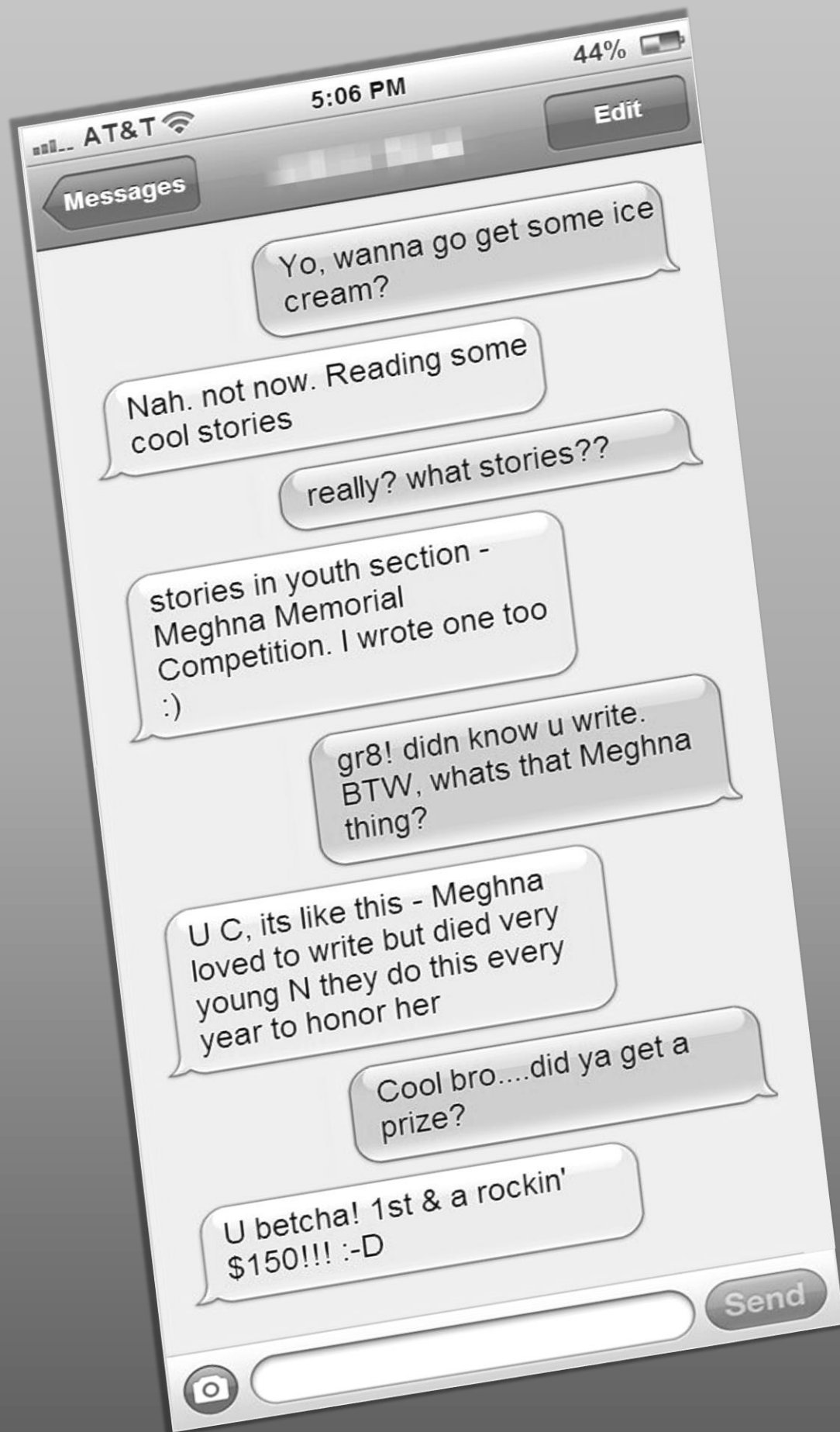
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Celebrating our young writers

Meghna Memorial Award

It was an exciting evening in November 2005 in Michigan. The usual celebration of Kumara Purnima was in full swing. Everybody, especially the kids were very happy to be part of the joyous celebration. But none was expecting the most unexpected. Perhaps it was one of the saddest days for all of us. Michigan Odias were stunned as a little girl wouldn't see the next morning. A little life would be snatched away by the cold hands of Death! It was heartrending. In the face of such incidents, we feel how helpless we are - a puppet in the hands of Providence.*



*This cherubic 6 year old girl, **Meghna Mohapatra**, was the only daughter of Lipi and Santosh Mohapatra. She came to Michigan in August 2001. She was a beautiful child and won the love of all. Turn of events leading to end of one's life sometimes happen in the most unsuspected ways. That is the mystery which is beyond the common people to unravel. Her father didn't want to come that day as he had some other important work. But Meghna insisted that she must go and be with others to be part of this great celebration. As it is difficult for any loving father to see tears in the eyes of the kids, her father gave in. Meghna gave a wonderful performance on the stage on that day. It was late in the night when they drove back. But the dark night never dawned for her. She was lost for ever by a tragic road accident on the way back home. In Bhagavad Gita it is said that one who is born has to die. But when an innocent life is taken away so suddenly and untimely, it becomes extremely difficult to accept.*

May the soul of Meghna rest in peace!

OSA Michigan community decided to keep her memory alive at this great loss. In 2006, the Oriya community of Michigan established the Meghna Memorial Trust to commemorate this wonderful life. Through this trust a creative writing competition has been started for kids under the auspices of OSA every year. Hopefully this noble effort will kindle the memory of that smiling face for years to come.

** Kumar Purnima is a popular and festive celebration of the young ones*

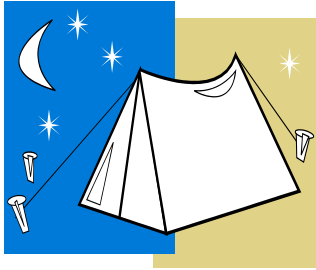
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Competition Judges: Girija Shankar Mishra, Shailen Mishra,
Triloki Pandey, Barun Pani, and Krishna Snigdha Senapati

A Bizarre Camping with my Friends

Adeep Das



It was a beautiful summer day. I was on a train going to Camp Cannonball. The train ride was an unusual train ride; as it looked like we were going a centimeter per hour, but we really truly were going at 700 million miles an hour (at the speed of light). We had to take stops at places like Tokyo, Mumbai, Madrid, and Cairo. I guess we were going to an international camp, as I saw a really big group of about 200 kids got on the train at each stop. On the train I saw my friends like Roshen, Sahej, Rohan, Hemanth, Prajwal, Spandan, Jake, Grant, and Anirudh. The compartments, where people can hangout and sit down, fit around 10 people. So we all shared one compartment. We were all wondering why kids from different countries were coming to just one camp in the USA. We all thought it was a camp for cool kids like us, but we were totally off. The kids were randomly picked by selected school principals from their own country. Soon we made it to Camp Cannonball. But what was going to happen next I never expected. The camp was huge. It was a little less than 350 acre or at least that is what the tour guide said. And it was pretty luxurious. Each person got their own cabin. In each cabin there was a King size bed, 70 inch flat screen TV, an Xbox One, and a PS4. And in the bathroom the toilet was made of silver. The shower was made of gold, and the sink was made of platinum. And we each got one. No sharing what so ever.

On the first day we all went on a hiking trip carrying skiing gear. On the long, boring trip we saw a group of mountain goat eating some good green grass. The trip took about 4 hours. When we got to the top it was the coolest ski resort ever. The top of the mountain was covered with snow. One part of the mountain has provision for ice skating, snow biking, and sledding. So far this was the best camp ever. Rohan and I had a race going down the hill. It was close but I won by a head. After 3 hours of skiing we went and had some hot chocolate. Then we went to our bedrooms. I decided to play the Xbox One until supper. I played FIFA 14 and NBA 2K14. For supper we had soup and mashed potatoes. It was delicious. After dinner I went to sleep so I would be ready for the next day.

On day 2 it was all water sports. For 2 ½ hours we were fishing. A guy from Japan caught the biggest fish. It was 2ft long. After fishing we had a couple of boat races. Not many people knew how to boat so there were a lot of bystanders. Like about 850 bystanders. At the end of boating the Egypt team won. Nobody got how they won since most of Egypt is desert and barely any water. The very last event was swimming. There was freestyle, butterfly, and breaststroke. In the end the USA team won. The whole day I was inside playing video games.

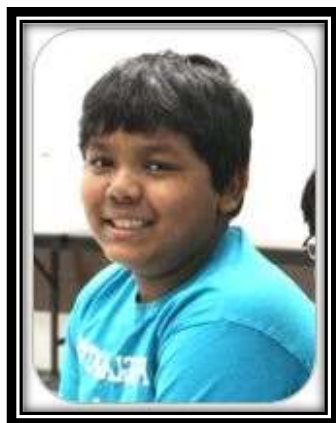
On our last day everything was surprisingly dry. The first game that we played was a scavenger hunt. We were given clues and we had to find the object and collect it. It also helped us to have more idea on the camping site. There was a wide variety of items from deer antlers to pieces of obsidian that has a circumference of 4 centimeters. After the game everybody was surrounding cabin 87. Apparently a group of bears had attacked the cabin and everything was destroyed. Now the counselors were looking for a cabin for a cabin so the people from cabin 87 could sleep somewhere. Cabin 53 volunteered. Before going to bed I was looking outside to see what to do tomorrow. Suddenly, I noticed that the sky was filled with clouds. Not even a tiny bit of space. After awing in amazement at how quickly the clouds came for 5 minutes, it started raining cats and dogs. There was so much rain that it could have filled a pond in 3 minutes at most. It just kept raining and raining and raining. But the rain didn't start dying down. It rained harder and harder. It started to form like a small river, it soon started flooding. Soon after our counselors called an **IN-CABIN-LOCKDOWN**; we were to stay in the cabin no matter what. As the water level was getting deeper and wider, suddenly a mudslide started to form. Chunks of mud, rock, and sediment all were flowing down the mountain. How could this possibly get worse? Oh, but it does. At about half way up the mountain the mudslide and very large river collided forming the **MUD RIVER OF DOOM!** As soon as I saw the mud river I started screaming run for lives, but I forgot we couldn't get out of our cabins. So the most I could do was to hide under my bed. The mountain was much steeper at this point, so the river was coming faster. Once it hit the woods the trees started falling faster than a racecar driver trying to win the Indianapolis 500. When the river started getting inland, it started carrying cabins along with it. As soon as I saw what was happening, I went and shut all the possible ways water could have come in. When the mud river hit my cabin, water rushed in everywhere, I panicked. I started screaming in terror. The river came so hard it could have knock out a great white shark. After the river cooled down after an hour, a metal dam appeared and stopped the river. Almost everybody fell out of there cabin and landed in wet mud. I went looking for my friend, but I couldn't find anybody because everyone's face was cover with mud. When I was walking around I saw some dead animals everywhere. I also saw a couple of skeletons look alike, and thought they may be some of our own camp member, who died due to flooding. I started feeling really sad to see them gone, but they weren't; all of them were broken structure that fell out. Finally found all my friends we went to ask the counselors what to do now. They said just sleep during the night and in the morning hopefully everything will be dry. Also we are going to have a pool party in the newly formed lake down below to our camp site, so we get freshen up. It was really easy to fall asleep because there was no light at all. It was pitch black.

Turns out the counselors were right. Everything was back where it was supposed to be and everything was dry. It looked like it never happened, but it did. Even though everything looked fine we still had the pool party (plumbing was down). For the rest of the day we could do anything. So I decided to play the Xbox One and PS4 the rest of the day. On our last day it was like all you can eat buffet. After dinner I played FIFA 14, NBA 2K14, and Assassin Creed 4 - Black Flag until I went to sleep.

In the morning I had some pancakes for breakfast, and I got back to my cabin to finish up packing. Then I went outside and tried to soak up as much as I could of Camp Cannonball. But, when I came back

to my bedroom I couldn't find my bags. I looked everywhere. And then I decided to ask my friends, and it turns out they pranked me and hid my bags. When I finally found my bags, I took them and went to the train station. On the train ride back my friends and I were all talking about what we loved about camp. On the last 5 minutes of the ride I started thinking about what I was going to do when I got home. I loved Camp Cannonball. We started shouting "Few more days"

Suddenly I realize somebody is pushing me and asking me to wake up Brother... Bro... (My little brother was shouting beside my bed to wake up).



Adeep Das is a 6th grader at Power Upper elementary School, Farmington Hills, MI

Believe, Dream, Inspire

Siddhi Satpathy

There was a little girl named Juliette. She lived in a small town called Merryville. She did not like to stay home much, as her step mother was very rude to her & always gave her a lot of house chores to do. So she liked to escape to the nearby riverbank. She liked the calmness of the flowing river. She liked to sit on the green grass & finish her homework before her step mom starts looking for her. One day while she was doing her homework, a little crow flew from somewhere & sat in front of Juliette. The crow started to caw as if it was trying to say something to Juliette. Curious Juliette followed the crow & before realizing she reached on a land far away from home.

The crow led the girl pass the woods to the open fields. In the middle of green fields, there stood a two story white house. The crow went & sat on the house, spoke to Juliette in its language and flew away. Juliette slowly stepped closer to the house. She could hear some noise coming from inside. Somebody was talking aloud, “I am going to play the song one more time and you girls have to do it correctly this time.” Juliette peeped through the window. Now she realized, she has reached a dance studio. But how did the crow know about her dreams? Juliette always wanted to be a dancer. She could not thank enough to the crow, who led her to her dreams.



Juliette slowly knocked on the door & waited. Then a tall pretty lady opened the door and said “Hi, I am Emma. How can I help you?” Juliette could not believe her eyes! The very famous dancer of the country is standing in front of her. She requested, “Please, please...please don’t say no. I want to be your student and learn dance from you. I don’t have any other place to go to.” Emma took Juliette inside, let her sit on a chair and handed her a glass of fresh lemonade. After hearing the whole story from Juliette, Emma accepted Juliette as her student. From then on there was no looking back for Juliette.

Juliette always believed in herself & had faith on her teacher. She was determined to achieve her dream, to be one of the best dancers in the world. Emma taught her how to dance step by step. She worked very hard, practiced for hours every day. Then she participated in local competitions & won trophies. Juliette kept on going. First local, then state & then national level championships; the winner was Juliette Grace.

In the meantime many years had passed. Juliette had grown into a graceful young lady and Emma into an old woman. One day Emma got sick. Many doctors came and treated her. There was no result.

Emma could not get up from bed and a few days later she passed away. Juliette became very sad and wanted to quit dancing. But she remembered the dream that Emma & she had dreamt together. She had to keep the dance school going in order to help the other girl's dreams come true, who believed in themselves.

So, next day she had her breakfast, got dressed and got ready to take the biggest challenge of her life, to fill in Emma's position. While she was rushing to the dance studio, suddenly noticed a crow circling above the house. All of Emma's students had arrived on time. But surprise! A new face! A shy little girl has come to start working towards her dream. Juliette was very happy & thought about how she had started her dance carrier. She taught the class, dance moves step by step, just like Emma had taught her.

It was the day of annual function of the dance school. Many students, parents & friends had gathered, Juliette greeted her students & said, "Never give up. Believe in yourself. Dream, Achieve & Inspire like Ms. Emma." All the students stood up & said, "We like You Ms. Juliet." Juliett's eyes got filled up. In a soft broken voice she said "THANK YOU."



Siddhi, is a 3rd grader at Midland Elementary School and lives with her parents, Sanjoy and Priyadarshini Sathpathy, in Poway, California. She loves to read and write. She is also passionate about dancing and is learning Odishi and Bollywood dances.

Big Brother...

Advay Das

One day I ask my elder brother that can I be his big brother, he said 'YES'.

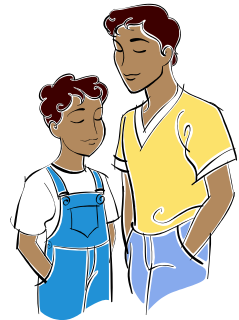
Then I said let us change our head, he just yelled at me -forget about it.

He told me first I should do things all by myself like -taking bath, eating...

But, I don't want to do things myself; I just want to have a phone, do hard math (e.g. six divided by ten), play good basketball, and boss around some body.

When my brother heard the BOSS thing, he said to me don't think of me find somebody else like Viaan.

My cousin brother Viaan lives in Chicago; he loves me and I love him too. I don't want to boss him; I am just his good big brother.



(The author wrote this story with the help of his brother)



Advay Das is a first grader at Hillside Elementary School in Farmington Hills, MI.

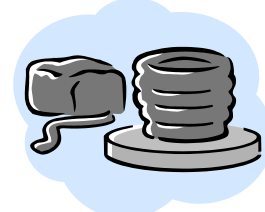
Clay!

Rishika Satapathy

Once I had a clay
 So I used it to play
I made a cat
 But it ran under my hat
I made a bug
 But it crawled under a rug
I made a cloud
 But it was too loud
I made a star
 But it rode in a car
I made a smile
 But it didn't stay for a while
I made a spoon
 But it jumped over the moon
I made a dollar
 But it hide under my collar
I made a rock
 But it made a shock
I made a heart
 But it fell apart
I made a book
 And it taught me how to cook
I made a peanut
 But it made friends with a treenut
I made a berry
 And it made me cherry
I made a fire
 But it got ran over by a tire
I made a rose
 But it got ruined by a hose
I made a phone
 But it got shoved in an ice cream cone

I made a rhyme

Hope you like it this time
I could say and play so many things with clay
It makes me think I can make much more with clay
But for now this is like a needle in the hay
See these things I made with clay
And it attracted this beautiful blue jay
Since clay gives me so much joy
I just want to say ahoy
I love clay, so let's say hooray!

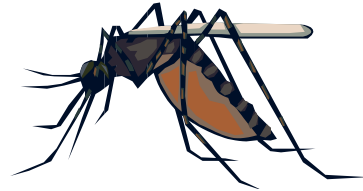


Rishika Satapathy is a 4th grader who lives with her parents, Ratimukha and Nutan Satapathy, in Northville, MI. Her favorite subject is science and favorite sports is swimming. In her free time she loves to draw art and write.

Death by Mosquitoes

Aryaman Mohapatra

There was once a taxi,
Oh how the driver taxed me,
But not just with money, but blood
An annoying and vampire-filled flood,
They were leeches both to my blood and brain,
They were my only source of pain,
I happily skipped over to my grandfather's apartment,
Only to discover that the vicious bugs had taken another part of me,
I scratched myself raw,
While I watched *Power Rangers* in the dead of night, I could only bawl,
The swollen bumps,
Even on my rump,
I would always hate,
But it is worth it for my motherland,
Which is just too great!



Aryaman Mohapatra is twelve years old, who lives in Parsippany, NJ, with his older brother and sister along with their parents PriyaRanjan and Aparna. He is inquisitive by nature and is interested in Science experiments and Robotics. His team was one time a New Jersey state finalist. Aryaman plays soccer, and Tabla and loves to ski, ice skate and skateboard too.

Dreams Do Come True

Shreya Tripathy

Poverty. This is a huge crisis all around the world. Many people die from lack of nutrients in their body because they can't afford the right things necessary to stay alive. Poverty in India is huge. How big is poverty in India, exactly? Well, 96.9% of India's population lives with less than \$5.00 a day. Around 1,179 million people in India live with that much each day. But the poverty rate is increasing by hundreds of people each day. Can you imagine living with \$5.00 a day? I certainly can't! Many problems shoot out of poverty, including child labor. 12 million children from age 4-14 have hazardous jobs. Gap, the clothing company, has been criticized for child labor in their products. Many families force their sons into jobs instead of studying for a better future. In order to escape extreme poverty, one must study to achieve the education to get a well-paying job to secure a better life. Some areas of India are still at age of boys studying hard while girls do the housework while preparing for her married life. How can someone achieve their dreams without studying hard? My story is about a teenage girl who is poor and dreams about being able to learn. She has many hurdles before her race is completed.

I, Aditi, rummaged through the trash and dustbins for something to eat. Nothing. I decided to go home empty handed. Bhaina (brother) should be at school right now. Oh how I wish to go to school instead of cook and clean alone. I reached home by dinner time long after brother came from school. I picked some fruits from the garden and slept half full.



“Pitter-patter, pitter-patter”

I woke up fatigue and weak. I heard the tiny raindrops splashing on top of our thatched roof. I just knew that today will be a lot harder. After cooking Bhaina's lunch, I decided to go out in the rain to the marketplace where Nana (father) worked as a scribe and give him his lunch. He wrote letters for others who couldn't write themselves. I remember sitting next Nana and watch him write letters and once a man wanted a letter written for the government. His cow was killed by a government train and wanted something in return. Since cows are holy for us, Hindus, the cow must have been very special. Few months later a government official asked us about the man whose cow got killed. The man created such a scene with the official that in a day the whole of India must have known about him! He refused to take the cow from the government because the government replied so late.

I quickly ran into the marketplace and gave Nana his lunch. It had already gone cold but Nana ate it happily anyways. After spending time with Nana, an aunty had asked me where my mother was. There was complete silence. I wanted to forget that I ever heard that. I missed Bou (Mother) so much. I tried to fight back the tears but they kept rolling down my cheek. I knew that the aunty had good intentions but it hadn't been very long since Bou had passed away. I glanced at her and I could see she saw me crying, in fact everyone saw, even Nana. Feeling sorrowful, I raced out of the marketplace and then I saw a car coming, after that everything was blank.

I woke up with myself on top of my bed. I was completely confused by what had happened. My entire face felt as if a thousand bees stung me. My legs were completely wrapped in some type of gauge tape. I looked at Nana and Bhaina, with a baffled mask on. They explained that I had been hit by a speeding car. I was scared by any of the permanent injuries. We were already so poor living on a single income, I didn't our family paying more for any of my injuries. I worried even more every second. What would happen?

Later we found out that the injuries wouldn't cost us anything and I would just have to rest for some time. Soon after two weeks I was back on my feet. Soon I saw a tourist from the United States. They had machines which kept flashing some light, while others smiled and froze. Curious, I followed the tourist, who then surprisingly used her machine without her light. After that she showed me a small screen with me on it. I was completely surprised even more when she gave them same picture on a paper. She wore very fine clothes and seemed very rich. I could see she was a learned person because she held books in her bag.

I have always had a dream that I would become a successful musician but I had never gone to school or ever learned anything. I was always bothered by watching all the other tourists, even the tourists younger than me, all being learned people. They knew how to read and write. I also wondered why I being a girl had to come in my way of my education. Why is it only girls who have to help at home, why not boys? How can I fly to success if my wings are clipped to the ground? How? I decided to go to sleep.

I heard a loud knock on the door. I was completely startled; Nana and Bhaina had already gone out.

“Open now, police!” a man at the door hollered.

I was totally alarmed that the police were at my door. I inched towards the door and slowly opened the door.

"Oh, uhh... Hello Laxmi, is there anyone else home?"

"Namaskar (greetings), I am alone at home, why?" I replied with a nervous voice.

They had their hats in their hands and said,

"I am so sorry to inform you that your Nana and Bhaina were involved in a bus accident." My heart slowed down, "They um..."

"Passed away."

I was almost done for. Tears streamed down my cheeks, everlasting, like the love I received from Nana and Bhaina. This was the same sensation when we received the news of Bou's death. Except this time I had no one to grieve with. No one at all. What was my purpose of life? I had no one to care for, no one to love. Most importantly no family to keep me warm and happy. We were sometimes so poor Nana and Bhaina had nothing to eat, yet they still fed me. That eternal love which never died was given to me by Nana and Bhaina. When it was so cold and there was no fire, they gave me their clothes so I could stay warm. They sacrificed so much for me; I could have never repaid them. I was all alone in that empty house. My heart completely stopped, I gasped for air. I passed out.

I was kicked out of my house and hustled into my Khudi (Aunt) and Kakei (Uncle)'s house. A Khudi who had no care for me. I was only another mouth to feed. I was pushed to do more work. I never ate, I never talked, I never smiled. Later my Chacha pushed to learn how to properly read and write. When I finally read one of Rabindranath Tagore's poems. That was the first time I smiled in a long time. I even squeezed in a laugh. I had made so much progress since the time I had lost Nana and Bhaina. I started writing poems inspired by Tagore's. I wrote and wrote I even struggled at little but I wrote.

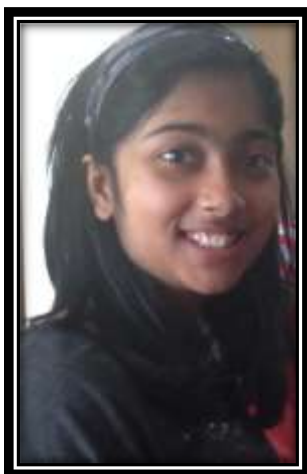
"Didi (sister) can you teach me how to read and write just like you? I want to be just like you when I grow up!" A poor girl approached, "I don't have money but I want to earn money exactly like you!"

My heart just grew a little bigger that moment. I had earned so much money by publishing stories and poems, that now I had inspired other little girls to learn how to read and write. My face glowed with happiness as I said, "Of course!"

Soon I had written so many poems and so many short stories, I became one of the only learned girl, let alone the youngest, in my village. This was to me a proud achievement. Even though Khudi often scolded me for not doing my chores and only writing faster than a bullet, I knew after every one of my pieces of literature was published, she felt every so proud. I also wondered how proud my Nana, Bhaina, and Bou would feel about my accomplishments. Nana would have been so proud that I learned to read and write better than Bhaina had. Bhaina would have always have such a proficient writer as sister. But most importantly, smiled a little brighter everyday while telling her friends really all I needed from Bou, a simile. A symbol of happiness symbol created by me. I felt as if that was the only way I could Bou but everyone who has ever given me anything in life. I much in the beginning but now all my dreams have been keep dreaming a lot more. But I will keep achieving as well. Inspire.



been so proud to Bou would have about me. That was in any form, a repay Bou, not just had struggled so achieved. I will Believe, Dream, and



Shreya Tripathy is a 6th grader in Oak Hill Elementary school and lives in Herndon, VA with her parents Gatikrishna and Lali and younger brothers, Rishi and Ayush. She loves to write, dance, and perform in plays.

Endless Possibilities of Being Vegetarian

Ayush Panda

It feels terrible when people kill animals just for food. For one part we should understand that animals are killed for food, but we are not animals; we have choices and so many other things to eat. That makes us different from being an animal. Animals should be able to live their lives as we do.

As food is directly related to our health, it is no wonder that people have begun to pay increased attention to the food they eat. Healthy lifestyles have come to dominate the minds of many people.

A healthy life should be the goal of our life. It pollutes less to harvest vegetables than it does to raise an animal and then kill them. Being vegetarian helps keep out pollution, global warming, and by decreasing the amount of meat sold which is directly proportional to animals raised and killed.

Studies have shown that chances of getting cancer, high cholesterol, high blood pressure and many more health issues increase with consumption of meat. Another major issue is obesity which is harmful to our heart too. A need to change in food habits is now what is required. It can be reduced if people choose to reduce their intake of meat or give up eating meat altogether. Plant diets have been found to be healthier. Including more fruits and vegetables in my diet is needed. One will be surprised to see a variety of recipes and endless possibilities being vegetarian and avoiding meat, still eating healthy.



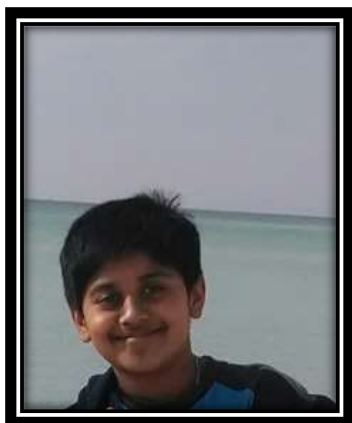
Research has also shown that the body mass index was found to be lower in vegetarians than in meat eaters. Thus, vegetarianism can be a viable solution to the problem of obesity.

We think meat gives us protein which we cannot get from only veggies. But too much protein reduces the body's energy. This is also harmful for our body. Proteins from veggie diet are easier to absorb than meat and then the chemicals added and preservatives to give the meat to keep the meat fresh. That is also bad. It's nearly impossible to lack protein if we eat balanced food.

Mother Nature has given so many things to eat; why kill animals who are just like us. They can feel the pain just cannot speak to us. If we stop and think for once, we will never forgive our own self for eating animals.

Vegetarianism can help one to protect one's health and is an inalienable feature of a healthy lifestyle. A person choosing a plant-based diet will more easily lose extra weight.

Let us just think for few seconds if everybody in the world ate the animals then there could be a point where there are no animals left at all. What will happen? The whole environment will be unbalanced. Then another thought that if everybody would not eat animals then we could save thousands of animals because thousands of animals are getting killed every day just for people who eat meat. If we do not give birth to the animals then we do not have any right to kill them. We all should try to be more environments friendly and save this world from disaster before it actually comes. One vegetarian saves about 100 animals per year; therefore if we count all the vegetarians in the world, it adds up to a lot of animal lives spared. The ability to appreciate and love the environment is a very different feeling hard to describe. Just trying to eat healthy is something worth trying.



Ayush Panda is ten years old. He lives with his parents, Meghkanta Mohapatra and Debashis Panda in Aurora, IL. He has a baby brother, Adwik, and loves playing with him. He also loves swimming, playing tabla, roller blading, and is a junior black belt in Karate. He has a fascination for photography.

Fall Rocks

Shivangi Panda

It is fall, it is fall
The best season of all
It is fall
Let's go outside
and play play play
for the whole entire day, for the whole entire day
It is fun
It is fall
Everyone shouts hooray hooray
It is fall, it is fall
The best season of all all all
The best season of all



Shivangi Panda is 7 years old and is the daughter of Saroj and Sarita Panda of Atlanta, Georgia. She loves music, dance, gymnastics, and reading books. She is good in maths and loves her friends.

Father

Debanshi Nikita Chowdhury

"Oh," Father
How kind you are
You are way better than a panther
The protection you give me, keeps all the troubles (away) far

You may get mad
And I may get sad
But I know you do this for good
Not to be rude

I do feel, you hate me at points
Still, I know this is not true
I will never trade you for coins

You are like the second god to me
Good thing, you don't cost any fee

"BAPA," I love you more than you love me.



Debanshi Nikita Chowdhury is the daughter of Debaki Nandan and Anjana Chowdhury of Germantown, Maryland. She is a fifth grader and is learning Odissi, vocal music, violin, and piano. She is active in Girl Scout and loves doing art and sampling frozen yogurt.

Fireworks

Arnav Roy Patra

Light grows
The world grows smaller
Frightening many a child
The wick stands alone



Its scream heralds a new world
One of death and energy
A tiny spark comes running
The cry of flames stop

The children ooooh and aaaah
A scream runs helter-skelter
Booming brighter than the sun and moon
The earplugs are donned
How silently the world sits

Until the next one up...
Looking at the little stick serene and silent
I dream of its future
Someday flying
Bursting through the dark
Light rising to conquer the darkness
Exalting
Forever alive in my mind

But alas,
If only that were to be...
In a fireworks life
Misery pain
Bursting as though all the world is doomed
Light grows
The world grows smaller
Frightening many a child
The wick trembles



The beginning of a new life and death a
Power and powder backed into one
A tiny spark comes running
The cry of flames

The children oooh and aaaah
A scream runs
Booming brighter than the sun and moon
The earplugs rise
How silently the world sits

Until the next one up...
Looking at the little stick serene and silent
I dream of it
Someday flying
Bursting
Exalting
Forever alive in my imagination

But alas,
If only that were to be...
In a fireworks life
One of momentous Misery and pain
Bursting as though all the world is a speaker

Alone it sits
Waiting
Waiting
And waiting for someday
To be free from the world.....
Free at last....



Arnav Roy Patra is eleven years old and a sixth grader at Heim Middle School in Buffalo, NY. His interests include geography, reading, writing, and music. He lives with his parents Abani Kumar Patra and Sipra Roychudhury.

*** Second Prize winner in 2014 Meghna Memorial Award for Creative Writing, Junior Category
CONGRATULATIONS!**



First Day of Middle School

Ritika Senapati

“Hurry up,” called Mom from the bottom of the stairs. “You have to go to school.” It was my first day in a new school, and I was excited to start the New Year. Fresh out of fourth grade, I was ready to take on fifth. Even though I was excited, I still wasn’t ready to wake up at six o’clock in the morning. As I was running down the stairs, Mom called out, “Your ride is already here, and you aren’t even ready!” Running to my carpool, I saw that the clock only read 7:10. I would make it to school on time and even have time to spare. Thirty minutes later, I fixed my hair and jumped out of the car.

“Hey Allison,” I greeted her with a smile.

“Hey Sarah!” She reached out and gave me a huge hug.

Allison had been my best friend since first grade, and we were both lucky to have been drawn out of the lottery to go to this new middle school.

As I separated ways from her and went to my homeroom, I looked around in awe. There were newly painted walls and recently waxed floors. This new school was better than my old school in every way.

“Good morning, Goodmin Middle School!” Principal Macaster’s voice boomed as he called out the announcements. “It is the first day of school--the most exciting day of the year!” he said. “Get ready to have a blast!” After the announcements, everybody broke out into loud talking.

“Hey guys, how was your summer?” I said as I approached a group of friendly- looking girls.

“It was awesome! I went to Washington and met up with my family. What about you?” Asked a tall girl with glasses.

“It was alright. I just stayed at home. Anyways, nice to meet you. I’m Sarah.” I stuck out my right hand for her to shake.

She smiled brightly at me and took my hand in her own. “I’m Trinity. Nice to meet you too.”



The bell rang, and Mrs. Hunter walked in. “Quiet down now, class,” she shushed us. The booming noise quickly died into quiet whispers. “Good morning, class”, Mrs. Hunter greeted us. “Today, we’ll just be going over school policies and information.”

As she talked to us about the rules, Trinity and I quietly chatted. Eventually she dismissed us to our related arts class.

I caught up with Allison in the hallway. “Hey, are you going to computers?” I asked. “Yup,” she replied as she took my arm and skipped to the computer room.

By the end of the day, I had met all of my teachers, and I was glad that I actually liked all of them for once. This new school had already proven to be amazing. Not only did I love all of my classes, but I had also made new friends. All in all, I already loved my school, and I could tell that this was going to be the best year ever!



Ritika Senapati is twelve years old and lives in Nashville, Tennessee with her parents, Manoj and Smrity Senapati, and an older sister. She is a 6th grader at Meigs Magnet school and enjoys arts & crafts, and swimming.

House or Home

Aaryana Pradhan Rajanala

“NO!” Ishika shouted. “Absolutely not! We just moved here, away from my best friends, and you tell me that we’re moving again and expect me to just say okay? This is *unbelievable!*” Ishika and her family had just moved from Michigan to New Jersey because of her dad’s job transfer. Her little sister, Isha, had gone willingly because she had been four at the time and didn’t entirely know what was happening, but Ishika and her older brother, Aryan, had put up a fight. Many of their best friends had lived in Michigan and they had not adjusted easily to their new home.

“It’s only to a new neighborhood,” her mom tried in an attempt to comfort her. “We’ll still be in New Jersey.”

“But what about Emma and Jewel? They were the first friends I’ve lived close enough to run over and ask if they want to play.”

“You can still visit them and you’ll still be in the same school as Jewel,” her dad reminded her.

“I never see Jewel in class; we don’t even have the same lunch period. And-and...” Her voice died out for a second. She had run out of arguments for the moment, but instead of yelling some harsh words, which would have only been the cause of a grounding, she broke out into fake, teary sadness. “I don’t want go!” she bawled. Tears still streaming down her cheeks she dashed to her room and shut the door. Drying her eyes she picked up a bright scarlet pen. Ishika did what she always did to vent out anger or any other strong emotion.

She wrote a poem. “Red?” she thought out loud. “Not orange. Ah, I’ve got it.” After scribbling the words that she had felt just then she stopped to examine the red ink on the page, slightly less infuriated with her parents.

Just then the door creaked open. “Ishika?” whispered a small voice.

“Yes?” Ishika answered, trying to control her temper. No matter how frustrated she got, she could never yell at her little sister. “What is it, Isha?”

Isha slipped through the door. “Are you okay? I heard shouting downstairs.”

“Don’t worry,” Ishika reassured in a calm tone. “I’m fine. How about we go call Emma and ride our bikes?”

Isha shook her head. “I know something’s up. What’s that? Red pen... Are you mad that we’re moving?”

“*If* we are moving, which we will not unless you want to drag me to the supposedly better house,” she replied stubbornly.



Isha frowned. “Can I at least read the poem?” Ishika slid the white sheet over to her little sister. Although she was just learning how to read in school, Isha was already very fast. “Pack up, pack up, we’re going away,” she read aloud. “That’s how it started that horrid day. Or that’s how it sounded to my little ears, when we left, my face all streaked with tears. We boarded the plane, and reached the house fast. ‘Finally!’ I heard, ‘we’re here at last!’ But these thoughts were not my own, for in my heart I felt alone. I wished for a home, one place for me, and not moving to a house where I didn’t want to be. I felt so sad, and also afraid, and kept wondering if this new home could be made.” She paused, deep in thought. “Where’s the rest? This is so sad.”

“Well, that’s how I felt then, and now, today,” Ishika snapped irritably.

Isha retreated. “Sorry.” The word was almost inaudible. “But just so you know,” she called loudly from behind the door, “I’m on your side now. Last time it was all a confusing jumble of words for me, but I can help now. This time I’m ready.” And with that she was gone.

After that Ishika continued with the rest of her daily activities, finishing homework, reading, but the whole time she stayed locked up in her room. She trudged down the stairs when her mom called her for dinner and picked at her food, responding to her dad’s questions with short, blunt answers. When she was back in her room she plopped down on her bed and flipped angrily through her book.

“Ishika?” Aryan questioned, opening the door. “Are you okay? What did you do to Isha?” Ishika simply kept staring at her book. Aryan picked up her angry poem and looked over it. “Oh. You’re mad that we’re moving. You think I’m any happier? Next year we’re both going to new schools, and we’ve barely settled in here. Parents don’t understand, they adapt so easily and never realize what’s happening to kids... It really isn’t fair.”

“Then why can’t *they* see that? Aren’t parents supposed to understand and take care of kids? We had to move away from everyone else then. Why again?” she sniffled.

“They want to buy a house, have one place to stay. At least we won’t have to move again, because I *know* we are not going to sell a new house. All I think we can do now is wait and see. And who knows, we might like the house, but for the most part I am on your side.”

Three out of five don’t want to move she thought as she flicked off the lamp and Aryan left, *but now majority won’t rule.*

The next morning she did what she had been doing the past four days and got ready for school. She endured the seemingly endless bus ride, sat at her desk and tapped her pencil at math, and after gym, which was as repetitive as ever, met with Anya at lunch.

Anya was by far Ishika’s best friend in New Jersey. They had met at a Diwali celebration and had become fast friends after comparing schools and lunch periods. Though Anya was a year younger than her, she could give Ishika advice that was better than what any adult would say. “Because kids understand each other,” she’d explained one day.

“Again?” she exclaimed after hearing of Ishika’s predicament. “I suppose I can see why you’re so unhappy. They can’t keep moving you. More than anything it’s unfair to do that to a kid. Don’t you have that huge narrative due next week, too?”

“Yes! I cannot believe how stressed I am. I don’t even have a topic yet!”

“Well, see the house and then decide,” Anya suggested. “Who knows, you might like it more than you think. As for your story, I’m sure something will come to you, though I would think that much good could come out of these situations together. I bet you’ll end up killing two birds with one stone.” Ishika raised an eyebrow, mystified. The bell rang, its shrill tones filling the air. “Got to go. See you later and good luck,” she called back as she gathered her books.

“Doubtful,” Ishika mumbled in response to everything her friend had just said. “Very doubtful.”

After three classes and another bus ride Ishika was home. She opened the door which had been unlocked and entered silently as she always did, then was about to announce her arrival when she heard a soft discussion continuing. Ishika eavesdropped on them from the side of the doorway that led into their living room. Standing on the red carpet in front of the TV were her parents, but they weren’t getting ready to give Ishika a warm hug and ask how she was. They were arguing.

“But can’t you tell how unhappy it’s making them?” Her mom looked at her dad with a sad look in her eyes, as if she were pleading for her most precious possession. And she might have been.

“We can’t just do what the kids want,” her dad reasoned. “You want the house and you’ll get it. Put your foot down for once.” Her mom was quite clearly unconvinced and the hard look in his eyes vanished. “We’ll show them the house soon and they won’t have a second thought about moving. Alright?”

“Okay,” her mom agreed uncertainly. “But i don’t think we should go if the kids still don’t want to.” *I don’t want to go, she thought, I’m home now. This is my home, don’t need a new house.* Then it was quiet. She took the silence as an opportunity and jumped over the one wooden stair that went down into the living room. “Oh! You startled me, Ishika.” And after *that* came the ‘how are you’ and ‘how was school.’

“Fine,” she answered. She took an apple to her room as green as the tree she had pulled it off and began her homework as she nibbled on the sour fruit, though it was nowhere near as sour as her mood.

“Aryan, Ishika, Isha!” her dad called some time later. “We’re going out!” The three siblings thumped downstairs. “Get in the car,” he snapped.

They did as their dad told and were soon sitting in their places in their van, Isha in the back, Aryan and Ishika in the middle, watching the sun sink down and reveal the stars in the blanket of night. “What was that all about?” Aryan exclaimed. “Are they seriously fighting now? This is unbelievable!”

“Maybe we should just go,” Isha muttered sulkily. “I can’t stand this.”

“We don’t have much of a choice,” Ishika concluded. “So we’ll say yes whether or not we like it. Agreed?” They both nodded. This was the least favorable outcome of them all to Ishika. *So we’re just going to give up? She thought. After everything we’ve done, all they’ve put us through...? This is unbelievable.*

They all knew they were driving to the house that, unfortunately, they were going to buy. And their fears came true, in a way. They *loved* the house, which was worse than *not* liking it because it showed that they were really wrong. They didn’t even have to act like the house was amazing. There was an in ground pool in the backyard, which was right next to a huge lawn full of green grass and a crab apple tree. In the basement was a pool table and a mini gym, which only made them think more of the house. And if that wasn’t enough, the three other bedrooms upstairs were almost the same size as the master bedroom. When it came time to make a decision, they all yelled an excited, “Yes!” And that was that.



They bought the house and began to move all of their possessions to their new home. Ishika told this to their friends with as much genuine happiness as they felt, which had received a raised eyebrow from Anya and the want to say “told you so”. Soon after, Ishika came up with a topic for her narrative and found that Anya had been correct. When she handed her typed copy to her teacher on Tuesday, (a day late

because of a violin lesson, though her teacher was understanding) she grinned, thinking that something that had caused her so much indecision could turn out to be such a good story. Her story was titled A Moving Tale, which had caused giggles throughout the classroom. Their parents no longer quarreled with each other for the next few weeks, and all was well, though Ishika once thought she heard her mom saying to her dad, “I can’t believe it worked. The house is ours!” and her dad replying, “Yes, but it was mean, and if Aryan hadn’t spoken to Ishika it probably wouldn’t have worked.” And even though that couldn’t have *possibly* happened, Ishika spoke to Aryan about it and he confessed, leaving their parents to the silent treatment from her.

The day they moved into their new house Ishika stared in wonder at how nice it looked with their furniture in it. A few weeks later Ishika remembered something and dashed upstairs. Sitting down at her desk in the new room she loved, she corrected something. Ishika knew it was time to douse the red flames of her poem with her watery blue pen and the right words:

*We’ve bought the house, and I’ll give it a chance
But before I didn’t even give it a glance
It isn’t bad, not one bit
And I think I’ve come to really like it
For now, everything is just fine
Now that this home is really mine
And now, no longer am I afraid
For this new home really has been made*



Aaryana is eleven years old and is the daughter of Nagesh and MoonMoon. She is a very musical author who loves reading and nature. She is a sixth grader at Eisenhower Intermediate School in Bridgewater, New Jersey. Aaryana enjoys language arts, science, and orchestra. A swimmer, dancer, singer, violinist, and author, one of her favorite pastimes is writing about any topic that occurs to her, be it magic or the rhythm of life

*** Third Prize winner in 2014 Meghna Memorial Award for Creative Writing, Junior Category
CONGRATULATIONS!**



Hummingbird's Furniture

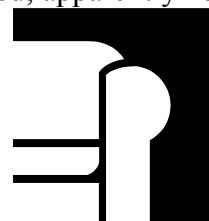
(*Mysteries of the Birds*)

Nistha Panda

She took a careful step into the new and unfamiliar place. The carpet was as soft as feathers and the room smelled of new leather. She looked up to see tan, beige, brown, and black couches scattered all over the colossal and capacious room. *This is a furniture showroom.* She felt especially small like a small baby hummingbird in the large world. Quickly, she scanned the room. There weren't many customers; it was a quiet place. All the windows were stained glass pictures of birds made of sky blues, emerald greens, honey yellows, and dark scarlet. In the middle of the room was a fountain as tall as an elephant stood. She could smell the chlorinated water that was dripping down the fountain from where she was (which was near the sliding doors); and around it was a checkout desk. Behind the desk was a man with hawkish features his long pointy fingers digging into the marble counter. The hawkish man's steely blue eyes called her towards him. While she glided towards the middle of the showroom, she could hear sounds of birds chirping. As she walked she ran her fingers over the furniture she passed, the smooth and soft fabric making her fingers tingle. The closer she walked to the middle of the room, the smaller she felt and the more she felt like birds of every kind were calling her for help.



Jack slipped through to door way past his parent's attention. He slowly and carefully closed the large front door and behind him and sneaked out into the open air. It was Thanksgiving night and no one would be out, not in this city. Here, everyone believed that if you weren't inside being thankful for having a protecting roof over their head or that you were alive you would end up the opposite like some people who used to live here. Today was a day when fear was in the air (much more fear than Halloween) and today was when he was going to do something that even the toughest and roughest bullies wouldn't do. Jack was going to enter the newest of the stores. The store was called *Hummingbird's Furniture*. The store was in the corner of the most popular shopping hub. Nobody had gone there since the opening day when a girl named Cassidy disappeared and someone *claimed* to see a ghost. Her ghost. After that day, nobody entered the store. And Jack planned to be the first. When he finally reached the store he saw bright red and blue neon lights faintly flashed the words OPEN behind the large stained glass windows. The clear door swung open in the wind. At this point at night, on this day especially, you would think that all the doors would be locked; apparently not. Jack crept into the dark and gloomy showroom. CRACK! Jack looked to his right. *There's nothing there.* He felt soft leathers touching his fingertips as he passed shadows that looked like sofas. Chilly breezes swept in from the open door. *Something moved,* Jack thought. He was sure of it. He turned his head to see what it was. A man with hawkish features and long wrinkly fingers (that you couldn't not notice) stepped out of the shadows. Jack's heart started to race at the speed of light; he wanted to run but his feet were glued to the ground. Then he heard something besides his heart thumping. Chirping. Not crickets chirping but a



noise that sound like birds calling for help. Slowly his feet started to move, though not in the direction he wanted to; he was walking towards the man. And after that he couldn't remember a thing.

A white microscopic crystal landed on Paisley's glass window. More flakes of snow fluttered out on Marcy Street that Saturday morning. Paisley's nose pressed against her window. She'd never seen snow before. A month ago she was going to school in scorching Southern California and now she was going to spend her Christmas in the snowy outskirts Minneapolis. She bolted from her room, down the stairs and outside. Paisley held her hand out and a small snowflake landed in the pale palm of her hand. An icy breeze almost swept Paisley of her feet; she realized how cold it was and she was only wearing pajamas. She ran inside washed up, grabbed her jacket and headed out to her new friend, Ally's house.

“Ding! Dong!” the doorbell rang loudly. Paisley heard footsteps running towards the door. Then after a minute of clicking a blonde girl smiled back at Paisley. Ally ran past Paisley and out into the cold snow. Her hands moved speaking words most people can't understand. Ally could only speak in sign language, and Paisley was the only kid in the school who could understand. She was telling Paisley to come out in the snow. They played in the snow for four hours. After they were done the pair of them went to their favorite cafe, Coffee Cafe. As they left Paisley noticed a GRAND OPENING sign hung on the windows.

Why is it empty? Paisley signed to Ally.

Because Ally signed back.

Ally turned and ran towards their neighborhood and Paisley followed still wondering why the store was empty.

The next day...

Bring! Paisley jerked awake. She stared at the clock. Her alarm clock flashed 5:00 AM in blood red. She was awake earlier than anyone else in the city, and she was going to be the first one to start shopping that Sunday morning.

Paisley was there at 5:15 AM. The GRAND OPENING sign hung lazily above the empty store. Neon lights blared OPEN. *Who opens at 5 o' clock?* She thought. Paisley was planning to sneak in; now, she didn't need to. She slipped into the door. When she looked out into the room, her jaw dropped. Beautiful stained glass hummingbirds made up windows in the back of the room. Furniture was scattered across the room and in the middle was a large fountain surrounded by a desk. Behind the desk Paisley saw a man. A man with hawkish features and long fingers. He scared her. A chill went through her body and she heard birds chirping. She had started walking, but she didn't want to.

Bob was walking on the sidewalk to the grocery store when he heard a scream. He ran towards the sound when he reached *the store*. The screaming had stopped and the glass door was swinging in the wind.

“Got it!” Red screamed out the door. Four large, bulky boys rushed into Hallowell Junior High’s small computer lab. The enormous boys towered over small Red’s computer anxious to see what he had done. Red, Redmond Collins, was one of the best hackers and mechanics ever to be born in Redmond, Washington (Yes, his mother named him after the city, but no one called him Redmond). He was a small bullied child with his fairly rich mother, and a missing father till all the kids saw what he did in his free time. Now instead of chanting “*Here comes Little Red Riding Hood, with his basket of bread and books. Sitting in the corner, scared of everything including the poor little gardener,*” (they weren’t very good poets, were they) they invited him to meddle with websites, video games, and other things. Today he was hacking into the middle school’s internet access, which only let students use specific educational sites. The bullies that were paying him today wanted to be able to play games during the school day. He had finished in less than fifteen minutes.

“Here.” Bully #1 (he had numbered all the bullies) pulled a fresh green, twenty dollar bill from his jean pockets and handed Red the cash.

“Thanks,” Red replied. He snatched the money and ran out the lab door. Red didn’t need the money. His family already was rich. He just did what he did for the fun of it. Red grabbed his bike from the school’s bike stand and rode home, his mansion in the suburbs.



When Red finally got home he parked his bike and rushed to the door. He took a deep breath before ringing the doorbell. He never told his mom his hobby. She didn’t mind his mechanic business, but he would never tell his mother about hacking. She would interrogate him. If she figured out she would put a stop to it. She wouldn’t like it. He prepared to be bombarded with questions.

Ding! Dong! The door opened with his mom with her furious dark brown boring to his intimidating electric blue eyes. Her bright red hair, which was identical to his, filled with unnatural curls bobbing up and down with anger. Her face was burning so bright red that all her freckles disappeared. Red wondered if his freckles disappeared when he was angry, then he remembered his mom was about to explode. He shrank and stared at the expensive hardwood floor beneath him.

“WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN!!!!!!!!!!? I TOLD YOU TO BE HOME BY 2:50! WE HAVE A MEETING WITH THE MILITARY!!! DON’T BE LATE! COME STRAIGHT HOME WHEN THE BELL RINGS AT 2:50... BUT NO!! THEY SAID THEY HAD A LEAD ON WHO HAD TAKEN YOUR FATHER, BUT APPARENTLY I’M THE ONLY ONE WHO CARES THAT YOUR FATHER MIGHT BE ALIVE!!!!!!!!!!...” The meeting. He had totally forgotten. His dad had gone one a military mission and never returned. Nothing was left behind and most thought he was dead

or kidnapped. He didn't like to think about it, but the military thought they found a major lead to who his dad's captor might be and at 3:00 he should have been sitting next to his mom listening to some officer tell him where his dad might be and where he may not be. Instead he was hacking his school districts system for a little bit a cash.

He listened to his mother lecture him till she was tired and crystal clear water poured down her spotted face. The last thing she said was for him to go to his room till she could find a proper punishment. He obeyed. Red dragged himself 50 steps of stairs running his dry fingers over the smooth gold-plated railing. He slowly walked down the long hall of the second floor to his room which took up half of the second floor (the other half was taken up by the seven other rooms). He slammed the door behind him and flopped on his bed. His life was terrible.

Click. His door knob turned and his mother gently pushed the door open. Red sat up in his bed; his mom came to sit next.

"Where were you?" she asked gently with her usual sweet voice. Red knew he couldn't reply.

"I was with friends. I totally forgot. I'm so sorry. I really do care about Dad." he lied. It wasn't all lying. Only the part about being with friends. Red wasn't with friends; he was with customers.

"I know you care, honey." she replied softly. "You know your dad forgot things easily to. He had your eyes to. You're a lot like him." she said with tears in her dark brown eyes, "But I should punish you so you don't forget again. I decided you'll help the new store in the hub set up. They want you there by 10:00 tomorrow morning. And don't forgot this time." She laughed softly then left his room. He sat there waiting for tomorrow to come.

Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. Beep. By the fifth one Red was awake. He stared at his alarm clock. Blood red numbers flashed at his eyes. They read 9:55, the time he usually woke up on at his normal Saturday morning. Though today was different. He was expected at the new shop at the hub at 10:00. He had five minutes to get ready, stuff and breakfast in his mouth, and speed to the store. The store was in the corner of the hub where most people didn't go to. Apparently, no one else wanted to help the owner set up so Red's mom volunteered him.

Red had gotten there in the nick of time. He stared up at the neon lights bent into cursive letters spelling the words *Hummingbird's Furniture*. The windows were colorful stained glass pictures of hummingbirds. He pushed the heavy glass door open and slipped inside. The walls must have been thin, because you could hear the sweet songs of birds calling. The room was dark and in the middle was a desk with a cash register on it. The large showroom smelled had the new leather. He looked to see furniture neatly spread across the room.

“Hello...” Red called out. The place looked like it was done being set up. *Maybe there’s a problem with the lighting. I am a mechanic.*

“Hello!” he called again. The place was starting to scare Red. Bang! Red spun around to see the glass door had shut. Without anyone pulling it. It wasn’t even a windy day. The lights flickered on. Red heard a tapping noises coming from behind him. He turned away from the door, towards the middle of the room. A man with hawkish figures stood behind the desk drumming his long, thin fingers. His pitch black eyes were calling Red towards him.

“Hi! I’m Red, and you must be mister... um, I never caught your name. Can I call you Hawk Eye?” he whispered. Red flashed his most confident fake smile ever, but on the inside he was screaming in fear.

“I...” he stopped. The man was glaring at him; he took a step towards him. Red didn’t notice; all he could was the birds chirping outside. He couldn’t even hear his thundering heart yelling for help. The man’s beady eyes called him towards him. Red’s impression of an evil smile appeared on Hawk Eye’s hawk like face. Before he knew it Red was walking without thinking.

Bring! Bring! The sound of the landline ringing filled the mansion.

“I’ll get it!” Lisa Collins yelled. She grabbed her bright orange coffee cup and ran to the living room to grab the phone. She pressed the phone to her ear, listening carefully to the person on the other side. She kept listening. Minutes later, the coffee cup slipped out of her sweaty finger. Crash! Small pieces of ceramic scattered across coffee stained marble white floor, her face showing pure horror.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THESE INNOCENT CHILDREN? WHERE DID THEY GO?



Nistha Panda is twelve years old and is in seventh grade. She lives in Fremont, California with her parents, Renuka and Debu Panda. She loves writing, painting, playing bass (in her school orchestra), and dancing Odissi.

***Fourth Prize winner in 2014 Meghna Memorial Award for Creative Writing, Junior Category
CONGRATULATIONS!**



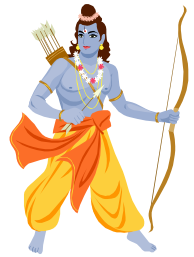
I Like Mahabharat More Than Ramayana

Simran Dillip



Ramayana and Mahabharat are two great epics that follow by all Hindus. Ramayana teaches what an ideal human being should be like. Deviation to that causes the downfall. The great example is Ravana. The great king and most powerful Demon in the universe killed by lord Rama. Ramayana shows the greatness of Rama and the evilness of Ravana. In Ramayana Rama has killed all the demons and evils to protect the sages and the good people. He made Vibhisan the king of Lanka.

Mahabharat in other hand teaches how the human being reacts to the situations and what they should do. Mahabharat talks more about the many great characters like Bhishma and his greatness and commitment to protect Kouravas and the Hastinapura. It talks about the great fighter like Karna and Arjuna, Great guru like Drona, Great student like Ekalavaya and Arjuna, Great Person like Yudhistara who always tells truth and believes in Dharma.



This also talks about the great politician like Sakuni who plays bad politics to take the revenge. It talks about great friendship of Krishna and Arjuna as well as Karna and Duryadhana. Karna knows that Duryadhana is not going to be able to win but supported him with his friendship until end of his life. This also talks about Great mother Gandhari and Kunti.

The most important thing I like in Mahabharat is the Bhagvat Gita. Bhagvat Gita is all the good Knowledge that directly given by lord Krishna to Arjun, should be followed by all human being. When Arjuna was sad and demoralized seeing his own people in the battlefield Lord Krishna explained the duty of human being and how they act to any situation. Lord explained in Bhagvat Geeta By the sloka "Yada Yada Hi Dharmasya" He takes birth in the world to protect the good and kill the evil and establish the dharma in the world.



Simran Dillip is 9 years old and is the daughter of Dillip and Priya Behera, of New Hampshire. She is a fourth grader at Newmarket Elementary School. Simran loves math and classical dance. Her goal is to win a bee contest.

Isabel and the Writathon

Aaditi Padhi

I always wanted to do it. But it just won't happen. I mean that I want to become a famous writer, but it won't happen. My whole family were writers, and I want to continue the tradition. But... I want to be famous. Famous for my words. My great grandmother's last words to me were, "Please be a great writer, and don't let our family down." I really want to fulfill those words. "10 year olds can't change the world", one of my older sisters, Lily, always scoffs (being the brainiac and fashion model of the Brownings). But deep inside, I think it only takes a heart to turn the world. My teacher, Mrs. Kantor always says that I would make a great writer. If only that was true.

Ringggg! My alarm clock woke me up early at 4 AM on March 31. Wait... Today was, April 1st! "Ahhh!" I yelled. I knew my little brother, Alex, was up to no good. At school, we had our creative writing competition, the winner would move on to district level, states, and finally nationals. I was so nervous, that I couldn't hold myself together. I decided to write a memorable and a moving poem. After 2 hours, our time was over and it was time for judging. The results wouldn't come out 'till tomorrow, so I went home and relaxed. As usual, when I got home, I heard the normal screams from the kitchen. "Lily and Eva", I muttered, rolling my eyes. Lily and Eva, my 15 year old bossy siblings couldn't live without debating on one thing or another. Eva was the athletic one who was all in favor of sports and Lily was the fashion model and had the brains. "Isabel!" shouted Mom. "Tell your sisters to keep it down!" I poked my head into the kitchen. "Can you guys keep it down?" I asked. After that, I went to sleep. Tomorrow would be a big day.



12 hours later, I awoke to the sound of the cheery birds that sang songs. I woke up in a bolt. It was the day that the winner of our creative writing competition was announced. I quickly dressed up and hopped on my bike. "It's going to be a long day!" I thought to myself. At class, Mrs. Kantor walked up and down the aisles of our classroom. "And, the time you've been waiting for!" she said excitedly. "The winner is... Isabel Browning. The whole class stared at me, and I felt myself gaping at the teacher. "Do you really mean it?" I asked in amazement. "Yes, Isabel. You will be going to the district level!" she said chuckling. When I got home, I expected a big tantrum from my sisters having a sissy fight. Instead I found them reading novels to each other! Were these my real sisters, or were they random supernatural forces who came to give me peace? "Hi Isabel!" they said in unison. "I and Lily were reading each other paragraphs from, "The Midnight Moon". "Right Lily?" "Right Eva!" If my sisters were nice to me and actually agreed, then pigs could fly, it could rain cats and dogs, and the moon would be demented. "Uhh, hi!" I stammered and ran upstairs. "Guess what?" I asked my dad. "What?" he curiously gestured. "I won

the creative writing competition and I am going to districts!” I cried. It was luck. Pure luck. But would luck be in favor of me this time?

I woke up to the song of the bluebirds and looked at the clock. “8:00, already?” I screeched. My head looked like it had an afro, instead of my usual neat and tidy hair. I quickly grabbed 3 granola bars and ran out the door. When I got to school, Mrs. Kantor was waiting at the doorway for me. She handed me a brochure that said, “Creative Writing 4 U”. “Isabel, 2 chosen winners from the district level will go to states. Greenwood School is counting on you.” Mrs. Kantor said seriously. “I’ll try my best!” I nervously whispered. I opened up my brochure, and the date and place for the district level said April 4th at Carnegie Hall, New York! April 4th was tomorrow and I had to go to Carnegie Hall!

Whoosh! I woke up to the sight of soft genuine leather seats, humungous baggage cabins, and NEW YORK/CARNEGIE HALL on the metallic dashboard in front of me. “We’re going to Carnegie Hall!” I screamed. My parents put me to sleep and carried me along to the plane. “Here I come Carnegie Hall! Nothing’s in my way!” I thought. An hour later, I sat in a luxurious cab with my family, on my way to Hampton Inn. When we got there, I gazed at the tall pillars and the velvet lined leather sofas. “Reservation for the Browning family”, Mom said. “I’m sorry!” said the desk clerk. “I can’t seem to find you here. What’s your name?” she asked. “Amy Browning” The conversation went on for a long time, but finally Mom won, and we all went up to room 101 with a perfect view of the busy city. For dinner, we went to Chipotle. Once again, my sisters seemed like they were mummified into twin robots that always (from now on) cooperated with each other and listened to me. I bought a taco kit and happily munched on my delicious and sour tacos. The next morning I headed up to Carnegie Hall. It was supposed to be a piano stage, but we went for a writing bee. The whole city of Albany was here and I was scared out of my skin.

30 minutes later, I handed in my poem and waited for the results. Now, they started to announce the winners. “1st place.... Isabel Browning! 2nd place...Katherine Zelder! These 2 writing stars will be going to states, folks!” the judge yelled. “Let’s give a round of applause for Isabel and Katherine!!” I looked up to see a girl with straight brown hair like mine. “Hi! I’m Katherine. You can call me Kathy”, she said. “Hello, I’m Isabel.” “You must be a really good writer to win the districts!” she said. “Not really!” I muttered under my breath. “What did you say?” Katherine asked me. “I am pretty good!” I told her. “Well, see you at states!” she said.

Nextmorning, I woke up at 6AM, so I could go to New York City for my states. You heard me right. NYC!! Right now, I was freaking out, because literally the whole state of New York would be there! When I got to New York City, I went to our hotel. I was very surprised to hear that Katherine would be staying in the room next to us. “Hi Isabel!” a squeaky voice squealed. It was Katherine. I secretly and quietly groaned. This girl was a pain in the neck. “Hi!” I said unenthusiastically. “Are you ready for the competition? Are you? Are you?” “Yeah!” I said sarcastically and glanced at the elegant rose studded clock behind me. “Oh got to go”, I said walking away. “Bye!!” she called out from behind my back.

When I got to our suite, there were screams coming from the kitchen. “Hi guys!” I said. “Uhh hi!” they said trying to look nice. I should’ve known. My sassy sisters were keeping down just for me, so I sighed. “Have you guys been being nice to each other and to me just cause I had a big competition coming up?” Lily sighed. “OK! OK! Isabel, we admit that we were being nice just for you.” “You outsmarted us, Izzie!” Eva mumbled. “OK, for real now. Can you please keep it down so I can take a peaceful sleep before we have states? It’s gonna be real scary!” Eva and Isabel looked at each other and their faces fell. While Lily plodded off, Eva whispered something in my ear. “Isabel, you know how the judges loved your poem at districts. Maybe you should submit your poem this time too!” “That’s so silly!” I said. “Don’t be smug. When Lily participated in the writathon, she won the nationals, because she submitted a great story every time!” Eva whispered furiously. I realized that she was right! Who says that only Lily has the brains? Big sis Eva can be very smart and nice at times. (Too bad she never wants to!) “Well, I’ll be on my way!” I said. I lowered my voice. “Thanks a lot!” I told Eva. “No problemo!” she grinned. I went across the hall to find 6 king sized beds, and each one had a little personal tub of candy in addition to it. I climbed in the furry covers and rested for the night.

The next morning, I woke up to the sounds of honks and beeps. I scrambled out of my bed, and bounded downstairs. “Isabel”, screamed my mom. “Get out of bed and come get breakfast then go get ready”, said mom. I went without a squeal, and I put a pair of high socks, a white blouse, and a black skirt. I grabbed a bowl of cereal. Then, I climbed in the cab and we started off to Time’s Square. “Hello ladies and gents!” blared the loudspeaker. “Welcome to the 40th annual creative writathon. One lucky student will be picked to represent New York at... Washington D.C.! I knew that I just wasn’t ready for this. My parents didn’t look like they wanted to be here either. I carefully pieced my poem together. “Isabel Browning, please hand in your work.” one of the judges said. I slunk down and carefully handed up the great poem and crossed my finger that Eva’s strategy would work. “Katherine Zelder, please hand in your work.” Katherine cheerfully passed her work to the grumpy judges.

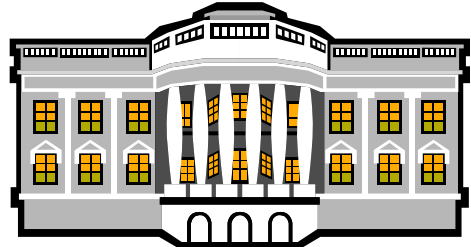
“Our judges can award 100 points in total, so get ready, folks! 70 points awarded to Colin Richard for his excellent work on this story. 78 points for Ashley Gray for her outstanding work on these tricky riddles. 80 points awarded to Anna Park. 82 points awarded to Justin Gray. 85 points awarded to Katherine Zelder. And... the winner is Isabel Browning!!!! Congratulations Isabel! You will be going to Washington DC!! Please come and collect your prizes from the judges.” As I headed to the judges collected 3 human-sized presents from them, Katherine looked at me with envy. I never saw her like that, so I headed over to the stands. “What happened Katherine?” I asked without sarcasm. “It’s so unfair”, she sobbed. “You won 3 awesome prizes, and you get to go to Washington DC, while I’m gonna have to wait ‘till next year!” Those words came out like moldy cheese. “Actually even though you don’t get to go, I was actually planning to give you this...” I said pointing to one of the life sized presents. “Really? Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!” she squealed. I slowly backed myself out of the stands carrying the remaining 2 presents. My parents were watching me as I came up to the bleachers. “Great job kiddo!” my dad said and gave me a big hug. My mom was looking pretty impressed. “Oh my god, you did great

out there Izz McBizz!” screamed Eva. (Eva likes to give me wacky nicknames all the time!). Right now, Lily grabbed hold and squeezed me for a long time. “Let’s go home”, I said, yawning.

An hour later, I woke up in a perfume scented room that was purple all over. Now that I was back at home, it was April vacation, and nationals weren’t ‘till next week, what would I do? My head started falling down and I slowly lulled myself to sleep. Whoosh! Dad was shaking me by my collar when I got up. “Isabel!” he cried urgently. “Nationals got postponed to the day after tomorrow! We have to grab a plane before it’s too late!” “What?” Now I was wide awake and I found myself packing bundles of clothes. 2 hours later, I was fast asleep on the crowded airplane. It didn’t seem like it, but before I knew it, we arrived at our hotel and I had to be carried from the car, since I was fast asleep.

“Isabel!” Now my mom was gently tugging at my sleeve. “Isabel, we have to get ready!” my mom shouted in my ear. It was the morning of the bee and I was sleeping in a wide six person bed. I scurried out of the room then I quickly dressed and tried to comb my hair, but it wouldn’t budge. “Here let me help”, Eva said. She took some hair gel and squirted it all over my long dark hair. “What are you doing?” I asked. “Oh you’ll see!” she said mysteriously. I looked in the mirror and gasped. I looked like Elvis, a little bit worse! Eva burst out laughing until tears came out of her eyes. “Put on a hat!” Eva blurted out. “Well maybe a stocking hat and some gloves would work in February, but it’s April, ya loonhead!” I screamed with fury. “Not those, the ones that gran wears all the time. Didn’t she give you any?” Eva asked. I rummaged through the hats and found a pink one with a big feather. “Just ducky!” Eva said. “Now go out there and win that competition!”

As I got to the White House (you heard me right, the White House!), my mom straightened my hat up and I headed in with a deep breath. The president, sat in the steps in front of 48 children and announced that he was going to be the judge. I gulped and rewrote my fabulous poem that everyone loved, then handed it to a secret service agent, who in turn, handed it to Mr. Obama. After everyone handed in their work, and the president read our magnificent papers, he said this: “I have hosted 3 writathons, but I haven’t seen one like this. So, the winner of Creative Writing 4 U’s writathon is..... Isabel Browning!” All eyes stared at me and my mom broke the silence. “3 cheers for Isabel!” “Hip hip hooray! Hip hip hooray! Hip hip hooray!” After all of that was over, a newspaper reporter, of the *New York Times*, snapped a picture of me and my family that was going to be the headline news for the week!! She also interviewed me. Later, all the fun was over and I sat in my airplane seat with 10,000\$ and a big golden trophy sitting on my lap.



When we got home, and I had a good night’s rest, Dad woke me up and thrust the *New York Times* in my face. There I was, standing in front of the White House with a big stupid hat and a silly grin. I covered my head with the bed sheets. “Are you okay?” asked my dad. “Yeah, fine. I just need some more time to wake up,” I said. My dad left me to consider my options of what to do about the picture.

Hitch a ride to Idaho and take up residency there.

Use my money, buy up every copy of The New York Times that I can get my hands on, and burn them up.

Dye my hair purple, so that no one is going to recognize as the stupid girl who wore that hat.

Admit that I'm the stupid girl, and it will eventually fade away.

Then I had another thought. I could stay just the way I am and be proud that I was the stupid girl in a weird hat that won a nationwide writathon. Some people are best just the way they are.



Aaditi Padhi is a fourth grader at the Crisafulli Elementary School in Westford, Massachusetts. She is nine years old and lives with her parents, Sunita Padhy and Jyoti Bhusan Padhi. She really enjoys writing, and tries to write whenever she gets the time to. She also enjoys reading, art work, swimming, being outdoors, rollerskating, and Odissi dance. She is currently in the New Wave Swim Team.

Life

Srujani Panda

Life is a road,
A road that twists and turns,
A road that few desire,
Because to them, it's just a pyre.

Life is a road,
A road that has many trees whose leaves dangle in front of our face,
But instead of examining each leaf,
We just toss them away.



Life is a road,
A road that comes with many monsters,
Monsters from your worst nightmare,
Monsters you just cover under.

Life is a road,
A road and a test,
A test as fragile as a glass,
A test we don't even try to pass.

Life is a road,
A road that you don't choose,
A road that is made,
Made by *you*.



Srujani Panda is twelve years old and is the daughter of Tanmay and Sunanda Panda. She is a 7th grader at Woodbine Junior High School in Toronto. She is a voracious reader, writes poems, fictions, and stories. She also plays the trumpet and occasionally dances and sings.

My Dream

Megha Mishra

I have a Dream...
A land filled with peace and prosperity
Families live with harmony and joy
People laugh in the streets
And no harm befalls any girl or boy

I have a Dream...
No poverty or despair
No thieves and no crooks
Mother Earth is filled with sunshine
And people are judged by their hearts not their looks

I have a Dream...
Mankind leads a noble life of sacrifice and service
Animals are safe from pain and live in bliss
No war and no destruction
And nothing on Earth would be amiss

I have a Dream...
That the beauty of nature would shine through our very beings
Hatred and lies would be non-existent
Hope is a virtue that everyone has
And that all of us would be persistent



I Believe...
We can reach this perfect world
If we look within us past the malice and greed
Small steps of kindness is all that it takes

“Be the change you wish to see in the world” as Gandhi said



Megha Mishra is eleven years old and is a fifth grader at Level Creek Elementary School in Suwanee, Georgia. She is the daughter of Anurag Mishra and Susmita Tripathy. She loves to read, write, and dance. She is also learning how to play the violin, and is always very kind and helpful to others.

My Field Trip

Aditya Pradhan

A few days ago our entire fourth grade at Grandview Elementary took a field trip to Cranbrook Educational Center. We learned about different subjects related to science.

Our first class was Biodiversity. The instructor talked about threats to the nature and how to prevent them. She also talked about threats to animals. We got to see a fruit bat an owl and a frog and it was fun.

The next class was Astronomy and that was in the planetarium. While we were there it felt like we were either moving up or down! We learned about different constellations like the Big Dipper and how the stars move to make different constellations, this happens about every three hundred years.

Then we learned about different types of masses and friction in Physics. We talked about different kinds of atoms which are smaller than molecules and different types of matter. At the end of this session the instructor took some alcohol, put it in a bottle and shook it up. Then with the help of a machine he put a small electric shock and the bottle was set on fire and everyone screamed!

The final class was Economics. We learned that people back then, cut rocks in half and used them as money to buy things! First we played a game where we pretended to be different countries and we traded things. Then we played another game to sell something with one could sell for how



was Economics. We learned that people back then, cut them as money to buy things! First we played a game to be different countries and we traded things. Then we and there were eight workers and each one was trying play money. Each thing really had cost five dollars but much ever one wished to!

Our trip to Cranbrook Educational Center was extremely fun and informative and I wish I could go again. We learned something very cool in each subject.



Aditya Pradhan is a fourth grader in Grandview Elementary School at Livonia, MI

My Five Senses

Akshita Pattnaik

Eccentric, unique and memorable all describe the typical village of Odisha. The Indian village has a unique touch to it, to make it mesmerizing and unforgettable. I had never experienced anything like it before--the scenic beauty was finished with the perfect addition--the people to match the atmosphere.



The people were strangers to me, but I was family to them. The pinched cheeks, squeezed bodies were to make me feel at home. I have to admit, it was kind of scary at first, but then I enjoyed it.



I cherished the authentic traditions. Women carrying *handis* (the clay pot) on the top of their head, men hauling *bahungas* (poles made of bamboo, more commonly known as *kanvar*) with hay bales of equal weight hanging on each side, and the children frolicking through the streets. I can picture this scene in a part of a Bollywood movie, much like they used the tradition and concept of *lungis*, in the hit song “Lungi Dance”.



Drinking fresh *nadia pani* straight out of young coconuts, then eating the soft pulp with the broken pieces of the outer shell, was enjoyable. The fresh water is much healthier and tastier than the American classics, Pepsi and Coke. When my friends hear about coconut water, most of them say something negative about it, when truly, it's not. I could just as easily say that to Coca-Cola or Pepsi products. So I am proud to be an Indian, being able to have such culture. Without drinking *nadia pani*, I would have probably said the same things.



Everyone knows Krishna as a cow herd. I saw an actual cow herd during my village visit. The cow herding in the mornings is what I remember most. The loud herder would come every morning, and yell “Gai fitta, Gai!” (Implying ‘send out your cows’ to the owners), which was melodious to my ears. As the cows raced after the herd, I sat there and saw every last one. Then he left with the cows, and I waited and waited and waited for them to come back, but they didn't. When it was time for me to leave, I kept on begging my mom to stay just a little longer, until the cow herd came back.

It wouldn't have been that enjoyable without some good scents. The smell that drew me in the most- the wood burning *chuli*, with the aroma of cooking food. Of course, every day in the village starts with, my least favorite smell, the *gobara* (cow dung)! It was strong and overpowered some of the good smells.

This not only gives me the opportunity to physically take a trip, but go there sensationally, too. I long to go back and visit my *gaan*. Sometimes I even wish to live there!



Akshita Pattnaik is the daughter of Nibedita and Bikash Pattnaik of Madison, Wisconsin. She is eleven years old and is a fifth grader at Middleton Cross Plains School District. She likes reading and writing stories in her free time.

Odisha Trip

Prachi Mahapatra



I woke up to the smell of noodles. My maine (aunt) was making Maggie. Then I remembered: Today was my brother thread ceremony! My family and I traveled all the way to India to have this thread ceremony. Not that I am criticizing. I had to stay home with my mamu,main. The rest of my family went to the temple where the thread ceremony was taking place to prepare. I jumped out of bed and quickly put on my new dress, a present from my grandparents. My main and mamu greeted me as I sat down to eat. Together we all went to the temple where the thread ceremony was. When I reached the temple, all of the people were crowded around the room. I pushed my way through so I could see what was happening. My mom was lying on the cot, moaning. She was sick. "Oh no" I thought disgustedly. She had to be sick right on my brother's thread ceremony. I saw my grandma signaling me to come over and eat. My mom recovered right when the ceremony was about to start. We did all kinds of chants. Then we went outside to shave my brother's head. Boy, did he look grumpy! After that we did more chants. Then the Guru had all of the boys who already had the thread ceremony, come over and have my mamu feed them. Then all of us started eating. The only thing I ate was the ice cream there! At about 9:00 we started marching toward the temple. My mom gave me permission to march, only if I would stick with my grandma. It took us nearly an hour to get there itself. We prayed to god and marched back to the other temple. I checked my dad's watch. It was already 11:50! We had to stay longer because we were the hosts. At about 12:40 we were ready to go home. My brother changed into his night clothes and went to sleep as soon as we got home. I stayed up longer and talked with my grandma. I fell asleep on her lap. The next morning we had to get ready for the reception. For this occasion, my mom had bought me a pretty flower dress and sparkly silver shoes from the U.S. At around 6:00pm, we went to the hotel where the reception was held. I met my cousin sisters: the younger one was 8 and the older one was well, I don't know. We talked and laughed and played around until it was time to go. We went home at 12:00 at night! I slept in that day. The next day was our last day we said goodbye to our grandparents. We reached the airport. I bought a book and my mom bought a magazine. Of course it took a couple of days to get back to the U.S. When we got back, we were tired. Then we were invited to a dinner. Fortunately the house we were going to was just across the street. We ate dinner and came back. I hope we can go to Odisha again.



Prachi Mahapatra is 9 years old and is the daughter of Hrudaya and Sunita Mahapatra. She lives with her parents and older brother, Pratyush, in Canton, MI. She is a 4th grader and her favorite activities are dancing, drawing and learning the piano.

My Parents

Sarthak Das

There are many people I look up to, like my teachers, soccer players, cartoon characters, movie stars and many more but I believe that the most important and loving people in my life are my parents! I could not accomplish certain things without their help. In my life they are my first guide and teacher. They taught me how to walk, talk and learn new things. They helped me develop different skills for my future growth. We do many things together like playing, working and learning.



They teach me our culture and religion through participation in various cultural activities. They also teach me how to respect elders and love younger. I have learnt to be honest and truthful from them, for which I get the honest award from my school most of the time. Teachers also trust me because of my honesty.

To be kind and helping others is another important character trait I learn from my parents. Their valuable lessons help me to be cooperative with my friends at school and outside. From them I learn to respect and believe in god. They push me to be a good human being first and then to be respectful. Respect everyone.

Whenever I feel scared or unsafe, I know my parents are always behind me. They always encourage me to have positive thinking. Even when I fail in challenges, my parents encourage me to do better and that gives me confidence to take other challenges. Their encouragement makes me more confident. We get in arguments and fights but in the end we realize our mistakes.

They are my guardians, my guides, my role models and most of all they are my best friends forever.



Sarthak Das is a 3rd grader in French Emersion program. He lives in Brampton, Ontario with his parents and an elder sister. He loves to play soccer and plays guitar.

Mythical Creatures

Anika Satapathy

There used to be many mythical creatures in this world
Some twirled and whirled
Others threw things and flew
Well I will tell you a few

Once upon a time there was a fairy
Her name was Mary
She was green and blue
And she lived in a shoe



Also there used to be a troll
He had a very big mole
People called him midge
He lived under a bridge

Another creature was the Invisible Knight
Who rode with all his might
No one knew his name
He only became visible in a flame

There was the One Eyed Monster
He had long soft purple fur
He scared everyone
But only did it for fun

There also was that Fire Pegasus
She always made a fuss
People called her Pink
She could not skate on an ice rink

There also was the Scaly Mermaid
Her tail was as green as a jade
She would always wear a smile
But she would only swim in the Nile

There was a Helpful Elf
He never thought about himself
People thought his name was Doby
But for all they knew his name could have Moby

Also there was the Fire Dragon
She was so bright she shone
She would protect her castle till night
If anyone passed she would put up a fight

The Fire Dragon's twin was the Ice Dragon
He was mean to everyone
He had not a single friend
No friends till the end



The last one I know of is the Beautiful Veela
She looked like every day she went to the spa
She attracted most people when she appeared
But every time people got close she sneered

There are many more creatures I have not said
But most of them are dead
Look out there might be one behind you
It could be true



Anika Satapathy is a fifth grader at Pointers Run Elementary School in Clarksville, MD. She loves to dance, sing, paint and play piano. She lives with her parents, Tina and Sikhanda Satapathy.

Peace

Aditi Das



To me, 'Peace' looks like...

The fog on Christmas Eve in the sky, the colors of the rainbow after a rain,
snowflakes falling from a dark night.
That is what 'Peace' looks like to me

To me, 'Peace' sounds like...

Quiet like a gentle breeze, water when the cool water falls on my window,
and waves crashing down on a shore.
That is what 'Peace' sounds like to me.

To me, 'Peace' feels like...

Sweet little kisses from my mom and dad, snuggling down into a blanket on a cold night,
and cozy hugs from my relatives.
That is what 'Peace' feels like to me.



To me, 'Peace' smells like...

Flowers blooming at the start of springtime, homemade cinnamon rolls just out of the oven,
and piney fresh Christmas tree
That is what 'Peace' looks like to me.

To me, 'Peace' tastes like...

A soft hot chocolate with marshmallows, homemade samosas from the oven,
and crispy crunch bars.
That is what 'Peace' tastes like to me.



*Aditi Das is a fourth grader at Ashley River Creative
Elementary School in Charleston, SC*

Rise

Saswat Pati

Standing alone, watching those around me, I wonder
What is it to be special, unique, and real, to make blunders?
Dragging myself down a street I see a man who is chained down by ropes
A man with a look in his eyes, as though he has not given up hope
I think to myself, should we remain in safety or be a mover
Jump from the pedestal of home and soar across the future.

Mankind is like the Phoenix who is dying
Weighed down by useless arguments and vying
In the Storm of uncertainty
Mankind lazes about uselessly
Waging war on each other
And each day driving down further and further
Light has been lost for so long since we are at home
That we have forgotten what it means to get out of our comfort zone
Groveling pitifully down remembrance lane
But forgetting what other frontiers mankind can tame
Arguing in trivial lecture
But not putting forth the bigger picture
I know not whether man will get out of this mire
Or rise above with greatest fire



Saswat Pati is twelve years old and lives in Houston, TX with his parents Dr. Arati Nanda and Dr. Debananda Pati. He is a seventh grader at St. John's School. Saswat loves playing Tennis, Star Wars, Legos, and reading books. His hobbies include singing, writing poems, and playing the piano.

Seasons

Triya Mahapatra

Winter

The white scenery
With pretty, shimmering snow
The early sunset



Spring

Flowers start to bloom
The days get longer and warm
Animals are out

Summer

The hot and warm air
And the three months of freedom
Add up to summer

Fall

Red orange yellow
Are the colors of the leaves
Falling throughout fall



Triya lives in Aurora, IL with mom Sarita, dad Manoj and big sister Trisha, and her most favorite family member of late, Snoopy the puppy. She will be an 8th grader in the coming school year at Granger Middle School in Aurora. She loves to spend time with friends, plays piano, is into spring board diving and enjoys playing badminton.

“Seriously....?”

Arkesh Ray

I was being chased by an enormous spider. He wrapped me up in silk and leisurely lifted me toward his mouth. He wrapped me so tight I could barely breathe. I thought I could escape my bonds until.....my mom shakes me awake. “Arkesh” she says. “Yes mom,” I reply sleepily. “We are going to Michigan!”

“What!” I yell my eyes flying open. A thousand questions fly into my head. Before I can even ask one, my mom tells me to get dressed. “Why did ... you...mmme...tell...yyou... Michigan” I stammer. Go get dressed she says again. I brush super quickly (while almost falling asleep and making my head fall in the sink) and got dressed.

After that my mom told me to help my dad put bags in the car. I feel so tired when I drag myself into the car. I think about how warm and cozy it was under my covers how cold it is in the garage. Every time we hit a bump my head wobbles a little. I can barely keep my eyes open. In no time at all I’m back in the dream world.

This time I saw these lightning bolts with weird faces and little tiny hands. When I went up them they said their former king had just died and they needed a new king. Right after they finished talking they shocked me with a volt of electricity and it tingled through my body as if someone was tickling my insides.

I felt a soft tugging and opened my eyes to see my mom. Right when I became Lightning King we had to reach the airport. “Come on, let’s go,” she says. I sluggishly get out of the car. My dad goes and gets one of those luggage cart thingies that I love. I love standing on those things or pushing them really fast and jumping on them. Too bad my dad fills it with luggage.

I push my sister sleeping in her stroller to the check in line. I try to be very patient (I’m not very patient) but very soon I get bored. There’s nothing to do and I hate it when there is nothing to do. I bored to death sit on the luggage cart. Finally after what seemed like a year we get a move on.

Next we go to the security check in. Every time we get to this part I get kind of sacred. Who knows what type of things people bring? When we’re all done (which it doesn’t take too long) we head to the train.

This is my favorite part! I'm the first of my family to board the train. I'm so excited!!! I run as fast as my little legs can carry me (which is pretty darn fast) to the back of the train and plop myself down on the last seat. My parents slowly follow. In A second we are off!

In my head I'm thinking woohoo! This is awesome, but on the outside I'm just sitting there. Soon the train ride is over. I might be one of the first to board but I am one of the last to get off. "Now there is nothing fun to do at the airport!" I whine.

"I'm starving!" my father says. "Let's get some breakfast." We go to some place (personally I don't bother to remember the names of places) to have a breakfast of pancakes and eggs (my dad's favorite). The order takes forever to come.

After about ten minutes of eating my mom gives her words of wisdom. "We better get going or we are going to miss our plane!" Thunder rumbles loudly making my teeth chatter. "5 more minutes," my dad says. After 5 more minutes my mom gets up and tells us to run to make it to our flight. We turn the corner and The plane has left! "Noooooooooooooooo!" my mom says "we missed our plane."



She gets mad at my father for not listening to her. I'm confused. How are we going to get to Michigan now? My father rushes to a nearby flight schedule person and asks her when the next flight to Michigan is. "You're in luck," she says "The next flight is at 9, 2 hours from now!" "We're saved" I say "We're saved!"



Arkesh Ray is a fifth grader who lives with his parents, Kew and Shobhana Ray, and little sister, Arya. He loves technology and loves to read books. He enjoys hanging out with his friends and is extremely kind hearted and really cannot see anyone in misery. He is one of the smartest kids at his school, having won the Spelling Bee and other competitions at his school.

The Beauty of Hope

Amrita Sahu

It is dark, no brightness or source of light
Just sadness, a moonless sky
The wind whispers
The waves surge
In my lonely, pensive mind

And then, from the corner of my eye
A great and lovely sight unfolds
In the form of a bird, trying to gain flight
To soar to new and wonderful heights
And finally, to glide
Into the deep, dark, blue sky

She spread her wings
and leaped into the air
Only to hit her nest's rim
Many times she thought she'd burst into flight
Relentless, she tumbled through the night
Each time I put her back up, watching her plight

Until that one time
When things looked grim
She spread her wings
Which looked nice and prim
And flew gracefully till she was out of sight

Chirping a thanks
That reached my ears
I called out the same
For that little bird let me
Anticipate...
On a sorrowful and despairing night
A feeling filled with the brightest of light



Amrita Sahu is ten years old and a fourth grader who lives in Herndon, Virginia, with her parents, Prakash and Manaswini Sahu. She loves to read, write, and draw. She enjoys classical dancing, both Ballet and Odissi. She is also learning Hindustani classical music.

(The art work at the end of the poem is done by the author)

*** First Prize winner in 2014 Meghna Memorial Award for Creative Writing, Junior Category
CONGRATULATIONS!**



The Black and White Pagoda

Deepak Dalai

The Black and White Pagoda are the most popular destinations in Odisha among tourists. The Black Pagoda is the Sun Temple at Konark, and the White Pagoda is the Jagannath Temple at Puri.

First we will talk about the Konark Sun Temple, often called the Black Pagoda. Among many other sites in Odisha, the Konark Sun Temple is one of the most visited sites in the world. The Sun Temple is devoted to the sun god Surya. It took 12 years to build the Konark Sun Temple. It is built to look like the sun god Surya's chariot. It follows the Kalinga architecture. It was originally built right next to the river, Chandrabhaga, but the water line has receded since then. It is about 77km from Bhubneswar, Odisha. They hold a festival called the Konark dance festival. It is where some of the best dancers in India dance at the Konark Sun Temple. Now you know the glory of the Black Pagoda. But do you know how part of the temple collapsed? I'm guessing you don't know.



Well, that's okay. Nobody actually knows how it collapsed, some say a strong earthquake made the temple fall, and others say it was because of bad construction. What do you think?

Now, the White Pagoda, or the Jagannath Temple is very famous too. It is the shrine to Lord Jagannath. The Jagannath Temple is at Puri, India. Although all worshiped Hindu deities images are made out of stone, Lord Jagannath's image is wooden. They make an exact replica of the image every 12 years. Daily offerings are made to the Lord six times a day. These include:

1. The offering to the Lord in the Morning that forms His breakfast and is called The Gopala Vallabha Bhoga. Breakfast is a seven item treat - Khua, Lahuni, sweetened coconut grating, coconut water, and popcorn sweetened with sugar known as khai and curd and ripe bananas.
2. The Sakala Dhupa forms his next offering at about 10 O' clock in the morning Sakala Dhupa. This generally consists of 13 items including the Enduri cake & Mantha puli.
3. Bada Sankhudi Bhoga forms the next repast & the offering consists of Pakhala with dahi and Kanji payas. The offerings are made in the bhog mandapa, about 200 feet from the Ratna Vedi. This is called Chatra Bhog and was introduced by Adi Shankaracharya in the 8th century to help pilgrims share the temple food.
4. The Madhyanha dhupa forms the next offering at the noon.
5. The next offering to the Lord is made in the evening at around 8 o'clock it is Sandhya Dhupa.
6. The last offering to the Lord is called the Bada Simhara Bhoga.

The temple complex takes up more than 400,000 square feet! It is bounded by a 20 ft high fortified wall. The complex contains about 120 temples and shrines. The highest point in the complex is 129 ft high. The temple has 4 chambers. The temple was originally built by the Kalinga ruler Anantavarman Chodaga. The image of Lord Jagannath was buried under Chilka Lake so invaders wouldn't destroy it.

The temple has a festival called Rath-Yatra. It is when 3 deities are carried by 3 chariots. Jagannath's chariot is huge! It is 35 square feet. It has a height of 45ft high! It has 16 wheels, each 7ft in diameter. More than 4000 people drag this chariot each year.

Here are some interesting facts about the Jagannath temple:

1. The flag always flaps in opposite direction of air.
2. From any place in Puri, you will always find the Sudarshan Charka (Charka at top of Temple) facing you.
3. Normally during day-time, air comes from sea to land and during evening, the vice-versa occurs. But in Puri it's totally opposite.
4. Normally planes do not fly above the Temple.
5. The shadow of the main dome is invisible at any time of the day.
6. The quantity of cooked food inside the Temple remains same for the entire year. But that same quantity of prasada can feed a few thousand people and it can also feed 2,000,000 people. Still, it won't get wasted or it will never fall short.
7. In the Temple kitchen, 7 pots are kept on each other and cooked on firewood. In this process the contents in the top pot get cooked first and then the bottom one.
8. After entering from Singhadwara's first step (from inside of the Temple), you can't hear any sound produced by the ocean. But, when you cross the same step (from outside of the Temple) you can hear it. This can be noticed clearly during evening.

Now I hope you see the Jagannath Temple. I also hope you also see the Konark Sun Temple. If anything is better than seeing one site, it is seeing both.

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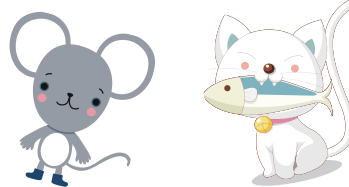


Deepak Dalai, son of Rajashree Kanungo and Pabitra Dalai, studies in fourth grade at Pleasant Hill Elementary in Palatine, IL. He likes to play basketball and read.

The Cat and the Mouse

Aarushi Nayak

This story is about a curious mouse,
and a white cat from Wigabe.
Right now they live in Cabaju,
in the desert and by the sea.



They started to embark on a journey,
to sail to a land far away.
Said the mouse to the cat,
my, oh my! This will take a year and a day!

Then after this, the cat got tired,
and she said, Mouse, oh Mouse,
This is just too tiring for me, oh, me,
and we should go right back to our house.

When the cat looked up at the moon one night,
she said what a large snack that must be,
for the moon is made of tasty Swiss cheese,
what a giant snack for me!

The Mouse said, oh no
that just wouldn't do for we have gone so far,
if we stop right now, we would have to go back,
and it would take longer to get ashore.

Halfway there the mouse met a fish
and, hello my good sir! He said to the fish.
The fish said hello and went down below,
and got a beautiful and shining dish.

The cat and mouse sailed for a year and a day,
when they finally came to land.
They shared some bread and a bit of wine,
then they chased each other in the golden sand



Aarushi, eleven years old daughter of Siddhartha & Dr. Anuranjita Nayak, is a sixth grader at Lincoln Middle School in Gainesville, Florida. She is learning Bharatnatyam and Odissi dance, and also plays violin & piano in the school orchestra.

The Coin

Nisheet Panda

I was a talented mint, one who makes coins. My name was Gordon Washington. I had luscious brown hair, sparkling blue eyes, and pale colored skin. When I was 13, in 1748, I got very frustrated because I made pounds for King George III, which I hated to do because it's hard work and I wanted to be free. One time I was walking with my friend, Johnny Adams, (like I did everyday) I found a bag near the mine that we stopped by to rest. There was a sparkling multi-colored powder in the gold pouch. It had a note on it.

The note said:

This is a magical powder. Promise to only use for good magic.

“It’s all yours.” Johnny said.

“Thanks,” I said. He sprinkled the powder on me. Then, we saw a soldier of King George III with a gun.

“Work or be shot!” said the soldier.

“Never!” I said defiantly.

“We better run...” whispered Johnny. He was already running



“Yup,” I yelled back.

The soldier held up his gun. Bang! I froze in fear and couldn’t move. Johnny was already about a mile away, but I was still standing there. I turned around seeing a bullet speeding towards me. The bullet stopped inches away from me, then fell to the ground with a loud thud.

“Impossible!” said the soldier astonished. He kept shooting but none of the bullets ever touched me. Finally he ran out of bullets and fainted out of surprise. My legs unfroze and I ran for my life. We ran till we reached another friend’s house, Tom Jefferson. I ran towards the small house and through its squeaky door.

“Hey!” Tom called.

“Hello!” we panted back.

After we sat down, I suggested that we should make a coin, for the fun of it. This coin wouldn't be like the others I made for the king. It would be much different from those old things. After about an hour of arguing and debating they agreed to join me. One side of our coin said "We want freedom!"; the other showed a star spangled banner.

"Let's sprinkle some of the powder." I suggested

One second later I'm not in Tom's house, but somewhere else. I look outside to see people crowding around my brother asking if he could be something called a president. I ask my brother, George Washington, "What happened? Where are we? This isn't anywhere near Tom's house where I was a second ago. Do you happen to know what time it is?"

"It's 1783," George said. "We are free from Great Britain. Remember?"

"We threw your coin on the battlefield and the British army gave up," says Tom.

"When you say 'we' were in war with Britain, who is 'we'?"

"Yes, we were in war with Britain for our freedom! Now we have it! Do you remember that coin of yours we made when we were 13 years old? Well, I threw it on the battlefield for luck and they just gave up," said Johnny.

"Finally your coins help," says George.

"You thought my coins were useless?" I shoot back.

"Will you put designs on your coins?" George asks.

"I thought you think they're useless" I reply. "Never mind that, but how did I miss a war. How could I have missed thirty-five years of my own life?"

"We all thought you were in hiding, but maybe that powder saved you from fighting in a bloody war. We just don't know." Tom says.

"And I was the head general." said George.

"It does not make sense" I say. "Why are the people asking if George or I can be the president? I wasn't here for the war. I didn't even help you win."

“Because they know you made the coin. You were the biggest help we got.” Tom says.

“No! *I* was, you numbskull!” George yells at Tom.

In England...

“How did they win!?” boomed King George III.

“We surrendered, Your Highness,” frightfully whispered the soldier.

“I never told you to!” screamed the king. “So, why did you?”

“I don’t know, Sir. I can’t remember...” replied the soldier, “the last thing I can remember is picking up a coin on the battlefield that one of the enemy’s soldiers had thrown. It looked familiar... like the one I saw a boy make 35 years ago.”

“A boy?” asked King George. “Where did you see him?”

“By the mine. He wasn’t cooperating so I decided to shoot him, but my bullets fell to the ground inches before they could reach him.”

“Someone found the powder.” King George whispered to himself. “You must find him and bring him to me. I need to talk to him,” he said now speaking to the soldier.

“Yes.” the soldier replied. Soldier bowed then exited the room, curious why the king wanted to see this boy.

In America...

I woke up at 4:00 that morning. Someone had knocked on the door. Even if I was sleepy, I still opened it.

“Surprise!” shouted the soldier I had seen at the mine. He pushed something on top of my head and everything went black.

I woke up in the familiar palace of King George III. I looked to my side to see Johnny there too.

“This one threw the coin on the battlefield, and--” the soldier said pointing a shaky finger at Johnny. The soldier’s eyes were pleading Johnny to hurt him. He pointed to me then said, “This one made the coin and was the boy I had seen at the mines.”

“Thank you that’ll be all,” the king said to the soldier. The soldier left the room. The King leaned toward to us. “Where’s the powder?” he whispered harshly.

“Why do you want to know?” I replied.

“That powder was mine. I made when I was a kid, bored in an empty palace with no one to play.” His eyes looked sad, but quickly turned happy again. “Use your powers” whispered Johnny.

“Now I want you to be my servants” said George

“We’ll never be!” I said

“Oh really” the king said. A bright light flashed in front of my eyes. I passed out and couldn’t remember a thing after that. I woke up in the same room, but something was different. When I looked up to see the king, I felt that he was the best person in the world, that everything he said was right and correct.

“What can we do for you, Master George?” I coughed. The words didn’t sound right in my mouth, but it was all I could think of, what I could do to please this man.

“It’s working...” King George whispered to himself. “Go to America and bring me that powder, you know the magic one. You may take one of my ships.”

“No need to do that, Master. The powder is here in my pocket.” I replied with a sly grin on my face.

“Okay, then bring your friends back.” boomed the king. “You are dismissed.” I plucked Johnny off the ground. His eyes were glazed over. Johnny looked at the king, like King George was the best person. Unlike me, who was sprinkled with the powder, Johnny was actually hypnotized by King George. I had faked it.

While we were on our way to America, I used the same trick King George tried to use on me. Johnny had no idea why we were on ship.

“What happened?” Johnny asked curiously.

“Nothing. We’re just going to round up an army to fight King George III.”

In America...

When I got my hands on the powder I sprinkled on everyone I could think of. I got them all aboard the ship that King George had lent us and made sure we made it to England safely. My army was the strongest ever. No one could beat me. Not even the king.

The plan was to disguise ourselves as soldiers, get into the palace, hypnotize the king's army, then attack the king and force him to never use his powers for evil again. And everything worked out fine, except the part about forcing him. Since we had the powder, just thinking about it did it.

"Give it up, you're losing." I told the king.

"Never!" the king replied.

"You promised never to use your powder for evil, so give it up," I said.

"I would rather destroy the powder than use it for good." King George said selfishly. He did something with his hands and something happened. I wasn't in the palace anymore. I was sitting at a desk with a newspaper in my hand. I looked at the date. It was 1883. My friends and I should've all been dead by then. To my left was a history book. I opened to see a mention of all my friends, Tom, Johnny, and my brother George. But it didn't say anything about me, my coin, or even our attack at the palace. Like it never happened.



(With support from my parents and my teacher, Mr. Lotz)



Nisheet Panda is 8 years old and is in third grade. He lives in Fremont, California, with his parents, Renuka and Debu Panda. He is very fond of dogs and loves making Lego sets, writing creative stories, playing baseball, and most of all spending time with his family and friends. When he was a beginner at writing all he did was to come up with ideas and give up. But one day he was in the writing class and told someone to type everything he said and that was his first story titled "Blind Boy".

The Dreams of Tikia

Rohan Ray

Once upon a time in the city of Moynaq, there was a family consisting of a mother, father, and six children. The times were difficult; water was scarce. Moynaq was suffering from severe water stress. The family of eight were struggling to stay alive, their health declining and luck decreasing. As time passed, the water stress was winning the best of them. Father and one daughter had died of a rare water disease. Mother struggled to keep alive, but wouldn't abandon her children. They slowly faded as the leaves on an oak shrivel up into flaky brown pieces of matter. The will to live was lost, their heart diminishing from all the deaths in the village, especially their father's. Eventually the youngest child Tikia was the only one still living. The famine had relented, and the people of Moynaq had adapted more to the loss of the Aral Sea. He had a fine childhood, but never overcame the hole in his heart that had scarred him at a very young age.



At age seven he was as smart as a fifth grader, and therefore put ahead in school. But the education system along with the HDI of Moynaq was very poor, and he despised that. His dreams included improving his area of birth, finding a cure to cancer, and moving to a place where all his other dreams would come to life. The last one was his most wanted. Every night he would question his mother about how Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, and so many other souls were successful in life, and his mother replied, "Because they have accomplished your most wanted goal." Tikia didn't think this was possible, but agreed anyway. He still pestered her with questions though. "Why don't we enter a land where a person's dreams can be fulfilled?" he asked. "Right now we have not enough money," says his mother, "But one day we will."

His school life was excellent, but he occasionally wished he had been in a lower grade and not with people three grades higher. In high school he entered college for all subjects and for his soccer skills. He was astounded however, how undersized and hideous the college was. As he looked around, he noticed more and more negative qualities about the building. Again he felt his dreams take over his brain, and thought about the United States. They had most of the top colleges, and here he was in the most horrid place in the universe.

But then one day, a package arrived. It was from his great uncle who had left them money for when he died. It contained 1,000,000 US dollars. He was stunned. Excitedly, his mother spent it on immigration to the United States, but only for him. His life in America went unknowingly. All that is known is that he was a successful graduator from Yale University, he married, had two children, and lived to an old age. His last words were, “America.... A land of opportunity.”



Rohan Ray is twelve years old and studies in Baker Middle School, Michigan. He lives in Michigan with his parents, Akshaya K. Ray and Pushpita Bhuyan. He is a very bright and inquisitive child and loves to read, play chess, travel, and hang out with his friends.

“The Hero” Paul Revere

Deepika Rana

What he did is very clear,
He warned the people that the British were near,
He shouted this for them to hear,
More than the corner of their ear,
He is Paul Revere

He did not sit in a cave,
And didn't shed tears,
He must be brave,
Of course not without his trusty horse and not deer,

Revere must be bold,
No matter how cold,
People must be told,
Of what will unfold,
He accepted no goods or gold,
For the advice he sold,
He risked his life,
Without a strife,



What he did is very clear,
He warned the people that the British were near,
He shouted this for them to hear,
More than the corner of their ear,
He is Paul Revere

But here is a twist,

Only known by some,
The most shocking part of history known to exist,
Come, let me tell you, come come,

Revere wasn't a real hero,
Born a fake,
Only famous by this poet who deserves a zero,
The real hero is Samuel Prescott who made the earth quake,
He was the one who warned the people, not Revere,
Revere was at stake,
While Prescott rode without fear,

There you have it folks,
The stories about the brave Revere are jokes,
But keep these stories the way they are,
Unseen and unheard



Deepika Rana is a fifth grader and is ten years old. She lives with her parents, Bijoylaxmi and Sridhar Rana, and sister, Lipika, in New Jersey. She is a track-and-field athlete, dancer, and swimmer.

The Known Unknown

Simoni Mishra

Research says that women are more effective leaders than men, but unfortunately, we don't get to see many women leaders in Odisha. As we move up on the ladder of prosperity we need to bring diversity to the front. We need to voice our opinion and work together as a diasporic community to bring more women leaders in Odisha.

Because of some of the inherent qualities most women are capable of handling some situations better than men. For instance, multitasking is natural to women since most of them handle their household duties as well as the job related responsibilities. Relationship management, an important attribute of leadership, women know how to deal with this better than men do. According to "Business Insiders" women score more points than men on different attributes of the leadership competencies. Except few areas where men score better, they score much higher on some of the attributes such as "develops others", and "collaboration and teamwork" that are very vital qualities to have when approaching the stage of being a leader.



Even though according to some research woman known to be more effective leaders, walking up the corporate ladder, women leaders abruptly vanish, and often it is observed in the highest levels of the hierarchy. This mysterious phenomenon confronts organizations when they realize that women are the rare lotuses in mud which is the case in higher levels. The women in non-leadership positions have the same situation except they are not the "rare lotuses"; they are "common lotuses" of the same kind. Yet how is it that women are effective and common in lower levels, but at the same time there are women in higher levels that are effective and rare?

In Odisha, the percentage of women leaders is very low when compared to men. The reasons behind this are many folds. For example, illiteracy, ruse among their peers, and non-corporation of the colleagues are primary reasons among many more.

In Odisha, about 50% women are literate but, the number varies from state to state. For instance, in some states, it ranges from 20 to 25% which impacts greatly in generating new leaders. Education needs to get primary attention in those states to understand the importance of leaderships.

Education should be given equal importance in all the districts of Odisha. It needs to be monitored on a regular interval to see the progress of literacy. New regulations and rules need to be created and implemented in such a way so that the women leaders feel safe and stay protected from the various attempts made by some people to discourage them.

According to statistics most of the time women came out to be better leaders. Therefore, this shift of leadership would bring a noticeable change in various sectors of growth in Odisha as well as other places in the world.



Simoni is the daughter of Leena Mishra and is a 4th grader at Cold Spring ES (Magnet School, Potomac, MD). She enjoys dancing, singing and solving math puzzles. Simoni has participated and won various competitions in dance, music and maths. She was awarded in Subrina Biswal, OSA Got Talent, and Champu Chhanda competition in the past OSA Conventions.

The Life of a Sock

Shreya Padhy

Hi, I'm a sock. My life is not the best. But I still go everywhere and experience the world! But now I am in a box, and it stinks so much in here! Oh I know, I think it's called a garbage can? Anyway let me tell you my story all the way from the beginning.



So, I was on a table, and this person was sewing me with other types of cloths, and made designs on me! I was white with colorful rainbows. I was packed in a random box. When they took me out of the box, I was in a place that was completely different. Then it hit me!!! I was in a store, a few thousand miles away from where I was born. These random people wrapped me up with a transparent package. It was better than the box. At least you can see through it. I was hanging on a metal hook for many, many days, without any change. People came and people went. No one really cared. Then suddenly, this little girl came and took me out of the hook. She called her mom and began to talk. I could not listen because I was still wrapped in the plastic package. After a while, I was dropped in a cart. I was really sleepy. So I slept. About an hour later, the little girl picked me up and dropped me with a THUMP! It kind of helped, the transparent wrapper helped! The girl opened the wrapper and picked me up. She wore me, and to be honest her feet did not have a pleasant smell at all. What could I do? I mean, I have a job to keep, all feet should stay warm. The girl just suddenly screamed “Where did my shoes go?” First of all, what are shoes? I really did not care. After about 5 minutes, I went into something. I had no idea what it was. I think it was a shoe! That’s what the girl was screaming about. I was seeing a lot of cool things. Well, the job was not so bad after all! When I got back home, I was not white anymore. I was covered with mud! YUCK! It was the most disgusting moment ever! But I knew that it will definitely happen again, so I needed to get used to it.

The girl dropped me in a machine which was filled with water and bubbles (washing machine)! I went round and round, up and down, clockwise and anti-clockwise, in all possible directions. At times, the movement was slow. At times, the movement was very fast. There were many other things that were rubbing against me. I was getting bombarded from all sides. There was every color, smell of filth inside. After some time, things started to improve. I came out from that machine and was thrown into another squared shape machine (dryer). I was all cold and wet. It was very windy inside, but it felt good. Thank God, the wind was hot! I was once again going round and round, and in all directions, many, many heavy things falling over me. When I finally came out of the second machine I was all warm and not wet. I was a bit dizzy but I could manage it.

The little girl picked me up and took me with her, and do you know what she did?! She paired me up with a black sock! And that sock was like the total opposite of me! I was really sad and I wanted to get

partnered with my twin sister! Anyway a few months later, getting use to all of the things which happened in the past, and got a hole. Then the little girl said bye to me, and put me in the garbage can. And that's how I ended up being here! I will sure miss that little girl.

I guess a life of a sock is not so bad; you get to experience the world and get an opportunity to serve people! You become the protector and serve the human being until your last day. More often people do not recognize my value and do not appreciate the fact how important a role I play in a day to day life. Objects are more often ignored sensing that they don't have a life. But the ignorant people don't realize that they are also made up of objects. They more often don't take proper care as a result of which I get thrown before my life ends. I have attempted so many times to let those ignorant people know that I have a life too. It is so important to recognize my life through your heart/soul and treat me well. People talk so much about being green and environment friendly, yet they do not stop buying too many unnecessary things, such as more pairs of socks than they need and throwing them before the end of my life.

I need to go now; I can see the garbage truck is coming with the huge engine sound! I hope in my next life I will have so much fun, respect and care from you all!



Shreya Padhy is ten years old and lives in Ottawa, Canada with her parents Smita Mahapatra and Sushant Padhy. She is a 5th grader at Adrienne Clarkson Elementary school. Shreya enjoys dancing Odissi, swimming, ice skating, singing, biking, and speech competitions.

The Time Machine

Saheb Panda

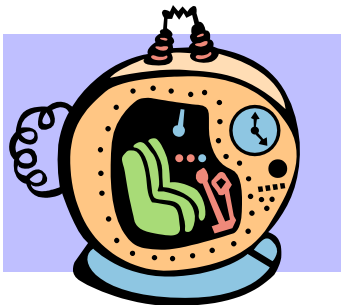
It all started one day when a person walked down the sidewalk. The person was a boy named James and he was a very curious boy. Whenever he came across something that looked interesting, he would stop, pick it up, and inspect it a bit. Although he is curious, he was also talented and smart.

So, James was walking down the sidewalk when he came across a funky-looking map. The map was brightly colored and was very complicated. The path to where it ended was in so many twists and turns that James will probably get lost trying to even follow the trail. Also, the path leads the very dark, tangled forest. The forest is so tangled that legends have been told that people, brave people, have tried to cross the forest and never got out. But at the end, the map leads to a tall, freaky machine that James recognized as a time machine.

James always wanted to see a time machine, so he began his quest right away. He was doing fine until he reached the Quicksand Beach. It is said that people never, ever got to cross the Quicksand Beach. James looked up and he saw the vines hanging from the jungle trees. He jumped up, grabbed the vines, and started swinging on the vines like a gorilla going crazy. At the end, James crossed the vines and started the quest again.

James was running this time because he was afraid about running into other obstacles that will either injure him really bad or just plainly kill him. Because he was running, and by the fact that James was a fast runner, James reached the dark, tangled forest. Remembering his lucky shark tooth that James's mother gave him just in case, he entered the forest.

Inside the forest was very damp and murky. James did not like the fact that the forest was damp and murky. He got so confused that in one hour, he realized that he had going in circles for such a long time. After James started walking straight, he can just make out a narrow sidewalk. Once he followed the trail, James actually got out of the dark, tangled forest. He was laughing at his good luck.



It was several minutes before James realized that he was right now in front of the biggest palace he had ever seen. There was the owner of the palace and my, did he look happy! He walked right up to James and said,

“Congratulations! You’re the lucky winner! Your prize is the time machine 20000! Not only does it teleport back in time, but also teleports to other places in the same time.” James was very surprised and very happy that he just won a time machine. He went inside and programmed the time machine to teleport to his house.

After a millisecond, James returned home. He went inside the house and told all about his adventure to his mother. But it was several hours before James’s mother would stop punishing him!

Moral: Don’t go anywhere without informing your parents, guardians, and any other care person.



Saheb Panda is a 6th grader at Novi Meadows Elementary School in Novi, MI

The True Colors of a Hero

Renee Sen

What defines a hero? Heroes are people who make a difference in a person's life. They are everyday people who save someone in crisis or in distress. People tend to consider celebrities as a hero. But do the celebrities make a difference to other people? Do they help other people? "Wow! He is the only person who could do that!" – They are the heroes. They "turn a tragedy into triumph." It is not what they wear or the things they say that elevates them to a hero status. Without a doubt, it is the actions they perform and the personalities they exhibit that make them stand out among others, rather than being in the right time and place. Who would you consider a hero? Well, I'll tell you now.

You must've heard the myth, "Achilles myth". This story shows how Achilles is a hero. Achilles' body was immune to any harm except his heel. His mother, holding Achilles by the heel, dipped him in the River Styx which made his body insusceptible to any danger. The only part that was not dipped however was his heel. Because of his immune body, he could fight any villain without getting wounded. "Nobody could hurt him, so he fought without fear and with panache." His personality of being fearless and crushing the evil elements made him a hero.

To prove that a person's personality makes them a hero, "Superhero Image, Justice League" shows how it hides their original personalities. Their costumes do not show that they are a hero. Did you think they were heroes because of their bold costumes and cool names like Superman? Hearing the word "super" probably made you think, "Oh! He must be a hero". They are not based on their costumes and names. They are a hero because of their traits of caring for the citizens of the country, and their fearlessness of defeating villains.

A hero could be seen anywhere, including the TV. I've seen a hero on the TV! This hero is helping others and it is, "Sankara Eye Foundation." There could be many heroes in this foundation. But they make one hero that helps thousands of people. But how are they a hero? Some people in India are in need of eye care. They don't have the money for it though. This caring foundation helps people find their path and turned a "tragedy into triumph." They also made a difference in those people's lives. But the foundation didn't just make a difference in the people in need of eyes. They made a difference in other people's lives. The foundation showed the other people in the world what they can do to help you. They aren't just making differences in people's lives... They are making people heroes! They advertise on the TV how you can help by donating money. They give you a chance to be a hero! This shows the personality of this hero, caring and giving.



Now this example show how kids can be heroes! Wait... kids? Yes! Kids can be heroes too! In many schools, they do a “Food on the 15th” program. It’s not joining, it giving. We give food to people who are older than us, more likely our elders. How is this being a hero? Well, many elderlies have to buy their medicines. They have to pay for it. But they don’t always have enough for food to buy; after all, they need to buy medicines. They shouldn’t have to decide between food and medicines. That’s where we come in. We take the food out of their deciding list. Kids in many schools bring food to their school and deliver it to the retirement homes, where the elderlies live. In my school we help diabetic people. We also get specific food for our class without salt or sugar. Sometimes we get soups, fruits, beans, peanut butter, and more. We just have to watch carefully, making sure no sugar or salt is added. Now how is this being a hero? We are helping people in distress and dilemma. We make a difference in those lives those are in need. We show our kindness and our care for others.

Heroes become heroes because of their personality traits, not the time and place of the event. Just because people are in the right time and place of a crisis, does not make them a hero. They just could be bystanders, standing there in silence and awe. They might even walk away and pretend they were never there. What make people heroes are their personalities of courage, of their actions, and to help others in need. Being brave, fearless, caring, kind and helping someone in distress can make someone a hero. You might not get anything for being a hero sometime, but you do get a proud family and being happy for what you did.



Renee Sen is a 6th grader at Clarksville Middle School, in Columbia, MD. She is 11 years old and enjoys reading, writing, arts, drawing, and learning Odissi dance. She lives with her parents, Sikha and Brahma Sen.

Who we really are?

Diya Swain

Who we are and why we are different from other cultures

We are from India but, we really are from Odisha. It is a state in India. I was born in America. I am an Indian because I celebrate Indian traditions in my family. Since my parents are from India and rest of my family lives in India that makes me an Indian as well. Most of my Indian friends are born in America. They are Indians for the same reason as I am. We are special from other Indian cultures as we follow traditions from Odisha. Everyone has something in common and something different based on their culture.



We are different from other cultures because we eat different food, wear different clothes, and celebrate different holidays. In India we celebrate Holi and in America we celebrate Saint Patrick's Day. America celebrates Thanksgiving and India doesn't. We celebrate Ganesh's Birthday and America celebrates Easter. In Holi we throw colored powder and in Saint Patrick's Day we wear green. In Ganesh's Birthday we do a big Puja and in Easter we hide eggs. In Thanksgiving America does a big feast with turkey. In India we celebrate all or most of our god's birthdays. These are some traditions that make us different.

It is hotter in India than some places here in Ohio because India is near the equator and it is a tropical place. The winter temperature in India is similar to summer temperature in Ohio. Imagine how hot it will be in summer in India! Due to tropical weather India grows lots of food than Ohio or Michigan like coconuts, the jasmine flower, and bananas. Our food is different than other cultures because it is spicier and we put different kind of spices to the food.

Our clothes are different as we wear Salwar, Ghagra and Sarees. There is one more interesting thing I didn't mention and we have two birthdays. One is on Odisha calendar and the other one is the day we are actually born. This is why we are different from other cultures.

Things I liked during India visit

The things I like about India are that I used to go on my grandpa's scooter to eat egg with him. I also liked going to the sea beach because I got to ride the camels. I enjoyed going to Jaganath temple in Puri. I enjoyed doing fireworks with my grandmas and grandpas and seeing those colorful colors in the sky. I enjoyed eating Pani Puri with everybody. I liked seeing my aunt the first time and at her wedding I liked to dance and take pictures. I enjoy meeting my grandmas, grandpas, cousins, uncles, and my aunts. I have many pictures of my times in India but, that was when I was little and I hope I go to India very, very soon.

Things I will carry on to my children

When I grow up I want to teach my kids about my culture so they can tell their kids. First I need to learn from my parents. From my mom I want to learn how to cook Indian food. From my dad I want to learn to study well. I also want to carry on how to celebrate my traditions and holidays. The first time I went to Holi I had lots of fun and I learned that in Holi you throw colored powder and sometimes you put it in a water gun with water and spray it on people. I want to pass on the stories I have read in Indian mythology books that my mom and dad read to me. I want to share the good things that I learn from the books and the cultures to my children so that they can pass it to their kids.



Diya Swain is nine years old and lives with her parents, Deepak and Mamuni Swain, near Cleveland, Ohio. She is in third grade and likes to read, and write imaginative and magical stories. Diya likes to spend time with her family and friends. She has a passion for Kathak dance.

Winter Olympics

Shobhit Pradhan



One of the things I liked to watch was The Winter Olympics. It took place in Sochi, Russia. The events are Ice Hockey, Speed Skating, Short Track, Figure Skating, Biathlon, Cross-Country Skiing, Ski Jumping, Alpine Skiing, Snowboarding (half pipe), Snowboarding (cross), 4-men Bobsled, 2-men Bobsled Skeleton and Lugeing.

The best one I liked is snowboarding (cross). I like Snowboarding (cross) the best because it gets to race other teams. In Ice Hockey, you are supposed to try and score goals with a puck on the ice. We have to skate to the goal to get it in.

In speed skating you are supposed to race the opponent in one lane, switching lanes every lap.

In Short Track you are supposed to race multiple opponents, staying in a boundary line.

In Figure Skating, you are supposed to perform tricks skating around in an ice rink.

In Biathlon, you are supposed to ski on a track and at one point, archery. You carry bows on your back.

In Cross-Country skiing, you're supposed to ski across a very long course.

In Ski Jumping, you're supposed to jump off a ramp going down a hill on skis. Jump as far as you can go.

In Alpine Skis, you're supposed to go down a track on skis, within the fastest time, staying in boundary.

In Snowboarding (cross), you're supposed to race other opponents. In Snowboarding (half pipe), you're supposed to perform tricks.

In 4-men bobsled and 2-men bobsled, you're supposed to go down a track in a bobsled within the fastest, even though there are different number of people.

In Skeleton, you're supposed to go down a slope on your tummy, on a type of sled.

In Luge, you're supposed to go down a slope on a type of sled in sitting position.

That is all about winter Olympic events I know.



Shobhit is 9 yrs old and ia a 3rd grader at New Albany School in New Albany, Ohio. He lives with his parents Akshay & Mamta Pradhan. He has lots of interest in sports like tennis and soccer. He also likes playing the piano.

Women

Diya Kar



Realms of Paper, Poets have used
To portray her charm and her mood
Reels of film, have been taped
Still she finds a new way to captivate.
Charming than a floating lotus
Alluring than a dancing peacock,
All colours look good on her
She dazzles in whatever she wears.
Star shines when she smiles
And storm comes when she cries
Hundreds of qualities lie in her
She is truly the God's messenger.

Emperor acquire the land,
While Warriors fought the war,
Kings made the monuments for her,
That shows her value and power.
You may be a millionaire,
A charming prince or a great emperor,
You have to bend your knee
To get her love and win her within.
She is sometimes a mother,
Sometimes a wife, daughter or a sister

She comes in many forms

Change our life and shapes our character.

The beginning of the human life starts in her womb,

She brings us to the world & raises us like a bloom.

A salute to the women & a salute to her divinity

Never forget that our life is a tribute to HER!!!



Diya Kar, daughter of Gouri Kar and Swayam Pati, is a fifth grader. She likes writing stories and poems. She won the Olive Garden Essay competition National winner, for fourth grade, in 2013. She also likes doing art and dancing.

A Disastrous day in Middle School

Debanjan Nandan Chowdhury

It was November 2011 when I was in Eighth grade in Rocky Hill Middle School. That was a time when I had lost all my past reputation because of rumors and things I lacked. I was slow in learning and could not make many friends. There were other students who made fun of me, even for my religion. I was certainly depressed. Even, I was afraid to walk in the Middle School hallways. I was afraid of getting beaten up and being criticized by a bunch of students which could humiliate me in front of the whole school. Wherever I walked, I mostly heard rumors about myself and people gossiping about me. I was sad as well as mad. In classes students would bully me by messing around with me in bad ways. No one talked to me. It was so frustrating, that I felt like bullets were going into my heart. Every comment was like a lightning fire on me.

As I was an emotional kid, all such actions were pretty insulting. In school I always felt separated from others. They all made fun of my name, whenever they saw me. If I tried to talk to them, they would criticize me in bad ways and call me a stalker. The bad kids would always bother me in class. Even though I was very depressed, I suppressed it at home. I was in agony for three constant years in Middle school and before that also, but a little bit. At times I thought, I would react seriously to those students, who humiliate me. However, they were in groups, they were strong. I was not strong enough before them. I was also afraid, if I do something wrong, I may be suspended from school. I certainly did not want to be suspended from the school. These things affected my life in a tremendous way.

One day, I was on my way to the gym. I was really scared as I walked. Then all of a sudden in the hallway, an African American (big guy) named John Brown, alias JB came over and beat me up while criticizing me. A lot of students were scared of John in school. He hit me in the neck, shoved me into the walls really hard and tried to take my stuff from my backpack and did things he thought was funny. During the scene, his gang started laughing around me and called me names like “You Indian, you smell like curry, you ugly, dumb...” and many more. Some even told me to speak English. I was so much down emotionally, that I could not think that I could come back to my normal life in the next five centuries.



I was all sore and agitated and then Raul came up with Edward. Edward liked my red binder and called it his briefcase. He came up to me and said, “You stole my briefcase, give it back to me.” He would try to take my stuff in class always. He also made fun of me and said, “You are a restart, you are slow in studies.... son.” They along with other friends, came up to me and said the same humiliating words, “You

Indian, you smell like curry, son, use some lotion and speak English.” They also made fun of my food, my accent and bullied me in bad ways. I was not injured severely on the outside. But, on the inside I was depressed and felt a rage. Even at times, I felt like finishing those kids right there. I know that is not right. However, at that time the anger was not letting me think, what is right and what is wrong.

The issue was not over right there. I walked into the gym locker room feeling very nervous for getting bullied. While changing into gym clothes, a white guy named Johnathan Smith saw the sacred thread which was around my neck. (Just a little background... I belong to the Brahmin Caste in Hindu Religion. As a ritual, every boy in my caste has to go through a sacred thread ceremony. After the ceremony, we are supposed to hang a thread on our neck and chest.) He had seen Tarzan wearing that in the movie and said, “Hey Tarzan, are you a monkey? When did you come from the jungle? You have a thread which makes you look like Tarzan. Why did you come over here, are you gay?” That pissed me off right there. He criticized my thread and said that it is for jungle settlers like Tarzan. That kid is really perverted. He came close to me and gave dirty lectures.

The issue did not stop with black or white kids. An Indian kid named Raghu Sharma started making fun of me, on the same topic. He said, “Hi Tarzan, when did you come from the jungle and what made you come. You are a monkey, and monkeys raised you. That is why you are an Indian who is not among us. You are not brilliant like us. You need help? It is better for you to go back to India. Look at your accent. You were born here and yet you have the accent a little bit.” He was gone, but trouble was not over. An Asian kid named Albert came and began, “You have the same shoes as me, you stalker. Who do you think you are? He stepped on my shoes and shoved me around.

A lot of Indian kids always separated me from their groups. Like Raghav, Raj, and a lot more Indians. After changing clothes, I walked into the gym lockers and Raghu said, “You are an Indian but you suck at sports.” Raj said, “You stupid Indian, you are not in higher math, do not get honor roll. You are going to screw our reputation.” Raj Patel was another Raghav Sharma kind of person, but he bragged a lot more. If you even talked to those kids, they will not answer because they think they are more superior to you.

By the end of the day, I was so down; I could not feel that I had any existence. The incident gave me physical pain from getting beaten up, emotional and mental pain for being mocked at. It felt like a lightning bolt had hit me really hard, for a while. I was mad and sad at the same time. Most of these things were probably a joke for some, but they had no idea what I was going through. I was very lonely. It is said, “No social life causes depression.” Anyone in such circumstances can go up to a certain point. After it crosses the limit they land up in situations when they take guns to places, where they are not supposed to and shoot a bunch of innocent kids and people. The Society thinks they are the root cause of the problem. The Police think they need mistreatment and punishment. Law and order might send them to life sentence or mental hospital, where they may get electric shock. If you think seriously, does any of

it addresses the root cause of the issue? In my view, the kids who were bullying should be punished. They never get punished, as the kids who get bullied lack the courage to speak it out.

This gym story was an incident that had impacted my life in bad ways. After Middle School, I was on my mission to prove to everyone that I was more superior to them. I was really smart, but I was very emotional and slow in studies. That was standing in my way to prove anything. I felt those American Asians and American Indians, who forget their core values and origin and consider themselves as assimilated Americans, should bleach their skin. I am sure they will not be liked by their relatives in India or back in their country of origin. I remember, when I used to have such bad attitude, my relatives never liked it. Before Middle School, I was not really paying attention to such things; I was just like others, enjoying life. But after that incident, I was never able to stay peaceful. Foreigners, as they land in US start learning such bad attitudes forgetting their great heritage and values of life.

When I look back, this was a great lesson in my life and gave me determination to prove that I am much superior to those kids. Today I am scouting, swimming and maintain honor roll every quarter. However, when I see a shooting incidence in TV, I feel the person who did the shooting, may not always be a copy-cat or crazy guy. There is a possibility that he has undergone humiliation and depression, which has crossed its limit. Until we address the root cause and raise the values of our lives as friends, brothers, sisters, family, school and community, it will be difficult to bring an end to such things. The underdog will always be blamed in today's world. Does it bring the solution?



Debanjan Nandan Chowdhury is a sophomore at Clarksburg High School, Clarksburg, Maryland. He lives with his parents, Debaki Nandan and Anjana Chowdhury in Germantown, Maryland. Debanjan is a Life scout and has interest in playing Tabla and performing in dramas.

A Story of Fools

Priyam Mohanty

Once upon a time, there was a woodcutter named Igor that lived near a forest with his wife, Irina. One day, Igor asked Irina to watch the fire, while he went out to chop down some trees. Later on, Igor returned and exclaimed, “This room is cold! Why didn’t you watch the fire, Irina?” She responded, “I did, Igor. I watched it until it died!”

Igor slapped his palm against his forehead in despair and called Irina a foolish woman. He told her to light the fire again while he went out to cut some more wood. A passing stranger watched this scene play out through a half-open window. Being a cheat and a trickster, he decided to try to trick Irina into giving him the coat hanging on the peg near the fireplace. He waited until Irina had lit the fire, then knocked on the door.

Irina opened the door and the trickster said, “It’s a cold day. I noticed your fire through the window. May I warm myself for a little while, ma’am?”

Irina happily responded, “Of course you can. Come on in.”

The trickster came in and sat down. Irina started up a conversation.

“Where have you come from?” asked Irina.

“I’m from heaven,” replied the cheat.

“Really? My father passed away a few months ago and I’m certain that he’s also in heaven!”

“Of course. We are both neighbors in heaven.”

“Wonderful! Tell me, how is he doing?”

“He is doing well. However, it is very cold in heaven. Often times, he comes to me complaining about the weather and wishes he had a warm coat to keep away the cold’s touch,” the cheat said, pointing towards the coat near the fireplace.

Frowning, Irina said, “My poor father... Please, take this coat and give it to my father, if it’s not too much of a hassle for you.”

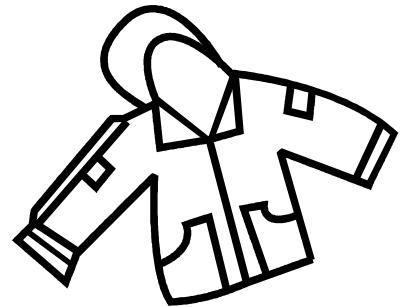
Chuckling, the cheat replied, “Of course not! I am glad to see that you care for him so much. I will make sure I give him this coat. Thank you for your hospitality!” And with that, he left in a state of joy.

Later on, when Igor returned, he found that his coat was missing from the peg. He confronted Irina, “Where is my coat?” Smiling, Irina related the earlier events of the day, pleased that she was able to help her father keep warm in heaven. However, Igor was irritated. “Bah! I’m leaving home. I shall only return if I find a greater fool than you, Irina!” With that, he left in search for the cheat. Igor found footsteps leading towards the cheat’s house. He arrived just in time to witness the cheat hand the coat to his wife and leave. Igor waited until the cheat was out of sight, then he walked to a pig near the cheat’s wife.

“Greetings, O Great Pig!” he exclaimed.

The cheat’s wife, confused, said, “What are you doing?”

Igor responded, “This big resembles my wife’s long-lost brother. Who knows, he might have changed into this pig. May I take this pig home so my wife can talk to him?”



The cheat’s wife giggled, thinking “*What a fool!*” She then said, “Of course you can take your brother-in-law home.”

Cleverly improvising, Igor replied, “Thank you so much! But it is bitterly cold. My wife will feel very sad to see her brother come home shivering.”

“Here, take this. Cover your dear brother-in-law with this coat. And why don’t you take him in our horse carriage?” said the cheat’s wife. She handed Igor the coat and put the pig in the horse carriage. Igor got onto the horse and rode away into the forest.

When the trickster returned, his wife told him the earlier events of the day. He was enraged. “You foolish woman! You have given him the coat, the pig, AND the horse carriage! I am going to go get them back, and until I find a greater fool than you, I’m not coming back!”

Meanwhile, in the forest, Igor figured that the cheat is surely going to be coming after him. He hid the coat and the horse carriage behind a lot of foliage. Then he sat down and waited. Soon, the cheat came running towards him and stopped, panting. “Hello sir! Have you seen a man passing this way, in a horse carriage?”

Igor replied, “Yes, he passed this way a while ago!”

The cheat, dismayed, said, “Do you think he would have gone very far?”

“Well, I am a champion runner. It would take me around a half-hour to catch up with him.”

“Really? Please, do catch him and I will reward you!”

“I can’t leave this hat here, though!” Igor pointed towards his hat on the ground.

“Take it with you, then.”

“No, I cannot! My master has trapped a golden bird under it. He ordered me to not let go of it until he returns, even if someone offers me a gold coin.”

“Fine! Here, take FIVE gold coins and go! I will watch your hat.” The cheat handed five gold coins to Igor.



Happily, Igor thought, *I have finally found a greater fool than Irina! I can go home now!* With that, he ran off into the woods towards the hiding place of his recovered belongings. Taking the horse carriage, pig, and coat, he went back home exultantly.

Meanwhile, the cheat sat down to guard the hat. After a few minutes, he decided that he would take the supposed golden bird under the hat and just put a stone in its place. The cheat upturned the hat carefully, and to his astonishment, he found the hat empty. *Oh no*, he thought, *There’s no bird here! I have been tricked!* Dejected, he walked home.

His wife confronted him, “You are finally back! So you did find a greater fool than me!”

The cheat replied, “Yes, I did. It is myself.”

Priyam Mohanty is a 9th grader at Wilcox High School, Santa Clara, California

A Walk with Grandpa

Meghna Nanda

He walks to my room to see me idling all day.
“Come, we shall go for a walk,” he would say.
Old yet strict and tough, he forces me out.
Our ridiculous buffoonery rising about.

We walk on our daily path nearby,
His eyes jolly and cool like the summer evening sky,
His slow steady steps, his posture eased
As if the existence of time has ceased.

He narrates me stories so funny and queer,
His laughter booming for all to hear,
Never hesitating to tell them once more,
Making my stomach uncontrollably sore.

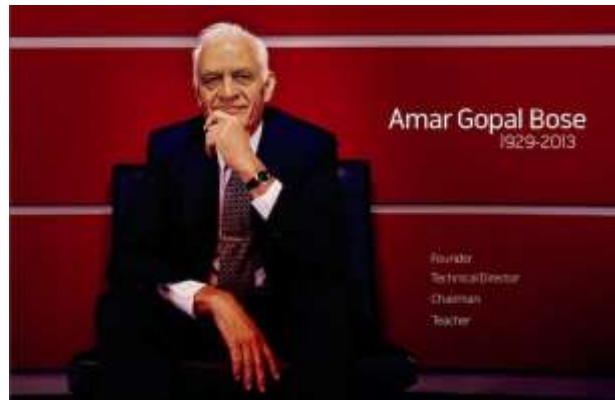
We finally come back home long after an hour,
Our thunderous laughter roaring with power.
My childish, happy self will forever know
Away our best time together will never go.



Meghna Nanda is an eighth grader who lives with her parents, Sukanta and Snigdha Nanda, in Santa Clara, California. She likes to play the piano. Meghna is also learning Hindustani classical music and Odissi dance.

Amar Bose: teacher, entrepreneur, and innovator

Devarun Dass



Childhood

Amar Gopal Bose was born on November 2, 1929 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. His parents were Noni Gopal Bose and Charlotte, an American mother. His father was an Indian freedom fighter from Calcutta. Bose's father arrived in the U.S with only \$5 dollars in his pocket. His mother was a schoolteacher of a French and German descent. Bose's mother was a strict vegetarian and was interested in Hinduism. When she would cook food, Bose could smell the freshly grounded spices. The Bose family lived in a white neighborhood. Amar Bose was always bullied in his childhood.

He learned many life lessons from his father that made him a fighter in life. His father advised him to learn boxing in his teens. Bose was mistreated by peers due to his color. It was difficult for the Bose family to rent a house in a white neighborhood and dine in restaurant. Bose learned to play classical violin. Bose's father had an electronics repair shop. He learned to repair model trains and home radios, and helped his family income. At thirteen, he was running a full-fledged shop. He was the only Indian kid in his block. Bose had a rough childhood. The Bose family went through severe racial discrimination and humiliation. He gained good values from his parents.

Education

Bose was a brilliant student. He graduated from Abington Senior High School in Philadelphia. Due to his interest in electronics, Bose studied Electrical Engineering at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). He received a scholarship to go to MIT. He finished his Bachelor, Master, and Doctorate in Electrical Engineering. He worked with famous professors at MIT. In his school days, Bose learned to be self-sufficient. Bose kept on playing violin and developed interest in classical music. He relaxed while playing violin. Bose chose to buy a hi-fi speaker system instead of wasting time on game

devices. He liked to listen to classical music using audio speakers. The quality of the speakers was bad. He wanted to improve the quality of the speakers.

Bose spent a year in Eindhoven, Netherlands in a research lab at Phillips Electronics. He pursued his study of the mathematical side of communications theory. He reached his goals of academic brilliance. Bose finished his PhD working under the guidance of Norbert Wiener, one of the greatest mathematicians of 20th century. Bose completed his PhD by writing a mathematical thesis of non-linear systems of communication theory. After Bose finished his Doctorate he began to teach at MIT. He was also conducting research on physical acoustics and psychoacoustics.

Profession

Bose got a Fullbright scholarship to go to India after his graduation. Bose met his first wife Prema Parthasarathy there. He worked in Calcutta and New Delhi for one year. Teaching at MIT gave him enormous pleasure. Mostly he taught courses on Electrical Engineering and Acoustics. Students flocked to his classes as he taught students independent and critical thinking in his courses. Students admired him as a great professor and an effective teacher.

Bose kept on doing research to improve the quality of audio sound. He put a tremendous emphasis on mentoring graduate students. Throughout his teaching career Bose maintained high standards. He has inspired generations of engineers. He was a great mentor. He received many awards for his wonderful teaching and pioneering work. His peers and students called Bose a “legend”.

Entrepreneurship

Bose was not happy with the quality of the available speakers. He did his research on the audio speakers to improve the quality of the sound. His passion for speakers helped start his business with the help from his colleagues. Bose borrowed \$10,000 from Professor Yuk Wang Lee to start Bose Corporation. He started Bose Corporation with former MIT graduate Sherwin Greenblatt. Bose's first product was the 901 Direct/Reflecting speaker systems. Bose Corporation was privately held. Bose Corporation has 12,000 employees now. Bose products were sold globally. Bose Corporation surpassed big companies like Phillips and Sony. Bose Corporation became a successful company. Bose made noise canceling headphones and wave radios. Bose Corporation put speakers into top automakers including Mercedes and Porsche cars. Bose encouraged employees to do many great things.

Legacy

Amar Gopal Bose breathed his last on July 12, 2013 at his home in Wayland, Massachusetts. He was first and foremost a teacher. Bose was a famous professor and the owner of Bose Corporation. Bose was known for his success as an inventor and businessman. Amar Bose taught at MIT for 45 years. In 2011, Bose donated major shares of Bose Corporation to MIT. The shares are supposed to help with further education and research. But it is Bose's passion and dedication to scientific research in the area of acoustics that have had the greatest impact on society. Amar Bose is one of America's great pioneers and

innovators. Thanks to his dedication to teaching and innovation, his work will continue to bear long after his passing. While he's best known for founding the globally recognized audio company that shares his last name, Bose holds a number of patents for acoustics, electronics, and communications theory. His acoustical products are used in Olympic stadiums, Broadway theaters, and landmark buildings such as the Sistine Chapel, and mosques in Mecca. Amar Bose's life is worth emulating by the students of the 21st century.

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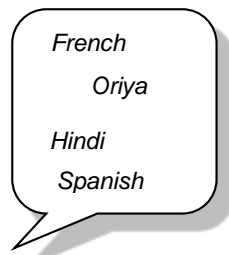
Devarun Dass is an eighth grader at Harmony School of Excellence in Houston, Texas. He is the son of Dr. Arunima and Dr. Raghu Dass. Devarun is a friendly, energetic, curious, and gifted-talented student. He plays basketball and soccer in the school team.

Being Multilingual

Abhinav Mohapatra

Through its elegance and beauty, the French language has ensnared me within its seductive grip. To capture the grace of the tongue, I have strived to capture its every nuance, lest I do not do her justice. My passion for French has its roots in my upbringing and has whetted my appetite for foreign languages in general.

As with many families, I have grown up in a multilingual household. I speak Oriya, a tongue hailing from the eastern coast of India. I also have a basic knowledge of Bengali, also a language from Oriental India. However, even during my formative years in elementary school, I strove to master Hindi, which my parents did not teach me. I spent hours immersed in the world of Bollywood, trying to grasp the meaning of each word sung in the typical festive Bollywood manner or trying to keep track of the volatile, perpetually changing dramatic relationships between the characters. Due to my age and lack of guidance, I was able to become fluent in



comprehension of the tongue but was only able to speak at an acceptable level. My true linguistic quest began in sixth grade, when I received my first taste of the French language. After the end of middle school, I became truly devoted to mastering this tongue. This ambitious quest involved (and still does involve) countless hours spent sifting through conglomerations of miscellaneous French words, the memorization by rote of numerous expressions that require the subjunctive tense, as well as poring over classic French works to gain a grasp of the archaic yet elegant style that characterized the French language. Through these efforts, I was able to establish myself as an almost fluent non-native speaker of the language. In the spring of my junior year, I visited France as a participant in an exchange program with a French student. For a duration of eleven days, I lived in a French home, experienced French cuisine, toured several landmarks, and generally immersed myself in French culture. Through this exposure, I was able to increase my grasp of the language and gain a new perspective of the tongue. Thus, French has been an ardent passion of mine for quite some time and has provided me with a sense of connection to the world that only the power of communicative ability can provide.

Needless to say, I have not yet attained perfection in the realm of French. My quest still has some room for progression until I near this point; however, I will continue to propel myself forward in my immersion. Meanwhile, I have also begun the pursuit of learning Spanish simply for the sake of having another language in my arsenal. Being multilingual creates the impression of being a worldly and genuinely intriguing individual. Though I am still in the elementary phases of my Spanish education, I know that I will see to it that my quest for fluency be fulfilled.

Abhinav Mohapatra lives at 30 Lord Stirling Drive, Parsippany, NJ

Best Friends Forever

Aparna Ray

Aria was never the prettiest or the smartest girl, but she didn't mind as long as she always had her best friend Hanna. They had been best friends from the moment they met in third grade. They did everything together from trick-or-treating to going to the movies or eating out. They were both very intelligent, but they each had different things to excel in. Hanna was probably the prettiest and smartest girl in the grade, but you would never know if it weren't for Aria. Aria was outgoing and funny, and she wasn't outgoing for no reason, she was talented at anything that involved her mouth, whether it was singing or just talking. They brought out the best in each other and they knew that.

Even though Aria was good at plenty, it was never enough for her family. She came from a family of geniuses. Her uncles went to Harvard and Carnegie Mellon, and her aunts went to Stanford and Yale. Even her sister went to New York University. They were all amazing students who did everything their parents said, along with every team or club their schools offered. Unfortunately, she was expected to do the same. She always tried her best but somehow when it came to creative things, she never was up to par with Hanna. She always got a B when it came to writing, when Hanna got a perfect A with comments like, "Excellent!" and "Best story I have ever read" plastered all over her papers. Aria wasn't mad at Hanna because it wasn't Hanna's fault she was good at everything, but she got a little jealous sometimes.



One day Aria was sitting at her normal spot at lunch and talking to her friends. Hanna skipped over and asked what Aria got on her science project. Aria wasn't about to tell her that she got an A- on it, so she quipped, "You tell me first" and since Hanna is perfect, she said, "I got an A and Mrs. Stilinski said that it was the best project she had ever read. Now you tell me". The science project wasn't her best grade but she had never lied to Hanna so she pulled her away from the group and told her. That night Aria was scolded for not getting an A on the project and she went to sleep, jealous of Hanna. She dreamt that she and Hanna were both competing against each other for a scholarship to Yale--her dream school--and she beat Hanna by a few points--extracurricular activities, and ACT, and SAT scores and that her family was finally proud of her.

The next day was Saturday so Aria relaxed and called Hanna to see if she could hang out. That was something Aria was really good at, forgiving people and not holding grudges. Oddly, Hanna didn't pick up. Aria just assumed she was at dance and went on with her day. On Sunday, Aria texted Hanna and asked about her day on Saturday. Hanna didn't reply to her text until 11 that night saying she was busy and she was going to sleep.

On Monday, Hanna didn't show up to school. Everyone asked Aria where Hanna was and she didn't know what to say. By third period, Aria was getting a little anxious about Hanna not being at school, so she tried to call her at lunch. The call went straight to Hanna's voicemail. Aria didn't like leaving messages but she left one anyway asking where Hanna was and if she was ok. After school, Aria walked home alone and decided to drop by at Hanna's house on the way to see what happened. She rang the doorbell numerous times but got no reply.

Aria walked home in silence, contemplating where Hanna could be and why she wasn't answering her calls or texts.

* * * * *

She came home to see that Hanna was sitting on her front porch crying. Aria ran to Hanna and hugged her and asked what had happened and why she wasn't at school. "Over the weekend, I went to the doctor for a checkup and they had me wait there all day. When the doctor finally came back, he left with my mom to talk to her about some extra tests he wanted me to take. I went back in on Sunday and took tests all day long and on Monday the doctor called me in again. H-he," Hanna stuttered, "He told me that I had been diagnosed with brain cancer and I only had seven weeks left to live. I'm sorry I didn't tell you sooner, but I was so afraid. When I heard the news all I could think about was you." Aria burst into tears and the both of them cried all the way up the stairs to Aria's room.

The next couple days were tough for both families. They decided that they would let the girls go on a trip together. Hanna and Aria chose Italy and stayed there for 5 weeks with some close family friends. When they came home Hanna went to the doctor and he told her she was doing better since she was happy and would have a few more days probably. That night, Aria got a long text from Hanna saying that Hanna loved her and they would always be best friends. She apologized for everything she had ever done and said that Aria had to promise to visit her in heaven. She said she believed in Aria and that she would fulfill her dreams. When Aria woke up and walked to Hanna's house to pick her up the next morning, Hanna's mom told her that Hanna had passed on that morning around seven. She had 'Aria + Hanna: Best Friends Forever' written on her hand.

* * * * *

5 years later...

Everyday Aria wrote ‘Aria + Hanna: Best Friends Forever’ on her hand for 5 years and with it she set off to reach her goals. She worked hard and got into Yale for her and Hanna, she was a straight A student who had the best papers on campus, a talented singer who graduated early. She had enough on her resume for her and Hanna.



Aparna Ray is a seventh grader at Wasatch Junior High in Salt Lake City, Utah. Her passions include debate and music. She is a talented singer and hopes to become a lawyer one day. She has an older sister Ankita and lives with her parents Abhijit and Julie Acharya Ray, very close to the Wasatch front of the Rockies.

*** First prize in 2014 Meghna Memorial Award for Creative Writing, Senior Category**

CONGRATULATIONS!



Born Equal (?)

Suvam Nayak

It was a slow summer evening in the park with my friends about a year ago. Time was very slow and the only thing that occupied us was our favorite game, football. We didn't necessarily play rough most of the time, but it was a sport that I knew anyone can play. So that summer evening, when I was playing football with my friends, one close friend of mine who was a girl asked if she could play with us. I thought how fun it would be to play and compete against her. My friends didn't think the same way as I did. They hollered "no way" at her because she was a girl. The reason could be many, such as she was too weak or too girly or that she wasn't fit for football because she was a girl. These were all typical stereotypes for girls which I despised to hear. I argued with my friends to let her play and they finally accepted her into the "football family". Now, she can play better than many of my friends in football. What disturbs me is why this gender inequality and discrimination still exist.

In the old ages, girls and women have always been treated differently. The man would be like the dictator of the house in which he would order his wife to do all the work and the woman could not say anything against it. So what differs a man from a woman.....? To me, nothing at all. My philosophy that I would like to bring up, is all men and women are born equal, should be treated equal no matter what their race, creed, or gender is. So I believe that women in the world should have a saying in life, government, and tradition.

In English class I was reading a story about a girl in Pakistan named Malala Yousafzai which really touched me. She was born in a place where education was banned for girls under the Taliban rule, but she had an interest in learning. She and her dad both agreed to send her to school. Apart from this, she also started to write blogs about her life under Taliban rule and her opinion regarding women rights and education. By doing this Malala risked her life.

On 9th Oct. 2012 while she was boarded on a bus to school with her friends the Taliban attacked and shot two of her friend and shot her on the head which almost killed her. She struggled for life after the attack. But did that stop her? No, Malala kept on fighting for her rights. "The terrorists thought they would change my aims and stop my ambitions, but nothing changed in my life except this: weakness, fear and hopelessness died. Strength, power and courage was born ... I am not against anyone, neither am I here to speak in terms of personal revenge against the Taliban or any other terrorist group. I'm here to speak up for the right of education for every child. I want education for the sons and daughters of the Taliban and all terrorists and extremists," Malala quoted, saying on her address to the whole world on her 16th Birthday which UN named as 'Malala Day'. Also, she won several national and international awards and was the youngest to be nominated for Nobel peace prize.

This discrimination was not only used in the Middle East. This type of exclusion has brought up in Ancient India and even in America. In ancient India I have read that when a man dies people would

throw his wife in the fire with him. In America, women never had the right to vote, to own property, or even fight in the war. Because of this bias, in Asia people would prefer a boy in the family than a girl and sometimes the family would throw away the girl or even kill the girl child. Today things have changed in America and Asia, but not yet in the Middle East. That was the one of the reasons for the war against Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia. Those men fought and died for Afghani independence and for all the woman slaves.

In Malala's case, she fought verbally, like Gandhi's silent protest against the Britons. The way that some people decide how to settle peace I think is very interesting. While most people usually like to fight or start a war, Malala used verbal interaction in this horrible sexist case.

Now to think why there is a need to talk about this topic? Well, when I was a kid, I have always been taught that girls are weaker and delicate than boys and that is why you have to be very gentle with them. I have often wondered if this lesson truly was correct. If I agree with this lesson, I would be no less than the Taliban in Malala's story. If I argue with the lesson, then I would be discriminating women indirectly. I was in confusion until I thought that truly only half of the lesson was wrong. Everyone mistakes a girl to be weaker than a boy, which I don't agree with. As Malala said "If a boy can do it then I can do it too".



There is no reason for a girl to be thought as weaker than a boy physically or mentally. Some girls believe it and think themselves as weaker than boys. In Middle Eastern countries, women have to shield their face with Burqas (veils that cover the whole body) for "protection". This type of discrimination can be traced back to the early years of U.S history. Women weren't a part of anything except knitting, cooking, and caring for the family. They obviously had more potential than that. Thomas Jefferson said in the 18th century "that all men and women are created equal under god". We all read, understand but do we actually believe in equality? Probably not. The world may not be perfect but a little effort from all of us definitely can bring change in the world. Hats off to you Malala!! You are truly an inspiration to many of us from all over the world.

If all of us can learn from you to use our words to fight for equality, the world would definitely be a better place.



Suvam Nayak is an energetic eighth grader with active interest in reading, writing, singing, martial arts, and tennis. He is also very passionate about music and football. He has a very positive attitude and his goal in life remains to invent something new for the mankind. He is the son of Satyabrata Nayak and Sunita Rout.

Determination

Arya Mohanty

What is determination? When you hear this word, what do you think of? I think of my science teacher and role model, Mr. Gogolos. For, on his desk, there is the following quote; “If there is no elevator to success, you must take the stairs.” He had climbed the stairs and decided to fulfill his own dreams, his own success. He, once a prosaic high school student, was chosen to be in a movie, *True Lies*, with his favorite actor, Arnold Schwarzenegger. How many of us can do that? I shall answer this for you- not very many people. Very few even think it’s possible. But he works hard and works for what he wants, no matter how impossible it seems. When he becomes inspired, he stops at nothing to complete his goals.

Remember, you have to follow your dreams and never let anyone dull your sparkle. Thankfully, I learned this lesson while I was very young. When I was 7, I had just started learning soccer. My coach was a very opinionated person, and said you’re either a star player, or you’re nothing. This is true, however depressing a thought it seems. Later in life, it will not matter who your friends were, what brands of clothing you wore, or how popular or unpopular you were. Your determination will help you become amazing. In soccer, the leagues were separated by age; 6-8, 8-10. I had started at the odd age of 7, instead of 6, so I had to play in the U8 league, which is for ages 8-10. This was because the children in U8 had already started soccer the year before. I was a lot smaller than everyone else and I was short for my age. I would get pushed around, tripped, made fun of, and my coach detested me. He told me that I would never be good at soccer, and should just quit. But I really loved playing, no matter how many bruises and bumps I had when it was over. The physical damage was nothing compared to the emotional strength I was given.



He made me want to prove him wrong. So, I went home every day after school, and used to put my infant brother in the middle of the room and dribble around him, taunting him, so he would try to take the ball. This helped me get better at dodging. At the next soccer game, instead of impulsively head-on charging the defensive players, I would go around dodging them. They were afraid to kick me, as their feet might have ended up in my face, instead of at the ball. I got better at dribbling and became a faster runner than they were. I was determined to get better. My coach, who used to see me as a disappointment, began to see me as a role-model to the other players. I slowly made my way to higher, more advanced teams, until now, where I am today, one of the best teams in the league. All my hard work paid off, and now I am also trying to get my brother to get better, even though he is already good at taking the ball, from his practice in his infant years.

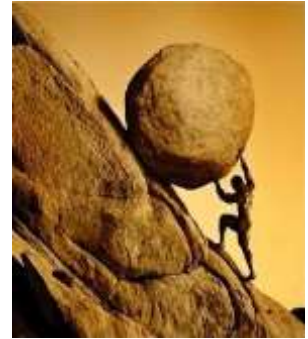
A few years later I became very interested in animals. A favorite animal of mine is the horse. One day, when I was looking on the internet for a horse ranch near our house, I stumbled upon the story of Monty Roberts. As a kid, his father was a horse trainer. Monty Roberts traveled to stables and ranches all over the country because of his father’s job. He moved around a lot, for his father’s job also. Because he moved so often, his education was not as advanced as the other kids’. In one town, his teacher asked the

class to write an essay about what they wanted to be when they grew up. Without a second's thought, Monty wrote a 7 page essay on how he wanted to own a horse ranch when he grew up. Two days later he received the paper back with an F on it. After class, he asked his teacher why he got the F. His teacher simply said, "This dream is so unrealistic for a boy like you, who has no money, no resources and who comes from an itinerant family. There is almost no chance that you can fulfill this dream of yours someday." The teacher then offered to let him re-write his essay for a better grade. Monty went home and told his father what his teacher had said. His father replied, "Now Monty, you have reached the time in your life where you must make an important decision that will change your future. I am sorry, but this is not something I can help you with". Monty pondered upon what his father and teacher had said. Several days later he brought back the same essay with no corrections. He said to his teacher, "Keep the F, but I'll keep my dreams." Now, Monty Roberts owns a 4,000 square foot house in the middle of a 200 acre horse ranch. His advice to children now is to follow your heart and never let anyone steal your dreams. After reading the selection, I thought about how little these people had and how much they made of it. Yet, here we are with so much, but getting nowhere.

Here is a moment from around last year that I still fondly recall. There I was, with my best, most loyal, trust-worthy, kind, and amazing friend Fiona Martino, sitting under the shade of a tall tree, in the center of a grassy green hill. A soft, cool zephyr was blowing in the background. The sun was radiating warmth and happiness. There was a pond in front of us, and swans, ducks, and geese were happily swimming along. If you haven't noticed yet, I'm talking about the area behind the library. It was a perfect day. Fiona and I were eating grilled cheese sandwiches and enjoying it, when, out of the corner of my eye I spotted something; there was a small duck that was trying to fly. We were curious, and it was really cute because it looked like a yellow ball of fluff, so we went to take a closer look. We took crackers with us to feed the cute little duckling. We laid the crumbs on the grass and stepped away. The duckling limped over to the crumbs. I knew that ducks waddled, but this duck's walk was truly unique. It almost made a penguin's gait look normal. That's when Fiona noticed that it had only one leg. Still, it tried to fly and walk, not considering its disability. We heard the mother calling for its child from the banks of the pond. The duckling limped its way across the field into the safety of his/her mother's arms. This could be seen as a metaphor. We are trying to fly still, and the only things holding us back from this, is our disability, our minds. We do not believe we can do many of the things that we end up accomplishing. There are many simple things in this world that have the power of completely changing our lives. They not only give us the power to change our lives, but also help us change other peoples' lives. One of the many is determination. People who succeed in life aren't from planet Krypton, or bitten by a radioactive spider. They are superheroes, but most are not extraordinary physically. They are, in fact, ordinary like us, but they are determined to prove that they can make a difference. Many amazing people with special skills and talents are lost because of lack of determination.

Determination has the power to change the world's laziest couch potato into the hardest worker you have seen. My friend Fiona has great ability. She can do things easily which I find difficult, but hasn't found her reason to be determined, her reason to work hard and crave to thrive. Now once again ask yourself, what is determination? What do you think of? When I think of shooting stars and dreams, ash

and dust turn into ladders and opportunities. But whatever you do, no matter how many times you fall, always stand up, dust yourself off and start walking. Before you know it, you'll be soaring. People can crush your soul, break your heart, and steal your life; but no one can take your determination away from you. It's part of who you are. Mankind may be weak and fragile on the outside, that we cannot control, but on the inside we can make ourselves strong. One of my favorite songs is "Who Says," by Selena Gomez. One of the lines in that song that really spoke to me was; "keep you beneath the stars, won't let you touch the sky." I realized how true this statement is. People will try to obliterate you and use you as a stepping stool, whatever the need to do to seem better. But even if you falter along the way, one of the key ingredients to success is determination.



Arya Mohanty is thirteen years old and is the daughter of Arun and Namrata Mohanty. She is a seventh grader at McCall Middle School, Winchester, Massachusetts. Her hobbies include singing, dancing, drawing, reading, writing, and playing soccer.

*** Third prize in 2014 Meghna Memorial Award for Creative Writing, Senior Category**

CONGRATULATIONS!



Evolution

Aniket Mishra



The world around us has technologically evolved due to people inventing new and easier ways to do something that we struggle with in our everyday lives. For example, people 68 years ago can't even begin to comprehend the astounding features that the computer can now do. We have come from dreaming to go to the moon, and now actually settling on the moon; children dreaming of playing video games, and now children creating video games. We all dream of being rich, but usually after one failure, we drop and do not pick ourselves back up. People might make a new and better idea as soon as we launch our idea, and that should motivate us to keep inventing until we eliminate all competition from our category. These messages are meant to help people of all ages, and no matter how old you are, you can always make a change and help the world out. All people evolve when they are exposed to new things, and they adapt to that certain situation. So when you think only others are super smart and cannot be beat, you just have to try new things and evolve yourself. A little saying I go by whenever someone did something better than me is, "When someone beats you, do not even let them dream of ever doing it again." This simple quote helps me in my life, and you can make your own one up or use mine, all it takes is some thinking and putting a bit of a personal approach to it. I used to give up easily on things that I had never tried, but my parents gave me a helping hand, and now I can do those things with my eyes closed. If you ever feel like you cannot do it, there will always be your parents, a sibling, or a guardian that will be willing to help you. "If there is a will, there is a way." Remember that, and I guarantee you, success will be found.



Aniket Mishra is a seventh grader and lives with his parents, Dolly and Kishore Mishra, and a younger sister, in Santa Clara, CA. His parents are his idols of living. He has some pet goldfish and has a black belt in Karate. He writes in his free time, plays sports, and video games.

Injured Paradise

Neha Satapathy

Over the mountains, through the forests
resides a paradise, for acres and acres in green and large plains
The sun smiles down upon the earth, from up in the sky
and in the morning, *when* the birds sing
The heart is happy

Colorful flowers coat the earth
colors of red, yellow, and orange
the tall grass dance in the wind in a large and magnificent plain
Here, it is quiet, the weather is subtle
The heart is happy

The ground is soft
The soil is healthy
This is a land where plants flourish
Wind is a light breeze that gently sways one from side to side
The sky engulfs one in a warm embrace
The heart is happy

How did this paradise come about?
What made this a fantastic getaway from the reality?
Truth be told, reality is this bliss
This world is real, as is the paradise
It depends, like all great things
On effort, the persistent kind
That is what we need
For the heart to be happy



Changing seasons, time goes by
The world around us says goodbye
For better or for worse, little did we care
and now the paradise has paid a great fare.

Dark colors invade the waters
The wind gives home to many rotten smells

The birds stop singing, the wind stops blowing
The sun hides his face from the Earth
How can this heart be happy?

Let us rejoice for change
Time passes once again,
Although the paradise has been injured, injuries can be fixed
Colors shoot out of the distance and appear as a rainbow
The heart is healing

Over the mountains, through the forests
resides a paradise, for acres and acres in green and large plains
The sun smiles down upon the earth, from up in the sky
And in the morning, *when* the birds sing
The heart is happy



Neha Satapathy is a sophomore at River Hill High School, Clarksville, MD. She enjoys dancing, playing the piano, photography and travelling among many other things. She lives with her parents, Tina and Sikhanda Satapathy.

*** Fourth prize in 2014 Meghna Memorial Award for Creative Writing, Senior Category**

CONGRATULATIONS!



March Forward Ladies

Srujani Das

Social evolution has changed many things over time. We have learnt, discovered, and invented many things on this beautiful earth. Yet, there is one thing that many of us believe to be the greatest evolution of life, which is gender equality.

There were two significant reasons as to why women were treated unfairly. The first reason being that many people believed in superstitions. For example families thought that if their daughters were to study, ominous things would start to happen to their family. The second reason as to why women were treated unfairly was, women were labelled as fragile and innocent human beings. Everybody thought that women were not capable of taking strong decisions because they were fragile. They were labelled as weak and very emotional. Like they say “One lie can ruin a thousand truths”, meaning that when one person spread the lie that women were not capable of anything and they were weaker compared to men, thousands of others listened and suddenly the truth turned into a belief.

There were women who were very powerful who changed the fate of billions of other women. If we look back in Indian history during the nineteenth century, Queen Lakshmi Bai's fearlessness and courage against British rule exemplified her power. Irrespective of her family's resentment to allow her to go out and fight against British soldiers, she pursued her dream to protect the mother land. Those were her bold and decisive characteristics. As she grew successful people started to accept her. Irrespective of the beliefs back then, Queen Lakshmi Bai's actions sent a clear message that women are equally capable as men. During late nineteenth and even early twentieth century, illiteracy, superstitions and blind beliefs, social humility and caste were important social issues. There were many social activists who were trying to empower women through educating people about the social evils. A very famous Oriya author, Fakir Mohan Senapati was one of them. He wrote many powerful short stories. Through one of his famous stories, *Rebati*, he described the disapproval of women's education and its consequences as a superstition. In another novel, he introduced a character named Lachama who took revenge against a local ruler. These stories contrast each other by women characters to reflect the social inequality.



Early days in India, widows were treated as a social sin. If the husband died before the wife, family members forced the wife to sacrifice her life by jumping into the husband's funeral pyre. The root of this inhuman practice in Hindu society lies in old tradition where women were always considered as subservient and inferior to men. As far as stopping or banning this evil practice, it was a tough task but some powerful ruler had taken steps. It was abolished during the early nineteenth century by Raja Ram

Mohan Roy under the British Rule. However, social evil was not the root cause of the problems of widows in the western world. People took good care of them and helped them throughout their life so that they could live a health life. In the twentieth and twenty first century, the life of widows has improved but there is still a lot that can be done.

Slowly the changes in gender inequality, started to occur in the beginning of twentieth century through different writers, social activist and media. One of the most powerful woman in post-independence India was Indira Gandhi. After growing up with politics all around her she was elected to become one of the Indian Prime Ministers. She fought for India's Independence and was even put into jail for doing so. Another important lady was Mother Teresa. She was a miracle worker who helped many poor children learn and even cared for those who had nobody in their life. She was compassionate, loving and caring. These characters brought her into the international arena and she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. After her death, she was declared as a saint in the 21st century.

Women in today's society are very powerful and privileged human beings who receive the same opportunities as men. Women previously were not allowed to leave their own houses and today women are soaring out of this world and touching the stars.

Women have developed into great people in today's society in many different fields all over the world. For example business, arts, politics, and education. Even with all the difficulties, women stood tall and now they are capable of doing anything!

Many different parts of the world had different reasons and barriers as to why they conceived women differently. For example, India, one of the major developing nations had different barriers for women before and have changed over time. Organizations like UNDP (UN Development Programme) has transformed poor rural women to successful business managers. Today many women from India have showed the power they hold in themselves. For example the famous Indra Nooyi, who is the current chairman and CEO of the, second largest food and beverage business in the world, the Pepsi Company. She is one of the leading women in the business fields in today's society. Another example of a successful woman is Sheryl Sandberg, who is the Chief Operating Officer of Facebook.

The Western world had a less harsh way of treating women in the olden days. Women were able to travel freely but did not have the right to vote or take part in any other job other than taking care of the household. This was unjust, so women themselves had to take a stand. A very famous group who called themselves The Famous Five stood up for rights to vote. It was not until early twentieth century, that women had the right to vote. Another very famous African American woman, Rosa Parks stood up to the Montgomery Law, which stated that all African American people had to segregate to the back of the bus.

Some very recognized woman in today's society are Hillary Clinton who was the secretary of state, Angela Merkel a German Chancellor and Michelle Obama, who is not only the First Lady of United States

but a very social and concerned citizen of the youth's health. These ladies have learned to take decisions and handle responsibilities. All women in the political arena are very powerful but the most powerful woman is Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth. She is a very dedicated and strong leader. The western countries have tremendously developed in all the fields of life by incorporating women into the fields of education, business, commerce, science and technology, literature, health and defence.

The Nobel Prize has proven women to be very talented. For example Alice Munro who won the Nobel Prize in 2014 for Literature, Maria Goeppert Mayer who won the Nobel Prize in 1963 for physics and even Ada E. Yonath who won the Nobel Prize in 2009 for chemistry.

Even though women have the same privileges as men now, there are still some gender equality issues. Not all countries allow women to have the same privileges as men and there are countries that cannot support or encourage women to have the same privileges. An example being that women make up two thirds of illiterate adults in the world which means that women are not provided with education. The world has changed and slowly society has accepted the fact that both men and women should be treated equally. Women have the capability to take charge and execute everything a man can do just as well and sometimes even better. We cannot underestimate women. We should continue to encourage countries and women themselves to come out and stand up for their rights and freedom. Remember, always march forward ladies!



Srujani Das is an eighth grader at Tomken Road Middle School. She lives with her parents, Smaran and Mitali Das, and a younger brother in Brampton, Ontario. She enjoys playing the piano and reading books.

Memoirs

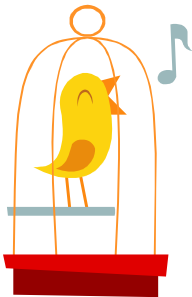
Ankita Mohapatra

She strolled out of the room, leaving behind the droning voice of her teacher's English lesson. She never did like that subject anyway; it was just a bunch of stupid grammar rules with stupid exceptions and stupid pronunciations. It made no sense if you thought about it. And even though she knew that any of her old friends would have given an arm and a leg to be in her place, somehow she wished for her comfortable, predictable life back home. No, no, no. She'd promised Mama she wouldn't whine, and that she'd try to make a friend. Today, she'd even come to school with a big, fat lollipop in a Ziploc baggie, tucked into her book bag. She'd saved the cherry sucker just for the girl she'd befriend. Because she had *promised*. And she *never* broke promises.

So, faking a smile, she skipped over to the lunchroom. Hmmmm. From somewhere in the chatty crowd, the notes of a catchy melody floated over to her ears. Following the tune she dawdled towards the familiar lyrics.

... So come on and fly with me, as we make our great escape ...

And her lips stretched wide, dark eyes twinkled with knowledge, because she loved that song. Papa would normally only play bhajans in the car, but she'd heard this before in a store, and the infectious tune had stuck. Today she could prove she was just like the rest of them. Someone would notice how normal and fun she really was. She could almost see it in her head - herself strutting down the hallway, hips swaying, totally American. So, heart lodged in her throat, she sat down on the cold bench and opened her (disproportionately sized) mouth.



... Baby, are you down, down, down, down, down? ...

Her eyes were closed, and she was singing her heart out, pouring her soul into the song, just waiting for Alexis or Marchella to tell her how beautiful her voice was, or how cool she was to know the song. They would ask her on a playdate when they heard her, she knew.

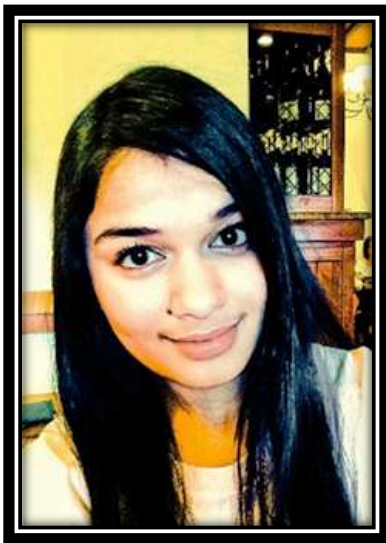
And she swayed, just like all the other girls had been swaying when she sat down. The bubbly girls, with their fluffy brown bangs, pink headbands, colorful nails, peace tote bags, and charm bracelets, had been swaying, singing, and laughing. Which made her realize that they weren't swaying or singing or laughing anymore. They were staring. At her. And not because they'd been floored by her spectacular vocals. They were staring because she had dared to sing with them, when she was supposed to be the girl who just quietly ate her smelly Indian food (packed in a neat tiffin, of course) and doodled on her napkin with a blue pen, messy hair veiling her face like a screen. She wasn't supposed to sing the latest hits with Marchella and Alexis's friends. She didn't even wear a single charm bracelet. And when was the last time

she'd gone anywhere without her two dependable side-plaits?

She froze at the unwelcoming scrutiny. Her face went ashen, and her eyes widened. The words she'd been crooning came to an abrupt halt as her chapped lips snapped shut. Now, her legs carried her at a dead sprint to the bathroom, even as a faint voice in the periphery of her consciousness scolded her to sign out, and locked herself into a stall. Sitting on the scratched toilet seat, she plopped her red face into her fuzzy, leopard pink pants (they were so ugly, and nobody wore fuzzy pink pants, but Mama had found them on sale at Kmart, and insisted they would be comfortable for school, which wasn't supposed to be a catwalk anyway).



She did agree though, the pants were very comfortable as she laid her cheek on them, sucked the cherry lollipop, and let the snotty sobs and salty tears pour out, staining the soft material.



Ankita Mohapatra (Mani) is fourteen years old and is a freshman at High School. She lives with her parents, Priyaranjan and Aparna Mohapatra, and brothers, Abhinav and Aryaman, in Parsippany, NJ. She is very talented, creative, and passionately expressive in various activities like Odissi dance, poetry, skiing, skating, hiking, and painting. Ankita excels in academic endeavors and believes in living life to the fullest, enjoying every moment with her family and friends.

The painting, that's towards the end of this article, is done by Ankita.

*** Second prize in 2014 Meghna Memorial Award for Creative Writing, Senior Category**

CONGRATULATIONS!



Perfect World

Rachel Woody Ram

In a perfect world, I would never be hungry

In a perfect world, I would learn something new every day

In a perfect world, I would have a family to worry about

In a perfect world, I would be free from financial stress

In a perfect world, I would accidentally spill orange juice on my mother's birthday card and she would assure me that now she loves it even more

In a perfect world, I would have an older sister to take the blame for me when I try to open the door of a car that looks just like ours and the alarm goes off

In a perfect world, the pain from a scrape or bruise would be forgotten with a few words of comfort

In a perfect world, every day I would hear the three beautiful words that let me know I am loved

In a perfect world, I would have everything that I could possibly need and want and would be content with my life....

That perfect world is mine.

To My Mom.



Rachel Woody Ram is the granddaughter of Dasarathi Ram and the daughter of Sumita Ram. She's an honor roll eighth grade student at Glacier Creek Middle School in Madison, WI. She enjoys writing, plays tennis, soccer, and runs cross country. Rachel also plays piano and is a member of several student clubs including forensics and FCCLA.

Poems

Parneeta Mohapatra

Poems don't come easy to me,
As you can very much see.
The struggle to find words that fit,
Leaves me struggling in a very dark pit.

Poems can be easy,
For people with creativity.
The ability to be rhetoric,
Hits them like a train wreck.

For me thinking is a migraine.
Like being hit with ice rain.
I just don't like rhyming
It makes me start crying.

But I realize if I see,
The simplicity in complexity.
Then poems will come to me,
With much creativity.



Parneeta Mohapatra is 14 years old and lives with her parents, Pramod Mahapatra and Sushree Sangeeta Tripathy, in Chattanooga, TN. She enjoys playing violin and piano, likes to read dystopian novels, and writes poetry.

Predator

Satwik Pattanaik

The word 'predator' has two dictionary definitions. One of them is the definition we all grew up with. A predator is 'any organism that exists by preying upon other organisms'. When we hear this word, we naturally think of a lion, a tiger or any sort of beast. The second definition is 'a person or group that ruthlessly exploits others'. The first thing that comes into mind from this definition is an internet predator, or pedophiles. To us, these 'predators' are scary, and it is only natural to fear. That means, they should either be caged in zoos, or locked up in jail. Then what about us? If that is the case, then shouldn't we all be put in jail, or caged in zoos? Are we all not predators? We take for granted that the earth and everything in it have been given to us to mould to our desire. We have demonstrated this through various ways, by exploiting animals, people and nature itself. These actions impact not only people and animals, but also the earth.

Whether we admit it or not, we believe that we are the sole owners of the earth and we can do whatever we like with it. In some states such as Utah, Washington and Colorado, collecting rainwater is illegal. Apparently, the government believes that rain that falls onto your property is their water, and not yours. A man named Mark Miller was arrested for collecting rainwater for his car wash. He was charged for unlawfully using the 'government's' water. Another man named Gary Harrington got arrested because he too was illegally using the 'government's' rainwater. In my eyes, people that exploit others out of their birth rights fit the description of a predator. Sadly, it is not just the government, or some specific people in general, but is a majority of human race that steps over others for their own gain.

Hunger shouldn't be a problem in this world. We have 7.2 billion people in the world. We make enough food to feed 10 billion people. We should have enough food left over to feed another 2.8 billion people, but unfortunately, there are around 870 million people in the world suffering from undernourishment. Why? This is because of many reasons. There is a huge gap in income. The rich have more money than any man should need, while the poor don't even earn 2 dollars a day. Another reason for world hunger is the amount of food wasted. In the US, around 40% of the food is thrown away. More than 90% of the population throws away perfectly good food. There are 313.9 million people in the US. A population nearly three times of that, is dying of starvation while other people consume more than they need to and throw away the food that could have helped save a starving child. This is not a situation that occurs only in the US; it occurs in almost all developed countries. Another reason for food shortages is the growing demand for meat. Worldwide meat consumption is growing every year. More meat is needed to be produced. Raising livestock now uses 30% of the earth's landmass; 70% of food grown in the country goes to feeding livestock. What for? We raise these animals, keep them trapped, so that we can slaughter them later. Why



do we need so much meat? People used to ration their food before, used to save meat for months, while we throw away food each day like it is nothing.

Our exploitation of the world also extends to the environment. We are exploiting and consuming our resources so fast that the Earth is falling apart. The carefully constructed balance that it had taken billions of years to attain is being destroyed within a lifetime. Paul Watson, a Canadian marine conservationist and the founder of the Sea Shepherd, once said, "We are all just primates, but we think of ourselves as God." We, as humans, think we have the right to decide who lives and who dies. That may just be our greatest downfall. Let's take sharks, as an example, which are getting killed each day. Poachers just cut off their fins and throw them back into the ocean. Being deprived of their fins, they can no longer swim and eventually die. Not only are we wiping out sharks, we do this knowingly, but also face the consequences that follow. There are two main reasons. People want money, and not enough people care to protect what nature has blessed us with. As the saying goes, 'what goes around comes around'. We are killing off the major predator of the ocean, letting other species of fish, such as plankton eaters multiply in population. What happens then? Phytoplankton produces 50 to 85 percent of the oxygen in the atmosphere. As plankton eaters increases, the amount of plankton decreases. This in turn will harm the world severely. CO2 (carbon dioxide) levels in the atmosphere will rise at a level which we cannot even imagine and our oxygen supply will deplete. Global warming would make it impossible to survive on earth, and the balance of nature will be in chaos.

Every day we continue to live as if everything is normal, but it isn't. In the past few years, humans have caused immense damage to the earth, and all life in it. The saddest truth is we have all done it knowingly and willingly. We all can help; we all know what is going on in the world. The authorities have known it for ages, but they are all profiting from these exploitations. In Costa Rica, the shark fin industry is huge. Although it is illegal, people poach sharks just for their fins. The government knows, but they do not stop it, rather they encourage it. The shark fin industry is worth over billions of dollars. This is giving Costa Rica money. Politics without principles, wealth without work, pleasure without conscience, knowledge without character and commerce without morality. These practices are leading our world to its demise. We can stop all this. All it takes is a little courage. Revolutions start with individuals. The civil rights movement was started by Gandhi in India and Mandela in Africa. Galileo changed the way we thought about the world, yet they were also individuals. So why can we not change the way we think and act? It is time to stop acting like predators and it is time to give back to the world.



Satwik Pattanaik is fourteen years old and is the son of Satyajeet and Nibedita Pattanaik. He has a little sister named Shreeja and they live in Mississauga, Ontario, Canada. He loves reading and writing literature. His hobbies include playing tabla, swimming, skiing, skating, soccer, and several other activities.

Saved by an Elven Princess

Gitanjali Mahapatra

There was once an Elf kingdom. Separated from the world, Forenwind was ruled by King Phelan, and it laid peacefully for many years. One day, a terrible siege lay upon the castle. Gnomes spewed forth from underground, attacking the elves. For months the elves just barely managed to fight them off. Late into the war, news from the battlefield was received: 'the commander had fallen'. The elves had lost their chief, and with him, their spirit to fight. Gnomes won the battle thus advancing into the kingdom. They had lost all hope, when, suddenly a horn sounded. Help was here! The army of King Jaryn of Munsch had come to help the elves defeat the gnomes. With his help, the elves managed to defeat the gnomes and win the war. King Phelan was ever grateful to his human savior.

All was well, the elves and men lived in harmony. Unlikely allies were they, but both kingdoms flourished. Until one day, terrible news reached King Jaryn's ears. His son had been abducted by the neighboring kingdom, Revel, home of the evil king, Ruark. He demanded that Jaryn hand over all his wealth to him. The ransom also stated that if he refused, the prince would be killed, and Ruark's armies would storm into Munsch and destroy all.

When Arien heard the news of Prince Kathel's abduction, she knew she had to save to him. This was her chance to repay the kindness shown to her people by King Jaryn. It was her duty, but she knew she would never be allowed to go alone. So, she made up her mind to leave in the dead of the night. Arien walked into the War Room, to see her father and King Jaryn in a deep discussion about what to do about the ransom. Jaryn was in distress. He loved his son more than anything, but to hand over his wealth to Ruark, was like giving him the world. He could not allow Ruark to rule Munsch, because if Ruark got his hands on the wealthiest kingdom in Kreeal, he would have no trouble in plunging the world into complete darkness and desolation. Phelan comforted the king by saying,



“Have faith. We will find a way to bring back Kathel.” “But how?”

“We will send an army after him.”

Arien spoke from the shadows where she witnessed the exchange. “They will expect that.”

“What?” Both kings spoke in unison, surprised.

“They will expect you to send armies after Kathel and would therefore strengthen their security around the castle.” Arien continued, as if she hadn't heard them.

“Then what do you suggest? Give up the kingdom?” Jaryn asked hopelessly.

“Never,” Arien defended. “It is simple, my Lord. We send one person after Kathel.”

“But who will we send?” exclaimed Phelan. “I will go.”

Arien volunteered.

“No!” The two kings cried out together.

“I would never send my only daughter on a suicide mission no matter how capable she thinks she is!” Phelan thundered.

“I won’t allow it!” Jaryn growled. “But--”

“My word is final!” Phelan exclaimed.

Disappointed, Arien left the room, and headed back to her chambers. *It was worth a try*, she thought. Before midnight, Arien grabbed her sack full of supplies. She had clothing, a map of the lands, money, and her path-finder--a human made device showing directions. She sheathed her sword, and extra daggers. Arien strung her bow, slung it over her back, and refilled her quiver, strapping it next to the bow. Arien checked if there were sentries posted in the hallway. Moving lightly, she raced towards the gates which were locked. Arien scaled the wall and leaped to the ground. She ran to the stables, and picked out her steed. It was a black mare, with a fiery spirit, named Tempest. She looked back at the castle.

“It’s too late to turn back now.” She said and rode into the darkness.

Arien laughed as the wind whipped in her face as she rode through the forest. Her eyes, that looked like a sapphire split in half, sparkled with joy for a moment, before remembering why she was out here. She could tell Tempest was tiring. There was a town nearby, so she slowed her steed, to a steady trot.

“ello lass. What ye be doing this far out at this hour? You best be heading back home.” A friendly man greeted her as she as she entered a village.

“I am on a quest. I seek a place to stay the night.” Arien replied.

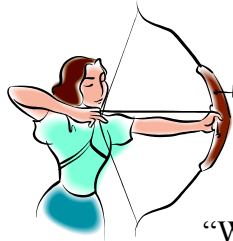
“Well of course. Yer best bet to stay is over there,” he motioned to the left. “The Jaunty Sailor. Best place in town.” he chuckled.

“Thank you, sir.”

She dismounted her horse and walked into The Jaunty Sailor.

Light break came sooner than Arien expected. Groaning, she got out of bed and freshened up. Changing into a pair of leather pants, a forest green tunic, maroon dragon vest, and a soft-birch belt, she secured her weapons, and swung on her forest cloak and left the inn.

Arien learned that light passed by faster when she rode. Arien had yet to encounter troubles on her journey. She was riding comfortably, when a robber suddenly jumped from a tree, and grabbed at her sack. Her instincts kicked in. Before the robber could blink, she had an arrow notched and aimed at his face.



“Touch it and this arrow will go through your face,” she spat. The robber’s face paled.

“P-p-pa-ardon me miss. I-I’m s-so sorry. P-p-please d-d-on’t hurt me.”

“Why shouldn’t I? You tried to steal my property and expect me to leave you alive?” she questioned.

“Please. My family... they need food. We are poor, I-I-we-”

“You think I will believe that? I can tell when a man lies, and you are.”

The man sniveled. Arien sneered. She unstrung the arrow from the bow and put it back in her quiver.

“There is no point in wasting an arrow on you! Get lost, never show me your face or I will kill you!”

Groveling, the man slinked back into the forest. On the fifth day, Arien saw something she didn’t expect. Two soldiers with the Revel Crest decorating their armor. It consisted of two dragons entwined around a skull wreathed in shadows. She had reached Revel. She approached the soldiers.

“Excuse me Sirs. Would you be so kind to tell me the way to King Ruark’s Castle?”

“And why would a pretty lass like you want to go to the castle?” sneered the first man.

“My business is my own.”

“It would be that way miss.” said the second guard.

Arien nodded and rode forward. As she neared the castle, she dismounted and walked up to the gates. “I come as a maid to the queen.” she announced. The sentries let her pass. She heard a fearsome roar but didn’t react. Arien walked on. Quietly she headed toward the dungeons and peered into the cells holding fearful prisoners. Towards the end, a corridor led to an open cell guarded by a sleeping dragon. Inside the cell sat Prince Kathel.

“Kathel!” Arien hissed. Kathel looked up. His mouth dropped open. He didn’t expect anyone to rescue him. Drawing her sword, she raised it above her head, ready to swing it down on the dragon’s neck, when a voice cried out. Snapping her head around, she saw guards rushing in. Without wasting time she notched an arrow and fired. More guards came in. She shot arrows rapid-fire, killing all of them. Unfortunately, the last guard woke the dragon, leaving her to face the beast.

It was a thing of gruesome beauty. With monstrous wings and heavily plated scales forming an impenetrable armor, it rose up. The sun glinted off the brilliant green scales. Arien notched an arrow in her bow. She shot arrow after arrow, but they just clanged off its armor. The dragon inhaled, its belly lit up. Fire filled the room, burning everything except Arien who ducked behind a fallen boulder. The dragon reared up on its hind legs exposing its vulnerable underbelly. Arien took the opening. Drawing a lead arrow, she notched, aimed and released. The arrow struck home, piercing its heart. The beast let out a terrible shriek and blew his last flame, which reached King Ruark's tower. It went up in flames, and with it, the evil king perished. Arien broke open the cell door and pulled Kathel out. "Come, we must leave as soon as we can," she urged. Kathel expressed his thankfulness many times over as they found their way out of the ruins of Revel. Arien and Kathel emerged from the castle and saddled on Tempest. The five day journey was completed in eight hours, so swiftly did they ride. At light break Jaryn's castle became visible.

The kingdoms were overjoyed at their return. Peace filled the land once again, and everyone rejoiced.

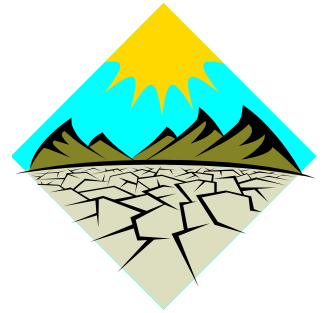


Gitanjali Mahapatra is an eighth grader in Thorton Jr. High, Fremont, CA. She is thirteen years old and is the daughter of Pradeep Mahapatra and Suchitra Das. She is crazy about fantasy fiction and movies. She also does artistic doodling, and is an Odissi dancer-in-training, as well as an amateur cook.

Shattered Ground

Raveena Mishra

I'm standing on shattered ground. I didn't ask to be here. I was chosen from unfaithful bursts of life. I'm not depressed and angry or confused and messed up. I'm just here, just ... here. We all get here sometimes. We all lose someone, something, an idea, a vision that we thought would be a part of us forever. Until we realize that we all are on what I call shattered ground. Where, not even three simple deep breaths can make you feel whole again. I'm not saying that this is entirely a bad place. It's just not a place I would want to stay in forever. I get caught up in life too easily. Cutting myself on the broken glass beneath me. Sometimes I want to curl up in a little ball and forget that I even exist. This place is foggy and my reflection is clear. I see who I am and who I want to be. I see a person trying to be whole again and trying to be unbroken. It's hard, because I can still see the words on my body that are printed on like scars. At times it's hard to even look at myself, but you have to let yourself heal and be better. You have to look for that light behind that door, and find something new that makes you whole again. Being broken isn't a curse; it's a chance to become rewritten. I'm not saying you will be better today or tomorrow, or even in years down the road, but you will be better, and I'm not promising you that. You have to promise yourself that. One day when I do get off this shattered ground, I promise to fill in these cracks with something new.



I promise.

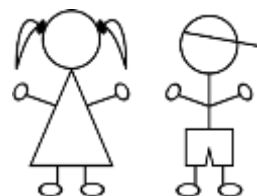


Raveena Mishra is the daughter of Manasi and Pradipta Mishra and loves to read and write. She also loves to play tennis and is in her school's tennis team. She really likes to spend time with her friends and go to the movies. Raveena likes creative writing because it helps in clearing her mind from the busy world around her.

Siblings

Anand Anuj Das

At first, there was one
As bright as the sun
Something greater than the earth
Priceless in love, priceless in worth
The greatest possession, to ever be possessed
The precautions and safeties, could hardly be obsessed
Raised with smiles, with love, and swift
The years that passed, passed without rift
Then came number two
One of the new lot
But was not cute
Surely not!?
And the first and the second
The cutest things, most adorable
They wanted things
Not always affordable
The bonding that took place, between one and two
Every year, would be renewed
The first was the sister
And the second the brother
The greatest twister
That was unlike any other
The first always stayed by his side
So he had a place to hide
And he could confide
And somewhere he could go to when he cried
The growth in size, in age, and above
Are nothing compared to the growth of love.



Anand Anuj Das is fourteen years old. He is an eighth grader who goes to Peterson Middle School in Santa Clara, California. Besides school, he holds a black belt 1st degree in Karate and likes to write poems. He also likes to read books in his spare time. He has participated in many Odia and Hindi dramas in the Bay Area Community. He lives with his parents Bibek and Kuku Das and sister Sanuja in Santa Clara California.

Take my Hand

Sanjana Senapati

Every day, every moment
Listen to the voice from within
Hear the beat as soft as thunder
Embrace me

I am the free spirit
I am the voice from within
I am the beat of the drum
Dance with me

Let out your fear
Move to the voice from within
You are the center of this storm
Conquer me

I call to you
With a voice from within
To be the guide whom you have faith in
Believe in me

Our journey will go on without end
Because this is our time to live
It always was,
Come with me



Sanjana Senapati is a freshman at Hume-Fogg Academic Magnet Highschool, TN. She is fifteen years old and lives in Nashville, TN with her parents, Manoj and Smrity, and a little sister. Her hobbies include playing/watching sports and Kathak dancing.

The Little Angel who dreamed



Anweshia Ranabijuli

Once upon a time, there was an angel, who never questioned why
Yet she gave birth to twins, who couldn't fly
Each had one wing, and two blue eyes
But still, each grew up, as time flew by
But as time flew by, the twins soon came to realize
Neither had the ability to rise high in the sky
They were stuck on the ground, as if gravity was their father
Always thinking how it was such a bother
And then one tried
One tried to fly
Flapping her little wing, trying to rise
She stumbled and tripped, and bruised herself up bad
And the one on the ground thought, has she gone mad?
But as the one on the ground, watched her twin struggle
An idea in her head, started to juggle
Started to juggle all her hopes and dreams
And this brought a smile to her face, and made her beam
Beam with curiosity, hopes and wonder
So she went to her twin, who was in a blunder
And together, they flapped their wings, and rose high
High with all the other angels in the sky



Anweshia Ranabijuli is thirteen years old and is the eldest daughter of Chandana & Prashanta Ranabijuli from Round Rock, Texas. She goes to seventh grade at Walsh Middle school, Texas. She learns Piano, Violin, Guitar, and Bharatnatyam dance.

The Qualities of Hanumanji

Shulini Padhy

During my spiritual lessons, this year, I have been exposed to a very powerful verse on Hanumanji. Hanuman is the perfect example of a student. He was always focused, hardworking, humble, determined and brilliant. I have attempted to write few paragraphs on reflecting the qualities in detail of the following shloka of Hanuman and comparing with our daily life moments. The shloka is as follows:

ବୁଦ୍ଧିର ବଳଂ ଯଶୋ ଧର୍ମଂ ନିର୍ଭୟତ୍ୱମ୍ ଅରୋଗତା
ଅଜାତ୍ୟଂ ବାକ୍ ପଚୁତ୍ୱମ୍ ଚ ହ୍ରଦ୍ୱମତ୍ ସ୍ମରଣାତ୍ ଭବେତ୍ ॥

***Buddhir Balam Yaso Dhairyam, Nirbhaytvam Arogata
Ajaadyam Vaakpatuthvam Cha, Hanumat Smaranaat Bhaveth***



Buddhir means our wisdom, our intellect. *Buddhir* is a characteristic that Hanumanji uses all the time. When Hanumanji was crossing the ocean, Surasa was not allowing him to go forward as she wanted to have him for food. Hanumanji assumed a giant form to make her open her mouth as wide as possible. He then reduced himself to a very tiny form, entered her mouth and came out before she had a chance to close her mouth. This shows that Hanumanji had an extremely sharp intellect to face any situation. We all have a mind and an intellect. Our mind always tempts us to do the things that seek pleasure. This is called “Preyas”. Preyas gives us immediate happiness but in the long run, it always ends in sorrow. For example, our mind prompts us to play on our cell phones, other electronic devices. But our intellect knows the right choices. Our intellect reminds us “Do your homework! It’s the first thing due tomorrow”. This is called “Shreyas”.

Balam is our strength. This is not limited to physical strength, but includes mental tenacity. When Hanumanji had arrived in Lanka in search of Sitaji, he had exhibited immense strength and skills in warfare. He also had brought Gandhamardan Mountain to get “Sanjeevani booti” for Laxman, killed Akshay Kumar (one of Ravana’s many sons) and destroyed his entire army. For a student, it is important to stay on task when trying to achieve our goals. The key is to keep trying and not give up.

Yaso or *Yasas* is fame. In spite of Hanumanji having so many qualities, he never let fame get to his head. He always stayed as a faithful devotee at the feet of his Lord Rama. This was his glory or “Yash”. As a student, our primary objective should be to learn from our teachers. We should never let our knowledge and grades make us feel over confident.

Dhairyam is patience. Hanumanji showed extreme patience in performing all his assigned tasks. When trying to search Sitaji on reaching the seashore, the search party was in discussion as to who can cross the ocean. Hanumanji was very patient and silent until he was asked for help. When Jambhavan asked Hanuman to volunteer, he readily agreed. As students, we should always be patient in doing our

assigned tasks. For example while doing a math problem; we should remain patient even if we aren't able to solve the problem at that moment and should keep trying.

Nirbhayatvam is fearlessness or courage. As an example, Nelson Mandela had the courage to fight for his own rights. Same with Mahatma Gandhi but without violence. Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks also had lots of courage and are famous for speaking up. Hanumanji also had the courage to travel across the ocean to Mother Sita and fight numerous demons. As a student, we should always stay prepared so that we have the courage to face any situation.

Arogata is good health, physical, mental and spiritual. Hanumanji had all three kinds of sound health. He was skilled in warfare and combat. Hanumanji had surrendered himself completely to the service of Lord Rama. In order to have good physical health, we need to have good practices of eating healthy food, exercising, drinking water, etc. There is a saying - "Early to bed, early to rise makes a man, healthy, wealthy, and wise". For good mental health, proper amounts of leisure and meditation is necessary. Also, praying and thinking of God purifies our mind and is good for our spiritual health.

Ajaadyam means to be alert. Hanumanji stayed alert and on course when he was crossing the ocean in search of Sita. He did not take any rest until he reached Lanka. As a student, our focus should always be to use our time wisely to gain knowledge that will help us in our later lives.

Vaakpatuthvam is eloquence. Eloquence means fluent speech. To speak eloquently, it must use effective language. When Raavan ties Hanuman up in his kingdom and asks him "Who are you?" Hanumanji doesn't reply with "Hanuman". Instead, he replies, "The Messenger of Shree Ram". He used the right words at the right time, keeping his focus on his intentions. In this case, he used eloquence. His eloquence could also be seen when he approached Lord Rama and Lakshmana as Sugriva's (the Monkey Kings) messenger. Lord Rama also used Hanumanji as his messenger to search for Sita and fetch her after the war for his eloquence. Also, Lord Rama sent Hanumanji to know Bharat's intentions before setting foot in Ayodhya. It is necessary to speak only when necessary. Unnecessary speaking wastes everyone's time. Use of appropriate language makes communication effective.

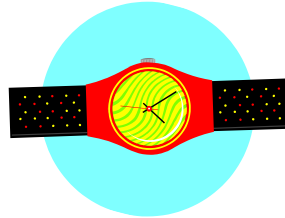
It is important to keep our mind calm and free from agitations at all times. This will help us make the right decisions. Developing these 8 qualities of Hanumanji will help us in our future and glorify our personalities.



Shulini Padhy is an eighth grader in Longfields Davidson Heights Secondary school. She is fourteen years old and is the daughter of Sushant Padhy and Smita Mahapatra. She is currently learning Odissi dance. She loves to play badminton and enjoys biking, swimming, and making cupcakes.

Time As It Is

Deven Das



Reborn again, come anew.
Humble beginnings.
Budding plants, the rising sun.

Sights of laughter, sounds of warmth.
Suns in the apex.
Youthful curiosity.

Hunger disrupting harvest,
Blighting pandemics.
A cold is arriving soon.

There is little time left now,
The fields are barren.
Bleak, dreary, all is forgotten.



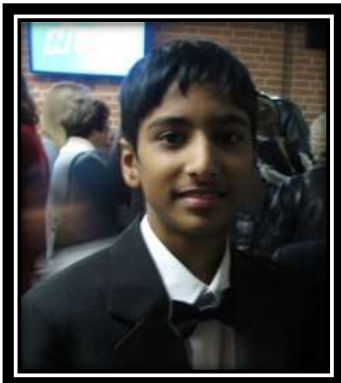
Deven Das is an eighth grader at New Albany Plain Local Schools, Ohio. He is the son of Tusar and Ranjita Das. His hobbies include reading books, writing poetry, listenening to music, and playing instruments. He plays many sports too and likes to spend time with his little brother, Dhruv

Time Travel

Dev Satpathy



How does time travel work?
Does it forge its own path, governed by the laws of math?
Is there a flow of time, which cycles in a constant loop?
Or can we blaze our own path, with any chosen group?
Can it branch out on different paths, or is it something that can only react?
I know my knowledge about it is inexact,
But that does not stop me from questioning how it acts.
Can we distort it and bend it as we please?
Or are we linked by real world properties?
If distortion is possible, would the time change its form?
Or would it adhere strictly to the norm?
Will we inadvertently destroy everything we know?
Or will it help the world grow?
In conclusion this is valid form of confusion;
That propels our imagination forward,
So our desire to know everything can be pushed skyward.
Therefore, as this thought comes to a close,
It leaves questions unanswered that not a soul knows.
As you can see, there is a path to the beginning, simply drawn
If only time travel were not a paradox.



Dev Satpathy is thirteen years old and is in eighth grade. He lives with his parents, Sushant and Ipsita Satpathy, and elder brother, Rishi, in Naperville, IL. Dev is a drummer.

Unlocking the literary potential



Be your OWN Buddha
A Time of Rising
Lord Jagannath's Miracle
From Surface To Soul: A Journey
Walk and Dance away your Depression, Anger, and Loneliness
7X8
Memoirs of My Life so far... One More Taj Mahal
My Sister
Bondage in Freedom
Ratha Jatra
Sleepover in September
Feel Your Feelings
Who Am I
2013 Odisha Tour Report
Will You Be My Valentine
Search for Anada
Spiritual Insights into Lord Jagannath & Ratha Jatra
Milli- a Kandha Girl in Odisha
Searching Inside Maya Miriga
America Here I come

Spiritual insights into Lord Jagannath & Ratha Jatra

Jnana Ranjan Dash

He was born into a Sikh family and did his undergraduate engineering at IIT Delhi. Then, after completing his MBA from IIM Kolkata, he was set to excel in a professional career – but a different call came and soon he left everything to become a sanyasi with the name of Swami Mukundananda, a disciple of the late Jagadguru Sri Kripaluji Maharaj. Swamiji spends a lot of time at the ashram in Cuttack and gives spiritual talks in many cities and towns all over Odisha. Once he had told me why his guru had advised him to begin his spiritual career in Odisha of all places – because Odisha has the deepest Bhagabat prem compared to any other place in India. This must go back to several hundred years of our spiritual heritage. Incidentally, a new university in the name of Kripaluji is coming up in Odisha near Cuttack/Banki. The Barshana Dham in Austin belongs to this organization. Odisha has been the only place for the establishment of another spiritual university: *Sri Sri University* (inspired by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, the Guru of Art of Living organization in Bangalore).

Very few people may know that the first translation of the monumental epic Srimad Bhagabatam (composed by Vyasa with 18,000 verses) into an Indian language was in Odia, done in the 1500s by the well-known Odia poet Atibadi Jagannath Das (1492-1552). At the request of his mother, the poet composed the entire Bhagabata in “nabakshari” (nine letters) meter for easy understanding. Other translations in languages like Bengali, Hindi and Tamil came much later. The Odia Bhagabat has been a part of the spiritual DNA of Odisha for the last 600 years. Odisha’s villages used to be dotted with Bhagabat tungi (small houses) where villagers gathered in the evening to listen to the Bhagabat recitation. This text highlights the essence of Vedanta in the form of a dialog between king Parikshit and sage Sukadev. Lines from the Odia Bhagabat became part of the daily vernacular of Odias, such as “*Mana Tohar Nija Guru, Uddhaba Kahinki Pacharu.*”

Our cultural heritage is visible here also, as many communities across USA and Canada are performing Jagannath puja and the annual Ratha Jatra. While we all like the mythological stories behind Lord Jagannath and the annual festival, not many know the origin and the spiritual significance. I had the privilege of listening to various visiting scholars such as Professor Chandra Sekhar Rath, Dr. Kabi Mishra, and the respected Gajapati of Puri. In the rest of this article, let me briefly share what I have learnt about the spiritual significance of the Jagannath culture of Odisha.

Lord Jagannath, a spiritual view

We see Lord Jagannath at three levels: personal, universal, and transcendental.

At the personal level, Lord Jagannath becomes our family member. The first invitation of a family wedding must be given to Him. He gets up in the morning and brushes his teeth, eats breakfast, then takes a bath followed by lunch and a siesta in the afternoon. After the evening puja and dinner He rests for the

night. Much like the rest of us He follows a daily routine. We address Him in an informal way and at times, we scold Him also. Naturally He becomes a sounding board for our problems. This is the commonly worshipped part and He becomes the Odia's much coveted Ishta Devata (personal God).

At the universal level, Lord Jagannath represents all Gods of the Hindu pantheon. He is Lord Narayana (Vishnu), Brahma, as well as Shiva. He is Lord Krishna as well as Lord Rama. When Guru Nanak came to see him, the Pandas wouldn't let this Muslim-looking fellow with a white beard enter the temple, so Nanak sat in front of the temple near the Ashok pillar and sang bhajans. Lord Jagannath communicated through his priest that his devotee couldn't be left outside and must be brought in. Such stories abound. Every form of divinity is represented by Lord Jagannath – the name itself means the Lord of the Jagat or universe, not merely Lord of Puri or Odisha or India. Hence He is universal.

At the transcendental level, He is a symbolic representation of Bramhan as depicted in our scriptures. He is sat-chit-ananda (existence, knowledge, bliss) or He is “Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam Brahma” (truth, knowledge, and infinity – Taittiriya Upanishad). The horizontal line on the head symbolizes his infinite nature. He is “Akarta, Abhokta” (non-doer, non-experiencer), represented as having arms but no hands, lips closed (silence), nose without the nostrils. His eyes are always open (no eyelids), so that he is the “drashta” (seer or sakshi or witness) of this universe that He created. His color is black symbolizing all colors of the humanity (black, white, yellow, brown skin colors). What he reminds us is that each one of us is no other than Him as the Mahavakya “Tat Twam Asi” (that thou art) declares. No other God brings the Upanishadic teaching of Bramhan so clearly as Lord Jagannath.

Ratha Jatra – what does it signify?

The story is well known to us. The Lord takes a long bath on Snana Purinima and gets a fever. For recuperation He goes to His aunt's place on a chariot. On this day the Lord comes to His bhaktas (devotees). He preaches equanimity (samatwa) as everyone is treated equally. He reminds us to practice ‘egolessness’. Even the names of the chariots carry symbolic meaning – e.g., Darpadalan means crush your ego.

But the real narration of the chariot's journey or Ratha Jatra began with Kathopanishad and became the inspiration for Vyasa to compose the Bhagabat Gita with Lord Krishna as the charioteer. During the dialog between Nachiketa and Lord Yama, in chapter 3, Lord Yama says:

Atmanam rathinam viddhi, sariram ratham eva tu,

Buddhim tu sarathim viddhi, manah pragraham eva cha.

(Know the Atman as the Lord of the chariot, who sits within it and this body is the chariot. Know the intellect as the charioteer and the mind as, verily, the reins.)

Indriyani hayanahuh, visayamstesu gocaran,

Atmendriya mano-yuktam, bhokte-tyahur manisinah.

(The sense (and the instincts) are the horses, and their roads are the sense-objects. The wise call Him the enjoyer when He is united with the body/sense/mind.)

Our intellect is like the CEO (Chief Executive Officer) of a company and the mind is the COO (Chief Operating Officer). There must be harmony between the CEO and the COO for the company to function smoothly. All the sense organs report to the COO/mind. If the mind is not controlling the senses properly, then this body is going to topple. Using the car as a modern-day example, the driver is the intellect, the steering wheel is the mind, and the tires are the sense organs. Unless the driver (intellect) controls the steering wheel (mind) properly, the car (body) will have an accident.

Hence every year, as we participate in the Ratha Jatra, we are supposed to reflect if our body/mind/intellect are being managed properly. If our mind is obsessed with negative thoughts of desire, anger, greed, and jealousy, then our body will suffer from high stress and other ailments. The Lord represents universal love and that is what we must practice in our lives.



Jnana Ranjan Dash, a former executive with IBM and Oracle, is currently a consultant and board member at software companies. He is a long-time Life Member of OSA and lives in San Jose, California.



Sublimation of Memories: the Odisha of my Parents

Lalu Mansinha

Nothing endures but change!

...so said the Greek philosopher Heraclitus of Ephesus (500 BCE). So it is that the Old Odisha (pre 1950), after changing so little for centuries, has been transformed into the New Odisha (post-2000) within the short space of my lifetime. I use stories of my parents, grandparents and me, as a framework to hang these anecdotal tales of the New Odisha and the Old, which parallels also my life.

When I was in school in the 1940s, my father (Mayadhar Mansinha) had a big worry, that I would not do well in school, and that at some point in the future he will have to beg an official for a *kirani*, (clerk) job for his not-so-bright, lazy son. Bapa's fears were reinforced by my well-meaning *mamu* (maternal uncle), drumming into my ears that I better study, or else *tu ghasa katibu*, (You will be mowing grass for a living). As it turned out, my mamus were partially correct in predicting my future. I stayed on in Canada and did mow the lawn regularly, though not for a living.

Move ahead sixty or so years, into the 21st century. A good friend of mine, Mana Ranjan, asked my mother (Hemalata Mansinha), in jest, if she was happy with her sons, particularly Lulu. She shook her head and said 'I wish I had kept him under control a bit longer.' My friend was taken aback, because he was expecting that Bou would praise her eldest son sky high. He asked '*Mausi. Lulu aau kana kari thanthe?*' (Mausi. What more could Lulu have accomplished?). Bou replied '*seita Nobel Prize pailani.*' (He did not get the Nobel Prize).

I was stunned, to say the least. I was taken aback that my mother harbored a secret hope that her eldest will get world recognition, a Nobel Prize. My failure to do so meant that I had failed in her eyes. I quickly tried to explain, telling her three stark realities, that her son was not good enough for the Nobel; not everyone who deserves a Nobel Prize gets one; and that in any case, there was no Nobel Prize in my field of Geophysics.

My wounded ego aside, the gap of six decades between the time when my father was worried for me that I may not accomplish much in life, and the time that my mother was convinced that I had not really accomplished much in life, is reflective of an astonishing change in expectations in Odisha and Indian society, which in turn is reflective of a dynamic change in the perception of ourselves and our place among the nations. It is the difference between a ceiling imposed on subject people by foreign masters, and the "we-can-be-anything-we-wish-to-be" attitude of the citizens of New Odisha, in a world suddenly thrown wide open.

One significant difference between the Old and New Odisha is the huge population difference. Populations' estimates are difficult. At the time of the arrival of the Europeans and the Moguls the population of India was about 110 million, and the population of Odisha was about 4 million. By 1800 the population had gone up to 7 million, increasing to 10 million by 1900, and to 12.6 million in 1950. It took 450 years, from 1500 to 1950, to triple from 4 to 12 million. The current figure of 42 million, triple the 1950 figure, was achieved in just 60 years.

With the passage of years the numbers of those of us who were young in 1940, and can remember the Old Odisha, are getting fewer and fewer. With natural attrition as well as population growth, this

group now constitute less than 10% of the population. I wish to invoke an image of that Odisha for that 90% of the current population of the New Odisha that know the land of my youth only through history books.

I have arbitrarily termed Old Odisha as the period from 1803, when the East India Company captured Odisha, to 1950. The New Odisha, again arbitrarily, is considered to start in 2000. The fifty year period in between is the transition.

... ❁ ...

The wealth of Odisha before 1550 CE can be estimated from the remains of the monuments created by our ancestors on this land. We see mega multiyear projects like the Diamond Triangle of Buddhists MahaViharas at Ratnagiri, Udayagiri, Lalitgiri and Langudi (6th century CE). These neighbouring Viharas constituted an international scholastic centre rivalling the famous Nalanda in the number of scholars, scholastic achievements and influence. Another massive project was the embankment of Cuttack, built by Raja Markata Kesari a thousand years ago in 1006 CE. That embankment has been so well engineered, and so solidly built that it is still protecting Cuttack from the rivers after eleven centuries. The Jagannatha temple (12th century) and Konarka temple (14th century) are other examples. Konarka was an ambitious project. A tall heavy temple built at the mouth of the Chandrabhaga River. Quite possibly the foundation of the structure was laid underwater. Massive, expensive projects are an indicators of a healthy economy in Odisha and a surplus state treasury, until at least the 16th century. Certainly the engineering and the craftsmanship, and low population of 4 million suggest a wealthy nation.

The last independent ruler of Odisha, Gajapati Mukunda Deva, died in battle in 1568 CE, and Odisha passed into the control of an Afgan prince, Bayazid Khan Karrani. Three decades later, around 1590, Raja Man Singh, Akbar's Rajput general, defeated the Afgans and Odisha became part of the Mogul empire. About 150 years after that, with the death of Aurangzeb in 1707, the Mogul empire weakened and the Marhattas, under Raghoji Bhonsle I of Nagpur, seized Odisha in 1751.

In 1800 the East India Company ruled the Madras Presidency and the Bengal Presidency, separated by Marhatta controlled Odisha. Primarily to provide continuity of their two possessions, Bengal and Madras, and to weaken the Marhattas, who were the last major force opposing the British in India, Lord Wellesley, the Governor General, ordered the army of the East India Company to capture Odisha. The Marhattas (and the Odias) offered little resistance to the invading British troops. With the signing of the Treaty of Deogarh on December 17, 1803, the Marhattas ceded Odisha to the control of the East India Company.

Let's try to imagine the Odisha as she was in 1800. Odisha was mostly rural, dotted with towns and villages, separated by farmland or dense forests, connected with cart tracks. There were no cars, buses, railways, no radio no telephone, no kerosene lanterns. The well to do travelled on elephants, horses or carried by humans in a *palinki*. The not so well to do travelled on foot or in bullock carts. There were no bridges across rivers; people, animals and carts just waited for the boats. Dense forests hid wild animals, tigers, elephants and dacoits. Travelling was expensive, and risky, as much for the wild animals as for the dacoits.

It is easy for me to visualise Odisha of the 1800, as my ancestral village, Nandala and the surrounding region, at the southern end of Chilika Lake, in the 1940s, was an image of Odisha as it was in 1800s, or even earlier. Even though Europeans had reached India in 1498 CE, there was little evidence of contact with the outside world. During the early 1940s I do not recall seeing a single factory manufactured item in the village: no pen, no pencil, no bicycle, etc. Not even a paperclip. Our family

travelled every summer from Sambalpur to Nandala. The last stretch of this trip, on foot, by bullock cart, or by boat (during the monsoons) from Huma or Rambha was evocative of travel a century ago.

The population numbers are important. In the Old Odisha, of my youth, and of my father and grandfather's times, the population of 10 million had not yet severely impacted the environment. The dense Dandakaranya forest, mentioned in the Ramayana, was there, populated with tigers and elephants etc. I could not have imagined then that the tigers and elephants would be on the brink of extinction in the New Odisha of just 50 years later. Wood, available in infinite amounts is now getting scarce.

The progression of Odisha development from 1803 to around 1950 has been a slow prolonged process, gauged from the founding of the education institutions. It was 52 years from the British takeover to the first high school, the Ravenshaw Collegiate School, in 1851. The first college, Ravenshaw College started in 1868. A second college was founded, in 1944. The first university, Utkal University in 1942; the first engineering college at Burla in 1956. The population of Odisha had gone up from 8 million to 12 million in the time interval of 76 years between the first college and the second. It took 153 years in the Old Odisha for the founding of the first engineering college. The New Odisha can count 120 engineering colleges founded within just 25 years. It took 130 years after the British occupation for the first two Odias to get doctorates, Pranakrushna Parija, D.Sc and and my father, Mayadhar Mansinha, PhD in 1939.

In 1803 the official language of the government and the courts was Persian. Changeover to English or Odia was difficult and slow the number of Odias with knowledge of English and educated to an appropriate level was small. The number of educated Odias remained scarce for a long time, as the British were slow in setting up English type schools. The East India Company, based in Calcutta, neglected Odisha. This was noted in 1837 by Henry Ricketts, the Commissioner of Odisha. He wrote to his superiors.

“At the conquest, we found the Ooreahas in a state of great degradation and to our shame be it recorded that our policy was to perpetuate the degeneracy which prevailed among them. The problem could be solved if schools be established and properly attended to, the Ooreahas will soon show that degeneracy is but the usual consequence of misrule”

Dr. E. Roer, Inspector of Schools in 1850 reported to the govt:

“For the whole of Odisha, with an area of 52, 995 square miles and a population of 4,534,813 souls, less is expended than for the small district of Howrah with an area of 800 sq miles, and a population of 7,50,000 souls.”

The truth is that the Old Odisha society was not convinced of the benefits of of the curriculum in British government or missionary schools. The intelligentsia grudgingly accepted the British as overlords, but looked down upon their societal values. Acceptance of Ravenshaw College was slow. In 1900, when there were 7 million people in Odisha, only 94 students graduated from Ravenshaw College.

In the Old Odisha the middle class, which forms the core of a modern state, was very small and with very little disposable income, in a population of 7 million or so. In the New Odisha, with economic development and an increase of the population to 42 million, the middle class is sizeable, and with sufficient disposable income to make a significant impact on every aspect of society. The totality of the disposable income, tagged as population pressures, is huge and its effect on the environment of Odisha are visible. There is an adverse impact on forests, rivers, wildlife, fish and humans, on the physical appearance of the land, and in the character of the society

In the New Odisha many alternate avenues are available for those who do well in school, and also for those who do not do so well. In the New Odisha of course even if one does not study diligently, many alternate pathways are available for getting outstanding marks. As the angry parent of a failing son shouted at the Principal of a private engineering college: "I paid Rs2 lakhs in tuition fees. It is your responsibility that my son does well".

The youth of New Odisha speak with confidence, absolutely sure of their place in the Sun. Case I: I was trying to persuade a bright girl, graduating from IIT, to come and do a PhD with me. She smiled and declined. She said 'I have just been offered a job with Schlumberger, with a contract for two years. I will be based in Eastern Siberia. At the end of two years I will come back with Rs40 lakhs in my pocket'. Case II: A not so bright boy, B.Eng., MBA from a not too well known college, has been unsuccessful in India in getting a job. I asked him if he was worried. He said: 'Worried? Not at all. I will try here for a month more, and then I am flying out to Singapore and try there.'

The dramatic difference between societal behaviour is in corruption. In the Old Odisha corruption was known, but it was whispered to be practiced by a very few. Hard to believe now, but in the old Odisha copying or cheating in the exams was rare, almost unknown. Bribery was also rare. Crime was low. In Cuttack and other cities crime rate was low enough that one did not feel unsafe in the urban areas at night.

Odias could not get jobs without some level of education. They could not get an education an English education because there were very few local schools. In any case, the bulk of the population could not afford to pay the few annas of school fees per month or afford the expense of sending a child to a distant school. There was a social factor. With so few Odias employed by the British run government, most villagers did not see the benefit of taking a son away from helping with farming and send him to a distant school. And so the cycle of illiteracy and poverty continued, and Odisha continued to be at the bottom of economic development in India. Odisha, then as now, with the wealth of mineral, forest, ocean resources was in dormancy. Then, as now, Odisha was cash poor and resources rich.

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My mother was right in thinking that I had not really accomplished much, compared what she, my father and my grandfather had accomplished in their lives, succeeding in spite of overwhelming difficulties. My grandfather, Banamali Behura, had a minimal education and was a lowly officer in Mayurbhanj State, under the rajah. Yet when he retired three of his sons and two sons-in-law had finished college in Odisha, Bengal or Bihar and then gone onto UK for higher degree.

Sometime in 1935 or 36, Aja received a one line post card from Bou, asking him to come immediately. Aja, suspecting some serious crisis facing his newly married eldest daughter, rushed to Nimapada, where Bapa had a job as a school teacher. Thinking that his newly married daughter had some crisis on hand, Aja rushed from Rairangapur to Nimapada. Travelling by train, bus and finally on foot a very worried and a very tired Aja arrived in Nimapada. He was relieved that all Bou wanted to tell him "*se padhibaku Bilat jibe*" (He wants to go to England for higher studies.)

In those days foreign universities offered no scholarships. Bapa wrote to several eminent persons for financial help so he could study further. A few responded. With help from Aja, some money from sale of village lands, he left for UK shortly after I was born, in Bhowanipatna. I and my mother spent the first few years of my life at my grandmother's place in Udula and Rairangapur. My father has written of his travels to UK, the one and only time he left India, in *Paschima Pathika*. (Traveller to the West).

I went abroad for a PhD in Physics some 23 years after Bapa went to UK. The West felt threatened after the Soviet Union placed the first satellite, the Sputnik, in orbit. The West wanted to catch up and surpass the Soviets, and the universities in the Western world saw huge increase in funding. I came to the

University of British Columbia in Canada, with an award of financial aid. Unlike my father I did not have to worry about funding. By the time I left India, studying abroad was still not routine, but not an adventure into a strange world either.

A striking difference between then and now is of course the higher education for girls. In those days the families expended scarce resources in education for boys, and dowries for girls. In the New Odisha so many girls are going for higher education.

My mother got married at age of 13, never having had a chance to complete her schooling beyond Class VII. Regardless of the lack of formal schooling, she was naturally bright, and schooled herself and became a writer in her own right. This was a formidable achievement, to grow up as writer from under the shadow of my father's literary reputation and continuing literary output. She wrote and ran a weekly women's column in the Odia newspaper *Prajatantra*.

The absence of formal education did not deter her from assuming two roles for which our extended family is thankful. One is the stark reality for the Mansinha family. In spite of his being a well known Odia author, and the first PhD in Odisha, there were very many periods when he was underemployed or jobless. Our family kept its dignity and pride and our heads above the water only due to the astute control of family finances by my mother. All through our financial nightmares, she quietly nurtured her lifelong project of building a house and home for all of us in Cuttack. My father was a poet, dreamer and totally impractical. Without my mother he and we would have been sunk. Miraculously, all through our tight financial situation, she had money saved away for the education for each of us, for my sister's weddings, and for building a house.

This is the new Odisha of the 21st Century. It is in this new Odisha in which my mother changed her expectation of me. My parents built our family home in Cuttack. There was a master plan. But regardless of the master-plan, rooms were added on top and sides to make it a warren of a house. The real reason was that they expected all of us brothers and sisters to live with our families in our house. As it turned out, none of us brothers and sisters settled down in Cuttack. None of us lived in that our house. Our and Aja's house were like an oasis in the heart of Cuttack. We were within a kilometer of Mangalabag, in the heart of crowded Cuttack, with a population of 1 lakh then. And yet every night we were serenaded by the howling of the *bilua* (jackal). Every once in a while we would see a *kokisiali* (fox). There were lines of *kia* (Pandanus) bushes, marking the property boundaries. Once in a while a *kia* flower would bloom, bathing the whole neighbourhood with this lovely fragrance. But the *kia* also sheltered numerous snakes. And we would see these 5 or 6 ft long cobra, or the Russel's viper, etc. In Cuttack in the summer our family trooped over to Kathjodi river, about 2 miles away, and bathed in the clean clear water and drank water from the *chua* that we dug in the sand.

Our Nandala village was not wealthy, but there was an abundance of fish, crabs, prawns and *sukhua* and *tampda* (salted sundried fish and prawn). The great Dandakaranya forest, mentioned in the Ramayana, was still dense and had an abundance of tigers and elephants. In Cuttack city we used to be serenaded by the howlings of jackals every night. Our property boundary in Cuttack was marked with *kia* (Pandanus).

Odisha was in a dormant state. Odisha stirred out of the dormancy with a slow booting up process, which is still continuing, two hundred years later. In village after village one hears of one plucky boy (in those days' only boys) who persuaded often unwilling parents, uncles etc. to allow him to get him an education in the local village school. Then if he is good enough to get a scholarship, he uses that as a persuasive factor to get permission to continue to study. And every year, he would get comments like "Why are you wasting money going to school? You should stay at home and help with the farming".

With the new qualification the boy would get a job, start earning. With the newfound cash the boy pulls up his brothers one by one to get education. In turn they get jobs, pull others from the joint family up.

In the 1940s an Odisha parent's fondest hope for the sons was a local job with a pension, preferably located where the parents lived. The dominant requirement was a guaranteed inflow of cash into perpetually needy family finances. Parents of those days dreamed of a joint family with all the sons, and their families, living happily under one roof.

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In Bhubaneswar an organisation *Renaissance Universal*, headed by Prof. A. K. Mohanty, has invited me several times to give lectures on science to a general audience. In the past I have spoken on topics in my discipline, geophysics: the 2004 Tsunami, and on Birth and Death of the Earth, etc. In 2013 my friend Sarat Misra requested that I speak on the Nobel prize for the God Particle, the Higgs Boson, I protested that I am a geophysicist, not a theoretical or particle physicist. But Sarat was persuasive and insistent. I finally agreed did give the talk, justifying to myself that in speaking on the Higgs Boson, I was communicating science to the general public in Bhubaneswar. I had to study furiously, praying that no theoretical or particle physicist would be in the audience. I also wanted to learn about the Higgs Boson. A Hungarian physicist, Theodore von Karman, once said that if you really want to understand a subject, give a lecture on it.

In the New Odisha, the talks organised by Renaissance Universal on various topics are also symbolic of the change from the Old. That there is continuing public interest in Odisha in the latest developments in every field of knowledge is laudable.

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Our village Nandala, and Region are now connected with all-weather roads to the National Highway. Villagers can reach the government and the courts in 4 hours or so. In my time the village had a threadbare school. Now there is the Mayadhar Mansingh High School. In the next village, Malud, there is now a college.

Even with the apparent prosperity of New Odisha, Odisha continues to be at the bottom of the States in India. Many Odisha villages have yet to be connected by a road and rail network. It is fair to say that while much of the State is in the New Odisha, much of the interior is still in dormancy in the Old Odisha.

My father's fear about me were based on his life experiences in the Old Odisha. He passed away before he could experience the ambience in the New Odisha. That a barely educated girl who got married at age 13 could even dream of a Nobel Prize for her son speaks volumes for the resurgence of Odisha. So much of my mother's life and personality had been shaped by the harsh realities of the Old Odisha. Yet she could sense that the life accomplishments by her son (me), that had appeared so bright in the Old Odisha, looked much diminished in the light of New Odisha. My mother would have enjoyed to hear me speak on the Higgs Boson. Sadly, she had departed.

Lalu Mansinha
Professor in Geophysics,
Western University,
Ontario, Canada
[mansinha@uwo.ca]

Prof. Lalu Mansinha lives in London, Ontario, Canada. He is a Visiting Professor at the Indian Institute of Technology, Bhubaneswar and Adjunct Research Professor in Geophysics at Western University, London, Canada. He is a participant in a multidisciplinary research project based at the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, to study the foundations of Konarka and Jagannatha temples, and to trace the old Chandrabhaga and Shradha Rivers.

Walk and Dance Away your Depression, Anger, and Loneliness

Dr. Prasanna K. Pati

Lord Shiva is one of the Hindu Gods. He is the great Yogi, the great Teacher and the counsellor of all other Gods and Goddesses of the Hindu pantheon. Above all, Lord Shiva is the Cosmic Dancer, the Lord of the Dance. In his ecstatic dance, he is creating the universe with one hand and destroying it with the other.

During my daily four mile walk, sometimes I chant to Lord Shiva. What would this Great Guru of all people advise us now? During my walks, it is time for solitude, contemplation, introspection; time for flashes of memory of those loved ones, who are no more that makes the eyes teary sometimes,, and above all, time for connecting with Mother Nature and her ever changing beauty.

How I got started on this walking program is a long story. I wrote an article about it, “Happy Walkings to All” in Chart Notes, the monthly publication of the Marion Polk County Medicinal Society in January 2010. The article can be found on their website at www.mprnedsociety.org.

I have been in Psychiatry since 1952 in Pennsylvania, Michigan and mostly in Oregon. I have come to the conclusion that people of this country have to take responsibility for their own health maintenance, both physical and mental. This is primary prevention; however, it is easier said than done.

Returning to walking, the following is from a company called Wellesse in Washington State;

Fifteen Benefits of Walking

- 1) Burns calories
- 2) Accessible to everyone
- 3) No special equipment is required
- 4) One of the easiest ways to get active
- 5) Reduces stress
- 6) Low impact exercise
- 7) Improves mood
- 8) Helps build strength
- 9) Tone muscles
- 10) Building aerobic fitness
- 11) Helps maintain lean muscle tissue
- 12) Easy way to reduce risk of diabetes and aid maintenance of the same
- 13) Improves heart and cardiovascular health
- 14) Less likely to lead to exercise-related injuries
- 15) It is free

Another article I read is called “Walking is a great way to slow mental decline,” by Mami Jameson of the Orlando Sentinel. This article quotes from Dr. Jay Van Gerpen, a neurologist of the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida. According to this story, a daily 20-minute walk can cut the risk of dementia.

Finally, on dancing, one of the stars of Bollywood (Mumbai, India) Mithum Chakraborty writes, “Every day is not the same in your life. Whenever I get distressed and sad, I dance, and through dance, forget everything. If you are upset, dance it out. It gives a lot of positive vibes. There is no point in getting violent and beating up anybody. If you are angry, show your anger. Dance is very close to my heart.”

The reader may ask me, “Do you dance?” Yes, I dance a few minutes every day to the music of India. Many years back, at the age of 80, I used to attend Expressive Dance sessions guided by a wonderful local dancer and teacher.

Also, because of a bit of insanity, I started going to weekly classes of Zumba dancing. After only three months I realized that this high intensity and fast dancing was for young people and not for an old guy. Also, one of my friends teased me that I was going to watch women dance. I was a bit defensive, but managed to respond, “Maybe a bit of that, but mostly for fun.”

Finally, in a lighter moment, I would share with the readers my 2014 resolution.

Oh Lord Shiva, a new year has come,

My mind is half-gone

All resolutions forgotten,

Let me dance away to a Bollywood tune,

You, the Lord of Dance, the Natarajan,

You, the Great Guru, do a duet with me under India’s sun.

Let us walk and dance starting today, and not wait until tomorrow, and do it daily. Take it from a self-styled old Guru and psychiatrist, that if you start your day with walking, dancing, meditation and yoga, that is, with a combination of such, you are on the right path for health maintenance.

Dr. Prasanna K. Pati,
1353 Heather Lane S.E.
Salem, OR 97302, USA
[njrpati@aol.com]

Prasanna K. Pati M.D., is a retired Oregon State Hospital and Consultant Psychiatrist. He is a Distinguished Life Fellow of the American Psychiatric Association.

From Surface to Soul: A Journey

Mamata Misra

About a year ago, when the dimensions and positions of the sanctums of the various deities at the main temple became clearer, it was time to start exploring how the new Jagannatha Parivar vigrahas for our temple will be created and brought over. Various sources including the Gajapati Maharaja pointed to one sculptor in Puri, Ghanashyama Mohapatra, involved in the creation of vigrahas for several temples in the US and in India. Being ignorant, we had many questions. Should we venture into getting the vigrahas made in the traditional way or are there other more practical options? How long would it take? What would it cost? Who in Puri would help monitor the process for us and raise a red flag when needed? Unlike most vigrahas that are made of metal or stone, the Jagannatha vigrahas are made of wood and they must be repainted every year. And, of course, there is no “For Dummies” book available on how to take care of the Jagannatha deities.

I happened to be in India in February 2012. Tusar, our main volunteer, requested me to contact Mohapatra and collect some basic information. My schedule was full and making a trip to Puri seemed difficult, so I called Mohapatra to get the information over phone. To my surprise, he said that he was coming to Bhubaneswar the next day and would prefer to have a face-to-face meeting. Mohapatra showed up the next day at my father’s home as promised and described the process of making the vigrahas. First, they have to locate a suitable tree and get the wood. I remembered what I had heard in my childhood from my mother about the suitability of the tree – *A neem tree with signs of Vishnu in its bark, surrounded by sandalwood trees so that the wood smells like sandalwood.* “We have to start the work with a yajna and the carving of the four deities must be completed in three weeks.” Again, the legend of how the first Jagannatha vigraha was created flashed before me -- *After the Maha Daru came floating in the sea and reached the shore, when no sculptor could make a dent in it, the Lord, disguised as an old man, carved the Daru into the shapes of His own choice behind closed doors with the condition that the doors must not be opened for three weeks.*

“What about the paint? Do you suggest traditional method or should we use a synthetic substitute that would be easier for us to use?” I asked. “Traditional of course! The Lord would not accept even water otherwise!” Mohapatra replied when I was expecting some technical comparison of the two kinds of paint. Since I missed his point, he explained again, “You may think that it is okay to use any paint but it is not. The Lord will not accept your offerings! He will remain hungry! Besides, all that fume is not good for anyone!” The thought of synthetic paint polluting *the breathing space of living deities in a temple* seemed unbearable to Mohapatra. “But is there a cost difference? And, would ordinary folks like me be able to mix traditional paint?” I persisted. “There is no cost difference. Once you use synthetic paint, you cannot use traditional paint over it. I may come to the US to show anyone who wants to learn how to mix traditional paint if needed. It is not that hard if you want to learn.”

We moved on to other details: dimensions of the four main deities, Jagannatha, Balabhadra, Subhadra, and Sudarshana; accompanying deities such as Madhava (made of wood), Bhudevi, Sridevi, Rama Krushna, and Madana Mohana (to be made of ashtadhatu or eight metals); the signature Neelachakra (metal) to be mounted on the individualized ornamentation for the sanctum; the stone platform (ratna vedi) on which the deities are to be seated; and Garuda to be placed in the front, on his own tree that looks like a pillar (stambha).

As we discussed the cost, I learned that there is a lot more between the wood and the paint. There will be *seven different layers*. Some of it, paata (a special silk) thread, and fragrances such as musk are expensive. Some materials like specific kinds of clay, stone, or waxes from trees, are to be procured from specific places in a certain way; everything needs to be factored into the cost. After Mahapatra left, I jotted down what I had learned, feeling grateful that the Lord had sent Mohapatra to me when I couldn't go to Puri.

The next day, unexpectedly, my cousin Jyotsna and her husband DC Mishra dropped in. I learned that DC had retired; after spending their entire working life in Delhi, the couple had fallen in love with and settled in Puri. DC, a man with many passions – from educating slum children in Delhi to long motorbike expeditions with Jyotsna to spread awareness for various causes – had acquired a new passion for folk life photography. He said that he was discovering Puri in minute detail. I told him about our Austin temple and my fact-finding mission about the Jagannatha vigrahas. Thinking about DC's thoroughness in whatever he commits to, I mentioned, "We need a volunteer in Puri who can sincerely monitor the process and liaise between us and the sculptor as needed. Would you have the time and interest to take on this important role?" DC agreed to help us. I figured that *the Lord was providing us with His instruments*. Since that beginning, Tusar and others at the Austin Hindu Temple have had uncountable emails and phone calls with Mohapatra and DC at every step of the vigraha making and shipping process of over a year.

I traveled to India again in November of 2012 to attend a nephew's wedding. "You have another job to do this time," Tusar requested. "A daru brahma homa needs to be done. I would like you to attend this homa as yajamana on behalf of the temple community. I would also like you to check how far things have progressed and give us an eyewitness report." The auspicious day of Prathamashstami was selected for the event. After reaching Bhubaneswar, I contacted Mohapatra and DC and found out that the homa was to be held at the site just outside Puri where the vigrahas were being built. "We couldn't insult the Lord by creating His smaller replicas right on Bada Danda where the originals are made. We are making them just outside Puri." Mohapatra explained. I was reminded again that *one must feel the Lord's living presence at every step and action*.

It was my good fortune to witness the deities in the making in their raw wooden forms and to attend the unique daru brahma homa done only during the creation of new vigrahas. I saw the shapes of Sri Jagannathaa, Balabhadra, Subhadra, Sudarshana, and Madhava, placed against the wall facing us. The rare sight made me ecstatic. Devi Subhadra looked especially beautiful, with the natural marks of the wood symmetrically running through her face, forming natural lines to mark her eyes. I observed that the heads of the deities looked so much bigger and wider than their bodies, something that had not been so obvious

in their clothed and decorated forms I was used to seeing. DC explained that the sculptors turn the tree trunk upside down for carving, so that a wider area is available for the head. It reminded me of a very old philosophical Odia song: *Olata brukshye kheluchhi lotani para (the pigeon that must return home is playing in the upside down tree)*, and the upside down tree mentioned in the Bhagavat Geeta, chapter 15, where Bhagavan says: *That imperishable Ashwattha tree of creation, with its roots up in the Primeval Being, the stem in the middle as the Creator, and the leaves spreading everywhere as the Vedas – one who knows this knows the Vedas.* I was filled with gratitude for this experience.

We unpacked boxes to reveal the four metal deities Sridevi, Bhudevi, Rama Krushna and Madana Mohana, a darpani (metal mirror used during bathing), and the neelachakra. We lined them up in front of the wooden deities and set up the area for homa. It was a beautiful homa. The fire rose high and consumed the coconut. The priest seemed happy and declared that Agni was very satisfied.

I also saw eleven traditional besas (costumes) in the process of creation, some done in part. Sri Jagannatha changes costumes often and special costumes include various incarnations of Vishnu. The *as though formless* form of Sri Jagannatha has no hands but each costume requires hands with mudra specific to a puranic story. I saw several pairs of hands already carved and watched a sculptor carving a hand. I also saw various head ornaments in the making.

“The easy part, the wood work, is done. What remains is the difficult part, very elaborate and delicate, to be added layer by layer. The final forms would be bigger and heavier as each layer will add to the thickness and weight,” Mohapatra had told me at the homa. But I learned the significance of each layer through Tusar later. The body of Sri Jagannatha is made like the body of a living being. The inner wooden core represents the skeleton. The layer of silk thread represents the circulatory system, the arteries and veins. There are two layers of ground limestone, clay, and tree waxes mixed with fragrant preservatives found in nature, some only known to the descendants of the tribal keepers of Neelamadhava, the origin of Sri Jagannatha. These represent the flesh layers of muscle and fat. A layer of red fabric is used to represent blood. Two more layers of fabric are used to represent two layers of skin. Finally the paint is the pigment in the skin, the colors white, yellow, and black, representing the colors of different human races. Again, I was reminded that *the Lord is a living entity with all the necessary layers of a living being.*

Tusar got busy, organizing and tracking the details of shipping, and figuring out where and how to get the remaining items needed at the time of pratisthaa: the *brahma vastu* that represents the soul, to be placed within a special chamber in the navel area at the time of *prana pratishtaa*. He also told me about his research to find out what *yantras* are needed for the deities. A yantra is a two-dimensional model of the body. Yantras are used in various tantric worships and meditation practices along with beeja mantras. Sri Jagannatha’s rituals show an assimilation of different rituals followed in India through ages: tribal, tantric, vedic, and puranic. In Mahanirvana Tantra, Sri Balabhadra is described as Tara Devi of white color, Devi Subhadra as Bhubaneswari Devi of golden color of the sun, and Sri Jagannatha as Dakshinakali Devi of black color. We learned that we should procure the three yantras representing Ugra Tara, Bhubaneswari, and Dakshinakali for the seats of the deities. We also learned that Sri Jagannatha, while worshipped according to the tantric rituals, is dressed as female, with ornaments on the nose and forehead and sari

over the head. I was again reminded that *the formless Brahman is neither male nor female, but may be worshiped in either form.*



A year ago, I had started on the outer surface, with the question of the paint. But now I see that through Lord Jagannatha's journey from Puri to Austin Hindu Temple, I have also made a journey from asking questions about the paint on the surface to gaining deeper insights at every step. There is no doubt that this experience has penetrated into my inner layers and touched the soul. *Jagannatha swami nayana pathagami bhavatu me!* May Lord Jagannatha be in my view!

Mamata Misra authored this article in May 2013, just before the Kumbhabhishekam of the main temple complex of the Austin Hindu Temple and Sri Jagannatha pratishtha. The article was published in the temple souvenir. [misramamata@gmail.com]



Search for Ananda

Manmath Nayak

The basic assumption of this article is that everyone is seeking happiness in one's own terms and conditions. No one wants happiness to be snatched away under any condition. This search is a part of the search of *Ananda*, which is defined as ever growing happiness, not cyclical, not limited by space and time, and is infinite in nature. In the modern age, life is filled with various tensions and sufferings in spite of material prosperity and technological advancement. There is a simple method of pursuit of *Ananda*, which needs no physical or mental preparation to start the process on the part of the individual. The path is revealed towards the infinite goal without prior knowledge. The method was given by Lord Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu. Simply by *sravanam* (hearing), *kirtanam* (singing or chanting) and *smaranam* (thinking) about God one makes sincere effort towards the path, which is never wasted. Just as we understand connection and relation in mundane affairs, in the same way this is a simple effort to establish connection or relation of the self with God or *Ananda*. With reciprocation from the other end, this is an ever growing process. The purpose of this article is to bring forth this point. It is hoped that someone might benefit from this. The rest of the article gives a glimpse of facts learnt by the author from scriptures or exalted souls in this path of relationship of the individual soul. Errors or inaccuracies in this article are author's sole responsibility. In the beginning of the pursuit of *Ananda*, there is faith in that relationship, whose validity can be tested through evolving personal experience. The process continues as we go deeper inside with no end.

Ananda is synonymous with God. Living beings are part and parcel of *Ananda*. They are part and parcel in the infinitesimal form. They have some of the attributes of the whole. God has infinite attributes and main among them are *Sat* (Truth), *Chit* (Consciousness) and *Ananda* (Bliss). Among them if we want only one attribute to describe, which is the most prominent one, then that would be *Ananda*. *Jeeva* or living soul has all these three qualities but in a very minute form. This is what is meant by *Jeeva* being a part and parcel of *Ananda*. That is why *Jeeva* is knowingly or unknowingly ever attracted by the whole. Irrespective of caste, creed, color, nationality, religion or belief, every human being is searching for *Ananda* or God. Even one who does not believe in God, is also searching for *Ananda* unknowingly through one's action. No living entity can stop being active for a moment. The basic motivation for any action is search for *Ananda*. This search has been going on life after life by living beings but mostly with no success. No external teaching has been necessary to motivate soul to search for *Ananda*. But from the time of birth until death, this search goes on by the living soul. This is inherent since the part always wants the whole. Whole is ever attractive with infinite love and compassion. If a living being meets with success then *Jeeva* becomes *Anandi* (filled with *Ananda*.) Never can *Jeeva* or living being become *Ananda*. There is one and only one God no matter what path one takes up. There are few who succeed in their search.

What has been the problem then, if the soul inherently wishes for *Ananda*? Why the soul cannot enter the realm of *Ananda*? There is another inferior energy of God which is called *Maya* or Matter. This does not have *Chit* (Consciousness) or *Ananda* (Bliss.) But it is bestowed with *Sat* (Truth or Existence) in minute form as energy. This is also energy of God but has been called inferior energy. The whole of matter including this physical universe, mind, intellect and ego are creations of material energy. Even though material energy always exists, its manifestation is changes with time, and it is temporary in nature. *Jeeva*, as described above, seeks *Ananda*. Mind is a product of the material energy. Mind is in the driver seat and has no prior experience or knowledge of *Ananda*. Hence the *Jeeva*, the passenger goes through discomfort. The soul is searching for *Ananda*, while the mind, the main force for action, is material in nature.

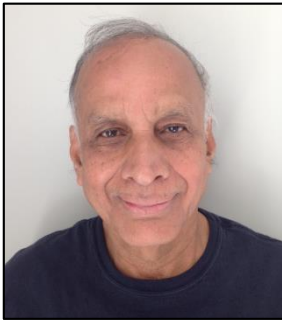
Srimad Bhagavat Gita describes the conversation between God and *Jeeva*. Lord Krishna is *Ananda* and Arjuna is *Jeeva* (highly exalted) whose mind is perturbed. In this case God Himself has worked as mentor or Guru. Generally this is Guru's job in becoming a mentor to help the disciple in cleansing the heart of the implications of *Maya*. *Maya* entangles the mind in so many residual effects also such as Lust (*Kama*), anger (*Krodha*), greed (*Lobha*), fear (*Moha*), false pride (*Mada*), jealousy (*Matsarya*), unfulfilled desire (*Basana*.) God displays Himself to the extent the purity of heart develops. He has among infinite attributes and the quality of *Kripa* or Grace. This is His special power. Arjuna was special and very dear to Lord Krishna. He developed great weakness of mind and body. His attachment was to the relatives and friends among the *Kauravas*, who were in front of him in the battlefield. The *Kauravas* had gone to the side of injustice and unrighteous because of stubbornness and various other reasons. This is the whole epic of Mahabharata. Seeing Arjuna so perplexed in the battlefield Lord Krishna gave Arjuna the sermon which is known as *Srimad Bhagavat Gita*. This epic reveals and provides direction to any one at any juncture of his or her life. He revealed Himself as the Supreme Being, who had taken the human form with His propensity, known as Yoga Maya, which is different from material energy known as *Mahamaya*. He gave instruction about *Karma Yoga*, *Gyana Yoga* and *Bhakti Yoga*. Among them *Bhakti Yoga* is simple, most powerful and all inclusive. *Karma* can elevate one's status in the material world. The problem is that it is temporary. No matter how elevated is the situation; it goes through a cycle and is eventually terminated. Lord Krishna preached about *Nishkama Karma* (*Karma yoga*, which transcends material quality and with no desire for fruit of action) in order to get rid of the cycle. On the other hand, path of *Gyana* preaches detachment. The result is self-realization and can have *Nirguna Brahman* realization by the Grace of God. This is very difficult and is full of pitfalls since it depends in the beginning stage on one's strength, which is never sufficient for God realization.

Bhakti Yoga, on the other hand, is simple and easy to practice and the result is farfetched. But *Bhakti Yoga* is basically *Nabadha Bhakti* (nine types) with special relationship of the *Jeeva* with *Ananda*. There are various degrees and levels of that relationship. God has *Sat*, *Chit*, *Ananda* form but manifests in three different ways with varying degree of potencies. In *Brahman* form there is no appearance (*Rupa*), no abode, no creation and no *Leela*. That is called *Nirguna Brahman*. In Vishnu form, there is *Rupa*, name, relationship, but no pastime. In Lord Krishna form, He manifests all the potencies,

attributes with infinite names, forms and incarnations. A devotee enjoys *Rupa* (appearances), *Leelas* (Pastimes,) *Namas* (Names,) relationships, and infinite other attributes.

Now let us come to a very practical question, which is very relevant for the modern age. Arjuna's question was how one can practice even *Bhakti Yoga*, which is the simplest form of *Yoga* to practice because mind is so fickle and beyond control and the senses are so strong. Lord Krishna agreed with Arjuna's description of the mind as very powerful and difficulty of controlling it. His advice was to surrender before Him and give up all religiosity. A simple method was given by Lord Sri Chaitanya some five hundred years ago on how to practice surrendering to God. This is called *Saranagati* or practice of surrender or *Raganuga Bhakti*. He flooded every one with devotion and was mostly in ecstasy in Srimati Radhrani's *bhava* (loving emotion,) which is called *Mahabhava*. For a *Jeeva* that *bhava* is not possible. But one can connect or relate by hearing, chanting and thinking. These are the first three steps of *Nabadha Bhakti* as mentioned before. Next to Srimati Radharani's *Bhava* is *Gopi Bhava*. Srimad Bhagavatam written by Vyasadeva describes this in tenth cantos. When Lord Sri Krishna vanished during *Maharasa*, the *Gopis* lamented, as described in *Gopi Geet*. *Srimad Bhagabatam* is the description of Lord Krishna's potencies and pastimes, which can bring devotion to any sincere follower of *Bhakti Yoga*.

There are so many scriptures, literatures and exalted souls devoted to *Bhakti Yoga*. I am grateful to so many for their association with me directly or indirectly. I would like to express my gratitude for Swami Prabhupada and Jagatguru Sri Kripaluji Maharaj, who very effectively imparted Lord Sri Chaitanya's *Bhakti* path along with so many others in the modern age.



Manmath Nayak,
3704 Bluejay Lane,
Naperville, Illinois 60564,
USA

[mknyak2001@aol.com]

Lord Jagannath's Miracle: A Gift of Life

Arati Nanda Pati

“Arati, look who has come to our house.” an ecstatic Debananda insisted in waking me up from my deep sleep.

“Who?”

“Who can be in the middle of the night?” I ignored while holding on to my sleep dearly.

“Lord Jagannath, Lord Balaram, Devi Subhadra, and Lord Sudarshan, the entire family has come to our house right after the *Ratha Yatra*.”

“What?”

“Is it possible?”

Before I realized, I fell deep into the cosmic romance!

With the bitterness of the separation after my mother's death in December 2010, I shrank into my snail's shell. I was not attending any family gatherings or public events in Houston. After six months, on Saturday, July 16, 2011, Lord Jagannath was on His Celestial Chariot. I was deep into my personal loss and did not join the *Rath Yatra*, the most desirable event of the year. Instead with blissful devotion wrote a poem “*Puni Phula tie Kara*” and offered at His lotus feet miles away from His glorious celebration. And then at mid night, He is at my door! Impossible!

A subconscious relinquishment sped within me at lightning speed and prostrated towards His divine feet. I ran into the garage to discover the entire Jagannath *Parivar* had been tightly secured by the modern car seat belts. Sister Subhadra was at the center protected by brother Balabhadra on right and brother Jagannath on left. Lord Sudarshan was standing next to Jagannath's left arm. They were completely fit for the back seats of the car to drive home on the Houston freeways. No physical tardiness was perceived in their *SriAngas* instead they were jubilant with radiant dresses, glittering crowns, sparking ornaments, and fresh garlands. The entire garage smelled pious with His enduring presence. I offered my humble obeisance for giving me His arcadian *Darsan* on the *Ratha Jatra* day while having fastened himself to His mechanical chariot.

Debananda was like a mad mother, who lost her child recently. Seeing the Lord of the Lords, the ruler of the Universe, he was instantly transformed from the petrified Ahalya to mother Yashoda. With his unconditional tender love, he held each one of them in his semicircular Kangaroo pack while ascending the seventeen *baisi pabaccha*. Instead of the *Ratna Singhasan* at Puri *Bada Deula*, now *bhakta* Debananda offered the Lords to hold the dais of love in the north east corner of 2728 East Glen

Haven library. Now onwards, dazzling with their ceremonial dress, they are stretching forward their arms eager to hug their devotees. From a distance, while climbing the *baisi pahacha*, Lord Jagannath's geometrical circular eyes attract the first glance of a self-seeking devotee from His high raised *Singhasana*. Now, this temporary home of Lord Jagannath has become the most anticipated pilgrimage to observe some of His important celebrations like *Chittou Amabasya*, *Gamha Purnima*, *Boita Bandana*, New Year's Eve, *Dola Purnima*, *Pana Sankranti*, *Utkala Divas*, *Akhaya Trutiya*, and if no specific day is there, then just to assemble for His glorious *Naam Sankirtan*.



Bhakta Debananda at His Daily Service.

Once or twice every month, devotees flock to invoke their Jagannath culture. Infants and children join them too. Devotees like Satya, Surath, Somdutt, Gopal, Madhab, Aditya, Atasu, Mrutyunjaya, Nirad, Ramani, Nrusingh, Dillip, Ashis, Rajmohan, Bidya, Jyoti, Narayan, Debasis, Duryodhan, Raghu, Gyana, Somnath, Kalyan, Pramoda, Abinash, Sushri Sangita, Julee, Sangita, Arati Rani, Lily, Anu, Leena, Sasmita, Subhashree, Reva, Shrabanee, Bulu, Sabitri, Vani, Yamini, Arunima, Sarmistha, Suchana, Durba, Swapna, Bindi, Sarita, and above all Smita are the regular devotees to offer their love to the Lord of the Universe. Sometimes visiting parents love to get a glimpse of Lord Jagannath in the land of the West. Yamini's mother, Debasis's mother, Satya's parents, Sarmistha's parents, Bidya's father, Jyoti's parents, Abinash's parents, Gopal's



**Gamha Purnima Celebration with Sanyasi and ISKCON devotees on Aug 13, 2011.
Photo: Dr. Gopal Mohapatra**

parents, Nirad's father not only join the sankirtan but also appreciate the cultural convergence of the *Odia* elements. Kunti Mausi (Arati Rani's mother) is the most pious lady whose presence brings radiant energy to the crowd. Every time she visits covering a long distance with her son-in-law, Nrusingh, she brings the most delicious *pithas* and *mithas* for her darling Jagannath. The *satsangs* are followed by the potluck menus of *manda*, *enduri*, *kakara*, *khiri*, *poda pitha*, *chittau*, *gaintha*, *rasabali*, *rabidi*, *rasogolla*, *laddu*, *besara*, *mahura*, and *shabari's* fruits. At the time of departure, devotees exchange their homegrown vegetables with their tender words of farewell. These cultural settings bring the children to value the universal brotherhood of Jagannath culture to carry to a next level of generation in the West.

Boita Bandana is my personal favorite. The month of *Kartik* is one of the finest and sacred months in Jagannath culture. When I was little, my Grandma used to tell that even a "heron does not touch fish in the month of Kartika." I believed her whole heartedly. It was not because I was naive but because I was deeply in love with her. I never tried to justify her wrong by collecting data scientifically. I was moved by her innocent belief and participated in celebrating the rituals of "*Panchuka*", the final

five days of Kartika, at the age of ten. Early in the morning, before the sunrise, I would walk through the dew dropped street with her to the village pond to take a deep in the cold water. The initial touch of water was electrifying and would create the greatest moment of spark of divine love. I was more and more involved in seeking an eternal shelter by the magical attraction of the unsullied dawn air, the departing birds' lullaby, and the lavish tree branches with fresh flowers. I was fully engaged with Grandma in drawing *muruja* in front of the *Tulasi* plant on our courtyard. On the final day, the *Kartika Purnima* day, I would gravitate to the community event of celebrating the most illuminated *Boita Bhasana*. The whole pond would be sparkling with little stars. It was a spectacular event that I preserve in my most sacred memory of my village beauty.

With the arrival of Lord Jagannath, I loved to reiterate the blooming scenes of my girlhood while walking down the memory lane. Many drove on the same lane. Together we walked on the banks of Mahanadi to pay homage to our ancestors and celebrated the first *Boita Bandana* on Nov 5, 2011. Over 70 enthusiastic devotees including children joined the celebration. Kids were captivated by the artistic designs of *muruja* on the altar of *Tulasi* plant. The second *Boita Bandana* was observed on Saturday, Nov 24, 2012 during the *Panchuk* week. That was the Thanksgiving weekend, the most important week of the year to express gratitude. There were three community events on the same day with lunch, dinner, and *Boita Bandana* in the evening. At around 7PM, Kunti Mausi performed the *Tulasi puja*; devotees circled around the *Tulasi* altar chanting the *Mahamantra Hare Krishna, Hare Rama* with the rhythms of Satya's *mrudangam*. Leena made *boitas* for every child from the branches of banana tree. While migrating from one end of the Texas size Houston road ways to other, to attend all three events of the day, our members showed unending endurance.

The next morning was the most celebrated morning of my life. On Sunday, Nov 25, 2012, the Orissa Culture Center (OCC) was performing *Bhumi Puja*, the ground breaking ceremony to build a Jagannath temple and cultural center on the acquired two acres land at 2002 DeSoto Street, Houston. The auspicious moment was set in the early hours of the day. Debananda left home early to pick up the priest, *PanditJi* from his distant residence. Saswat and I went with Somdutt to the land of permanent residence of Lord Jagannath. While driving we talked about Endeavor, the NASA's retiring space shuttle in the Houston sky on September 19, 2012.

Soon we arrived at the beautiful land. It was an open, clean, and even land with sparsely raised old trees. The quite morning was impeccable with divine serenity. Cold breeze was sprinkling the aura of spirituality. *PanditJi* performed the rituals to invite the Gods to shower good wishes to build a Jagannath Temple that will one day be the Jagannath Dham of the USA. Every member poured his or her best wishes to build the 12th century Jagannath temple of Puri in Houston. It was a well-orchestrated puja followed by a vegetarian lunch sponsored by OCC. After the Puja, Debananda drove the priest to his home along with Saswat. His car was full with Puja Samagri. I was left out to return with Somdutt.

By now, my material body was very exhausted. The previous day's Boita Bandana preparation and celebration at our house had fatigued my body. After long hours of standing while helping with the

Bhumi puja, my body was totally debilitated. After seeing off few of our friends, I wanted some rest. So while waiting for Somdutt, I decided to sit on the ground.

I was cold. I chose a clear open space in the sun far away from any obstruction, especially cars. Cars were parked quite far behind me. I sat down there and talked to several people while they were wrapping up their stuffs to return home. Among them, I talked to Subhashree just minutes back. Somdutt waved his hands and told he would be ready in just few minutes.

I do not recollect what happened next. Only thing I remembered that I was shouting “*Narayan!*” “*Narayan!* “, with the top of my voice as strong as possible. I was hit by a red car on the driver’s side. My leg was under the driver’s side wheel. The more it was accelerating and pushing me down on my back, the more I was crunching to the word “*Narayan*” as if the elephant was calling for His Supreme mercy. At the near death situation, I was calling Him so dearly that even I could feel the depth of my own helplessness. Later, I remembered Kunti Mausai and Arati Rani giving me water in my mouth.

I was sitting on the ground several yards away from the parked cars. The car was far behind me. While packing up his stuff, the driver crossed me three times. I do not remember when and from which direction the car came and hit me. With the glass windows closed, the driver was inaccessible. With my scream, the people on the ground responded very quickly. Seeing me under the car and struggling for life, everybody was helplessly struggling to save me. They pulled my right leg from the front left wheel. The entire event was unfolding in front of everybody. They could not believe what they were watching live except accepting the gift of my life as a miracle of Lord Jagannath.

Arati Nanda Pati
2728 E. Glen Haven Blvd.,
Houston, TX 77025, USA

[arati_pati2001@yahoo.com]

Mili: The life story of a Kandhaa Girl in Odisha

Annapurna Pandey

Last year I was spending a few days with my friend, Kalindi in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Both husband and wife are academics and their only daughter is doing her doctoral studies at JNU, New Delhi where I did my graduate work. I encountered a new face, Mili Mullick, a beautiful, shy but a very sharp girl living with them. Her life story is a revealing case of autonomy made possible due to opportunities wrought by technology, higher education opportunity through affirmative action policy of the state and the kindness of my friend, an urban elite woman. I would share the account of Mili, a Kandhaa girl from Kandhamal, who is living with Prof. Jena and is on her way to fulfilling her rare dream, to stand on her own after graduating from a prestigious college in 2014. Women's movements have been the strength of India especially against patriarchy referring to violence against women like dowry deaths, rapes, their abuse, desertion and displacement and lately witchcraft, as reported in the media. My hope in introducing the agency of a tribal woman is to seek out possibilities for the present moment of Women's movements in India. In the words of Afsaneh Najmabadi, "to envisage possibilities for "building working alliances" in laws guaranteeing women's empowerment and the elite women making conscious effort to empower the marginalized."

In Dec 2012, during my visit to Odisha, Kalindi and her husband left for Jodhpur, Rajasthan to attend the Annual Sociology Congress and Mili and I were staying together in my friend's home. Our daily chore was to cook one meal in the morning to sustain us for the whole day and in the process we opened up to each other. Jointly cooking our morning rice, dal and a vegetable, reminded me of my hostel days in college and I felt like a 19 year old all over again. One morning, Mili ran into my room with the local newspaper, *Mausi, mo gna na paper re baharichi* (Aunt, my village is in the news today, referring to Samaj, Dec 24 2012). I checked- The Samaj Relief funds had gone to Daringbadi and Gazalbadi in Kandhamal region to distribute blankets in the cold weather. In December, even though the weather is pretty warm in Bhubaneswar, in Kandhamal, it is already one to three degree celcius. Mili is from Gazalbadi, a village, 20km from Daringbadi in the Kandhamal region of Southern Odisha. This area is the most picturesque in the state with its plentiful natural resources e.g., all kinds of vegetables, fruits, Bamboo and coffee. It is also popularly called the Kashmir of Odisha where there is snowfall in the winter and it is surrounded by beautiful tall hills and natural springs. It is about 900 meter above sea level and from colonial times, has been used as a summer resort by British officials. The name Kandhamal refers to the Kandhas who inhabit this area. With a population of over a million, Kandhas are the largest tribal group in the state of Odisha (Padel, 2011). They are largely concentrated in Kandhamal, Koraput, Rayagarha, Nabarangpur, Kalahandi and Gajapati districts. When I visited Kandhamal in 1986 –1987, I was struck by the natural beauty of the area and was amazed to see the simple life style of the Kuttia Kandhas and nearby Dongaria Kandhas, living in the area. Kandhamal is unique in terms of sex ratio of 1037 females for every 1,000 males compared to the state sex ratio of 934 to 1000. Kandhaamal has a literacy rate of 65.12%. Recently Kandhamal region has been in the news - the southern belt comprising of Koraput, Balangir and

Kalahandi districts (KBK) in the state of Odisha is endowed with 1733 million tons (seventy percent) of the total Bauxite resources of the country. In the post 1991 liberalization period this mineral resource has attracted many multinational corporations both from within and outside the country. The state wholeheartedly supports these initiatives, attracting huge revenue off the mining. During 1992- 1997, bauxite resource in Odisha has pulled in \$20.5 billion dollars. Vedanta Aluminum Ltd has set up and is operating one million ton alumina refinery at Lanjigarh, in the district of Kalahandi, based on a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed with the Government of Odisha that up to 150 million tons of bauxite for the plant will be supplied from nearby Niyamagiri hills (Vedanta report, 2012). However, with the protest of the local Dongaria Kandhas, the Union ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) has disallowed bauxite excavation at Niyamgiri. Ironically, even though this area has the vast natural resources, these mining projects have had adverse impact on the local tribal people, leading to their physical displacement, loss of land, access to the forest and its resources, affecting their livelihood. It is not a surprise that this area is known for the extensive upsurge of Maoists, the rebels who are fighting against the state and the society for unequal distribution of wealth between the haves and have-nots.

Since I have given a description of the Kandhamal, where Mili is from, let me return to her life history narrative. Mili's father Abel Mullick (she says, his anglicized name must have been influenced by the Christian missionary presence in the village) worked as a daily laborer and at present the supervisor at the Bamboo factory in the village, with its head office in Rayagadha). Her mother Muktilata Mullick has been primarily taking care of seven children (three brothers and 4 sisters, Mili the second to last brother). Her family has no land and the entire family works as daily laborers. She brought in a copy of her father's income certificate and it states:

No agriculture land, No salary, Daily labor (doing wage work) Rs.12, 000 (200 dollars) per year, qualifying him as Below Poverty Line (BPL).

According to Mili's caste/tribe certificate, she belongs to the Kandhaa tribe. They have been included in the SC/ST category, created for affirmative action benefits, known as protective discrimination in the constitution of India. Because of their excessive exploitation by the plains people who have invaded their region as moneylenders, contractors, state and central government employees, the Kandhas have been designated as the "particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PTGs)" From Mili's narrative, it appears that her father was influenced by Christianity in his area and came to the realization that education is the means to improve one's social condition in post- independent India. He got all his seven children educated up to class ten. None of them had completed high school except Mili. She tells me that her older sister has been elected as the Sarapanch in her in-laws village (Sidhhapur). One of her brothers went to the neighboring state Andhra as a migrant dadan laborer and acquired a supervisor's position because of his high school education.

In the summer 2011, Mili Mullick graduated from Ma Kandhauni Devi high school in her village (yet to be govt approved and accredited) securing 33% (barely passing marks). She became the first Kui girl in her village to have passed high school. I could see how proud she is of her degree when she brought in her high school certificate to show me her singular achievement. Her older brother travelled to a town

(22 km from Gajalbadi) and applied for her admission on the internet to six colleges. Luckily, she got admitted to Ramadevi College in the capital city of Bhubaneswar, named after the freedom fighter and a great feminist activist from Odisha. But she was put on the waiting list for her accommodation at the Indira Gandhi residential accommodation for tribal girls.

She thought that automatically she would get hostel seat. She said, “My father and I along with my brother in law, arrived at the college in the morning with all my belonging and I took admission but was told that there was no hostel seat for me. I was devastated. I ran to the assistant superintendent of the hostel and was told that I was the last on the list and all the seats have been filled up. I knew that if I do not get hostel seat now, I will lose one year and that would be the end of my education. I begged her that even without a bed I will sleep on the floor. My father was crying too. Then she sent me to Kalindi madam, the superintendent of the tribal hostel at the college. It was already late afternoon and I asked who she is and where I will find her. I was told that she was in the classroom. I waited outside her class. As soon as she got out of the classroom, I ran to her and begged “Madam, I did not get hostel seat”. Madam said, “Go back to your village and come next year”. I was crying uncontrollably. Madam asked me to wait till the end of the day. My father, brother in law and I had not eaten a morsel. Around 5PM, Madam came to the faculty common room. She looked at me and said, would you live in my house?” Mili could not believe her ears and she said that she would do everything to continue her higher education. Kalindi decided to keep her at her home in order to continue her studies at the Rama Devi College.

The next hurdle was to convince Kalindi’s husband Dr. Senapati. He is a simple man but with a set mind of his own. He along with his whole family are the disciples of Thakur Anukulchandra, a late 19th century god man and is a staunch vegetarian who does not eat onion and garlic. Knowing his nature, habits, and spiritual orientation, he was reluctant to have somebody unknown living in the house. But Mili was determined and Kalindi persuaded her husband. When he heard the name Mili (also happens to be the wife of the Naxalite Sabyasachi Panda, her village is ridden by Maoist movement), Dr. Senapati was very reluctant but still Kalindi brought her home. Mili says,” My father was in doubt. He called my mother and she said, “What is Mili saying?” I said, “I am getting this opportunity. If something happens, I will call you and ask you to take me back. I really did not want to go back to the village and I was ready to make it here. I realized that this is my only window to achieve something better and it was my decision.”

Mili got a break unlike so many of her cohorts coming from the rural and tribal areas. Sadly because of sheer lack of information many of them assume that college admission guarantees room and board as well. The brokers who promise them room and board but run away after getting their commission also misguide them. Some of the students coming from Ashram schools, which include room and board as well, assume that college would provide them the same facilities. Now with the internet admissions, uneducated parents and guardians are left in the dark about the provisions their children are going to have in college. My friend says that parents bring their children with all their belongings to get them settled and are extremely frustrated when they learn that higher education for their girls does not mean just a seat in the college. These ethnographic case studies help us realize how the subaltern citizens experience the lack of cultural capital in spite of affirmative action, creating a gulf between them and the state. It must be

heart breaking for both the parents and more so for their children to not avail the benefits of affirmative action at the social, personal and bureaucratic level.

Many of her friends had warned Kalindi about the pitfalls of a tribal girl living in an educated household because they assumed that she would be totally unfamiliar with the sanitation and hygiene of a Hindu household. But Prof. Jena discovered that Mili was a fast learner and within no time she acquired the skills of urban living. Mili dresses up like any other city girl – showing off her slim legs in her skinny jeans and tight t-shirts. She keeps a key to the house and has learnt to take buses to go to college, about 3 kms from Kalindi's house. On the road, when she encounters young men on the street trying to befriend her or tease her, she keeps a straight face and do not even acknowledge them. She uses a mobile phone but does not entertain any calls that she is not very sure of or is not familiar with. In order to avoid any curiosity or hear any comments from the street boys, she keeps her cell phone hidden and do not even make a call or receive one on the street. She makes sure not to befriend anybody on the street or invite anybody to her host's home. It must have been quite a restraint for a girl growing up in a face-to-face community in tribal Odisha. She keeps her friends circle to a minimum and never invites her college friends to her home. Being alone at home, she does not open the door to any stranger. She shared an interesting incident – once one of the disciples of *Guru Anukulchandra* knocked on the door and introduced himself as the *Guru* brother of Kalindi's husband, following the same spiritual order. He requested her to let him in but she was adamant and asked him to come back when Dr. Senapati is around.

Living in a vegetarian household, Mili has become a strict vegetarian, a huge sacrifice for a carnivore who was used to a different diet. She helps her madam in preparing morning breakfast and lunch and keeps herself confined to her room in preparing for her studies. Kalindi tells me that she had to tutor her elementary English starting from 3rd grade and Mili has passed her 12th grade exam securing 41%, far better compared to her high school result. And now she has finished a computer literacy course and spoken English course. Simultaneously, she is doing a correspondence degree course on Tourism management from Indira Gandhi National University, Delhi. It holds bright prospects for her and will heighten her chances of landing her a job in the city.

Mili looked radiant and full of enthusiasm when I saw her couple of weeks ago in Bhubaneswar. During my talk at her college, she asked me a question in English about my message to the young women in Odisha. I was so impressed! Kalindi told me that Mili wrote a letter to the editor in the local newspaper in the context of sex scandals of Morari Bapu and Ashram Babpu, the religious god men in the news, criticizing the role of Gurus/god men who are exploiting people and extracting money from them, sexually abusing young men and women and hoodwinking the community of believers in the name of religiosity. She has accused these men of exploiting people for their blind faith. In college, Mili has joined a dance group and she proudly tells me that her group of five dancers (one out of 65 groups), has been selected as one among six selected to perform at the college annual function. These six groups were selected after a rigorous three round of auditions, a rare achievement indeed. I was amazed – a tribal girl who would have remained in her village, now has taken advantage of the state affirmative action and good will of an

educationist to get out of poverty and is thinking on her feet and is already showing the signs of a person of her own.

Kalindi tells me that Mili made her a request to help her younger brother who was studying in class eight in their village school. Now he has come to live with her younger sister in the city to pursue his high school degree. He would not have to struggle unlike Mili to keep up with the standards of the college and would do better in his higher education. A little girl from the remote Kandhamal known as the most primitive tribe, is spreading her wings in the city and has the courage to touch the sky. Mili is not bothered by the neighbors whispering to each other - “I got the opportunity to study and I am so happy!” 287 illiterate people in India – it is a shame on our part to accept it.

I have been studying the Kandha community in Kandhaamal since 1980s when I was in graduate school at JNU. My earlier focus was their exploitation in the hands of the plains people as I have discussed elsewhere. During the last two years, thanks to my friend, kalindi, I happened to meet a Kandha girl, Mili whose life history puts the tribal women’s situation in a new perspective. The affirmative action policy of the state and the changing attitude of the Odia elite like my friend Prof. Jena towards its marginalized communities, have made it possible for someone like Mili to succeed in a highly competitive neo liberal economy of contemporary India.

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Annapurna Pandey,
101 Lisa Court, Santa Cruz,
California 95060, USA

[adpandey101@gmail.com]

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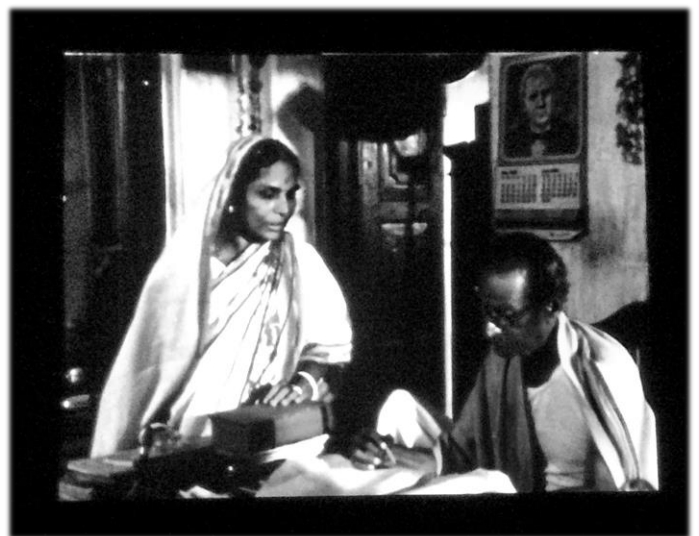
Biswajit Puhan

Early eighties was a mutinous time in India. A tall, lanky, deep voiced star had just emerged in mainstream Indian cinema, as if an emblematic parallel to the upheaval, which was tearing through the nation's social fabrics at the very time in no uncertain terms. Ask any Indian from that generation, they will narrate a rather passionate recollection of that time. A seemingly sleepy nation was just waking up.



Many young Indians received an opportunity for higher education in those ensuing decades, along with higher education came dreams of leading a bigger and bolder lifestyle. Their families dreamt with them as well, for a brighter day; socially and economically. This thread possibly ran thru the villages and cities of India at the time. As these young men found their footing, started shredding their economic and social burden so long carried by their families, they started asking questions of the social expectations, roles so ingrained in communal family life. When those norms conflicted with their ambition, they were not afraid to push for their own interest. How these sprouting of new aspirations impacted the social mores of an age old family based culture like India's and possibly shaped the social landscape of modern Indian nation?

It was in 1983, the year Nirad Mahapatra, presented his exquisite first feature film '*Maya Miriga*' - *the Mirage*'. Growing up I remember reading the fulsome acclaim it received in the newspapers but I never had the good fortune to see it till decades after. It was primarily due to the unavailability of the movie to general public viewing. Finally on a humid summer evening in Michigan, my ten year old son, who also shares my passion of movies, as my companion, I sat down to watch it. I was curious how he will react "I am going to watch a odia movie, do you want to see it?" He was little skeptical, "Is it an old movie?" Yes, I said. Furrowing his eyebrows, he said "OK".

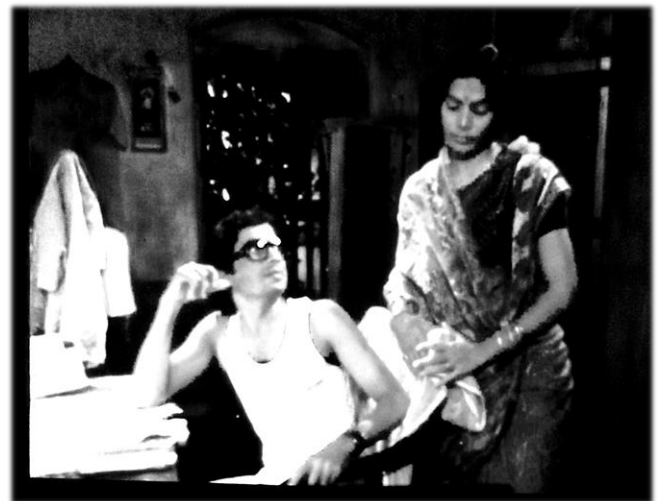


The movies opened with an old house from the British raj days, crumbling plaster and moss covered walls. As the camera pans up, we could see part of a city locality, could be any small city of Odisha at the time. (Actual location was Puri). Upcoming bungalows, part paved roads, stray dogs and rickshaws. Both of us watched silently, there were not much dialogue and no subtitles. If my son did not understand any dialogue he did not say anything, he was quiet. I did wonder what his innocent mind must have been making of this cinema.

The camera moved us to the courtyard of the house. A mango tree, broken pathway, *tulasi-chaura* and an aged grandmother sitting on veranda steps. The camera seemed to linger a bit longer on each frame, as if taking that extra time to make each shot perfect. And the images, they were like opening pages of an old album, dusting off the dust from the parchment paper covering the photos pages, before lifting it to look at precious memories, they may have starting to fade but undeniably clear. We got introduced to the dwellers of the house. Retiring headmaster, his wife, and their children. The announcement of their second son, Tutu, away in Delhi preparing for the IAS exam is coming home.



Then I abruptly I switched off the TV. My son who has not said a word till now, “What happened?” I mumbled a vague excuse, “We need to finish dinner first and then watch”. He was not convinced; he waited a few more minutes to see if I am going to change my mind and said, “The old man reminds me of granddad”. I knew now for sure he was watching intently. I walked out of the room shaken. Those images were touching. Deep inside I knew I wanted to first watch the movie myself alone, it sure would bring back memories, possibly hard questions along with them. A month or so later, when I put the movie back again, this time alone in night, I did not invite my little friend. Possibly I was not ready to share my vulnerabilities with him yet.



Demise of India’s (possibly world’s) joint families on the onset of globalization is now much discussed and documented. Most of us, who migrated to foreign lands, chasing our dreams after higher education, have felt it at sometime or other in our lives. It is only normal. This movie laid bare that



social transformation in most poetic way. Each character was sketched out for the viewer in a way so we will not feel antagonism for one sympathetic for other. Each character was flawed and charming at the same time. I felt the sunken heart when Bulu, the third son missed the coveted first class in MA exam. How the eldest daughter-in-law, expecting the family's first grand child looked vacantly at the window as if she is not in a house but walled in. Movements of joy when the dream was realized, the brilliant son, Tutu, got thru the Civil Service exams. Then the sudden heady push up in the social ladder for the family, marriage to a

wealthy bureaucratic family, the old house getting a complete makeover for the marriage. All the while I was aware the sacrifices the family is making for all these progress as well, price for the ambition. The inevitable final conflict came when Tutu decide to leave the house and move to a bigger city to advance his career. It was inevitable, the communal family life started to fade slowly, I could see, feel and live it on my memories. The pain and joys are real to experience.

The movie was like a lyrical poem, a poem of pictures. Tears welled up, I was not afraid to cry. It felt elated at the same time, a brief feeling of transcendence. Rising above the futile exercise of trying to rationally justifying what is right or wrong in human character but just to experience a pure compassionate feel for all human souls whether flawed or perfect.

Maya-Miriga's images could be that of any odia family, those dreams could be of any Indian or any universal family three-decade ago, may be even now. I felt a home I once left behind, a home and a family not very unlikely to what was portrayed in the film. I could hear the scolding of my father for spending too much time in cricket and not in studies, felt the lull of the summer afternoons when my brothers and me used to sleep on bare floor to fight off the baking hot air and dream our own dreams. It was in part like looking at a mirror.

The movie made me seek out what Nirada Babu is doing next, when I will get chance to see another exquisite visual poem, possibly another album of life - our lives. I am and a lot many viewers all over the world are still searching for his next 'mirage. Please take the effort to seek this movie out if you have not seen it yet, please seek it out, watch it and then watch it again.

Biswajit Puhan
Winter 2013, Farmington Hills, Michigan, USA

[bis_puhan@hotmail.com]

Will You Be My Valentine?

Lata Misra

These days Valentine's Day is celebrated all over the world, including India and Odisha. It is a relatively new phenomenon in India. When I left India some forty years back, there was no such celebration. Now it is celebrated with a lot of pomp and excitement. The boy would come to his girlfriend with a rose in hand and would ask the girl, "Will you be my Valentine?" What happens thereafter is not of any consequence, but the practice is very much in vogue.

What is Valentine's Day, after all? According to "Wikipedia," the Saint Valentine's Day, commonly known as Valentine's Day or the Feast of Saint Valentine, is observed on February 14 each year. It is celebrated in many countries around the world, although it remains a working day in most of them.

Saint Valentine's Day began as a liturgical celebration of one or more early Christian saints named Valentinus. The most popular mythology associated with Saint Valentine was that he was imprisoned for performing weddings for soldiers who were forbidden to marry and for ministering to Christians, who were persecuted under the Roman Empire. During his imprisonment, he is said to have healed the daughter of his jailer, Asterius. Legend states that before his execution he wrote her a letter "from your Valentine" as a farewell. Today, Saint Valentine's Day is an official feast day in the Anglican Communion and the Lutheran Church. The Eastern Orthodox Church also celebrates Saint Valentine's Day, albeit on July 6th and July 30th, the former date in honor of the Roman presbyter Saint Valentine, and the latter date in honor of Hieromartyr Valentine, the Bishop of Interamna (Modern Terni).

The day was first associated with romantic love in the circle of Geoffrey Chaucer in the High Middle Ages, when the tradition of courtly love flourished. In 18th century England, it evolved into an occasion in which lovers expressed their love for each other by presenting flowers, offering confectionery, and sending greeting cards (known as "valentines"). Valentine's Day symbols that are used today include the heart-shaped outline, doves, and the figure of the winged Cupid. Since the 19th century, handwritten valentines have given way to mass-produced greeting cards.

I believe the younger group celebrates this day more than the older people. This does not mean that the older ones don't have much love towards their loved ones, but how people take it depends on the attitude towards it. It may be their love towards their Valentines has become subdued, pale or dry. When I come to my office that morning, my colleagues wish me "Happy Valentine's Day" and ask me how I celebrate this day. To be honest, in all the years I've lived in this country, I have never celebrated this day. It is not that I do not love my husband as other people do, but I feel a little awkward to celebrate this day.

Nowadays in India, particularly Bollywood actors and actresses (who sort of started this craze in India) celebrate the Valentine's Day in grand style. Stores open up for gifts and flowers for this day. Some stores open a special section with expensive gifts: t-shirts with love signs, balloons, pillows, pendants and earrings, etc. The day is celebrated with huge parties in different places. I saw a Hindi movie a long time back called "Dil To Pagal Hai" with Shah Rukh Khan, Madhuri Dixit and Karisma Kapoor where they depicted how the people in Bombay film circles celebrate this day. I cannot believe that it is even celebrated in our own Odisha!

In Odisha, I hear that the young people gather in places like parks, movie theaters, and restaurants in order to show their love for their Valentines. How genuine is that feeling is another matter. I have heard that conservative groups like Bajarang Dal are against this celebration. They think that the celebration of Valentine's Day is against the Indian and especially the Hindu culture. They try to dissuade the loving couples, engaged in Valentine's Day celebration, wherever possible.

The Valentine's Day celebration reminds me of a story which I heard from my grandmother several times. Years back, we had a child marriage system in India. My grandmother got married when she was ten years old and my grandfather was twelve years old. After their marriage, my grandmother stayed with her parents' family until she attained puberty. That was the system then. She came to her in-laws' family when she was 15 years old. At that time, the women were not supposed to go out of their houses until they had children and always covered their faces in their saris' veil. For the new brides (*nua bahu*), the restrictions were more stringent. The new bride would be confined to her room only and would not show her face to anyone. Thus, my grandmother had not seen my grandfather's face in the daytime, although they were living together in the same house for more than six months.

There was no electricity in our village. People used only oil lamps; they did not have kerosene lamps at that time. My grandparents could only see each other at night in their bedroom. My grandmother used to tell us that they had an oil lamp which she used to hide so that others could not see it. With the help of two stones, they would create a sparkle and light the lamp just to have a glimpse of each other! Obviously it was difficult for my grandmother to recognize my grandfather's face outside of her bedroom. One day, for some reason, my grandfather entered into their bedroom in the middle of the day. My grandmother got panicky – was it a man that entered into the bedroom in the middle of the day? Strange! This never happened before. Right away, she covered her face with her sari and tried to hide herself in one of the corners of the bedroom. My grandfather said, "Hey, this is me, your husband. Why are you hiding your face?" My grandmother was worried – if someone in the family saw this, this would be a big problem. She said in a low voice, "Go away before anybody sees you."

These days, we see a lot of divorce cases everywhere. In spite of living together for several years before marriage, they break up soon after they decided to get married. They say that people get married on Thanksgiving Day and get a divorce on the Christmas weekend! In Bollywood, it has become common to live together before marriage, but after marriage, the divorce is as common.

My grandfather and grandmother were married for a very long time – they had many children and grandchildren. They did not know what Valentine’s Day was, yet their love for each other remained solid. Never did I see them quarreling with each other in all those years.

No doubt, Valentine’s Day is a noble concept. It gives an opportunity for the young boys and girls to profess love to each other in a respectable way. However, more often than not, we have seen it being abused. There are instances in Bhubaneswar where young lovers are caught in a compromising way in public parks, etc., and were apprehended by the police for lewd behavior. No wonder why the Bajrang Dal is against this practice! As long as we do not cross the limit and abuse this occasion, everything should be hunky dory!



Lata Misra
14 Champlain Way
Franklin Park, NJ 08823
USA

Lata Misra has been involved in the cultural arena of OSA since 1972. She won the coveted Kalashree Award from OSA in 2004. She also received a "Lifetime Service Award" from OSA in 2011, along with husband Saradindu Misra. She also conceived the "Champu, Chhanda and Odissi" award program for the children which takes place in the OSA Convention, every year, since 2009.



Who Am 'I'?

Prostrations to Thy Father-In-Heaven & Sat Guru!

Prashant Padhy

This question comes with a guarantee. One who KNOWS the truth of "I" is *guaranteed* to be happy without fear and sorrow.

Do NOT believe this! Introspect and find the answer. Feel free to prove this WRONG!

With all humility, let's start with a very simple question. Every living being desires to be "happy." Not today, not tomorrow, but to be "forever happy." Our constant striving, our every effort, in this so called life, is an effort to be happy. However, no one ever asks the very obvious question: "who is the one who wants to be happy?"

This is the most auspicious question arising in the "mind" of a living being. The "I Exist", "sense of individuality", or "I Am" sense without which an individual does NOT exist, is the key to FREEDOM.

It is for the sake of this "I", one does everything - but one never questions "what is this I?" or "Who is the 'I' who wants anything or everything?"

Questioning is the mother of all sciences!

Because Newton questioned why the apple came down, the law of gravity was discovered; because the color of a leaf was questioned, chlorophyll was discovered. Similarly, all the different sciences like physics, chemistry, biology, astronomy, cooking, communicating, etc. came into existence only because someone questioned the perception.

No questioning → No Science!

The day man stops questioning its environment; its perceptions, there would be no science!

Questioning the questioner is the Ultimate Science!

When a rare being questions the one who is asking all these questions, that is the most auspicious moment. As the investigation goes deeper and deeper, the result is a revelation that is beyond words, beyond description, beyond comprehension, but can only be expressed in deep Silence – beyond the concept of Silence!

Everything that is changing cannot be the truth simply because it is impermanent. That which is changeless or possesses the property of permanence alone can be the truth. So, look around the entire

universe - what is it that possesses such a property?

It is easy to infer that everything in the universe is continuously changing - whatever it may be. From an atomic level to the grossest of forms, everything is continuously changing.

Once you infer the above, it should also become clear that "I" or the "sense of presence" within seems to be possessing the property of giving a "sense of existence," from the birth to death of the body.

You may argue that the "I" is also changing (for example, the "I" during waking state dissolves during sleep or the "I" during dream disappears during waking) and, you are correct. However, that is the NOT the "I" being referred to here.

There is a "sense of existence" that "KNOWS" or "IS AWARE OF" all the 3 states of existence (waking, dream and deep sleep). It simply knows that "you" exist during all these 3 states and experience all the 3 states. That is the "I" being referred to here.

This must be contemplated, digested and assimilated completely before proceeding further. Otherwise, the process won't bear fruit.

Can "I" Be The Body?

- What part of the body when severed off makes the "I" to be lessened?
- If "I" (*subject*) am aware of the body (*object*), how can the object be the subject?
- Everyone refers to their body as "my body." This means "me" and the "body" must be separate.

Can "I" Be The Mind?

- If "I" (*subject*) am aware of the mind (*object*), how can the object be the subject?
- The mind doesn't exist in deep sleep.
- Everyone refers to their mind as "my mind." This means "me" and the "mind" must be separate.

Can "I" Be The Intellect?

- If "I" (*subject*) am aware of the intellect (*object*), how can the object be the subject?
- The mind doesn't exist in deep sleep.
- Everyone refers to their intellect as "my intellect." This means "me" and the "intellect" must be separate.

So then: When the psychosomatic apparatus is negated, a sense of presence is left behind that knows that "I Exist." This "Sense of Presence" or "I Am" is Pure Consciousness.

Any and every word used is only an indication and not the Truth. The Pure Consciousness (or Awareness) is who you really are and everything is "That" alone. The manifest world of bodies and minds (sub-atomic particles moving at ½ billion mph and contain 99.999% of empty space, according to quantum physics) is

the mysterious play of Divine Awareness. These are like the TV images where everything is just a dot of light, but we are able to see as live happenings and enjoy the movie. All changing “things” are only a manifestation of that Changeless Awareness.

Hence, the truth of a person or individual as we have normally understood and believed is a misnomer and only imagined. If 'you' and 'I' are different and separate, please find the dividing line of where 'you' end and where 'I' begin? – This is a challenge for anyone and everyone.

Self-Enquiry - 3~Steps:

- Step 1: Be empty of all knowledge/understanding as "I know nothing" (with humility)
- Step 2: Recognize the feeling "I exist". Simply, recognize your own existence.
- Step 3: Identify/understand/analyze the "I" and find out the source of "I".

Knowing Who You Are - Stages:

- Stage 1: Know with certitude the non-finding of the "I".
- Stage 2: Know with certitude that all is this "I" or "Consciousness".
- Stage 3: Know with certitude that this "I" or "Consciousness" is an illusion- that which is perceived but cannot be found when investigated is an illusion like a mirage.

Delusion is: (Going from (Eternity) Absolute => to Presence => to Person Parama

Shreyas is: (Going from Person => to Presence => to (Eternity) Absolute- knowing there is no person but only Presence

Finally, *KNOW* that *PRESENCE* itself *IS* the primary illusion.

The best of mankind, the saints and sages, say that if you know your true identity, you will be the happiest being in this universe. All of your problems will be solved. All of your worries will be gone. And, you will be always happy. Generations have come and gone. One day, we will be gone as well. Nothing will go with us. This body that we love so much will be thrown away. Would it not be worthwhile to find out our true identity and figure out what we are doing in this rat-race of life (as we call it)?

Interestingly, we have never been trained about these ideas. Even though they may be the simplest of all things, they might sound extremely difficult. At least now, you have a clue to Eternal Happiness as stated in our scriptures and validated by the Sages.

Prashant Padhy
1475 Radcliff Ln.
Aurora, IL 60502
[prashantpadhy@yahoo.com]

Memoirs of my Life so far

(Based on an interview with Sharmistha Mohapatra)

Compiled by Dr. Tanmay Panda



Who Am I?

Am I larger than life? Have I really achieved something that interests others? I am not sure. But yes, I have done something which is not commonly found in our community.

Who am I? What am I doing here? These are the two basic questions with which we all have grown. And the answers we find to these questions are mostly given by others for us. In my case, I just tried to find the answers myself.

Born to highly qualified parents settled in the US, I had no other idea other than to be a doctor by profession in my future. It is a profession that commands patronage from almost every parent and is voted noblest by all. Then what about all other professions? I was apprehensive, almost scared – what would be my identity if not a doctor by any chance!

My experience in ROTC

At times we find something about which we do not know and try to experiment it. And slowly we start liking it and get hooked to it. On a negative it may be addiction, on a positive it becomes passion. At my inquisitive age during high school, I met Army recruiters in my school and thought of exploring it. I joined the Reserves with a “pre-basic” status, attended monthly drill at Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and then quit to join college. However, I then joined ROTC (Reserve Officer Training Course) and started loving it. In addition to the credit courses, I joined the Color Guard and pledged a co-ed military trick drill team called the National Society of Pershing Rifles. Pershing Rifles changed my life, because it literally pushed my physical and mental reach. By the end of freshman year, I had cut my two-mile run time down by three minutes. By senior year, I was able to maximize the points for even the men’s standard of push-ups. Since I was one of the top in my class, the summer before junior year I was selected to go to Army Airborne School to jump out of C-130s and earn my parachutist badge; the summer before senior year I got to do a four-week internship in Germany with an Army construction engineer unit. The culmination of all this training came the summer before my senior year at a six-week cadet leadership evaluations camp at Fort Lewis, Washington. Here I received scores on physical training, swimming, rifle marksmanship, day and night land navigation, obstacle courses, and various scenario-based field exercises. Essentially, the ten weeks of Basic Training and additional few months of Advanced Individual Training (AIT) made me ready for the Army.

Joining ROTC had definitely my parental approval – to experience some professional discipline. But for me, ROTC was becoming my love, my passion. I was giving more time to ROTC. It made me more confident, more fit, more aware of the world at large. I became a public speaker, a logistician, a trainer, a leader – things you learn in practicum, not through a book. Every year, I earned greater responsibilities. My senior year, I was selected to be the cadet battalion commander, the highest rank and a role model for my peers and the younger cohorts.

I tried to convey to my parents that ROTC was more important to me than my other courses, but I wasn't particularly convincing in my words. With each passing summer I was getting closer to ROTC and my parents used to question, "You are still doing that ROTC stuff?" However, my commissioning ceremony made it real for them. There I was in uniform, I swore an oath to the country, and Ma and Daddy pinned my "butter bar" rank as I became a second lieutenant. My brother, aunt, uncle, cousins and friends were there to witness the moment I took on my new identity: Officer of the United States Army.

My stint in Iraq

After Engineer Officer Basic Course, I was assigned to Fort Hood, Texas in early 2006. The Army was in the midst of restructuring due to lessons learned from the wars, so my specific unit was unidentified. When I got to Fort Hood, no one at the in-processing center knew where to assign me. The Engineer Brigade was at max capacity and they had a battalion deployed to Iraq with no open slots. A friend of mine from college was in another unit, also in Iraq, and e-mailed me about a logistics platoon leader position that needed to be filled. So, I went to the 4th Infantry Division headquarters, pestered the personnel officer, and finally got assigned to join a group of new arrivals readying to deploy to forward units. I had about two months of training and preparation, and then I flew out to Baghdad in April 2006.

In Iraq, I was a Support Platoon Leader responsible for 50 soldiers. We were spread out over 3 locations throughout Babil Province covering vehicle and generator maintenance, refueling, food services, and security detail. I would spend some days between the motor pool overseeing maintenance operations and at the headquarters planning upcoming missions. Preparing for a mission required meeting with the intelligence officer, analyzing the threats on the routes, and determining the best times to travel. It also required coordinating with the various teams (military police, signal, intelligence, and medical) on their subordinate preparation responsibilities. A day prior, I would gather everyone – about 12 people – at the map and sand table and give an operations order for the mission. On our mission days, we would rally with our vehicles, cover last minute intelligence, load weapons, and then drive out to our designated locations to escort people and equipment around the region. At that time, there were base closures and base expansions happening everywhere, so we ensured the safe travel of civilian trucks carrying construction materials. Some missions involved transferring detainees from our base to the Abu Ghraib prison – this was post-torture scandal. After that prison was turned over to the Iraqis, we then transferred detainees to the prison at Baghdad. These weren't offensive missions; they were strictly logistical ones. Interestingly, I was in Iraq when Saddam Hussein was captured.

My Afghanistan days

On my first of three tours to Afghanistan, from April 2008 to July 2009, I served as the Civil Military Operations Officer-in-Charge for my engineer unit in Eastern Afghanistan. This job entailed managing 40 civil projects – to include schools, government facilities, roads, and utilities construction.

Typically the projects were requested by local elders and/or vetted by the Provincial Development Council. Taking those needs, my shop worked with the US Provincial Reconstruction Team – which included development partners from the US State Department, USDA, and USAID – to draft scopes of work, estimate project cost, vet and hire contractors, oversee quality assurance, and dispense payments.



On a fixed-wing flight to conduct aerial surveillance of projects. Kunduz, Afghanistan, 2013.

The priority of my shop lay in construction skills capacity development. To detract citizens from joining the lucrative insurgency, we fleshed out a workforce development program to improve the job marketability of the poor, unskilled laborers and to raise construction quality. We offered courses in carpentry, masonry, electrical, plumbing, and heavy equipment operation. We hired and trained Afghan engineers and skilled laborers to be the primary instructors. Shifting from a military-led to an Afghan-led program proved positive. It minimized language and cultural barriers between students and instructors and it showed the students educated role models among their own countrymen. Putting the training onus on the Afghan instructors also forced the staff to implement their own chain of command as well as develop their leadership skills. In the long run, this model eased the transition towards Afghan autonomy.

Over the year, we partnered with the city mayor and other government directors to combine construction training with urban development projects. Not only would this benefit the city, it would also give the students a sense of civic pride. We also successfully moved the training program from on-base into a city facility and began a new semester-long program incorporating the prioritized civic projects. In my 11 months of running this, we trained 247 students. We campaigned with local contractors to hire graduates for local projects; a known 40% of our students got jobs immediately after graduation due to our efforts. For the city, our students had upgraded one kilometer of bazaar road and built a meeting room annex and latrine building for a government compound. Our military successors continued the program for another couple of years, I believe.

My roots, her identity

What is Odisha to me? I did not grow up in Odisha. But I am fortunate that I have visited my native village more often than my contemporary Odias in America. I am brought up in a family where we have Odia food, Odia discussions, Odia friends and of course OSA. These were my only exposure to Odisha so far.

Yet I am more attracted towards Odisha and its culture. From the varieties of food that I have tasted so far in many countries, my favorites are still pakhala bhata, lemboo, dahi, piaaja, baigan bartha, bhendi bhaja, aloo chackta, and saga – and all to be eaten by hand. Honestly, this is the delicacy of my life – and it's simple enough that even I can cook it.

For our 30th birthday year, my high school friends and I decided to celebrate big by travelling abroad. We went to Porto, Portugal on New Year's Eve of 2014. We ate tons of fresh seafood – cod, shrimp, even octopus. After about eight days, my Gujarati friend and I confided with each other that we were craving spicy Indian food! On our follow-on days in Lisboa, we decided we were going to find an Indian restaurant and replenish our palates with some familiar tastes. Our seasoned globetrotter guy friend, who's German, teased us so much! How could we travel 3500 miles to port wine and codfish country and then gorge on tandoori chicken with naan? Well, if I'd had the option to order pakhala bhata, I would have!

Narigaan, my native place, is a small village – only 20 houses or so. Everyone knows everyone; you can roam wherever you want to. I have never been treated as an outsider, rather always privileged that I belong to Narigaan. I have witnessed Ratha Yatra in my small village and it was unimaginably hectic. Thousands of people had somehow managed to find our little village and attend this premier event. I have mixed feelings about our new Jaganatha mandira and all the pujas and ceremonies that come with it. The temple has marred the quiet isolation and peaceful refuge that was old Narigaan, and when people come, especially at large events, they don't seem to care about who is next to them in the crowd – they shove and push and throw trash around. I even yelled at someone once for spitting pana masala within the temple premises. On the other hand, there is something so awesome about people coming together in shared devotion. It's beautiful to catch those in the jostling crowd who are actually crying because they are so happy to see Jaganatha here. It's like a message to them that if Jaganatha could find a home here in this poor village in Odisha, then Jaganatha also could find a home in their simple hearts. Ratha Yatra is truly a reflection of Odia culture.

I think that 2nd generation Odias are maintaining the popular artistic culture of Odisha, particularly the Odissi dance, very well. Some even can speak Odia. As for day-to-day Odia living, we aren't purists. But why should we be? We live in a multicultural society and we would be silly not to embrace it. We have this wonderful immersion into diversity and we should learn about other cultures and extract the positives from them and apply them to our daily living. I feel it is our responsibility to infuse Odia culture into Indian-American culture and American culture and make others know we are Odia and we are worth notice.

My choosing to be an Army officer was not in my parents' dream. Military service was not in my roots. Take it as distancing myself from Odia familism and embracing American individualism. I do, however, follow my parents' philosophies on altruism and work ethic – to improve the lives of others beyond oneself. That I respect.

I am proud to be an Odia. To me, to be Odia is to carve hard wood into Jaganatha. To be Odia is the destiny of a broken and memorialized Kalinga. To be Odia is to embody the transformation of Ashoka.

To be Odia is to radiate the godly devotion of Konark. To be Odia is to stand as a Puri pillar holding fast in the wind. In short: To be Odia is to face hardship head on and achieve lasting resilience.

Lessons to share

Army life is stressful, and officers are supposed to know everything about the soldiers – from their professional capabilities to their personal lives. If anyone has marital problems, children with learning disorders, unkempt houses, drug and alcohol problems – we have to know it because it all contributes to soldier readiness. Deployment is a unique stress to the serviceman, so his chain of command has to ensure he is physically and mentally prepared to handle it. It is annoying that sometimes you feel like you don't really have privacy and autonomy in the military. On the other hand, you have a professional family network that is intensely vested in your success and well-being. This extra family keeps you sane when you're away from home.

If you want to join the Army (or any military service for that matter), go for an ROTC scholarship or West Point appointment in college and you can commission as an officer. ROTC programs across the country pretty much throw money at you to join. Not only will ROTC cover your tuition (even for private universities), they give you book and monthly stipends. You can join as late as your junior year, and you have a guaranteed job when you graduate.

If you already have graduated and are within a certain age limit, you can go to Officer Candidate School. If you want to go to medical school or law school or get a Master's degree (in engineering, of course!) right after undergrad, you can do that, and the Army will cover that too. Of course, with however many years of scholarship you get, you have to "repay" in-kind with military service.

Once you're in the Army, be prepared to face a host of frustrations. It's an imperfect institution. Being a veteran doesn't guarantee you a job after you get out of the service. If you've given any thought to joining the Army, take credence in the 1980s' call to "Be all you can be" and go for it.

What next?

I've finished my Army service and I'm making the transition to the civilian sector. I will be completing my Master's in Health Education this May. I'd like to work in international development, focusing on closing disparities in global health like in chronic disease prevention or reproductive health rights.

And go abroad again. I hear Africa calling.



Dr. Tanmay Panda
1012-80 Forest Manor Road
Toronto, ON M2J 1M6 Canada
[drtanmay@gmail.com]

*Dr. Tanmay Panda is a Professor
in Area Education Management at
Humber College Toronto, Canada*

Be Your Own Buddha

Parimita Mohanty

Buddha was enlightened!

Would you believe if I say I am enlightened?

Probably Not!

Is that because I am not popular yet? Ha-ha...

From ancient times to modern times we have pictured Gods, Demi Gods, Yogis, Monks, Gurus, and Spiritual Healers as purely enlightened beings in any religion or belief system. Just the name of the beloved Master automatically creates extreme-humbleness, deep-respectfulness, true-obedience in us that we surrender 100% of our heart and soul beneath their holy feet. It is said that by surrendering at the holy feet of the Master it liberates the soul from the cycle of birth and death.

The whole world worships, adores, obeys and admires the magical attributes of Masters. It is a great feeling of protection under his charisma...

Everyone is seeking. Everyone is seeking to find their most supernatural version of Being Human. We love getting the Darshan or to be in the company of those who have already glimpsed or conceived their own supernatural version of being human. It brings an elevated joy to the heart in their company. We experience transcendental peace.

The bliss we experience in their congregation soothes our heart deeply so that it becomes a nostalgic obsession for seekers. Eventually we create the most beautifully decorated box in and around us to be gradually fascinated by the directions of higher influential guidance from the Master.

It is said that "Our Mother is our first teacher!" Without her holding our hands and encouraging us to walk, we would probably never have learned how to walk on our own. The Universe has designed its law of "everything must grow for the creation." We can't hold our Mother's hand for ten years once we have learned how to walk. Otherwise it would be equally a burden for both Mother and child. It is natural for both humans and animals. They must leave or the process of growth is STAGNANT.

I have a real life example here, and I am sure some of you are already experiencing this or will go through this sooner or later. I used to hand-feed my one and only child every meal of the day until he was 10 years old. It created a great bond and completeness for both of us emotionally. I was very satisfied that I was able to make him eat all the food which he would usually not eat on his own (being a very picky eater). It didn't last very long after that year. I realized we both were missing the joy of family eating time

together, but the child was affected more from my overloaded emotion for him. You may wonder how? You may think it's always a sweet feeling when the Mother feeds her child. Yes, it is definitely a sweet feeling! But unknowingly I wasn't allowing the child to explore with his fingers from touching his own food, feeling the soft and hard, solid and liquid texture, sweet and sour, hot and cold, spicy and salty, bitter and pungent tastes that would have first landed on his palate through his very own fingers. And this area of growth was stagnant for him as he didn't get a chance to play, coordinating with his hands and eyes in touching and sensing food. At the same time, my growth was stagnant as I didn't get to enjoy my son being cute and messy on his face, hands, clothes and table.

So finally, I let go of that emotional hold because it was not giving us both what nature has designed for all. Now he is 15 years old and I am experiencing changes in my life just as he is experiencing in his life. He gets very busy academically, and just growing up stirs in a lot as well. So what would a Mother do when she can't spend more of the loving-cuddly hours with her child? Mothers have to find ways of letting go of their children to let them grow. By letting them grow we also let us grow into ourselves. Otherwise it is very sad to be needed less and less by the kids each growing day. If I would let him know how I feel deprived of his needs from me I would actually pull him back into my control of Selfish Happiness. He needs to look ahead towards his life. I will be a very mean Mother if I don't allow my child to open his own wings, to flap them, to shift power, and to lift up high and fly like a free bird in the sky.

We are Free! We are all free like the birds in the sky. No one has control over us except ourselves. We do not like to be controlled. The whole world is fighting against each other for freedom. No one wants to be in control of anyone. Husband doesn't want wife to control him, wife doesn't want husband to control her, children don't want parents to control them, parents don't want children to control them, government doesn't want citizens to control it, citizens don't want government to control them, employee doesn't want boss to control them, boss doesn't want employee to control them. Why does no one enjoy this? People leave home, jobs, spouse, parents, children, friends, cousin and even country, and sometimes when they are tired and weak or lose their mental balance they even give up on themselves – very sad but very true!

The question is why? Why does no one enjoy being controlled by someone or something? Does it threaten their pure soul deep inside their physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and beyond? Why does it bother so much? Perhaps deep inside us we know “who we are!” We know who we are! Don't we? But we forgot this. We forgot our true nature. Travelling from home to home with the heavy loaded garbage on our back from many times and births we have forgotten who we truly are and why we are here. From the extreme load of the baggage or from excess travel we rupture our soul. When we feel this soulful pain we surrender in the SELF. A person is most beautiful when he or she is sick. You know why? Because when “the junk of ego dissolves,” he is most humble and behaves extraordinarily. A person on a death bed is in its most compassionate state. They feel the most love for everyone, they like to see all near and dear ones, they want to give away all material possessions and spiritual knowledge they have, they even ask for forgiveness and forgive others as well.

Why does this happen when people are old or sick or on a death bed? Perhaps they are letting go of their own EGO which controlled their Spirit for long.

Yes it is! The ego disappears in the fear of death! When death comes the real Spirit takes over the false ego and it becomes the leader of the body and mind until its last breath. Whereas, Yogis enjoy the Nirbikalpa Samadhi and when the time comes they simply pause the breath, drop the physical body and move into their abode of Supreme Light.

Samadhi-The highest stage in meditation in which a person experiences oneness with the Universe.

We all came from that One Supreme Light, which is in each of us; we will go back to that Oneness after we achieve completion. You may question yourself, "I am an ordinary human, how can I complete or liberate from this cycle of birth and death?" You may wonder, "I am not practicing any spirituality like the Yogis," or say some of you are practicing spirituality but none of you believe that you will be enlightened. Isn't that right? Even we are in a practice but we still do not have faith on our own Souls. Who is controlling us? We like trusting the higher authorities but not ourselves. All of our energies are given out in manifesting what we want in our lives in the dependence of someone else. When trouble comes we offer prayer and we are out of troubles. Who is actually working behind this or who is acting for you in behalf of you? Can you believe it is you, it is in you? Your own Supreme Faith. You are not less than any Yogi or any powerful being in this Universe. You are born with the same light, Bramhasya Putraha (Children of God)! We carry the same blood that is in our parents. We are never separate from them. Likewise if we are the Children of God, we are not less than God and the Godly qualities. Nobody is controlling us but our own mind. Looking at the mirror we see only ourselves, looking at another person's eyes we only see ourselves as well. We are one!

We are one! But still we feel we are controlled by someone. This someone is our own (mind/ego/habits). Most of us want to be free from someone whereas those who are awakened within want to be free from their own selves.

It is the Controllability of the Mind. We have learned that everything is in our own control. We can let go of others' control on us and we can also let go of our own control on us. Let Gooooo!

Once we let go we can be our own Buddha...

Be Your Own Buddha. You are already that, just acknowledge that...

You are already enlightened, just accept that...

Enlightenment is also a process of growth. You are not where you were a couple of years ago and that is your enlightenment. You have moved from struggle to success and that is your enlightenment. Every individual on earth is constantly changing, shifting, growing, realizing and fulfilling its greatest potential. Nothing stayed or stays in the same place forever. From where we started, we are not there anymore. I started at page 1 and I am at page 4 now and that is the enlightenment of extended thoughts, words and ideas... We never end up where we began. Just this simple understanding clears that you are Enlightened!

I have shared what I have learned so far from my own mysterious eyewitness growth! My research is still going on in learning the world inside me which is also inside you and the Universe in a bigger picture. It is not my intention to impress or offend anyone's truth or belief system.



Parimita Mohanty
15055 NW Dopp Road,
Newberg, OR 97132, USA
[parimita.mohanty.01@gmail.com]

*Parimita Mohanty, is a
Yogi, healer, and writer.*



Bondage in freedom

Pragnya Patnaik

For most of us, America has been a wonderful country, which is accommodating and kind to people of every nation and every ethnicity. Folks from all over the globe come here either for better job prospects or for higher education. Some come to diversify their income, while others like me to accompany their working spouses. This is why I think that if you haven't been round the world, just walk through the streets of New York, and you will get a good glimpse of it. What better example of the Indian philosophy of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or "One World", where you find people from all countries and ethnicities, co-inhabiting in perfect harmony. Life in America is comparatively easier and the available options are diverse.

Having said that, I feel, wherever one might be, one can never really do away with one's mother or one's motherland. The umbilical cord may be invisible, but it can never really be cut off.

Last summer, while chatting away with some friends on the steps of my apartment, I came across a *sari* clad lady passing through the street in front my house. Inferring from her attire that she was an Indian just like me, I cordially greeted her and asked her if she would like to sit, and talk to us for a moment. I was new to this country and the sight of a fellow country-person made me feel glad. The kind lady readily agreed.

Talking to her, I discovered that she had been residing in the country for some twenty seven years now. Talking further, she informed me that almost all of her immediate relatives were settled in the States and also that she visits India almost once a year, sometimes once in two years.

"But who do you go to? All your relatives are here you said," I asked her being a little surprised.

"To my country, I go back to her," she said with a smile, which coalesced her love for her motherland, her nostalgia for the lovely days of yore and her yearn to be one with her country.

"Sometimes I think of going back forever, and my relatives in India call me crazy. You want to leave the American life and come back to India, to the poverty and to the imperfections. Are you sure? They question in shock," she added.

I listened quietly to the lady wondering how difficult or easy it could be for her, if she indeed planned to go back and settle down in India, after having stayed here for so long.

Her wistful words, cut short my thoughts, "You can never do away with your country; the streets where you played in with your friends, the rivers where you washed your face and watched the reflection of your soul, the breeze that carried the fragrance of the freshly bloomed mango flowers and the afternoon siesta under those big, shady village trees, they stay with you till you live. That desire to retreat to your

land remains somewhere as a hidden or faded one, just like the portrait in your store-house...you might have just forgotten to dust it off for years,” her eyes turned moist as she spoke.

“But aunty all these years you have been here. Even your children are here...if you plan to go back now, who will take care of you over there?”

To this question of mine the lady promptly replied, “My mother will welcome me with open arms, even if I retreat after a day, or a year or after thirty years. My country is my mother. She will take care of me. But you know, though I want to, I am not sure if I can actually go back...there are a hell lot of considerations you see.” With a somewhat puzzled expression on the face, the lady rose up from her seat to leave, leaving me a little confused. I speculated on what those considerations she was talking about could probably be?

Almost a year has passed by since the day I met that lady. I do not know if she could make it to India to settle down forever. I never met her again. But almost a year of my own stay here has made me understand her better.

Staying abroad, we miss our country. We miss the hot humid summers and the dry and cold winters. We miss the sprinkles of the rain drops, and the fragrance of the wet soil. But what we miss the most is the bonds we shared with our families, our friends, our neighbors and even with the shopkeepers in the ‘hat’ or the postman who brought us letters or the house-help who we considered to be our elder sister. We miss the preparations that we would do sometimes months prior to the festivals.

And so we form associations, and try to relive those times in whatever way we can, even if it means celebrating a festival days after it is actually over, at our own convenience. We join hands to preserve our identities, our language and our culture, and try to make our children familiar with our roots.

No doubt we are today residing in one of the most advanced and adored countries of the world, and we may boast of our social, economic and political independence. No doubt that we are in one of the most cleanest and safest place on the earth (as a woman I feel far safer than I did in my country.) We have greater and better career opportunities, and may have our rights protected in a better way than in our own country, but we all would undoubtedly and unanimously agree that there was more freedom in the bonding we enjoyed in our motherland...Don’t we?



Pragnya Patnaik
Apt#1L, 158, St. Paul's Avenue
Jersey City, New Jersey -07306, USA
[pragnya.patnaik@gmail.com]

7x8

Ankita Ray

7X8. The hardest of all the multiplication couplets. You may brush off this quandary, callously whispering 56 underneath your breath, but for an eight year old, this query could very well be the bane of his existence. And it was so, for Max Thackeray.

The summer before 12th grade began I had volunteered to tutor my English teacher's eight-year-old son in math. Max Thackeray was quite a character. Upon our first meeting, I learned that he was an excellent warrior in Minecraft, an avid reader and strongly believed that multiplication tables were insignificant nuisances in his otherwise colorful life. It was an unusual match. I was barely proficient in basic "hand-eye-coordination" endeavors; I only had a little sister and thus my knowledge of the mindset of young boys was severely limited. But I loved math and I had made a commitment, so I began my path to fulfill it.

A generous observer could say that the first day was less than disastrous. I began by introducing myself, making a few quippy remarks that I hoped would be perceived as charming. Unfortunately, charming isn't the optimal method to receive an eight-year-old boy's trust. I quickly noticed our dwindling conversation topics and decided to delve swiftly into the problem at hand. I pulled out a set of ragged flashcards from my backpack that I had once used when I had undergone this process for myself. When I had initially searched them out from the boxes of knick-knacks my mother had stored from our childhood, I just could not remember back to the days and methods of learning these couplets. I realized that it was due to a defensive mechanism towards the suppression of traumatic memories! Max instantly recognized the cards. Without a word of explanation, which I learned was common for young boys, he ran off to his room. I remained awkwardly sitting at the dining table unsure of what I would do next. To my relief, he returned with his own set. The condition of his cards were much more pristine which prompted me to shove my own disheveled set into my backpack. He handed me the new set and the process began. The first card read 4×6 . "24," I whispered under my breath. "13," he declared confidently. I cautiously corrected him and placed the card in the pile I had labeled "one more time". As the "one-more-time" pile stacked further, Max's initial confidence began to dwindle. Now, I was not only faced with the task of teaching him the tables but also carefully manipulating the situation to prevent him from all together dropping math. An undertaking that had initially begun around the dining room table, slowly migrated around the kitchen and then to the basement and eventually sprawled on the couch upside down. I will gratefully report that I was not the sprawled out one, but instead I was the awkward beholder who stood next to Max as his feet waved in the air, barely managing to blurt out 7×2 . The hour finally ended and I was more than relieved to collect my things and leave, but the daunting reality remained. The pile of cards that Max did not know was four times larger than those he did know and his self-confidence had a very

unique path: always beginning high, then quickly plummeting down and finally plateauing at an attitude of nonchalance.

The next several weeks followed a similar pattern with one exception: slowly, but steadily Max was learning the tables. The 2's and 3's were mastered rapidly and after I taught him the tricks for four's and five's those soon followed. Six's and nine's were only slightly harder but with mnemonic devices for each, Max was almost proficient in them as well. The only two heinous tables that remained were seven's and eight's. I was completely bare in my bag of helpful hints, which Max believed I readily possessed for dispersal. With Max's high praise and a dilemma I could not solve, I began to grow more and more nervous. I came home that evening and sat down with my own books and began to bore into the citric acid cycle. I began my usual method of learning: creating shapes and gestures with my hands to remember that acetyl CoA and oxaloacetate were the initial substrates that began the Krebs cycle. My sister walked by my room and dutifully teased me saying that one could never tell whether I was studying or dancing. And then it hit me! I made a quick mental note of my discovery and continued on with the rest of the process of Respiration. Judgment day finally arrived and I was highly apprehensive. My method would either be extremely successful or leave me ashamed before Max.

We sat down in our usual seats and I began explaining to Max our task for the day. As I gazed out at the trampoline that was placed in their back yard I relayed to him that we would be jumping on the trampoline to learn the tables. His eyes instantly widened. He knew that moments like these were rare in the world of mathematics and any wavering on his part might lead me to pull back my offer. What he did not know was that the eight-year-old inside me was not going to be uncertain in this decision.

As we began to climb on to the trampoline I explained the basic principles of muscle memory, in terms of an eight-year-old of course. I described a process much like "Simon says" where I would say a multiplication problem and combine it with an action and Max would then be responsible for repeating the action and the answer. Occasionally I would only repeat the action and Max would be expected to say just the answer. The game began with full momentum. Max quickly learned to associate the two aspects together and was eventually breezing through some of the couplets that had previously caused him a mountain of anxiety. In the end we had narrowed it down to one last problem: 7×8 . Though we had gone over it several times, amongst the other questions Max could not remember it. I knew I had to help him remember it somehow, but the sun had begun scorching above us and my feet were getting clammy. I braced myself and told him 7×8 could be remembered because seven and eight were right next to each other and five and six were right next to each other. Now the only task was to make him remember the significance of both these aspects when they were combined. "7 times 8," I said as I jumped two steps forward, "is equal to--" I was just about to make a huge leap backwards to symbolize five and six when my clammy feet gave out completely. I landed clumsily on my butt and blushed noticeably, but when I looked over I saw Max sincerely imitating me. "7 times 8," he said, "equals--" and jumped backwards on to his butt, all the while saying 56. I knew I had to test my method to see if it had truly adhered. I went

through all the previous tables which Max had valiantly mastered before. Finally when I came upon the infamous couplet I could see the excitement in Max's eyes. "7 times 8," I said holding my breath. "56!" he shouted plopping on to his bottom.

When I left that afternoon I knew that both Max and I were proud of our accomplishments. My muscles were sore but my mind and heart were at peace. Like never before.



Ankita is the older daughter of Abhijit and Julie Acharya Ray. She graduated with an IB diploma from Skyline High School, Salt Lake City, Utah in the summer of 2013 and is currently a freshman at NYU College of Arts and Sciences. She is an accomplished dancer. Ankita wrote this essay as part of her college applications. This is a true story!

One More Taj Mahal

Suchitra G. Das

The ocean was quiet once more. All along the darkening shoreline from *Swargadwara* to the swaying coconuts disappearing into a curve of tiny tiled roofs, the only sound that came from its fathomless depths was the balmy murmur of gentle waves riding the indigo. The soft lapping of low tides licked the sand in foamy tongues. A solitary figure stood at its edge, and gazed out with unseeing eyes. The moonless night cast a blanket of silence over him, and the darkness crept up to dig its nails into his soul in a death vice. The tempest in his life had subsided two full moons ago, but the emptiness remained. Motionless, a shadow without form, a body without substance, all night long he stood, and stared at the heaving mass, until shafts of warmth pierced the darkness, and set the horizon aglow. A streak of gold spilled over, and blanketed the perfect liquid latitude with shimmer. Out of the mists winged a seagull in furious haste, its shrill squawk shattering the quiet of dawn. Pale rays sought him out, a sliver of a man clutching his hands close to his heart. She had trembled with life, and he had started to live again. But now, life as Suriya had known, was burnt to flecks of gray. Long after watching the funeral pyre burn out, he had gathered her remains together into one fistful of ash, and secured them in a tiny earthen vessel. No more would he hear her incessant chatter. No more, her thin hand in his own. Only the look in her eyes before she was swept away. Was it so long ago? His body shook as memories stirred and stoked his loss.

* * * * *

At the end of each day, Suriya was seen standing at the edge of the waters. Burned to mahogany, and beaten into sinew, his gaunt frame had hunched into an arch with the constant pressure of heaving and drawing nets once loaded with fish. From a distance he resembled a walking stick, earning him the name *bankuli budha*. Propped up against the crimson horizon, he would wrap his eyes around his beloved ocean, sensitive to its each mood. The salt from the waters glistened on his skin and thickened his hair. But lately his silhouette was missing.

Earth had moved out of darkness with the advent of *Chaitra purnami*. Bathing its dwellers in silver, the crystal sphere hung low and heavy. The *Baseli* festival was underway with full gusto by the members of the *Keuta* community. A month long celebration of religious fervor would follow until the next full moon in April. This particular night, encircling a large bonfire, and responding to the sounds of *dhol* and *mahuri*, the entire community was on the sands witnessing the sanctification of a bamboo staff, which was to become the *Chaiti Ghoda*, a dummy-horse, and would be worshipped for a week. Suspended on the shoulders of a male dancer, it is taken out for a ritual dance on the eighth day of the dark phase of the moon. This time it was Suriya's turn to have the honor of being the dancing horse. But he was not there. He was in front of his tiny hut, out on the

shore with his Jhilli.

Suriya remembered vividly the day he had rushed Jhilli to the local dispensary situated in the heart of their small village. Twelve weeks ago, she had vomited, and doubled up in pain. Holding her upper torso, she was moaning in agony. The doctor had examined her, and suspected something worse. He had asked him about her eating habits and symptoms. She chewed betel nuts all the time. There wasn't much food, Suriya said. He then advised Suriya to take her to the government hospital immediately for further tests. The only hospital was twenty kilometers away in Puri town. The rickety auto-rickshaw had flown perilously over the pock-marked stretch, all the way to the hospital. Nurses in impersonal white had ushered her into an examining room, shutting him out with a wave of their hands. He sat outside the room waiting anxiously for the door to open. Then, a nurse came out, and motioned him to go inside. A lady-doctor asked him to sit down. It was breast cancer, she said. Suriya blinked in confusion. It was a disease, which could only lead to death, unless treated in its initial stages. There was too much poison in her body, and too less strength. She was in her last stage, and already dying when the symptoms of pain first appeared. The doctor's each word thrust dagger-like, and left him clutching at his hair. Numbness descended over him as his eyes glazed over. Guided by the hospital staff, he had admitted her to the hospital, but after a few weeks, the doctors had discharged her, saying, it was best she went home to her family. It was just a matter of time.

There was not enough fish in the ocean to heal Jhilli. Gone were the days when menfolk brought in the catch, and their women sold it right on the shores. The spoils of such bounty were now but a mirage. Instead, sand-sharks rode the waters, and middlemen swallowed profits after auctioning off bulk fish to the highest bidder. All that remained was a bloody trail of spilled guts, broken fish and a mad scramble to collect them. Muffled cries of hunger rent nights, and mingled with a series of strangled yelps by strays. Suriya would clap his ears until he grew numb. Not even a loan against his dilapidated hut, and fishing boat was enough to save Jhilli.

When shadows lengthened its reach on walls and hovered, the light from the small kerosene *dibi* quivered in fear. The length of days grew shorter until night and day made no sense to Jhilli. The stench of disease hung like a pall in the room where she slept; too heavy to lift, too dense to clear. Odors of decay oozed from her body to permeate every nook of the hut. Deep grooves had carved her face into immobility. Pinned tight against the taut skin of her shrunken forehead, her veins bulged out in gnarled branches. Her eyes were sunken pools of misery; her body, a waste land.

Pain was her new constant companion; it had enfolded her reed-like frame in a lover's embrace. There would be days when it would sting, scorpion-like, and by degrees tie her up her into a searing knot of fire, sending her whimpering for death. She pushed the medicines away. Opium, she begged. Day after day she lay on the tattered bedding, curled up like a fetus, staring at the wall in front of her. Skeletal fingers reached out, and traced the *chita* patterns on it. Twisting her neck

back, she ran her tired eyes all over the room, her home for thirty-six monsoons. Blackened pots, old tins, and broken baskets that sat in disarray on moisture-eaten wooden shelves, held within, some laughter and some tears. She remembered sitting near the earthen stove, waiting for rice to cook. The crackle and warmth of wood fire would lull her to drowsiness. In the wisps of vapor that escaped the rattling lid, Jhilli framed happy dreams. From a window, in the checkered green *lungi*, and a faded blood-orange sari that hung from a clothes-line, she saw mirth dancing wildly.

She stared intently at the beams of the ceiling, seeking some kind of movement in the midst of stillness. At times she spotted a mottled gray wall-lizard, still as death waiting its prey. Startled out of the shadows, a spider would race to its sanctuary. Another would be spinning a web across a space between dislodged tiles of the low roof. At other times she caught the sun seeping in to cast a lance of light on the wall, but getting caught in gossamer threads. Her sickness had changed Suriya. Folds deep in his forehead, and coal smoldering in his eyes spoke of a silence that grew louder than the thrashing of angry waves. She could see loneliness creeping up on him as he bore into something beyond his line of vision. Her heart ached for him. Go! Run away! Her eyes would storm at him.

Early on the morning of *Baseli*, unable to bear the look of her empty eyes, Suriya abruptly left the hut. He would have to get ready for the festival. This time, he only had fishing nets to offer up for the worship. He stumbled into the backspace of his hut, and reached for the nets heaped in a big bundle against the remains of a wall. Unmindful of what he was doing, Suriya pulled up the nets from the bottom. Thin and worn, they got tangled. He tried to undo the knots, but they kept getting tighter. Exasperated, he let out a low profanity, and threw down the nets. His face crumbled as he dropped to his haunches, and buried his head in his arms. His arched frame rocked back and forth in a storm of despair. Finally spent, he raised his head as he heard muffled footsteps in the sand. Siba was coming towards him. Quickly, Suriya wiped his tear streaked face with his *gamuccha*. Siba: his childhood friend. They were thick as thieves and inseparable. Siba had found him cowering under one of the boats, hungry and alone after one unfettered storm had lacerated their village. When he offered fish, friendship and family, Suriya forgot what it was to be an orphan. He was indebted to Siba then as he would always be. Siba's pet leisure was to listen to news from a radio as he cogitated on a *paana*. When his mouth filled up with russet colored spittle, a squirt from tinted lips would hit the sand like a guided missile. He boasted about any news he heard, because it gave him great pleasure to be the center of attention. Today he was waving a newspaper with a picture of the Taj Mahal.

“Suriya, the Taj Mahal has become the first Seven New Wonders of the world.” Siba announced excitedly.

“Taj Mahal became what...?” Suriya replied puzzled.

He took the newspaper from Siba's hands, and glanced at the colored photo. He remembered seeing cheap imitations of the Taj Mahal made from chalkstone and clay, sold by roadside hawkers. Siba prattled on about the monument. Suriya listened thoughtfully. After Siba left, he went back inside and saw Jhilli sleeping. He put a gentle hand to her brow. Then, he went out in front of his hut.

Suriya fixed his eyes on the sand, and as if in a trance, he dropped to his knees. He lifted the sand in his hands, and intently watched the golden grains slip out of his fingers. Abruptly getting up, he ran towards the ocean, and scooped up a handful of water. Bending low, he rushed back to the same spot he poured the water into the sand. Mixing water with sand, he pressed it into a little mound. Shading his eyes with his calloused hands he looked up to see the sun climbing higher. A grit of sand escaped into his eye, blinding him. Blinking furiously he tried to remove it, but when it failed to dislodge, he shook his head violently, and swore at himself. Had he ever done anything worth his while on this earth? Of course, only to catch fish! He closed his hurting eyes, and what seemed like an eternity, ruminated on his on his whole life. Tears welled up, the grit loosened. Plunging his hands once more into the warm sand, he scooped up another handful, and he held them close to his thudding heart. A thought exploded in his mind, and he felt delirious.

With his mind bursting with one single image, Suriya ran back inside his hut, and picked up a pick-axe and looked for a container. He found a blue plastic bucket lying unused in the corner of the kitchen. The bottom was cracked. Turning it in his hands, he hesitated. Nevertheless, he hurried out to the sand, and in one mighty blow, he smote it. Back to the rim with the bucket, he scooped up some water, and ran back quickly to the little mound of sand, with water streaming out into his legs. Pouring the water into sand, he worked up a great pile of sandy dough. Scooping up a handful of the dough, he started pushing it into the mound, and flattened it into a square bed. Wiping the sweat off his forehead he looked up only to realize the sun had stopped casting shadows. With a groan he scampered back. He felt hunger pangs, and realized Jhilli must be starving too. He came inside the hut and saw her sitting up in bed gazing at the door. She heaved a sigh of relief,

“Where were you for so long?” she chided.

“Sorry, I forgot.” Suriya mumbled and hastily went to the kitchen. How could he tell her he was out on the sand trying to build a Taj Mahal? She would think he had gone insane. Out of a small basket he took two pieces of *sukhua* and threw them into the dying embers. When the smell of burnt fish invaded the kitchen, he pulled them out into a tin dish and pounded them with a clove of garlic and dried chilies. Drizzling it with a few drops of mustard oil, and scrapping out some stale rice besides it, he took it to Jhilli. He fed her a few mouthfuls, and when she insisted, he hungrily ate too. Later, he timidly brought out the newspaper, and pointed to her a picture of the Taj Mahal.

“Do you know what this is?” He asked. Puzzled, she nodded. He continued.

“Emperor Shahjahan built the Taj Mahal for his queen Mumtaz. It’s made from white marble. But Mumtaz didn’t see it.”

Jhilli was amused. Undoing a snug overlap in the sari at her waist, she withdrew a tiny tin box. Taking a few slivers of betel nut from it, and tucking them into the corner of her left cheek, she teased.

“*Pagala*. You are in ove!”

Suriya’s eyes lit up. He had forgotten the sound of her throaty laugh. Surprised herself, Jhilli went into a spasm of coughing. Suriya patted her back and smoothed her hair, until she dropped off into an exhausted stupor. Then, he went back to his sand structure. To his dismay, the bed had cracks on it. He wondered why he was doing it at all. He remembered his wife’s amused laughter. In anger, he kicked the bed. And then he remembered her tired face resting on a rock hard lump of bundled up old, threadbare saris. *Jama* was not returning empty-handed. And he didn’t have the time. He mustn’t lose sight of his goal, he reminded himself. He hurried off, and scooped up another bucket of water. Leaning sideways, he cupped his hands full of water, and poured it gently on the broken bed. Pushing in the sand tight with his hands, he re-carved a square from it. Pausing to look at the structure, he wondered how to build a second level without breaking the base. Maybe the bucket would work, he thought. Packing it hard with wet sand, he gently loosened it over the square base forming the second layer. Scrapping away the sides of the cylinder, he fashioned it into a block. After a number of trips to and from the water, he finally finished the third layer. Only this time, he shaped it into a dome. He plastered base, block and dome with one final layer of fine wet sand, and stepped back.

The sound of waves was getting louder. Breathing and surging, tossing and foaming, it jostled one another as sanguine skies made their appearance in the dimming horizon. In the purpling sky, Suriya could sense a fury being unleashed from beyond its pale. Work was yet to be completed. Then, he heard someone call out to him in a feeble voice. He looked up to see Jhilli trudging towards him.

“Why did you come out?” he cried. “Let me take you back”. He tried to lead her back but she shook her head.

“I want to watch the ocean.” She whispered weakly as Suriya looked uncertainly at her.

“But only for some time! I have to finish this today,” he implored as he sat her near the sand structure.

Jhilli nodded. That’s all she had, very little time. An explosion of a thousand pins had set off within

her, leaving her tearing at her breasts. Oblivious to everything else, all she wanted was the touch of the restive waters. Its breath soothed, its damp sands cooled. As she watched Suriya playing in the sand, the pain flowed and ebbed through her body. Clumping together one pile of sand, all the time smoothing upwards and shaping it into a pillar, he finished one. And then three more. As the moon made its way upward into the dark sky, frenzy waves leaped up to kiss it, only to crash back in a deafening roar into its inky depths. Wave after choppy wave, the wild waters cleaved and careened against each other, threatening a deluge.

Suriya bent over his Taj Mahal. His calloused hands continued to create delicate arches from the ever escaping grains. He made one last trip, and scooped up one more bucket. When he turned around, it slipped from his hand. Casting its enchantment over the earth, the moon shimmered like a gigantic pearl in the ocean-sky. Mists from the turbid waters floated upwards to frame it in hazy suspension. Its silver rained upon the structure, transforming sand into marble, and setting off an opaque glow. Mirrored in billions of sand particles, the pristine orb hung low to enshrine this labor of love in its ethereal light. He slowly approached Jhilli, afraid even the slightest footfall would disturb the moment. Sitting down next to her on the sand, he gestured towards it, “For you, the Taj Mahal, Jhilli,” Suriya whispered in her ear.

Wide-eyed, Jhilli took in the scene. Her eyes creased upward into countless curves as it met Suriya’s above the din of crashing waters. She slipped her hand into his. Closing her eyes, she let the cool mists drench her flaming body. They felt nature’s rhythmic roar doing her manic dance. Their hearts thudded in unison with the throb of drum beats in the distance. They waited as the ocean surged with impatience. Back and forth, each spasmodic peak, higher, and louder than the last. Unable to restrain itself any longer, the monstrous waves rushed in, splaying a thousand tongues and swallowed sand, soul, and structure.

* * * * *

Unwrapping the small urn from its red cloth, Suriya looked for one last time into it. Reaching in, he pulled out some ash, and brought it close to his face. His eyes search and spot a tiny lump of red lac; his nostrils inhale of what are the last remains of his Jhilli. Then, walking into the ocean, he waits for another wave to flow in. Catching sight of a wall of teal rolling in, he bent over to release her into the swirling waters. He watched as the ebb of a wave deftly caught her over the surface. Bobbing with the dip and flow for a few seconds, she disintegrated into the mercurial depths. The sun was ascending to give light, and sounds of life stirring reached his ears. At a distance, a temple bell clanged to welcome dawn.

Suriya closed his eyes and exhaled.

FOOTNOTES *in order of their appearance*

1. *Swargadwara*-cremation grounds at Puri
2. *Bankuli buddha* – literally meaning, a bent old man resembling a walking stick
3. *Chaitra*-the advent of spring season during the months March-April
4. *Purnami*-(in Odia) full moon, *purnim*
5. *Keuta* – fisherman community of Odisha, living in coastal Puri and Cuttack regions
6. *Baseli* – sacred festival of the Keuta community (fisher man) of Odisha, with the worship and dance of a wooden horse. It is celebrated in the honor of the Mother Goddess in one of her primeval forms. A bamboo staff is ceremoniously propitiated by the community priest, and axed into splinters, out of which only twelve splinters are dyed red and used to make the frame of a horse. A wooden horse-head is attached to the frame and worshipped for a fortnight before the full moon of *Chaitra*, as the *Chaiti Ghoda*.
7. *Chaiti Ghoda* – sacred wooden horse made from splintered bamboo with a wooden horse head and worn over the shoulders of a designated dancer
8. *Dhol* – drum
9. *Mahuri* – wind instrument
10. *Dibi* – small kerosene lamp
11. *Bidi* – rolled raw tobacco leaves
12. *Paana* – betel leaves stuffed with shredded betel nuts, tobacco, lime and kaitha
13. *Lungi* – a broad piece of unstitched cloth worn at the waist.
14. *Chita*-designs drawn on floors and walls with rice paste; very commonly found in villages and homes across Odisha. Also called *jhoti*
15. *Gamuccha* –a piece of thinly woven cloth used as a towel.
16. *Sukhua* – sun-dried salted fish
17. *Pagala*- madman
18. *Jama* – Yama, God of Death



Suchitra G. Das
Fremont, CA, USA

[suchitramd@yahoo.com]

*Suchitra Das is a writer and is the founder and director of:
'Kids Be Inspired: the creative art studio'*

2013 ODISHA TOUR REPORT

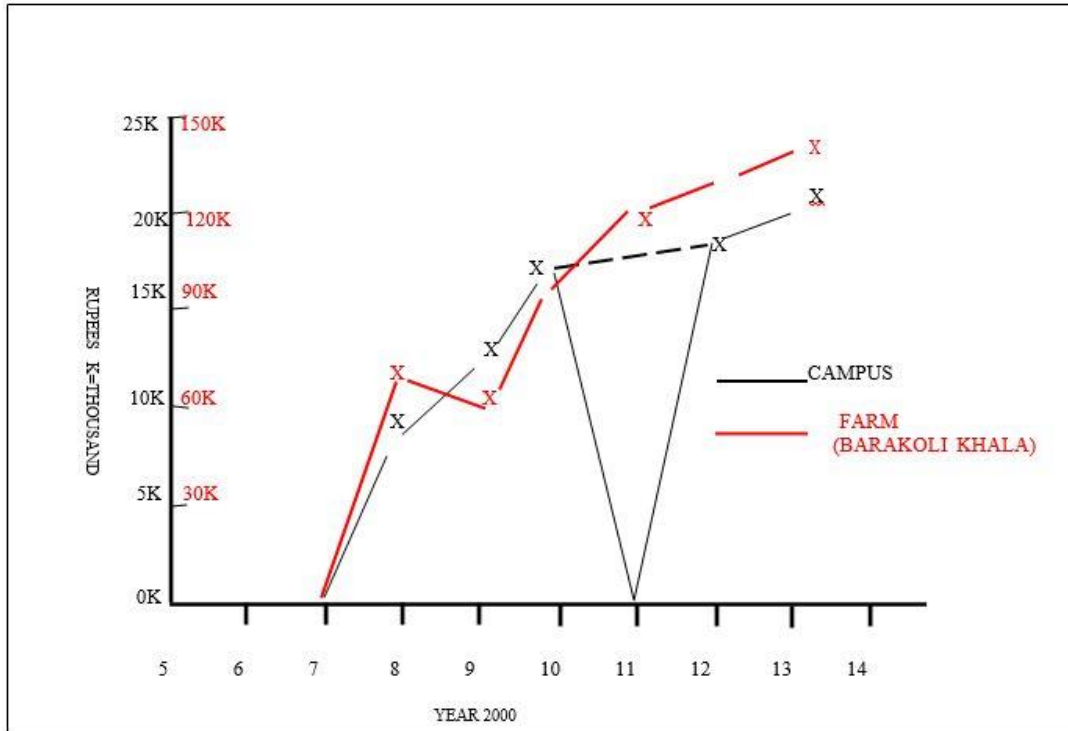
Subhas Mohapatra

I arrived at Bhubaneswar in the evening of Oct. 11, 2013. The storm Phailine started in mild form in the morning of Oct. 12 and increased its ferocity by the hour and continued with full force for several days. Even after Phailine was over, the roads were blocked with fallen trees and broken electric line for several more days. This forced me to cancel the first 10 days of activity which included a visit to the Nibedita Ashram Orphanage and to my village to start research for the workshop. Although Bhubaneswar itself was spared from the full ferocity of Phailine, still the force of the wind was strong enough to blow away leaves and fruits from each plant at the UAC (Urban Agriculture Center) of IAFF. I recognize that the photographs given with the text may be too small to convey the information the reader is seeking. If so, you can write to iaff10@yahoo.com to receive larger photos.

1. As soon as the roads became navigable, I went to my village and started the research needed for the workshop to be offered two months later at the RAC (Rural Agriculture Center).
2. **NIBEDITA ASHRAM ORPHANAGE (LUTHERAN MAHILA SAMITI, PATALIPANK, KENDRAPADA AND AICF, BUFFALO, NY, USA NGO PARTNERS, Oct. 15-18 and Nov. 15-18):** Because of the large scale devastation by the Phailine storm, no agricultural activity survived damage. However, photos below show that amidst large-scale devastation, two technologies introduced by IAFF did survive the calamity. In absence of any agricultural activity due to inclement conditions, the orphans were shown how environmental stewardship can be combined with agriculture. This was accomplished by cleaning of the adjacent water way through removal of invasive aquatic weeds, chopping these weeds to small pieces, using the chopped weed as a biomass over the sand bed that survived the assault of the storm Phailine. **FIGURES (L-R): 1. The coconut nursery at the Brakoli Khala that survived the wrath of Phailine. 2. The sand beds at the orphanage campus that survived the wrath of Phailine. 3. Children at the orphanage cleaning the water way. 4. The cleaned area in the water way. 5. The cleaned weed being chopped to pieces. 6. The chopped weed being used as biomass on the sanded.**



Inability to engage in agricultural activity also afforded me time to undertake a much needed economic analysis on the economic impact of IAFF's involvement (hence my personal involvement) on the economic sustainability of the orphanage both at the main campus and its farm at the Barakoli Khala. This analysis is given below in the form a graph which is plotted on the data given in the table given at the end.



1. All numbers are taken from govt. audit report (as claimed by the orphanage) and shown in the table given below
2. Red numbers and lines represent income from Khala (includes value of crops consumed by residents)
3. Black numbers and lines represent income from campus (includes value of crops consumed by residents).
4. Actual values are given in the columns; lines represent the nearest whole number.
5. All incomes (both at campus and Khala) shown in the graph and corresponding columns are from Agricultural activities.
6. There was no reported income from agriculture before AICF donated the farm in 2005. There was no agriculture income between 2005 and 2007, even after AICF donation of land.
7. First agricultural income was reported after IAFF's/Subhas Mohapatra's involvement in 2007.
8. Since 2007, with the exception of 2011, increase in agricultural income has been steady and incremental since. The zero income in 2011 resulted from storm devastation at the campus. It is anticipated that the 2013 income may also be like 2011 because of Phailine effect.

YEAR ENDING	INCOME				EXPENSE	
	CAMPUS	AICF	GOVT	KHALA	CAMPUS	KHALA
2005	0.00	867,301.00	300,000.00	0.00	3,30,000	10,73,241
2006	0.00	176,968.00	300,000.00	0.00	3,35,000	0.00
2007	0.00	230,927.00	300,000.00	0.00	3,40,000	0.00
2008	7,000.00	84,000.00	300,000.00	64,440.00	3,37,000	10,260.00
2009	12,000.00	0.00	300,000.00	59,440.00	340,000.00	12,430.00
2010	16,000.00	569,532.00	300,000.00	99,245.00	338,143.00	167,760.00
2011	0.00	232,452.00	432,143.00	124,600.00	547,000.00	20,500.00
2012	18,350.00	109,214.00	675,000.00	135,800.00	768,730.00	22,000.00
2013	19,730.00	427,146.00	675,000.00	142,700.00	792,260.00	24,500.00

3. SAISABA ENGLISH MEDIUM SCHOOL (Nov. 17): This school was started at my suggestion and is the only IAFF affiliated school in the state of Odisha. IAFF's role is to improve the quality of spoken English and teacher-student relationship. Each year, the school holds a one-day seminar open to the public. The topic discussed in the seminar is directly related to the educational goal of the school. Because the timing of the seminar is adjusted to coincide with my visit to the area, I have been able to participate in each seminar so far. The 2013 seminar topic was "Lead your children to lead themselves". IAFF donated an advanced Cambridge Dictionary at about Rs.2000.00 to the library of the school to aid in teacher improvement.

4. 11th ANNUAL ALL-ODISHA NGO CONGREGATION (Oct. 20): This was held at the ODM School, Bhubaneswar. Although participation was considerably low because of the effect of the Phailine storm, those in attendance participated with high spirit and passion. This is the first step and is an integral part in recruiting new NGO partners for the rural development of Odisha through the "DEVELOPMENT WITHOUT GOVERNMENT PROGRAM." The success of this program is reflected in the fact that IAFF so far has recruited more than 20 NGO partners although several of them were dropped from the partnership along the way. Although I put full energy, preparation and participation in this event, it came to an unexpected end thus making the 2013 event the last one. Termination of this program resulted from my prolonged illness after my return to USA. Doctors and my family agreed that I must curtail my program in Odisha to allow more rest for my aging body because of progressive loss of immunity with advancing age. This decision meant that I must not recruit new NGO partners. As further explained below, other events directed at the recruitment and training had also to be eliminated. This will mean that from 2014 onwards, I will be working only with existing NGO partners for as long as my strength permits.

5. ONE-ON-ONE MEETING WITH PROSPECTIVE NGO PARTNERS (Oct. 21-23): This was done to allow NGOs desirous of working as IAFF partners to interact with me for two hours and develop work strategy. This resulted in the recruitment of four new NGO partners: Triveni Trust in Bhadrak District, DAPTA in Kalahandi District, Prachi Youth Social Organization (PYSO) and Maheswar Malati Museum & Library, both of Puri District. As stated earlier this activity will be discontinued in future in compliance with my doctors' recommendations.

6. TOUR OF RURAL ODISHA:

i) Malkangiri (NYSASDRI NGO Partner, Oct. 24-28): Here NYSASDRI operates a residential school (1-5 class) for tribal girls. There are about 100-200 students. This school is unique in that it has attracted not only IAFF's interest but also the interests of French social workers and scientists. IAFF chose the role to develop the school's infrastructure for an educational environment through small but needed contributions: 1. Impress upon students, teachers and administrators the importance of educational agriculture and how to merge it with the educational mission. 2. Equip each class room with maps of the world, India and Odisha to improve students' global as well as local perspectives. 3. Increase the intensity of lighting to create a bright study atmosphere. 4. The school had only one broken umbrella available for use. IAFF donated three additional umbrellas. 5) Provide additional number earth handling tools, buckets and fertilizer to facilitate participation of larger number of teachers and students in educational agriculture. I have just received e-mail feedback that the bed shown above has become a very successful operation. It was a joy to work with the teachers and students because of the management's enthusiasm to bring in outside perspectives. **FIGURES (L – R): Students and teachers attending the seminar on conservation agriculture and educational agriculture, India map in a class room, Students using the only broken umbrella available, Students working to build a conservation agriculture bed under the educational agriculture program.**



ii) Muniguda, Rayagada District (NYSASDRI NGO Partner, Oct. 28-30): At this location also, NYSASDRI operates a residential school (1-5 class) for tribal girls with similar student strength as above. Out of necessity, IAFF goals at the Muniguda school are identical to that at Malkangiri. Slight differences are related to available facilities. For example, not much agricultural activity could be executed successfully at Muniguda because there is no fence to prevent invasion of pigs being raised by surrounding communities. Further, urine collection for use as a fertilizer is not possible because, unlike Malkangiri, there is no inside-campus structure for this purpose. Nevertheless, several earth handling tools badly needed for the educational agriculture project were procured for the school through IAFF funds. On the other hand, man-power availability at Muniguda is better than at Malkangiri. This allowed introduction of some new concepts on trial basis.

iii) Bhawanipatna, Kalahandi District (DAPTA NGO Partner, Oct. 30-Nov.2). DAPTA is a new NGO partner for IAFF. I consider myself lucky to find such a capable and committed NGO partner which has all the needed infrastructures for an effective and ideal model of “Development Without Government”. As soon as I arrived at Bhawanipatna, we hit the ground running because of excellent prior preparation and readiness. Furthermore, among the several dozens of NGOs I have been associated with, DAPTA is the only one which has developed the strongest “team approach” to any given program. DAPTA’s wide scope of programs has been well documented at its website www.dapta.org, and in its Annual Reports. While each program is necessary, IAFF’s focus being narrow, my involvement will deal with malaria prevention, primary education (especially for children rescued from child-labor bondage), pediatric eye care and, above all, agriculture. The leader of DAPTA is Raju Sharma, its founder and CEO. In spite of the most severe family tragedy through which he lost his love for life after going through diverse distractions and severe financial stress, he has kept his head high and spirit focused to help the hapless. Such determination and sacrifice is rare and exemplary for this septuagenarian who has already traveled different parts of the world. The following few photos show the caliber of commitment and capability of Raju and his entire team. I do not know all of the 80 + members of DAPTA, but I feel enriched through my contact with those whom I know. The main point of the photos below is to show that although there is a strict area-responsibility on day-to-day basis, when needs arise, they all pitch in irrespective of their area- responsibility. **FIGURES (L-R): TOP: 1. Strategy session immediately after my arrival, 2. Visit to the members of women’s farmers cooperative, 3. Field demonstration of hill-planting to cooperative members, 4. Visit to malaria control area, 5. Visit to the school for children rescued from forced labor-camps. BOTTOM: 1. Underbed preparation for soil-less plantbed, 2. Plastic film for soil-less plantbed, 3. Sand placement instead of soil to create the soil-less plantbed 4. Biomass placement on top of the sand bed, 5. Training to the DAPTA workers on how to select seedlings and how to plant seedlings, 6. A soil-less bed with chili pepper plants**



Notes:

1. The traditional planting method in Odisha is to first plant the vegetable and then form the hill. The disadvantage of this approach was explained to the farmers present. The correct method is to first build the hills and then plant the seedlings on the hills.
2. Although the soil-less bed is designed for 4-rows of plants, the agriculture team has planted only 3-rows after I left the place. This resulted in at least 25% loss of potential yield and profit.
3. DAPTA's annual report will show many sincere efforts to help financial empowerment of farmers (especially women farmers). But because of misconceptions and wrong methods, the farmers are not able to reach their potential. This will be possible only when their thought process changes to accept modern methods of farming instead of sticking to the traditional methods.
- iv) **Collaboration with Childright; Visit to Pirhat, Bhadrak District (Nov. 14).** Childright is an old NGO partner of IAFF and collaboration with them is in progress for several years. Tribeni Trust run by Ranju Gahan is a new NGO partner and is currently functioning as a satellite NGO of Childright. While at present Childright is one of the most creative and active NGO partners of IAFF, the partnership had to go through many initial hurdles because of a gap in understanding and working philosophy. It needs to be mentioned that a world-wide prevailing concept is "rich is getting richer and poor is getting poorer." In reality the former is true and desirable while the latter is untrue and undesirable. Rich should get richer because otherwise they will become poor if their investments fail. Poor cannot get poorer because they were poor to start with. Regardless of the intensity and nature of the debate, it cannot be denied that not only the gap between the poor and the rich is widening, but if this disparity is not addressed with urgency social order will eventually be replaced with chaos. No country in the world has a better infrastructure than India to address this problem effectively. This infrastructure exists in the form of "numerous NGOs". By setting up "for profit" business houses in the urban areas (where rich people live) and selling in these business houses goods procured from rural areas (where poor people live), NGOs are best suited to attain economic empowerment for the poor through trade and commerce. To accomplish this, Childright has opened a "supply store" named "Prakruti Sambhara" in the heart of Bhubaneswar. IAFF has made modest investments in this venture to enable Childright purchase goods from rural areas. In the year 2012-13, Childright had a gross transaction of nearly Rs.87000. Out this nearly Rs.50000 went to the tribal farmers of the Kandhmal District.

In addition to the business house, Childright is promoting conservation agriculture in the rural areas of Bhadrak District. Tribeni Trust has joined as a partner in this venture. These activities are being conducted under IAFF's Risk-Profit-Share-Interest-free- Microfinance program. In short, IAFF assumes all the initial financial risks and provides its NGO partners funding, technology, training and guidance for successful operations. If the undertaking fails, IAFF absorbs the loss. However, if the operation succeeds, IAFF gets back its investment plus 50% of the profit. This allows the NGO partners and their farmer clients to undertake conservation agriculture without having to face any financial loss. So far, IAFF has invested Rs.14000 in Childright and has gotten back nearly Rs.15000. Similar model will be used with the Tribeni Trust. The following pictures are examples of some of the collaborations in progress. **FIGURES (L-R): 1. Store sign in front of Prakruti Sambhara, 2. Tapan Padhi, Secretary of Childright and store operator, 3. Partial photo of stocks inside Prakruti Sambhara, 4. Training Pirhat (Bhadrak District) residents on Containerized Agriculture, 5. Chili pepper plant being grown by a Pirhat resident.**



7. PARTNERSHIP WITH NYSASDRI: This needs special mention because NYSASDRI is not only the oldest IAFF partner in Odisha, but is also the largest and most diverse. Residential School

for tribal girls in Malkangiri and Rayagada districts have already been discussed in the foregoing. The following are additional partnership components:

- i) **Pediatric Eye Care:** Kalinga Ehye Hospital and Research Center is the only hospital in Odisha with a special program on children's eye care. Although IAFF supports only a small fraction of the large number of surgeries performed, this program was started at my request. One of the reasons other hospitals do not have pediatric eye surgery is because this is an expensive undertaking due to special requirements for small eyes. Four surgeries supported by IAFF in 2013 are shown below with pre- and post-operation photos.



FIGURES: (L to R): In Each pair of Photos, Left is Pre-operation and Right is Post-operation 1 & 2: Biswajit Behera; & 4: Dukhia Dehury; 5 & 6: Govinda Nayak; 7 & 8: Rajashree Bhoi

- ii) **English Medium School at Kashipur, Dhenakanl Dist.:** NYSADRI has been running this school for the last several years facing huge financial loss because there are not enough students. This is an example of many undertakings NYSASDRI has committed itself to as a social service in promoting education. This is also one of many examples why IAFF takes pride in this partnership. IAFF's participation is only advisory at present. As much as I wish to make financial commitment, IAFF does not have enough resources to make the school financially sustainable. However, my hope is that if and when the school becomes sustainable, IAFF will step in make financial contributions to enhance educational quality as it is doing for other schools. In view of the fact that only \$100 a year will support the educational need for the whole year for each child, each reader is invited to sponsor one student per year. This will allow increasing student number and thus enhance the school's sustainability.

- iii) **NYSASDRI POST-GRADUATE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND SOCIAL WORK (Nov.25-28):** This is another undertaking by NYSASDRI for the benefit of the Society. Being a new venture it is bound to run in loss sometime to come. The intent is to set up an institution where high caliber training is provided in the area of journalism and social work. I have agreed to serve as an advisor and voluntary faculty in the College with greater emphasis on Social Work and lesser emphasis on Journalism. I will be a class-room teacher for the third paper on "TRIBAL CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT". In addition to teaching, I will offer seminars and play advisory role in the area of curriculum development and administration.

8. **WORKSHOP ON "ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT THROUGH CONSERVATION AGRICULTURE":** As stated earlier, this is one of the steps involved in the recruitment and training of new NGOs. This workshop/training is offered at the RAC (Rural Agriculture Center) in my village. The two and half day training involves lectures, field demonstrations and hands-on experience. From its beginning in 2002, the workshop has trained at least 100 NGOs. This program also became the last one because of my decision to cut back the program. Effective 2014, recruitment and training of new NGOs will be accomplished through existing NGO partners rather than through separate programs.

Subhas Mohapatra, President, IAFF, 1413 Boxwood Lane, Apex, NC 27502, USA
Phone: 919/362-7653. FAX: 440/378-2060; Web site: www.iaff1.org

A Time of Rising

Dr. Pratibha Satpathy

(Translated by Dr. Jayant Mohapatra)

No one is there to search.
Long back
I let the world know
that I am not present anyway.
In any case
I never wish to stand
Before the arrogant merchant-
aware that my footsteps would fall
inside the enclosure of a fool's judgment,
inside the darkness of disbelief.

In the mad rush of publicity,
Amid the roar of the crowds
who go on beating their own drums,
I never wish
to hear my own name-

Deep in the impenetrable forest
beneath a stretch of hills,
on the blood-stained earth
of the fallen Venus,
the imprint of my feet must be there,
or else
in the city street at midnight
my long hair would be blowing disheveled
In the lap of the suddenly stilled breeze.

And this solace I possess
would be softly stroking
the fierce desires of those insects
dropping from the street light,
the stain of my tears
would be there
on the tattered tin roofs
of slum dwellings.

My bejeweled ring
would flash fire
in a palmful of emptiness
of a new, milky way
floating down from afar;
here, now, I promise, I'll come back
before the earth closes its eyes.

And to every limb of mine
I will fasten
truth, light and faith
In stone
In necessity
in a sword
inside niggardliness
I'll search for a heart and come-
and in the bloodied eastern sky
I shall dawn like the new day,
I shall arise.

This poem was originally written in Odia by Dr. Pratibha Satpathy and is translated to English by world renowned poet Dr. Jayant Mohapatra

America, here I come

Babru Samal

“Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me:
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.”— *Emma Lazarus*

This chanting of the goddess of liberty resonates
all over the world

In the midst of Ethiopia
Along with my three sisters
I heard the voice
And started my journey to be in the land of
opportunities
Using the network of connection men
At the cost of \$15000 or more
I travelled for four years
Finally I crossed Rio Grande Bridge to
Brownsville To reach destination USA

From my home to the land of Sudan
From the sands of Sudan
I flew to the citadel of Sao Paulo
From there to Caracas by bus
Through Columbia by boat and car
Through the jungles of Panama
Travelling Central America
And the great country of Mexico by bus

The land of opportunity
Along with the huddled seekers from
Albania, China, Bangladesh, India and more
I wait in the shelter
With my four month old baby’s heart beating
inside me
To be at the statue of liberty
And say
Here I come, America
Take me or deport me.



Babru Samal
10201 Unicorn Way
Rockville, MD 20850, USA
[bsamal2@comcast.net]

Babru Samal is a molecular biologist with interest in arts, culture, philosophy and travel

My Sister

Julie A Ray

God granted that a part of me would be born
Ahead of me
So that she lit up my darkened alleys
Standing by my side
With a flame raised in her hand
Waiting patiently to face the moments for the
second time:
In her life and mine

She picks me up as I plunge down
Offering a shoulder of rock
And a chest of love
Repeating to me:
'I have seen mine and I have seen yours
It shouldn't be tough the second time'

If I were to ask for the star

She could raise one out of dust
If I were to beg for endurance
She could instil me with her breath
Her blood courses through my veins
Her soul stirs mine
Rhythms of her thoughts shape my heart beats
As she lives two lives:
One within her and one within mine

I tumble into her pit of errors
I climb her mountain of responsibilities
I pant though her swamp of misgivings
I light up like her
I cry like her
I laugh like her
I can't be unlike
'Coz she is my sister.



Julie Acharya Ray
Salt Lake City,
Utah, USA

[julie.ray@aruplab.com]

Julie Acharya Ray works as a research scientist in ARUP Laboratories, a clinical diagnostic company in Utah. When she is not working in the lab, she enjoys writing, music and painting. She has two daughters Ankita and Aparna and lives in Salt Lake City, Utah with her husband Abhijit Ray.

Feel your feelings

Mamta Pradhan

Feel your feeling with the dusty winds
Feel your feelings with snowy nights
Feel your feelings with roadside rags
Feel your feelings with those slums
Feel your feelings with the barefoot walking with miles and miles
Feel your feelings with the dry face
Feel your feelings with the untidy hair
Feel your feelings with the shining stars behind the black clouds
Feel your feelings with the tearful stories of those hindered shining stars
Feel your feelings of everything that they have but don't fail to feel the feeling of your kind heart.
Feel the feelings with the redwhiteboom's warming night from the peak of Sheraton Hotel
Feel the feelings with crowd of OSA 2014 convention
Feel the feelings with cultural enriched night at Ohio Theater
Feel the pain feel the need feel the empty pot
Don't forget to fill that empty pot with water.



Mamta Pradhan
5885 Painted Leaf, New
Albany, OH 43054, USA

[mamta5p@yahoo.com]

Sleepover in September

Prasanta Raj

Giovanna Mayura was at Jejema's house ... for a sleepover.
In month of...September.
Next fine morning...when Sun came over.
Three little deer...came right here.
One little deer...got stuck in the pier!
With a little help...one freed the other.
They told each other..."Always help one another".
Two little deer asked Gia..."Where are your brothers?"
Gia said...E. R. R., my Bhais are in school, with their teacher.
My two brothers and me...e Love each other.
Three little deer asked...How are you dear?"
Gia said..."Who are you and why are you here?"
Deer said "we came to say 'Hi!' ...as you are our peer".
Gia said" Oh my dear, I am happy you all are here.
Deer said, "Now can I have a pear?"
Gia gave few pears and said, oh little deer, you are very clever.
Take these pears...enjoy and share together.
Three little deer said...now we are really happier.
Gia said, for" Helping, Loving, Giving and Sharing,
Let us now cheer!"
And, from now on...we will be friends forever!!!



Prasanta Raj

[prasantaraj@yahoo.com]

Turmeric (*Curcuma longa*)

Dr. Abhay Kumar Pati

Turmeric, along with other curry herbs, has several physiologic activities, including the inhibition of platelet aggregation, antibiotic effects, anticholesterol action, and fibrinolytic activity. Dr. Abhay Kumar Pati, CEO Best Nutrition, Hayward, CA, USA and Biotech Ayur (Life Sciences) Pvt Ltd, Odisha, India

Origin

India

Part of plant used

Rhizome

Description

Turmeric (Haldi) 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 to render food more digestible. Turmeric, along with other curry herbs, has several physiologic activities, including the inhibition of platelet aggregation, antibiotic effects, anti-cholesterol 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 (the molecular standardized extract) which possess 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
- cholagogue that stimulates digestion, used for 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.

Dr. Abhay Kumar Pati, Best Nutrition Products, Inc. Hayward, California, USA and Biotechayur, Odisha, India manufacturer of a large number of vitamins, minerals, Chinese and Ayurvedic herbal, nutritional supplements, raw materials of standardized molecules of plants and fruit extracts. Dr. Abhay Kumar Pati, is an Ayurvedic physician, trained in both western medicine and Ayurvedic, India's Indigenous medical Science. Dr. Pati is a former student of J. B. Ray State College of Ayurvedic Medical College & Hospital in Kolkata, India, (Asthang Ayurvedic College) founded in 1915 by Jamin Bhusan Ray, Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He is an author of more than half a dozen books on Vitamins, nutritional supplements, Chinese, Ayurvedic medicine, medicinal plants, fruits etc. He is based in the United States, having ventures across the globe. Dr. Pati states that many of our health problems and diseases can be prevented, treated well with lifestyle, food habits and nutritional supplements. Most of the fruit contain ascorbic acid, enzymes, bioflavonoids, rich in minerals like chromium, potassium, and magnesium etc as well as B vitamins to amino acids.



In Memory of Dr. Akhila Nanda Gantayat

(November 30, 1943 to January 25, 2014)



An Ode to Akhil

*Sneha Mohanty**

A proud son of Aska,
From Berhampur to Berkeley
In the halls of Ravenshaw
red bricks to Kharagpur rocky
From Victoria Garden to San Francisco Bay

From a humble beginning to prosperous wealthy
Akhil made his glory all the way
Made the unique dream of America.
Works hard day and night
Treats his friend with great delight

Keeps his voice soft
Kind words never lost

Smile that has disarmed others' jest
Virtue and genuine grace speak out
Known as secret of Gantayat
Own everyone's heart.

From their day of wedding
Bijoya, a lawyer, with loving and caring
Unconditional devotion for him glittering
Cheerfulness brimming
Smile remained shining
A touch of spiritual glistening
A time for prayer and parting
A time for divine resting.

** Written by Sneha Mohanty, in memory of Dr. Akhila Gantayat who passed away on January 25, 2014. The author, a former neighbor of Gantayat's, is a retired school teacher residing at Huntington Beach, California.*



Dr. Akhila Nanda Gantayat was born in Aska Odisha, India. After finishing his B.Sc. in Physics from Ravenshaw College Cuttack, he joined IIT Kharagpur and graduated with top honors in civil engineering in 1966. He then came on a full scholarship to the University of British Columbia Vancouver, Canada for his master's. After that, he was admitted to the University of California Berkeley and obtained his Ph.D. in Civil Structural engineering with his groundbreaking thesis, "Stress Analysis of Tee Joints by the Finite Element Method." He settled in Northern California's Bay Area from 1976 onwards. He had a very illustrious career in his field designing nuclear power reactors, obtaining several patents all the while becoming a highly successful residential real estate investor. Dr. Gantayat is survived by his wife of 43 years, Bijoya Laxmi Gantayat, his daughter Atasi, son Anoop and grandson Dylan Vikas Raina. Visit the following web-site to see photographs of various past California Oriya events, watch video of the funeral with speeches by California Oriya's, share your memories of Dr. Gantayat, leave messages to his family, and other interesting material:

www.memorialwebsites.legacy.com/akhila_gantayat/homepage.aspx



Akhil Gantayat at UC Berkeley Campus, 1970

Sweet Memories



Akhil & Bijoya Gantayat 1995



Akhil celebrates his grandson's 2nd birthday on January 4 2014 - 3 weeks before he passes away



Akhil and Bijoya Gantayat Berkeley, California 1972



Anoop, Atasi, Bijoya, & Akhil 2011



First California Odia Picnic 1977

Top L-R: Hare Misra, Deba Mohapatra, Sarat Misro, Akhil Gantayat, Deba Mohanty, Surya Patnaik, Prafulla Padhi Bottom L-R: Bunu Misra, Tunu Misra, Prasanna(Meera) Mohanty, Pragati Misro, Biju Misro(Arati Misro), Bijoya Gantayat(Anoop Gantayat), Biju Misra(Anoo Misra), Atasi Gantayat, Anju Patnaik, Kaustree



First Odia group song performance bay area 1978 L-R: Akhil Gantayat, Deba Mohapatra, Deba Mohanty, Mamata Mohanty, Kaustree Mohapatra, Bijoya Gantayat, and Sandya Misra



Bishuba Milan (Kumar Ustab) function – song 1984 L-R: Shrikant Das, Swaroop Patnaik, Akhil Gantayat, Kamal Acharya, On Agrawal, Sunity Behera, Chinmayee Das, Snigdha Das, Meenakshi Samantaray



Orissa award winning float parade August 2000



Akhil Gantayat works in his Fremont home with Jnana Dash, Niranjan Tripathy, Niharika Mohanty, and Swaroop Patnaik to create the winning Orissa Float August 2000



Akhil works with Sanjib Mohanty to gather materials



Akhil works with Prashant Behera and Sunil Sabat on sound requirements for float

“MY DAD”

Written by Atasi Gantayat

As I sit on this airplane on my return trip to America after spending 3 weeks in Odisha, I find myself thinking about how my dad must have been feeling over 40 years ago as he left the comfort and security of his homeland and embarked towards the unknown of the west. The exciting promise of the "American Dream" must have been on his mind but also the anxiety provoking uncertainty of not knowing what to expect once he arrived and settled. He carried with him a full scholarship to the University of British Columbia, Vancouver and a mere \$100 in his pocket. How was he supposed to know then that 40 years later, he would be remembered in this country as one of the top nuclear scientists in his field as well as a very successful real estate investor.



25 year old Akhil Gantayat

Aside from all of his academic, professional, and financial achievements, my dad is also remembered as being very dedicated to the Oriya community. It all started around 1977 when my dad became part of a group of 10 families that started the first annual California Oriya Picnic. It is a tradition that continues today. Shortly thereafter, my dad voluntarily decided to take part in the first ever stage performance of an Oriya group song in the California Bay Area (organized by Debaranjan Mohanty) for a FIA function. My dad was incredibly shy and introverted; he must have had such a strong feeling of love and pride for Odisha to put aside that shyness and expose himself on stage in that manner; all in the name of showcasing Odisha to the greater Indian American community. It is this kind of sacrifice for Odisha that I witnessed which influenced me to follow a similar path.

As a child, I have fond memories of my dad encouraging my brother and me to participate in all things Oriya. We never resisted as we were just merely following my dad's influence. In 1984 when the California Bay Area Oriya community decided to celebrate Kumar Utsab by hosting a Bishuba Milan function, my dad opened up our home on a weekly basis to allow for practices and rehearsals. For weeks on end, 25 or so families would gather at the Gantayat residence in Milpitas and kids would practice dances choreographed by Dr. Anjalika Pattanaik and drama's directed by Sri Gopal Mohanty and Saroj Behera. The function, facilitated by Jnana Dash, was a huge success and I recall my dad being very happy at that time. He must have been so proud to be a part of something that showcased Oriya culture so far away from his homeland, and he must have been grateful that his kids had been given a platform to express their identity as being Oriya.

During the 80's a group of Oriya uncles would play cricket on a weekly basis at a park close to our house in Milpitas. At that time, my dad was very busy with his real estate endeavors and with his demanding job. Although he loved to play cricket and did join the group to play on occasion, his busy schedule did not allow for it on a weekly basis. Nevertheless, I remember my dad would rush home in between work projects every Saturday afternoon with a trunk full of Coke to go give to the Oriya uncles who were

playing cricket at the park. Although he was under a lot of pressure with work, he knew so many of those whom he cared for were so near to his house so he would go out of his way to come home just to treat them and then rush back to work again. My dad loved the Oriya community and all the friends who were part of it and although his introverted nature did not allow him to express it verbally, he would undertake gestures like this to show his love.

As I proceeded towards adulthood in the 1990's, I began to mimic the same sort of Oriya pride my dad instilled in me as a child. My dad's encouragement of community service in the name of Odisha had a large impact on my actions in years to come. In 1999 after the great super cyclone of Odisha, I became one of the founding members of the group IASF (Indo American Sevak foundation www.iasf.net) to help raise funds to go towards rehabilitation of the affected people. In 2005 after hurricane Katrina, I spearheaded an effort to raise funds for Katrina in the name of IASF so that Americans would recognize that the people of Odisha care about them too. In the year 2000, I began to be concerned with the fact that Odisha was one of the few states who were not represented in the annual FIA India Independence day parade. I was determined to have Odisha represented in the parade that year and with me acting as director and efforts led by Sanjib Mohanty, we bagged the first prize in the parade! That win was such a huge source of pride for Bay Area Oriya's. We felt that we had finally put Odisha on the map; at that time it was not usual to meet people from other parts of India whom had never even heard of Odisha! As usual, my dad remained in the background of the float effort by offering his house to do the weekly construction, host the winning after party and just being a strong pillar of support to the community. After the success of the Orissa float, I would go to Oriya events and people would comment to me on how rare it was for them to see a second generation Oriya to put so much effort into supporting the community. I was unable to offer any kind of explanation; it was just second nature for me to do things like this for Odisha because I was raised that way. The credit all goes to my dad. Without his influence, encouragement, and pro Oriya stance, I would never have embarked on any of these ventures. I have a lot of respect and admiration for his “egoless humbleness, incredibly positive attitude, sincerity towards his work and everything he did and also his value system to always remain 100% honest and ethical without cheating anyone. I hope that the next generation of Oriya’s who immigrate to the USA will hear of my dad’s legacy and learn from him while at the same time continuing to perpetuate Oriya culture to future generations.



Atasi Gantayat was born in 1975 in Berkeley, California while Akhila and Bijoya Gantayat were students there. She herself, went on to graduate from U.C Berkeley in 1997 with a degree in communications, finance, and marketing. Her career has focused on the grocery/consumer packaged goods industry, most recently with Safeway corporate. She continues to maintain the legacy of her father by managing his real estate ventures. She currently resides in Fremont, California with her 2 year old son, Dylan.

Our Dad: Nagabhusan Senapati

Suneeta & Sangeeta Senapati



Dad has touched so many lives in so many ways – as a teacher, a colleague, a trusted elder in the community and a friend. But to us, this extraordinary person was simply dad. He was gentle, thoughtful, and incredibly patient – whether it was holding our hands for our first steps, helping us with our homework, or teaching us to drive a car. His quiet strength was a constant in our lives – an unflinching faith in us that never wavered, no matter what our own doubts may be. He would often say, “if you work hard, and put your mind to the task, you can accomplish anything.” These words have carried us through some of the hardest times and were always such a source of comfort, as we knew that he truly believed in them.

As a kid Dad would tell us stories about his early life – college at IIT Kharagpur, the time at MIT and Mom and Dad’s early life in Boston. When we were kids it all sounded like an exciting adventure – but as we grew up, I think we really came to understand and appreciate who our father was, and the magnitude of what he had accomplished. Dad had a truly brilliant mind. He was passionate about research and was ultimately granted almost 3 dozen patents in his lifetime. He co-authored 4 books and was given numerous awards for technical achievements. But this same man found the time to build the desk that still sits in our room in Columbus today, to help us with our science fair projects, and to be there for every major event in our lives. Dad was eternally grateful for the opportunities he received as a product of his academic achievements – and as a result, championed education and the value of using one’s skills to give back to the world.

If you asked Dad what he valued most it would be a quick and simple answer – family. Family was so important to Dad – as the eldest of 7 brothers and sisters from a small town in Orissa, he had tremendous responsibilities and always rose to the task. He was quietly generous and fiercely independent - he would never ask for any help and never needed acknowledgement for all that he did. He simply did what he thought was necessary and what he thought was right. In recent years, when we would ask him what he wanted for birthdays or what he would like to do during vacations he would say, “ I just want to spend time with the family.” He was always looking out for what was best for the family – even, and perhaps most especially, in those last moments.

He loved to laugh and always saw the good in everyone. He was strong-willed, but would never pick a fight. Instead he would always try to use the power of reasoning to make his point. He lived a simple and elegant life with a constant focus on how he could contribute to the world around him.

While it is difficult for us to accept that his time on this earth was cut short so early, we take some comfort in a passage from the Bhagavad-Gita that alludes to one’s soul as ‘eternal, un-decaying, birthless, and indestructible.’ We could not have asked for a better father and whatever happens going forward, Dad will always, in some way, be with us.

- Suneeta is a practicing reproductive endocrinologist at University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.
- Sangeeta is a gynecologist specializing in minimally invasive surgery at NorthShore University, HealthSystem /University of Chicago.

Dr. Nagabhusan Senapati: A Bright Son of Odisha

Dr. Devendra Kumar Das

Prologue: Dr. Nagabhusan Senapati, an eminent researcher in the discipline of engineering in the USA passed away in November 2012, which was a great loss to the engineering community. I had the good fortune to know him closely in the 1970's during the years of his graduate study and research at MIT. From the fond memories of those early years, this article has been created. What follows is a compilation of some facts, as I reminisced about my association with Nagabhusan babu and our mutual friends of that era.

How we met: I had the opportunity to meet Nagabhusan babu with the help of Mr. Chandra Sekhar Mohanty in the spring of 1973. Time has gone by fast, but it seems like yesterday. I was living in a house shared by several graduate students, right across the street from the Barus and Holley Building of Brown University, which housed the science and engineering departments then. It was a beautiful sunny day in Providence, Rhode Island during the spring break of colleges in March. I was deep asleep, late on a Saturday morning, having worked very late into the night before, on a challenging class assignment. All of a sudden, I heard a knock on my bedroom door. As I got up from the bed, I remember the beautiful bright sunlight streaming into my room through tall glass windows. On opening the door, I was very happy to see the smiling faces of two well-groomed Indian young men, whom I had never met before. Dr. Dhiraj K. Pradhan introduced himself and Mr. Chandra Sekhar Mohanty. I immediately greeted them with my "Namaskar", the courtesy drilled into us during our engineering college days at Rourkela to maintain the respectable separation between seniors and juniors. I acknowledged that I had heard their names as fellow Rhode Islanders from my cousin, Dr. Birendra Patnaik, who was living in New Jersey then for several years, and I was looking forward to meet both of them someday.

I recall, feeling a bit uneasy at the appearance of my room, which was a mess and promptly moved them to the common dining hall and kitchen, where we could sit down comfortably and begin our conversation. I put the tea kettle on and served some biscuits and then we sat down to talk in Odia. Oh! What an intense pleasure it was to meet other Odias and talk in our own language, which I had not done in many months. Over that simple refreshment, we got intimately connected. Dhiraj babu explained that he was doing his Ph.D. in computer science at the University of Iowa after completing his MS in electrical engineering from Brown. Chandra Sekhar babu explained that he had completed his MS in chemical engineering from the University of Rhode Island (URI) and was working as an engineer in a company named Providence Metallizing. A common factor that brought Dhiraj babu and Chandra Sekhar babu closer was that both had studied engineering in Madras.

As our discussion progressed, Chandra Sekhar babu said “Deba: We have more Odia friends in Boston, and I usually go there during weekends to meet them. If you come along with me, I will introduce you to them.” This was a very generous offer to me and I immediately agreed. In early April one weekend, Chandra Sekhar babu picked me up from Providence in his beautiful Saab car and we drove to Boston. On the way, he explained “Last night I have talked to Nagabhusan Senapati, who is studying at MIT and we will go first to his apartment.” He gave me the background about Nagabhusan babu; a mechanical engineering graduate of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kharagpur and the recipient of the President’s Gold Medal for securing the highest percentage of mark among all branches of engineering of his graduating class. Being in the same branch of engineering, I was awed by the achievements of Nagabhusan Babu, and waited with a bit of anxiety to meet this genius of my discipline. We arrived at the graduate students’ apartment of the MIT campus, a beautiful brick building surrounded by big trees and nice green lawns. That was my first visit to the MIT campus. As I met Nagabhusan babu, I was amazed at his simplicity. He was an unassuming person, without any sign of ego, despite his huge accomplishments and he was a perfect gentleman to me. That was our *first meeting* and I felt very happy to meet a stalwart in my mechanical engineering field.

Chandra Sekhar babu and I talked to Nagabhusan babu until the evening and then proceeded to the apartment of Mr. Prasanna Samantaray. Chandra Sekhar babu had also explained the background of Prasanna babu to me earlier, who had graduated from the University of Maryland with an MS degree and was doing his Ph.D. degree at the North Eastern University in Boston at that time. There was a common thread between Prasanna Babu and me: we both had graduated from Regional Engineering Colleges (REC), he from Warangal and I from Rourkela. During the Boston trips in those days, Chandra Sekhar babu used to stay at Prasanna babu’s house. Therefore, gradually his house became the center of our gathering, where we generally spent our nights. We used to have dinner together on Saturday evenings and then discuss about India, the world and argue over many issues until the wee hours of the night. Then on Sundays in the afternoon, Chandra Sekhar babu and I used to return to Providence.

Through Prasanna babu, I was introduced to Mr. Bidyut K. Rath. Bidu babu was also a graduate of REC Warangal and had come to Worcester Polytechnic Institute and completed his MS degree. Then he joined the well-known engineering company, Stone and Webster in Boston as a structural engineer. I remember Prasanna babu bringing me to a get-together in Bidu babu’s apartment, where Bidu babu served a nice Italian spaghetti dinner and he introduced me to his girlfriend there. Through Chandra Sekhar babu and Prasanna babu, I was also introduced to Dr. Gauri C. Das, who was a post-doctoral scholar at MIT in the Material Science department, after completing his Ph.D. from the Imperial College of Science and Technology in London. In some of these gatherings, I used to meet Nagabhusan babu and engage in discussions about our mutual research projects. During those meetings, Nagabhusan babu explained to me that he was conducting research on acoustical theory and its application to medical diagnosis and treatment for his doctoral dissertation and his advisor was an Indian professor named Padmakar Lele. All these contacts occurred before the summer of 1974, when all of us were bachelors.

Subsequently, I met Mr. Nityananda Mishra who had moved to Massachusetts with a position at Dennison Manufacturing after his MS degree from the University of Vermont. By mid-1970, I met Dr. Bijoy Mohan Misra who was working at Harvard University as a research scholar in physics. As I recall from our mutual discussions in those days, Nagabhusan babu, Nityananda babu, Bijoy babu, Chandra Sekhar babu and Dhiraj babu were all products of the venerable educational institution, Ravenshaw Collegiate School of Odisha, so they already had a very close relationship.

Gradually, many of our Odia friends got married and our lives became much more organized and disciplined, and the same thing happened to Nagabhusan babu. The married households gave rise to much larger Odia gatherings and more frequent ones. In one such gathering in Nagabhusan babu's apartment outside the MIT campus, I met his wife, Mrs. Rajkumari Senapati in 1975. At that time our Odia group of New England was going through a significant transformation—the passage of rite from the disorganized bachelorhood to a disciplined married life. During that period, I was fortunate to meet the wives of our friends; Mrs. (Dr.) Rita Mohanty, Mrs. Niharbala Misra, Mrs. Subarna Misra and Dr. Meenakshi Samantaray. Working together, they organized elegant celebrations of Odia festivals at different households. I remember seeing Nagabhusan babu attending most of them. Around that time, I introduced my future wife, Ms. Katherine Cross to Odia friends including Nagabhusan babu and Mrs. Rajkumari. Katherine loved our Odia friends and enjoyed the Odia festivals. She joined in with genuine interest to become a part of our New England Odia diaspora.

His broad intellect: I recall, one weekend we were having a small dinner gathering at Prasanna babu's apartment. His apartment mate was Dr. Jayaraman, who hailed from South India and had completed his Ph.D in physics in the superconductivity area from the University of Maryland, and was serving as a post-doctoral fellow in Boston. He was discussing an aspect of his research with Nagabhusan babu and me. I had gathered some knowledge on this topic of superconductivity listening to the seminars by Professor Leon Cooper of Brown, who had earned the Nobel Prize in physics on superconductivity with Professor Bardeen in 1972. Prof. Cooper's office and lab was in our Barus and Holley building. Being new from India, having never seen a Nobel Prize winner, it was my burning desire to attend all the presentations of Prof. Cooper, which were well-advertised at Brown in 1972-73. So, I had picked up some basic knowledge about this subject and could take part in the discussion with Jayaraman. But as he delved deep into the subject matter, I fell back, but Nagabhusan babu continued his discussion showing his breadth of knowledge on a topic different from his own specialization. By the end of that evening, both Jayaraman and I came away with the impression that Nagabhusan babu had a broad intellectual capability, having read and conceptualized a vast array of difficult branches of science.

On another occasion, when he was curious about my MS thesis topic at Brown, I explained to him my research project based on radiative heat transfer. He immediately cited some authoritative texts, advising me that I can find some valuable ideas and solutions from those references. Although, his specialization was in the field of acoustics and ultrasonics, different from my research on heat transfer, his mechanical engineering foundation was so broad that he could provide some intelligent suggestions on my research project.

His dedication to study: During one of our small weekend gatherings at Prasanna babu's apartment, in the early part of the summer of 1974, Prasanna babu and Chandra Sekhar babu were arranging a trip to New York over a long weekend to visit their friend, Mr. Rabindra Nath Ray. Prasanna babu's classmate from REC, Warangal, Mr. Bhagwan Bhatia, a very gentle person, had agreed to join and I was very interested in going on that trip. Nagabhusan babu was present in our gathering, so I asked him to join us in the journey. He expressed his inability to take time off saying "Deba: Prof. Lele has undertaken a very ambitious project. It is a new concept and completely unexplored. No publication has appeared on this topic. So, I will have to work over the weekend. He was determined to find some solution for this extremely difficult problem." That was his dedication to his study and research at MIT.

My inspiration from him: Unbeknownst to Nagabhusan babu, I was inspired by his education at MIT, so I had requested the application from MIT and had filled it out to apply for Ph.D. there. This was during the period I was working at Tower Iron Works, after completing my MS at Brown and had joined industry to obtain my green card. I had always regretted leaving Brown after the MS, due to a wrong decision. Two Indian students who were doing Ph.D. at Brown at that time were having difficulty finding jobs in 1974. Higher level engineering jobs were short in supply due to the recession and Boeing Company had laid off many high level engineers during that period. The two seniors convinced me that it was easier to get a job after MS than after Ph.D., then obtain the green card and come back to do Ph.D. later. I followed that path joining the Tower Iron Works, which worked diligently to obtain my green card.

While working at Tower Iron, I was dreaming of joining MIT for my Ph.D. program and requested my Brown University advisor to write a letter of recommendation and the other letter was coming from the Manager of Engineering at Tower Iron Works. Then my Brown University advisor warned me that getting an assistantship from MIT would be extremely difficult, which was true. So, I left the MIT application in my office drawer at Tower Iron Works, but instead, I applied to URI. I was pleasantly surprised to receive an assistantship instantly and the opportunity to work under Prof. Frank M. White, an internationally known professor. When I mentioned the news to Nagabhusan babu, he had heard Prof. White's name and had read the books authored by him. So, he responded "it should be a good opportunity for you, and hopefully you would learn some advanced concepts from this learned professor."

A close connection to his family: After his wife, Mrs. Rajkumari Senapati arrived in the USA; Nagabhusan babu had invited us to a dinner at his apartment in Somerville around 1975. While introducing me to Mrs. Senapati, Nagabhusan babu told her "Deba studied at REC Rourkela around the same period as your brother, so he might have known him." It immediately captured my interest and I found from Nagabhusan babu that the name of Mrs. Rajkumari's brother was Y. Kumar. It turned out, I knew Kumar quite well for four years at REC, through a mutual friend, Bidhu Bhusan Das, who was a very close friend of Y. Kumar. Both of them were chemical engineering majors, one year senior to me, and I had spent many evenings with them in their hostel room. Learning about this old friendship, brought a close connection between Nagabhusan babu's family and me.

His legacy: Nagabhusan babu was a true intellectual and valued education and academic achievements. Therefore, with the help of his wife, he inspired his daughters Sangeeta and Suneeta to excel academically. Due to the careful nurturing and guidance provided by Nagabhusan babu and Mrs. Rajkumari, both children performed very well academically and completed their medical degrees. Being at an academic institution, I observe every year, how only a small fraction of our bright students are selected for admission into medical colleges. I believe that the sincere efforts of Nagabhusan babu and Mrs. Senapati will remain as their lasting legacy in motivating their children to adopt the noble profession of medicine.

My remembrance: As an Odia, it is a matter of great pride for me to remember this bright son of Odisha, who excelled in the discipline of mechanical engineering. Nagabhusan babu graduated from the best engineering institute in India of that era, as the top student in his class. He received his doctoral degree from the best engineering university in the world. He achieved phenomenal professional success at the prestigious national laboratory, Battelle Memorial Institute. After he moved to Ohio, and I to Alaska, we lost contact and I was unable to keep abreast of his achievements. However, whatever I knew about him during our close contact period in New England, assures me that he will always remain in my mind as a bright star, who brought recognition to not only Odisha, but India as well.



Dr. Debendra Kumar Das
Professor of Mechanical Engineering
327 Duckering Building, Tanana Drive
University of Alaska,
Fairbanks, AK 99775, USA

[dkdas@alaska.edu]

Dr. Debendra Kumar Das, is a professor of mechanical engineering at the University of Alaska and lives with his wife Katherine Cross-Das in Fairbanks.

ଉତ୍କଳର ଗୌରବ



ଗୋପିନାଥ ମହାପାତ୍ର – “ମାଟି ମଟାଳ”



ପଣ୍ଡିତ ନୀଳକଣ୍ଠ – “ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀ”



ମାୟାଧର ମାନସିଂହ – “ସାଧବଝିଅ”



ଶାନ୍ତନୁ ଆଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ – “ନର କିନ୍ନର”



ବାମା ଚରଣ ମିତ୍ର – “ମିତ୍ର ଗନ୍ଧ”



ପ୍ରତିଭା ଶତପଥୀ – “ନିମିଷେ ଅକ୍ଷର”



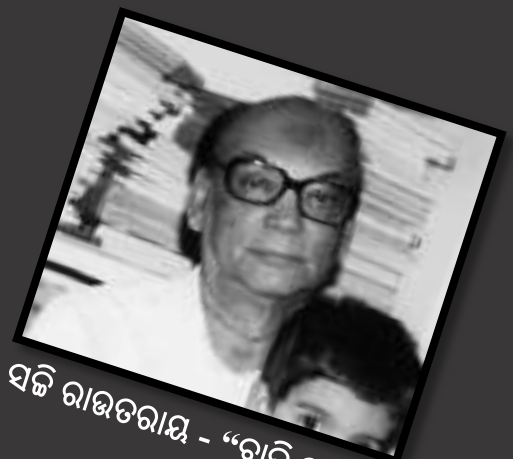
ପ୍ରାଣବନ୍ଧୁ କର – “ସ୍ନାୟୁ ସମହାର”



ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀଧର ନାୟକ – “ମୋ ସ୍ଵପନର ସହର”



ଅନନ୍ତ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ – “ଅବାହର”



ସଚ୍ଚି ରାଉତରାୟ – “ବାଜି ରାଉତ”

Odisha's Pride

Dr. Gopinath Mohanty: who I had the privilege to call Mausa (A doyen of Odia literature)

Sandip K. Dasverma



April 20th is the date of birth of Odisha's premier novelist Dr. Gopinath Mohanty. He was born exactly 100 years back at village Nagabali, in Cuttack district, in the year 1914 on this day, youngest of his parent's many children. His brother Kanhu Charan Mohanty was also a great man of odia literature. Dr. Gopinath Mohanty is considered the Greatest Odia Novelist of the 20th century.

I had a great privilege of coming in close contact with and deliberating with him twice, while he was in USA, in 1986-1987 and again in 1990-91. It was doubly exciting for me to meet him and talk with him, because before I met him, I read his classic *Paraja* in the confines of my Sunabeda (Koraput district) Govt. quarters, and had become his fan, a devotee of his writings.

While being posted in Koraput as an Engineer in the Government of Odisha, I came across his classic work *PARAJA*, depicting the realities of tribal life in the hill tracts of Koraput. Still a bachelor and an idealist, living in midst of the tribal of Odisha, when I read his classic, "Paraja". It left a lasting impression on me and my mind. I still remember, due to his accurate and empathetic descriptions of local life and exploitation of the simple people, in *PARAJA*, I could identify/empathize with 'Mandia Jani', Sukuru Jani et al. Their natural anger was understandable to me. I remember after finishing the book very late at night, in my Sunabeda Government quarter, I was unable to sleep for the rest of that night. *Paraja* is a very powerful book. To me it was the novel of the century in Odia literature and probably one of the greatest of the last century. Though his 'MATI MATALA', got him a Gyanpith Award - *PARAJA* belongs to a different (read higher) class. Such books are written once in a lifetime. They are timeless.

Four of his novels namely: *Paraja*, *Danapani*, *Laya Bilaya* and *Dadi Budha*, have been translated in to English, so far. The first three by Dr. Bikram K. Das and the last one by Arun K. Mohanty. Dr. Bikram K. Das's English translation, Faber & Faber (UK) published *PARAJA*, came out in 1987, while Dr. Mohanty, was in USA. I had the privilege of being presented freshly published English translation of 'PARAJA' by Dr. Mohanty, himself. And it exists as a prize possession for me, to this day. Having read Dr. Das's translation, as well the original my take is, it is extremely difficult/nay impossible to render in English, the nuances of Gopinath Mohanty's language. Though the translators attempted to convey the

richness and complexity of the original texts to readers unfamiliar with Odia, it is never rises to the same class. I had a thought always that Mause should have translated his books himself, like his illustrious predecessor in neighboring Bengali language, Nobel laureate Tagore - he being a brilliant student of English of Patna University, himself. He never answered my query.

During his first trip to America in the eighties (1986-87) and his second trip in 90-91, when he was here for treatment of his disease MDS, when he stayed for nearly fourteen months, until passing away, we developed strong rapport. This is when he inspired me to write. He emboldened me to write, saying - "Since you have an urge to narrate and ideas to express, please pen them. Form does not matter." He gave references to Octavio Paz's writing and always said forms are not important. if content is there. I was very lucky to be in touch with him in the last months of his life. He fortunately liked my company and we had many conversations about his observations on the immigrant Indian community. Once I asked him, before his trip back to India in 1987 - what are his two main observations on the immigrant Indian community, in USA? His two comments/observations:

1. Americans think Indians as one ethnic group and deal with Indians as such. But Indians in USA, similar to those in India, like to highlight their differences as if they are unable to forget their provincial identities. Other than the 15th of August and the 26th of January there are no Indian functions. They are only Bengali, Odia, Marathi, Gujrati, Tamil or Punjabi functions. In his opinion this is wrong both as strategy and tactics. Because counting separately, numbers are very small indeed and it will take a long time to reach a critical mass even if immigration continues. Thus, other smart groups may take advantage of this separateness. He thought that people coming from different states should consciously try to increase interaction among themselves so that their Indian-ness is highlighted and not the provincialism. Because, even though there are differences in languages and cultures, the values are the same. He advised all to stop living in their separate cocoons. This will solve many problems of future before even they come up.

2. His second observation was cultural preservation related. From the beginning he had observed that immigrants are not teaching their kids about great Indian intellectual/Historical figures. When he went to 125th Tagore birth anniversary, I was shocked to find that 90% of the attendees are Bengali. When he went to listen to M.S. Subhalaxmi, he found 90% South Indians in the audience. He did not like it at all. At that time the situation in Indian industrial centers and big cities, had significantly changed - appreciation of All India cultural figures had significantly increased. That is why advice to all educated, erudite Indians, is to learn and try to appreciate each other's "BEST". Indian immigrants are not doing that and this pained him.

His enthusiasm about new things was prodigious. I have a photo of him sitting by the side of the famous - "Out to Lunch", sculpture in front of Sunnyvale public Library. I also have a photo of him Mause and Mausi, visiting NASA, Mountain View museum with my family. Till the last day he was interested in life. On 19th August, a day before his leaving this world for the other - I remember him asking me to read Chinua Achebe's "Things fall Apart", which he had asked me to get from Sunnyvale Library, earlier. He would lapse into bouts of unconsciousness but as he came back to sense, he would ask "band kahiki kale? padhantu. (Why did you stop, read on.) I never had a chance to ask him if he believed in

Chanakya's dictum, "in earning knowledge one should consider oneself immortal, else it will make no sense".

Such men are born rarely and I had the privilege of knowing him very closely for more than a year. It was invaluable experience.

His Life's Philosophy:

I will now share a few immortal and inspiring thoughts that he shared with me and I want to share it with posterity.

It was about August 10/11 the 1991, was Mausā's penultimate trip to Hospital before he passed away. I used to commute from Cupertino, CA those days to San Francisco, CA Bechtel office via Caltrain. Those were arduous long days. But it was always a pleasure to go and meet Mausā and learn from him his nuggets of life's experience. Thus that day though my wife was unwilling/unavailable to come - I left as usual after my dinner to meet him. As I arrived in his hospital room - his daughters Anju (Dr. Anjalika Patnaik) & Tita (Jayantika) asked me if I could give him company for next two hours and stay with him till they both come back from their home, repacked for the night? I figured they had a longer and more stressful day and they needed the time more than me, so I gladly consented.

Immediately after they left Dr. Peter Greenberg, the Stanford Professor of Medicine (Hematology) an expert on MDS, arrived. It was a social visit by Dr. Greensburg because he had already informed the family Dr. Mohanty's, was an incurable disease. Mausā introduced me to the doctor - and then asked him - what is the prognosis of his disease?

Dr. Greenberg replied in a professional manner. As the disease progresses his platelet numbers will reduce faster and faster and have to be replaced by blood transfusion. When platelets reduce, blood will become thinner and will leak out of the blood vessels into surrounding environments, where they can. When this happens in the skull area surrounding the brain, there will be first pain and then patients go into coma (unconsciousness). The pressure has to be relieved via absorption of the blood back and leaking stops due platelet counts going up, due blood transfusion. The periodicity will reduce with increased frequency of such coma, as had been happening for last year or so. He has been revived and sent home for a number of times. At the end - the patient just does not recover from his coma. But as a doctor he can't predict when that last will come, because nature is still not understood well.

Then Dr. Greenberg asked Mausā, what your Indian culture/traditions tells you about death? That brought out in my opinion from Mausā's mouth his understanding of life. Mausā said: Our great book Gita, considered as the heart of Hindu Philosophy, tells us that this body is just a cloth, which when worn out is changed by the soul. The soul is indestructible. (Na Hanyate).

But there is another vision, where unrequited souls don't go away and suffer and expect solace. He went ahead in his inimitable style - to express his opinion through a beautiful and mysterious story.

He got engrossed in his story, remembering a distant past. He said it was in mid 1950s and he was in his mid-30s. He was in Rayagada area of Koraput District, on a tour. It was summer and when he reached the Dak Bungalow. It was past six pm. So the caretaker had left for his nearby home, with the key though Dr. Mohanty had reservation for the night. So he advised the driver to take the Jeep and bring the care taker from his home - so the caretaker can come and open doors, give him water for washing and a bath & start cooking. Mind you there were no electricity, pumped water or gas in those days. These “Dak Banglow” were built in British time, as out posts of the empire, which had just disappeared from the face of India. Also, long Jeep rides in ‘murrum’ roads of the time where very tiring and dirty. One got fully covered in red road dust by the time you travelled 50 to 100 miles (Km were still to come). The name “Dak Banglow” signified history. One time Dak or postage material was carried on horseback and the carriers rested overnight at fixed distances (about 12 to 14 miles) to exchange mails, rest horses and feed them before they went back on return journey. Carriers also rested there in safety overnight, if it became dark, thus avoiding burglars, who attacked them because they carried cash and valuables, with them.

After the driver left Dr. Mohanty thought he will go around the Dak Bungalow and stretch himself as well as enjoy the beauty of the setting sun, from the hillock on which the Dak Bungalow was located. By the time he started walking - about 30 minutes later - it was sun was starting to set. As saw the gardener still at work, cutting grass. Asked him the way around and set on his walk. As he got a little farther he saw a white man walking ahead of him. Surprised, he tried to walk faster to catch him. But the man walked as fast keeping the distance. After about half an hour tired Dr. Mohanty gave up and started his return to the Bungalow. His driver had not still come back. So he stopped by the gardener and asked him about the white man? Who was this white man? Why was he avoiding him and kind of running away? Where does he live? The Gardner looked at him and instead of answering his questions, just quickly wound up his tools and left. The gardener looked bewildered and afraid. Dr. Mohanty found no reason for such reaction of the gardener but went back to the Dak Bungalow and luckily by now the caretaker and the driver had both arrived and arranged for his bathing water. He took bath and got ready for dinner. While at the table for the dinner, he asked the caretaker again about the white man he saw, during his walk. After initially asking Dr. Mohanty not to worry - on his insistence the caretaker opened up and told an interesting story.

In 1880s, in a Victorian England, an educated young man from a working class family fell in love with a girl of an upper class family. When he saw no chance of his marrying his loved one, he became a priest and came to India and worked as among the tribal in Rayagada, Koraput. He worked his way up to become a Bishop but nurtured the tribal, with great devotion and sincerity. He was universally loved and when he died in the late 1930s he was buried in the side of the hillock on which the Dak Bungalow is located. His ghost have been sighted many times and that is who Dr. Mohanty saw today from a distance. Where else a white man come in the hills of Raygada, Koraput? The caretaker told Dr. Mohanty that he met that unrequited soul.

Dr. Mohanty passed away in San Jose on August 20th, 1991 after suffering from Blood disease MDS (*myelodysplastic syndrome*). Treatment has now improved a lot. Medical Oncologist Dr. Bart Scott opines that many of its strains are curable now. At times I wish we could go back to 1990/91 and treat him

with these medicines available today and get him cured. I know it is hope against hope, a wishful thinking - but world would have been better for that.

Dr. Gopinath Mohanty's Published work (A partial list):

Novels: Paraja, Amrutara Santana, Mati Matala, Mana Gahirara Chasa, Harijan, Dana Pani, Shib Bhai, Dadi Budha, Bundae Pani et al.

Short Story collections: Chhai Alua, Ghasara Phula, Naba Badhu et al.

Biographies: Dhuli Matira Santha (Gopabandhu Choudhury), Utkalamoni (Utkalamoni Gopabandhu Dash)

Translations: Bharata, Aji O Kali (Nehru's India today and tomorrow), Joga jog (Tagore), Juddha O Shanti (Tolstoy), Bankim Chandra Chatterjee.

In English: Radhanath Ray, pub:Sahitya Academy 1985

Autobiography: Srotaswati

On Adivasi language and culture: Gadaba Bhasa Parichaya, Kandha-Paraja Stotra O Sangeeta, Saura Bhasa, Kumbhi Kandha bhasa tatwa.

Honors:

1. Sahitya Academy Prize in 1955 for Amrutara Santana
2. Soviet Land Nehru Prize: 1970, for Translating Maxim Gorky's "My University".
3. Jnanpith Award 1973 for Mati Matala
4. D. Litt : Sambalpur University 1974
5. Padma Bhusan 1981
6. Adj. Professor Anthropology (Honorary), San Jose State University, CA, USA

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3. Dr. Peter Greenburg: <https://med.stanford.edu/profiles/peter-greenberg?tab=bio>



Sandip K. Dasverma
2500 George Washington Way,
Apt#120
Richland, WA-99354
[sandip.kumar.dasverma@gmail.com]

Sandip Kumar Dasverma, a native of Cuttack is a past winner of OSA Utkalamoni Gopabandhu Award winner and a past treasurer of OSA (2007-2009). He is currently Chairman of the Regional Drama Festival Coordination committee. A frequent blogger, his passion is socio-economic changes in Odisha. He is a member of SEEDS & active in RMTS and many other educational and social programs. A trained Mechanical Engineer, he is now retired after working in International Engineering consultancy companies for nearly 3 decades. Lives in Richland, WA, USA with his wife Dr. Lilarani Dasverma.

Remembering Shri Gopinath Mohanty

Triloki Nath Pandey



The first time I met Shri Gopinath Mohanty was on August 16th, 1986 at a luncheon in Santa Cruz hosted by Jan Nato, who had visited him in Bhubaneswar, Odisha. Dr. Mohanty was with his wife, their daughter and son-in-law, Dr. Anjalika and Surya Pattanaik. I had heard his name from Anjali Patnaik, who was one year behind me in graduate school in anthropology at Lucknow University. Since I was leaving for India in two weeks to take up an U.G.C. visiting professorship at North-Eastern Hill University in Shillong, our conversation was mostly about higher education. I remember him being very candid about the poor conditions of schools and pretty open about the poverty and social inequality in India.

The second time I met Dr. Mohanty was in his lovely home in Bhubaneswar on the Christmas day in 1987. My wife Annapurna and I were invited to tea and we had a memorable visit. Dr. Mohanty gave us a tour of the house and we spent most of our time in his study as well as in his garden. He introduced us to every plant, every tree in the garden and told us about their "qualities" and "care". We could easily see that he was a naturalist. I was touched by his avuncular affection since Annapurna, like Jayantika, was a daughter to him. I began addressing him "Mausa"(Uncle) and he seemed amused.

I really came to know him much better when he moved to San Jose in 1990 for medical treatment. By that time Anji Apa and Surya Bhaina had adopted Annapurna, Alok, Akash, and me into their large family and we often met them and enjoyed their hospitality. I loved talking with Dr. Mohanty who took a great deal of interest in my research and teaching on Native Americans. I discovered his love for the tribals of Koraput, and he shared with me his experiences with Kondh and Paraja among others. He showed me his diary and "field notes" with sketches of plants, flowers, and vivid descriptions of Paraja men and women and their daily lives. When I read his brilliant novel, Paraja, I could easily see that it was an ethnographic account well familiar to me as an anthropologist.

On June 26th, 1991, Annapurna took Alok and Akash to visit their grandparents in Cuttack. During the early summer months, Dr. Mohanty was in and out of Stanford Hospital, but I often went to see him. Just a few days before his death on the August 20th, he called me on the telephone. He had just returned from the hospital and was quite agitated. He was on the telephone for almost two hours, telling me the plot of a novel he wanted to write. It was going to be about "political corruption" and the

exploitation of the powerless by the powerful. As he had mentioned in Paraja (p.47,) what do we civilized care "if the tribesmen live or die?" This got him the Sahitya Akademi Award, the Jnanpith Award, and a Padmabhusan by the Government of India. Had he finished the novel on the exploitation of man by his fellow men, very possibly it might have earned him a Nobel Prize in literature!

His was the first death I have seen, and I remember him being quite alert and conscious of his surroundings. The moment he took his last breath, the telephone next to him in the hospital room rang. It was his first born son, Onkar, calling him to say "rest in peace." I am so happy that the OSA is celebrating his centenary this year. Long live, Dr. Mohanty!



Dr. Triloki Nath Pandey is a Professor of Anthropology at University of California, Santa Cruz, USA



Laxmidhar Nayak: Glimpses into his Life and Literary Works

Binod Nayak



How a writer gives utterance to the ineffable remains largely mysterious. Perhaps, a fusion of inspiration, emotions, imagination and unbounded creativity with a touch of passion, energizes a writer to put pen to paper. However, writing cannot be all imagination. The symbiotic relationship between the reality and imagination is inseparable. In fact, more often than not, it is the reality, which acts as a stimulus to invigorate a writer to write. I say all this at the outset to make the point that my father Laxmidhar Nayak, who was a writer in Odia language, did not even complete his high school. As a result, when he started out to write as a teenager, what he possessed included his imagination and creativity and the expansive world of reality staring at him, which he could perhaps barely relate to at his tender age.

Glimpses into his Life

That he dropped out of school was largely based on the fact that he did not fit the mold of an average teenager. To begin with, he was a rebellious child. As a precocious child he excelled in expressing himself through writing short stories, poetry, music, drawing and oratory. He also played the harmonium and the flute. He wrote Odia lyrics and sang his lyrics along with a harmonium. He also edited the school magazine. As a result, his father (my grandfather) was worried that, with only soft skills at his possession, his job opportunities were bleak. At times (perhaps to motivate him) he was compared with his cousins who excelled in school. My father revolted against all this. In the process he was estranged from my grandfather. In hindsight though, my grandparents were simply unaware that their son was ‘... marching to the beats of a different drummer.’

Being estranged from his father, he had to do odd jobs to earn a livelihood. There was a period in his life when he taught music to make some money. Even at an early age he was rather independent minded and was prepared to fend for himself. All this must have helped him to perceive the world relatively more vividly than an average teenager who is normally protected. My reading of him is that, he had a sharp and probing mind and he considered the world around him to be his greatest teacher, which provided the grist for his writing mill. In one of his poems *Swapna Dekhe* from his poetry collection *Khola Jharka* (The Open Window) he wrote,

mun chaahen kahibi swadhina manara kathaa
mun chaahen bujhibi sakala bukura byathaa

mun lekhibi kichhi jibanara anubhuti, ashrra abhiseke
kabi hebi kabi, dekhe mun swapna dekhe.

Even in his teens he harbored the ambition of becoming a writer. And in reality, it so happened his first novel *Udbhranta* (The Obsessed) was published in 1934, when he was only 21 years old. Renowned editor of Odisha, late Balakrushna Kar, was the publisher of this novel. At this stage it is important to add that, over the years as I have thought about him as a writer, I have come to realize that his lack of a formal education, instead of becoming a roadblock to his writing career, might have worked in his favor. What I am trying to posit here is that while formal education could have deepened his knowledge, it could have also burdened his mind with an intellectual veneer (more appropriately perhaps intellectual baggage), which would have made it difficult for him to peer through the world around him to see things as they are, without any preconceived ideas. Such preconceived ideas could sometimes steal the mind of its originality by depriving one to look at issues with fresh set of eyes.

He was born in 1913 to a middle class family in Gudupaaili (not too far from Puri), a small village in the state of Odisha. As a child he moved from Odisha to Jamshedpur (Tatanagar), which then belonged to the state of Bihar, famous for Tata Steel. He lived in Jamshedpur into his late 30s. Although he grew up in Jamshedpur, he considered himself a *prabaashi* Odia (Odia diaspora, non-resident Odia). He went to the KMPM High School, which was possibly the only high school in Jamshedpur that taught Odia as a language. Jamshedpur (also used to be known as ‘Kaali Maati’ – ‘The Black Soil’ in Odia) had large number of migrant Odia workers, who worked in Tata Steel. And their children did not have access to Odia education.

The year 1934 was a landmark year in his career as a writer. In that year, at the age of 21, he received a Gold Medal for his poem *Birahini* (The Lovelorn Lady) in the ‘All Odisha Poets’ Conference that was held in Ganjam. As mentioned earlier, his first novel *Udbhranta* (The Obsessed), was also published the same year. What is more, he also received a payment of about 62 rupees for his manuscript. He was quite proud of all this. These recognitions for the young writer, belonging to the Odia diaspora in Bihar, provided much needed impetus to network with renowned writers from Odisha. Those were the days when Odisha was yet to be recognized as a separate state. Because it was pretty certain that states in India would be organized on the basis of language, there was a drive to prove Odia is not a separate language. In spite of such a movement, Orissa (Odisha) ultimately became a separate state in 1936 under the British rule. However, when the new Orissa state was carved out, some of the Odia speaking areas such as Singbhum were not included in the state.

My father was certain that when people do not speak and learn their mother tongue, not only they lose their language they also lose their cultural identity. In order to preserve the cultural identity of Singbhum people, who were then predominantly Odia speaking, he, along with other eminent writers and leaders from Odisha were active in teaching Odia and establishing literary organizations (such as Singbhum Oriya Sahitya Samaj) in Singbhum. He also edited a magazine called *Bichhinnaa* (The Dismembered). All these activities brought my father in conflict with the Bihar government, which resulted in protracted

period of police detention of my father. The agony of a poet who was subjected to ‘mental torture’ by the Bihar government has been captured in one of his poems, ‘Khola Jharka’ (The Open Window), published in a poetry collection also titled ‘Khola Jharka.’

His first real job was that of a crane operator in Tata Company. He was able to get the employment because his father (my grandfather) was working as a chemist in the company. Soon my father lost the job because he wrote a poem ‘Majdur’ (The Laborer), which was perhaps perceived to incite the laborers. As a result, he was confronted with finding a stable source of income. For some time he had to drift from one odd job to another. He found a livelihood to his liking when he was hired as a manager of a printing press in Jamshedpur. After gaining some experience as a printing press manager, the entrepreneur inside him decided to borrow about 100 rupees from his mother (my grandmother) to buy a ‘hand-press’ to start a printing business to print handbills. He soon became successful in his printing business and started to expand his business in Jamshedpur.

His entrepreneurial instincts were good. He was a risk taker. In fact he was a serial entrepreneur in the sense that he invested money in a restaurant, a limited liability company that owned a repertory theatre (Rupashree Theatres), a rice mill and even in a trucking business. Instinctively he tried to diversify his investments to receive a steady source of income to free him from the drudgeries of life. As it turns out, he lost money in all of these businesses except his printing business. It is also important to note that it was the printing business, which supported him throughout his life and provided a modicum of security to devote time to writing. Needless to say, his writing career was not a moneymaker either. He lamented the fact that the Odia writers could not in general support themselves from their income from writing.

Glimpses into his Literary Creations

His writing career spanned almost 65 years. During this period he was rather prolific in producing 25 novels, three dramas, six poetry collections and five short story collections. He also wrote Odia *ghazals*. His Odia ghazal writing was triggered by listening to singer Ghulam Ali perform on stage in the United States. After returning from the program he was spending a great deal of time (in the seclusion of our basement in Maryland) to write Odia ghazals. Later, he also translated some of Ghalib’s ghazals for the Sahitya Akademi. He had his share of laurels that included the state Sahitya Akademi Award (*Mo Swapnara Sahara*) and Sangeet Natak Akademi Award for his dramas that included *Laal Chaabuk*, *Dharmapatni* and *Jamindar* and for his contributions to Odisha stage. In 1997, he was awarded Ati Badi Jagannath Das Award for his contributions to Odia literature.

In the 1930s and 1940s he used to write for various Odia magazines such as *Nababhaarata*, *Sahakaar* and *Chaturanga*. His poetry of this period portrayed a young writer who was at odds with the inequities and disparities that existed between the haves and the have-nots. The following extract from one of his poems *Bhika Muthe Milu* (Let me have a fist full of rice), which was published in the September 1946 issue of *Chaturanga*, provides glimpses into the mind of a poet who was tormented to witness the hardships the

poor had to go through to ensure their very existence during the Great Famine, which engulfed Bengal and Odisha in the early 1940s.

madhyaannara tandra gala bhaaji,
baahaare dekhili aasi asthi charma saara
ubha eka kuschita kankaala, pratinidhi mahaa durbhikhyara
jaagila mo manapathe shaanita jigyaanshaa

e' jugara nirmama samasyaa
hatabhaagya manishara bikala prarthanaa
khaaibaara daanaa naahin,
banchibaara naahin sambhaabanaa.

His novels such as *Haa Re Durbhagaa Desha*, *Sarbaharaa* and *Rakta Jharaa Bhor* also explored the disparities between the haves and the have-nots and called for revolution to cleanse the society of disparities brought about by exploitation, corruption and nepotism.

In spite of the hectic life of an entrepreneur that he was subjected to, he regularly escaped to write. And he was so passionate about devoting his time to writing that, at the age of 55, when his business was doing rather well in Rourkela, he decided to close down his printing press. In closing down the press his superficial rationalization was that if he had worked in a government job, he would have retired at the age of 55. I have always wondered how is it that he could sacrifice a steady source of income (in his sunset years) to devote time to writing, which was not money making proposition after all.

He was equally prolific in the later years of his life. The limited scope of this article does not allow for an elaborate discussion of his literary works. In the remaining part of this article I will provide glimpses into two of his latter works, i.e. *Khola Jharka* (The Open Window), a poetry collection from which I have already quoted a stanza and *Mo Swapnara Sahara*, (My Dream City), a novel of about 500 pages.

His novel, *Mo Swapnara Sahara*, (My Dream City) is the story of Subrata (in many ways his alter ego), owner of a printing press, a proud Odia and an idealist, who arrives in the promised land of Rourkela in the 1950s, where a steel city was being built, heralding socio-economic and cultural renaissance of Odisha. The novel depicts Subrata as a witness to a bold experiment, which post-independent India undertook to propel her masses on a path of development. Unbeknownst to its author perhaps, the novel, in its inimitable style portrays wide-ranging ramifications of such an experiment on the ground. Unlike many of his earlier novels, this novel is a broad based discussion of socio-economic and cultural milieu of Rourkela in the 1950s and 1960s as it gets transformed from a sleepy Odia tribal village to produce a million ton of steel to help India modernize. The novel depicts in great detail the struggles of the poor, the lower-middleclass and the middle class as they converged on this dream city, from different parts of India, to grow and prosper. It also depicts, how in spite of all the good intentions underlying this massive project, the cancer of greed, corruption, nepotism, lack of transparency and ethics, exploitation, envy and intolerance was chipping away at the very foundations of the society, which Subrata thought would make him proud one day.

In this context it is important to note that Rourkela Steel Plant was a product of top-down development-planning model that relied on building industries in the public sector, critical to India's development, in

record time, with massive financial outlays. It is perhaps fair to say, in the early 1950s, there was rather limited track record in India in implementing such large industrial projects in the public sector. The book depicts with vivid detail the dynamics of implanting such a large project and injecting massive amounts of capital in a remote tribal area of Odisha lacking proper infrastructure (such as post offices, electronic communications, roads, rails, organized market place and public institutions) and consequent economic, social and cultural dislocations in the lives of its people. The book is also a rare tale of two cities of post-independent India that coexisted side-by-side. The first being a brand new city, built ground up and inhabited by the employees of the Rourkela Steel Plant, who came from different states of India including Odisha and the second city, on the other hand, inhabited by the local people (sons of the soil – including the tribal people), migrant workers, businessmen, who also came to Rourkela from other parts of India in search of a better livelihood. Unlike the inhabitants of the first city, who were employed in the public sector (with secure jobs, good schools, colleges, hospitals and other amenities), the inhabitants of the second city depended for their livelihood on the commercial sector (private sector) as owners of micro, small and medium size businesses. And it lacked adequate infrastructure, transportation, communications and land for the businesses to have an organized market place. But at the same time the second city was instrumental in providing the daily necessities for the inhabitants of the first city. The book is a fascinating tale of the dichotomies that existed between these two cities and struggles among the inhabitants of the second city in which Subrata as an idealist and proud Odia finds himself embroiled. And at the end, he decides to leave the city for his mental peace, as the dream city of his turns into a city of nightmares.

That Subrata decides to leave Rourkela abruptly could raise myriad questions in the minds of its readers. One such question could be, did Subrata lose out at the end. In answering this question, he (the author) believes Subrata's defeat was inevitable and was predicated by a society that lacked progressive social values and 'social capital.' He describes Subrata's defeat was nothing less than a 'crisis-ridden delimiter' in the historical context of the people Subrata was part of. And in the preface to the book, he goes so far as to prophecies that a time will come when the same people who ignored the values Subrata stood for, would ultimately search for him in every nook and corner of the world, i.e. treasure the values and ideals he stood for.

Laxmidhar Nayak considered himself a common man and a proud Odia. He called himself a 'press mechanic.' And his aspirations as a common man were rather modest. He wrote in his poem *Palaashara Shikhaa*,

karmatha praanara sei asaranti premara uchhwaasa
mun bi eka phutanta palaasha.
khate aau aaram bi kare
lekhe aau padhe

swapna dekehe sukha shaanti asaranti prema
shasya-hema
kalpanaara khete.

Biology to a large extent dictates our destiny. Even imagination, creativity and free will of a writer have to succumb to the indelible imprints of experience and aging. My father in his youth rebelled against his father, wrote poetry highlighting the stark disparity that existed between the haves and the have-nots and

explored the kaleidoscope of ‘romantic love’ in his novels such as *Udbhranta* (The Obsessed) and *Bhulila Sate Sakhi* (Have You Forgotten my Love).

While his longing for eternal love (*asaranti prema*) remained sacrosanct throughout his life, in his middle age he increasingly explored the disparities of life confronted by the common man. It appears that, long years of introspection in exploring complexities of life (in his writings), his worldview perhaps went through a transformation. In his transformed worldview, while love remained the most powerful force in engendering ‘creation,’ ‘truth’ ascended to the highest position in the pecking order, because he perhaps realized, it is the truth that is essential to uphold a society. Without truth, our very existence could be at stake. Even the sanctity of love could not be guaranteed without truth. He wrote,

Manisai satya aau satya taara aadima prakruti
Shrushtishila praana khoje, kichhi preeti, preranaa, sweekruti.

In his transformed worldview, the man becomes an embodiment of ‘truth,’ and truth becomes his eternal quest. And the ‘creative man’ longs for love, inspiration and recognition (acceptance, support) in his search for truth.

Towards the end of his life he suffered from Alzheimer’s disease (a form of dementia). His suffering during these years was heartbreaking. It was my younger brother, Pulin, and sister-in-law, Nalini, who took full responsibility of my parents’ upkeep during these difficult years. After almost five years of suffering he passed away in 2004, at the age of 90. Even though Alzheimer’s disease was slowly tightening its grips during the last remaining years of his life, he devoted most of his time to writing lyrics and *ghazals* and singing them with a harmonium. Many of the lyrics of this period were based on spirituality. Talking about spirituality, I never saw my father to be ritualistic, but I think, he believed in the presence of a powerful force, which shaped our very existence. As I conclude this article, let me quote from one of these spiritually oriented lyrics, which he used to sing with tears in his eyes.

jeun aade chaahen kaahaara
chhaai chhapi chhapi chhuinchi
jemiti kaahaara murati
jhalashe nayane.

e’ simaan rekhaati ghunchaa’a
aabarana dia kholi
tumari mahinmaan shikhare
jalibi marane



Binod Nayak
11004 Colonial Green Court
North Potomac, MD 20878, USA

[binodnayak@hotmail.com]

After working for the World Bank for 27 years in areas such as Corporate Finance, Financial Risk Management and Development Finance, Mr. Nayak’s current interest is Microfinance. In the distant past he also worked on such areas as Pattern Recognition and Artificial Intelligence. His other areas of interest include philosophy and cognitive science.

My Dear Father: Bama Charan Mitra

Written By: Twisampati Mitra

Edited By: Ishita Mitra

*Matru Devo Bhava!
Pitru Devo Bhava!
Acharya Devo Bhava!
Atidhi Devo Bhava!*

Taittiriyanopanishad
Siksha Valli



*Kaate Kaantaa Kaste putraH
SaMsaaro ayametiiva VichitraH
Kasy tvaM Kah Kuta aayaataH
tattavM chintya tadiha braataH*

Moha Mudgara or
Bhagavadgita (Adi Sankara)

It was the last week of winter (Feb, 1975). Winters had always been the worst seasons of my father's life. He suffered from an unknown bronchial disease that made him cough continuously and harshly. My mother had tried everything that anyone would advise, but nothing had worked. My father used to get extremely tired and exhausted from coughing and sometimes it was hard for him to even breathe. Winter was like a slow killer that constantly seeped energy out of him. Thank God that this was the last week of winter and we all were happy that our father would start gaining his energy back.

We were five brothers and sisters in all. Actually God had given us 3 more brothers but since he saw our future had dignity and poverty at the same time, he did his divine arithmetic and came up with a number 5 to optimize our families' existence and contribution.

As a small kid, my father was my hero (just like other small kids) but as kids grow, learn and assume an independent personality, they change their views, find flaws in their hero and learn how other kids' fathers are greater heroes.

But my father was my hero when I was a little kid; he is still my hero and will remain my hero forever!

My father was born in a modest family. His father was a clerk in a court. They had some farmland in their village and had built a little house in Cuttack. My father spent most of his time in Cuttack graduating from school and college there. Later I came to know from his friends that he was a fairly good

sportsperson, especially in swimming and field hockey. He became state champion in swimming at a very young age. He had a wide variety of characters as friends – from the so called loose characters to the intellectually bound, from the extrovert adventurers to introverts needing help and from the bad boys in school to the bookworms. He was afraid to give speeches, but was frequently seen in various types of meetings. He had a voice of a mule as far as singing was concerned, but was frequently seen enjoying classical music concerts of the day. His daringness and adventurous spirit brought him close to Biju Pattnaik as his childhood friend. I can't even begin to imagine what the dangerous combo of these two people of notoriety would have created.

One story about him goes as follows: His father was very strict disciplinarian and had set his eyes on him to become a judge. But my father's passion was swimming, reading and all kinds of adventure. There was a swimming competition to be held in Cuttack soon. My grandfather was against it and locked all the doors determined not to let his son participate. My father put on a towel and went to the toilet in the backyard. From there, he simply disappeared and reached the river of "Kathajodi" where the competition was supposed to take place. He participated in it almost naked except for the towel and was first to reach the end line. Everyone cheered. The chief guest reached for the trophy to give it to him. But, when he came out of the water – he was sans his towel – he was stark naked! They rushed to cover him with something and then he received the championship trophy! What a hero!

He was not an Olympian; heck, he didn't even represent his country. He was simply a passionate lover of sports and adventure. To be passionate is not just an emotional affair. It needs discipline, practice, perseverance, training, courage, self-confidence and many more qualities. I don't care if he was not the best of the best in the world. What I cared and took away from him is his passion as qualified before. Life is meaningless without a passion for something. To be happy a person needs a lot of passion. And happiness is what most of us miss. He is my hero because he injected a heavy dose of passion into me.

My father was born in 1915. Most of his youth was spent in sports and reading. He was honest, straightforward, kind hearted and had a good sense of humor. He could laugh at himself and often did. Because of these qualities, he was desired for company with a multiple variety of people – the good, the bad, the ugly. He was fun to be with and always had new tricks up his sleeve. After graduating from high school, he joined college, and I'm not sure if he took history as a major or not; definitely not math, science or economics. As soon as he graduated from college, his father reminded him of his dream about becoming a judge so he studied law. By nature he was a very logical person and didn't find Law very daunting.

So now that his formal education was completed, he had to find a job and support the whole family. We lived in a joint family. My father's elder brother was the landlord and managed the farm land in our village, but he suddenly died at a young age. So, his two sons were now also my father's responsibility. On top of that, he had to get his sisters married- which needed a large sum of money. He had to take care of old and ailing parents. Then he had this God optimized family – that was us!

His first job was being a clerk. The salary was about Rs 40 per month (about \$5 a month at the time). I can't imagine how he managed it! A lot of credit goes to my mother, because my father would

simply hand over the salary to my mother and his responsibility was over. My mother's education was only until 7th grade, but now in the "Mitra Enterprise", she was the CFO, the economist, the cook, the doctor, the launderer, the marketer, the bargain hunter, the liaison between family members, the peace maker, you name it and she was that. I know women are generally much better multi-taskers than men...but what my mother did just blew my mind! At a later stage when my father had died and she was old, she walked 20 km both ways to build a house for us. I always cry deeply when I think of her love for us, her determination to make us worthwhile, her sacrifice and loyalty.

As a small kid, I used to sleep with my father in his bed. One day he was sleeping and I was awake; my eyes fell on his nose. I was curious; I thought, what is this bulging thing on his face? It must be painful for him having such a bulge on his face. As I loved my father so much, I decided to help him get rid of his pain. I pulled on his nose hard to remove it and blood started oozing out of his nose. He woke up and saw what I was doing, but instead of getting angry he kept giving me kiss after kiss. He understood why I did what I did. That is why he is my hero!

After my father died on Feb 21, 1975, there was a special issue published on his life by the then famous literary figures: Gopinath Mohanty, Sitakanta Mohapatra, Ramanath Panda, Smt Prasanna Kumari Devi, Mohapatra Nilamani Sahoo, Nirupama Acharya, Dr. Harihar Das, Jyotindra Mohan Joardar, Bijoy Kumar Mohapatra, Raj Kishore Mohanty, and many others. This was a special edition, but there were also many articles written on him in the popular newspapers and magazines. I'm very grateful to these people because I wouldn't have known about my father in as much detail because he rarely talked about himself to me or any of my siblings. From these writings I came to know that my father was a very average, balanced, well rounded and extraordinary person.

Until I was five years old, we hardly ever talked because I was so small and there was nothing serious to talk about- except for the occasional affection he showed. However, this was the time when my mother used to read Mahabharata, Ramayana, the Gospels of Sri Ramakrishna and many other books out loud to us children. I remember my father making comments explaining significance of the stories. During this period, he was working for the state and in the evening he used to read books or have several friends come over and discuss various topics. I didn't understand most of it, but what remained etched in my mind was that there are a lot of things to learn and actually one could really learn it as my father was a living example of it. Afterwards, I began to read most of the books from my father's library and kept reading them. One benefit I got from this effort was a strong sense of intuition... Since I couldn't always understand the deep rooted meanings in the books, I was forced to develop intense intuition and understanding of context to make sense.

I was moved to an English Medium middle school simply because Nilamani Kaka (Mohapatra Nilamani Sahoo) came over one day while he was still brushing his teeth and told my father to move the kids to a new English Medium school called Kendriya Vidyalaya. My father simply followed suit with no questions asked and both families' children were enrolled.

Now, I had to learn English among other things. So I picked up English books from my father's library and started reading. Every word was new to me, and I kept interrupting my father asking their meaning. My father simply handed me a dictionary and asked me to keep looking up word after word until I understood. This was another gift from my father. As I looked at the meaning of a word my eyes would fall upon nearby words and I couldn't stop my curiosity to understand them as well.

Within a short period of time, my vocabulary became so enriched that my father himself was surprised. With such progress that I showed and the fact that I stood first in the class every year without fail, my father actually started taking me seriously and started talking to me like I was a mature person. On occasions he discussed the plot of his next story and asked for my opinion and suggestion! I was flattered, afraid, and embarrassed at the same time. But this gave me so much confidence that I started reading a lot of erudite and esoteric books that demanded a lot of research.

My father was recognized by his peers as a very knowledgeable person in both breadth and depth. Gopinath Mohanty wrote about him "He wouldn't believe anything by just listening to someone; he could only be convinced after a detailed logical argument..." In another article Mohapatra Nilamani Sahoo wrote, "He himself was a pundit in his own right. His boundary of knowledge was as wide as it was deep. He owned all kinds of knowledge. From cricket stats to dialectical materialism, from classical music to Toynbee's book on history, Cervantes' Don Quixote to Sri Aurobindo's Life Divine, he had entered them all with equal interest." Once someone asked him how he knows so much in such depth in spite of his busy schedule. His simple answer was "If you love people, nature, and everything in this world, knowledge just happens!" I had not comprehended its meaning until I grew much older- then it seemed so obvious to me. If you love someone and he is suffering from cancer, would you not try to learn everything about cancer? If you love your son and he has difficulty in science, would you not pick up his science book and try to understand yourself so you can help him? Love is the generator of immense energy that makes you learn so you can help. There is obvious curiosity that forces one to know but the origin of curiosity is love of life and to understand its struggles better.

I was in 5th grade when my eldest sister got married. As per tradition, the bride and groom were supposed to visit the bride's home. They were treated with great respect and afforded all kinds of comfort. When my sister and brother in law came, we had nice food and a lot of fun. During this time, there was a fair near our house. I used to visit the fair but didn't have any money, so while my friends enjoyed a lot of good food and played those fun games, I was a silent observer. One day when my brother in law was in the shower, I looked in his shirt pocket and found two rupees. Despite my training in honesty, I couldn't resist the temptation. I stole the two rupees and headed straight for the fair. There I started spending the money on all the good things I wanted to enjoy. Meanwhile, my brother in law had to give some money to someone but couldn't find it in his pocket. He told my sister, who convinced him that he might have made a mistake. But my younger sister did not buy into it. She headed straight to the fair and caught me red handed, buying some pickled berries. She dragged me back home and told my parents. My father was so angry that he lost his mind and beat me mercilessly with a drum stick. I had blood all over me and somehow my mother rescued me. The first day my father was very sad and angry because his ego was hurt- how can the son of such a well-known and honest person do this? Where did he go wrong? He hardly

slept pondering over all this. The second day he was sad again, but his anger had subsided into compassion. He faulted himself over my misdeed. He thought to himself: what has he given to his son except poverty and the morality of being steadfast even in poverty? He had not had the means to afford his sons even the smallest desires of pleasure, while his sons' friends had plenty. How could such a kid resist the temptation given the opportunity? That is why he is my hero!

He realized that the world was full of opposites and the way to happiness is to transcend the opposites. That's why he found as much sympathy for a thief as in a person so rich that he is disturbed in his mind. In all his stories, he has pointed out maladies of the society, shown anger towards evil and praise for the good, but at the same time he has looked at both of them from a holistic view, transcending the opposites and touching the reader's heart who feels forgiveness and equanimity at the end.

My father was not known for flowery literary style. He wrote in a straight forward manner just like his character. His stories start with a very trivial incident or an animal like a mouse or a dog or even a tree. But from that simple beginning he delves into deep discussion on problems of the day and tries to find a solution of his own. Gopinath Mohanty once said "Bamababu does not write anything unless he has to say something". One always finds 'that something' somewhere in his stories.

But, in my view, my father's contribution of essays was far more impactful than his stories. He was basically a storyteller but, his stories themselves had elements of essays while his essays had some stories embedded. This was his style that made people of diverse interests like his writings as there was a commonality between his characters and the reader at different levels – be it his senses, experiences, mind, intellect or spirit.

After my father turned 50, his health degraded rapidly. But he didn't stop waking in the middle of the night and start writing. I used to sleep in the same room. So, I also used to wake up and study. One day my cousin (who is an eye specialist – Dr. Chandi Das) was visiting us and he said something to me that stuck in my head. He told me that my father didn't have much time left and I should do all the service to him or I'll regret for life. From that day on I used to do whatever I could to help him feel better e.g. read books or news to him, massage him, make sure he eats on time etc. One day while massaging him a strange thing happened. He was telling me about Bhima Bhoi and then recited, "Praninka Aarate Dukha Aparamita, Dekhu Dekhu Ke Ba Sahu; Mo Jibana Pachhe Narke Padi Thau, Jagata Uddhara Heu..." At this point he could not control himself and cried like a child. My eyes started welling up and I also cried loudly along with him. He is indeed my hero!

February 21, 1975 around 2:00 PM: One of my neighbor's sons came to my class and talked with great agitation to my teacher. My teacher asked me to get my younger brother and go home immediately- we didn't know why. We raced our bicycles and reached in no time. There were many people outside my house. Many of them were crying uncontrollably. We went inside and what we saw can never be forgotten. My father was lying down on the floor of our small living room; a stream of blood had forced itself out of his mouth. My mother was silent until she saw her two kids.

Apparently my mother had gone to bring some milk so she could make some cheese for my father. When she returned back, she saw my father lying on the floor. Death is not visible even if it is right in front of our eyes. My father had come out of his bedroom to the outer living room, probably knowing intuitively that this winter had seeped all his energy... He came outside because on the wall of the living room were the pictures of Jesus, Swami Vivekananda, Charlie Chaplin, Tagore, and Lord Narayana. He couldn't have left without paying them his last respects because when they were all within him, he couldn't see them. Now that they have left the body he could see and understand them very clearly. The glow in his eyes showed that.

He knew that it was the last week of winter. The world seemed lifeless and still. Trees were dry and looked like helpless skeletons. But, he also knew that spring was in the offing. The tiny buds would grow all over the skeleton of the plant. And then they would become new branches, flowers, and fruits. He knew it was his time to let these buds grow on his skeleton and soon grow into healthy branches, leaves, flowers and fruits of the beautiful garden of Odia literature and culture where myriads of people will find peace, solace, purpose, knowledge, ideas, entertainment, and above all happiness!

Twisampati Mitra
Cupertino, California
[twimit99@yahoo.com]

My Father: Santanu Kumar Acharya

Julie Acharya Ray



My father is not an ordinary man. Well, in saying this, I am no exception. No child thinks that his/her father is ordinary. Fathers are most likely to be described as strong, brave and supportive until the very last day of our life or theirs. And this is an overwhelming feeling that engulfs all of us, especially as we grow older. But I will say it all over again and with conviction that my father is not ordinary.

Coming 10 years after my two sisters, I grew up as the last child in the family. If you would think that being the youngest I might have missed out on my father's younger and formative years of life it is untrue. I have in my own ways witnessed him grow from little to huge, from thoughtful to eloquent, from composed to a storm and from impatient to the most enduring.

Upon my mother's chiding, the night before my chemistry test in high school, he sat down to teach me chemical bonding. Today I think it was an awesome experience to jump into the life of atoms, swirl around pretending to be electrons flying out of the outer shell of a Na (Sodium) atom, getting ionized and racing to catch a Cl⁻ (Chloride ion) to become table salt. However that night, a few hours from taking the test, I had thought it was an utterly bad idea to learn chemistry from him! That is my father. Everything had a life—right from machines to atoms, from table to table salt. And he was trying to show me the life inside a bond between Na and Cl by taking me in there. Extraordinary imagination is one of the qualities I would use to describe him.

I was a cranky sick child of 7 one winter afternoon when there were guests in the house. My mother was cooking and cleaning while people walked in and out and sometime in between she might have asked my father to put me to bed. I climbed into bed with him. In his hand was a red toy bell that chimed very softly when you moved it to the left and right. As he pulled the covers over me he started to play the bell. It was the most soothing sound I will ever hear. And as he moved the bell left and right he started describing to me a little shepherd boy driving his sheep up a small hill...the day was hot but there were big trees in his path and the shepherd boy rested here and there...drinking water from a cold stream....the sheep came running down the hill and clambered up his legs saying bababa.... I was held in a trance with the bell and my father's sonorous voice until I must have fallen asleep. I remember the

scenes today as if they were descriptions of Jerusalem. Extraordinary story teller is another talent I would ascribe for him.

June is the month of his mother's shraaddha. His mother died when he was 8 years old and till date he tears up talking about his memories of her and of his motherless childhood. Every shraaddha day my mother would get up early in the morning and cook many Odia traditional dishes to be offered for the "pinda". Every year my father wears the same butter colored dhoti, a spotless white "genji" with his sacred "paita" showing and come to do the puja. As he lay the big balls of rice and ghee for his mother, his grandmother and his great grandmother to the chants of the priests' mantras (we) his three daughters would weep thinking of how young and innocent he must have been when his mother died! And that afternoon he would tell us stories of how he would wander alone, riding his red bicycle on the river bed of Debi nadi of his "Aja's" village in Parbatipur, composing his first poems on nature and compassion. His mother's death sowed the seeds of writing into his life which he continues to reap until this ripened age.

Our house was busy everyday with writers who came to discuss and meet him over numerous cups of tea that my mother provided with no word of protest. Our house bustled at least once a month with over a dozen writers who came to meet under the name of "Lekhaka Sammukhya" (a forum of free thinkers that had its inception in the aftermath of the infamous Emergency period in India). They would argue over socio political issues and literary matters on the scale of international standards, embarking upon discussions of Nobel Prize winning novels and poetries, taking into consideration various ideological matters that entailed these models of ideas, -isms and styles. Sometimes these discussions were peaceful and sometimes it appeared as if they were fighting amongst themselves! We would hide and watch these mature people—poets, novelists, story writers, critics and all – quarrelling like children amongst themselves. But our fears were assuaged when we heard our mother's voice calling us to carry plates laden with her homemade pithaa, dahibara and rasagola to these guests!

Living life by profound ethics, a deep moral code and a superbly conscientious mind; such are the virtues with which he was born and those that he cultivated within us. I remember two such occasions.

One occasion when I was in 6th grade. I had used up my neighbor's money given to me to buy his child a school supply instead to buy an ice cream and had vehemently lied that the school had no supplies left and the parent would have to wait. The wait continued for weeks and I showed no remorse at the lie which my parents understood, but waited for me to own up. My father called me over one evening and said that we must go to the neighbor's house and get a letter from them saying that the money had been paid to the school but we had not received the supply. Half way as we walked down the dark lane to our neighbor's house, I broke down and said "Nana, mu micha kahuthili, seyi paisare mu ice cream khai deyichi" (Dad I was telling a lie, I had ice-cream with that money). My father looked at

my face and said “chaal gharaku pherijiba. Kaali taanka paisa pherei dabaa”. (OK then. Let’s go home. Tomorrow we will return the money to them). My lesson in integrity was done right there.

The other occasion was when my father must have been in his mid-forties working for an educational project in Science with UNICEF during his job as a Liaison officer –cum Deputy Director of Public Instructions, Govt of Orissa, in the Education Department. This entailed long hours of discussions and site visits with high ranking UNICEF officers when he also dined with them. One evening while he was driving us to his writer friend Mahapatra Nilamani Sahu’s house in Bhubaneswar, he was talking about his day. My mother sat in the front while we three sisters were at the back of our white FIAT ORU 1272. After some talking he mentioned “today I went for lunch at BNR hotel in Puri with these foreigners and I was offered beer ...not very much, just a glass and a half (dedha glass) of that stuff”. I was too young to understand what beer meant! But my mother was taken aback and was very swift at reprimanding him “tume jhiya mananka agare e katha kahi parila?” (Good Lord! How did you dare utter such obscene words in the presence of our daughters?). I guess that was the beginning of the teetotaler that my father is till date!

Having been born into an age of Gandhian Satyagraha and the moral convictions that he inherited from his family, he was and remains to be rebellious and uncompromising towards falsehood and social injustice. Because of these traits he faced severe crises in his service career. In the beginning of his professional life he lost a lucrative job as he did not obey the CEO’s special request to alter the quality control report that involved water pollution of a local river. Later still as a college teacher in the Education Department of the Odisha Government he had to take recourse to the Gandhian method of remedy by Satyagraha when confronted with sticky situations. Strongly protesting against a Government liquor shop that was being built illegally in front of our house, he was able to get public support for winning his point by means of such nonviolent resistance. I remember the scene when the Excise minister came with his entourage and met my father sitting on the road surrounded by people of the adjoining village. Of course for all these actions he had to pay a price. Time and again the government tried to break his back by putting him to trial for false cases followed by a chain of transfers and subsequently putting him under suspension. But in the long run he always came out victorious. You could break his back but not his belief.

But sometimes my father was a little child! And that usually happened when he was sick. It was rare but a funny occasion to be around! Once my mother was visiting her maternal home in Cuttack. We were home with him. He was sick with a fever and cold. As evening came by he lay on the bed reading a book. Then as the fever grew he called us (his three daughters over) and told us “come sit here by me and listen. I think I will die of this fever”. He read excerpts from the book punctuated by this hilarious line: “Listen children, I will not die first. Your mother will precede me. The reason is, she does not know much about how to handle the house or money, so if I die first it will be a problem for her. So she has to go first!” We joked with him, “Nana tike thandaa lagichi (it’s just a common cold) and you are already talking like this!”

My father is a musician. He can play the harmonium, flute and violin with ease. He says he owes it to his maternal grandfather who was a great lover of music himself and evenings at Parbatipur were filled with singing and strains of the harmonium. I remember the haunting sounds of the flute keeping rhythm with the whistle and chugging of the local train near our Bhubaneswar home when my father would play late into the night while taking a break from writing. I also remember him introducing me to Hindustani classical music. While he loved to listen to Bade Ghulam Ali Khan's dhrupad and dadra my childish mind could not appreciate the intense classicality of the lyric-less music. But I did immensely appreciate Pandit D. V Paluskar and Parveen Sultana. Our family would sit on the floor of the bedroom while the gramophone player would play HMV's long playing record after record into afternoons. All these incidents and images are recorded quite vividly in his books and each character out of his own life is a character in his novel. The origins of his books, writings and characters have been explained quite brilliantly in his recently published autobiography "Mo jibana: Anya eka Upanyasa" (My Life: It's Another Novel).

His very first novel "Nara Kinnara" published in 1962 (when he was 29 years of age) won the Odisha Sahitya academy award and is a prescribed book at the Odia Master's level in universities in Odisha. Quickly followed by Shataabdira Nachiketa, Tinoti Ratira SakaaLa and DakhiNaabarta, his writings are appreciated because of their unusual style, characters and settings. He has subsequently churned out over 50 novels and short stories and an equal number of central as well as state awards to his credit. His short story collection "Chalanti Thakura"(1991) won the Kendra Sahitya Academy award. KATHA foundation (Delhi) awarded him the KATHA award in 2003 for the best fiction writing of "Anomara Kanya" to name a few. Recently at a meeting held in his honor at the Odia department in Shantiniketan (West Bengal) Odia students clamored to touch his feet and take his autograph! His standing as an expert story teller and his continual exercise towards the upliftment of Odia language has thrust him to colossal levels in the minds of his loving readers. In March this year his novel Shakuntala (1980) was translated into English and drew great attention. List of his books and awards can be found at: <https://sites.google.com/site/julieacharyaray/booksandpublications>

Last year my father turned 80. Odiareaders and publishers celebrated his birthday as well as his first novel 'Nara Kinnara' by coming together in a commemorative way. Eminent Odia scholars, writers, researchers, publishers and politicians came together to wish his life and writings by holding a day long function where they discussed his novel and his writing style to its very detail. This was followed by an inspiring and revealing speech by my father, the gist of which is held in this 800 page autobiography, a must read for all Odias!

My father continues to touch the lives of millions through his extraordinary writings, inspiring speeches and thought-provoking opinions. Till this date if I am anxious all I need to do is dial his number in India. His voice and words dilute and fade the worst of storms in my mind. My father is not ordinary.

A poem I had written for him on his 75th birthday.

Layers of Life

I watch him watch himself
Not with disappointment
Neither with haste
Complete and content within
Perhaps
Laced with an iota
Of a smallish appetite
Like after a bursting meal
To munch a moment more

The recollections of childhood years
The stories of long lost loving uncles and aunts
The case of a snip tailed puppy
The cold village winds
That whetted up his childhood malaria fever
The loss of a mother
The days of bewilderment at her absence
The small red bicycle that tread upon many river beds
Looking for protective shades of love

The unearthing of youth
The writings that pour out of his being
The new found love for language
The words that begin to dispense out comfortably
Bequeathing comfort to the leaking soul

Carefully sculpting the man in himself
That he and his father once dreamt of
The ensuing trysts with truth and tyranny
The language and expressions
And volumes of manuscript
Finally bringing monsoon rains to many parched readers

The years of unwavering austerity
At the temple of words
The many crumpled sheets of crisp paper
That rolled their way to the waste basket

The missing lexis that finally emerged
Percolating through layers of the mind
In tandem with
Sweet sounds of the flute and a passing train's whistle
Close to midnight when a masterpiece was born

The accolades and reviews
The tributes and honors
The blessings of a lost mother
The pride of a dead father
The life partner that respected his very being
The kith and kin that rejoiced in his identity
He carries each with force and vigor

I watch him watch himself
Unravel the layers of life
Again and again
Every layer fully lived
Every moment effusively contributed
A stalwart of courage
A rugged mountain of hope
A mighty river of strength and knowledge
Indulging in just a whiff more
That's my father



Julie Acharya Ray
Salt Lake City,
Utah, USA

[julie.ray@aruplab.com]

Julie Acharya Ray works as a research scientist in ARUP Laboratories, a clinical diagnostic company in Utah. When she is not working in the lab, she enjoys writing, music and painting. She has two daughters Ankita and Aparna and lives in Salt Lake City, Utah with her husband, Abhijit Ray.

My Aja - Sachidanand Rautroy

Dr. Preeti Rout



Dr. Sachidanand Rautroy is my grandfather, and I am given the privilege of revealing a little bit about him and his life. The first memory I have of my grandfather is a game he would play with my sister, my cousins, and I. He was well into his 60s and always wore a simple white banyan and lungi. He looked frail to us even at that time, but it was all a ruse to trick us! The game was that he would make a fist, and we children had to break it. Despite his age, not one of us was ever able to beat him at that game. I think it was an example of how he lived- simply and honestly with a lot of hidden strength.

I knew him as a legend before I really knew him as a person. I had been told about his poetry, his awards, and his small but important part in the Indian liberation movement from the British. The first memories I have about him lived up to expectations. He was a curmudgeon - opinionated and dominating, as only someone with great ambition or great talent can possess. He would berate me endlessly for my lack of career goals, and my response to him was that I was 10 years old and did not have to know what I wanted to do. I think it was difficult for him to understand that, as he had been driven internally by the passion of a writer and poet since probably before he could remember. His earliest writings dated back to when he was only eleven years old. In fact some of his landmark poetry collections were published when he was in his teens and twenties. His first poetry collection “*Patheya*” was published in 1932 when he was a mere teenager. He was the original "self-made man" and a true artist in every sense of the word. As actions speak louder than words, I knew about his imprisonments, his bold defiance of the British, and his unwavering belief of India as an independent country which ultimately shaped his career. The truly revolutionary collection “*Baji Rout*” came out in 1943 when my Aja was only twenty-seven year’s old. It was so radical and Anti-British that the book was banned and he was imprisoned.

The most important picture, which I remember seeing on my visits to India every few years, was of my grandfather sitting next to Gandhi. My own grandfather! True, Gandhi was talking to someone else in the picture, looking in the opposite direction, and may or may not have known that my grandfather was sitting next to him, but it is the most indelible image that I have of him and one, I think, he wanted us all to remember. At heart, he believed in equality in just about everything, and that picture,

sitting right next to the great Guru, symbolized this. He was known as the "Poet of the People," and much of his poetry told the plight of the men and women of the working classes. Without saying it outright and before it was even an acknowledged issue, he believed strongly in women's rights. All of his children and grandchildren, girls and boys alike, were expected to be educated and have successful careers. Of course as he was more of the "idea man," and the day to day accomplishment of these lofty goals he left to my ever-patient grandmother.

Among all of his medical problems, I imagine that his loss of sight must have been the most difficult. His connections with the outside world and his own ability to write were curtailed. He had numerous students/disciples who would come in the evenings and read to him, but I would guess that was a poor substitute for actually being able to pick up a pen and paper to write, criticize, applaud, and do what he had done his whole life. In this he was without parallel as he wielded his pen for more than seven decades. Towards the end of his life, he was essentially blind, but unlike someone born blind at a young age, he did not have the coping mechanisms or skills to compensate for his visual deficiency. Luckily in India we take care of our elderly. After my grandmother, who was his true anchor in every sense of the word, passed away in 1999, his eldest son and especially his daughter-in-law took care of him to the end. Isolated from the usual cues of time and days passing, his constant question was, "What time is it?" So my aunt and uncle bought him a clock, which said what time it was every time he hit the button on top. On one family visit, my aunts were especially concerned, wondering who this strange woman was talking to him in his bedroom.

One of the last memories that I have of my grandfather is when he took us to a park where he had planted a sapling of the "Bodhi Tree." This was an original cutting of the tree under which Gautam Buddha had achieved enlightenment. My Aja had been given a sapling by the Mayor of Bodh Gaya and that sapling bloomed into a beautiful tree at the park in Cuttack. My civic-minding grandfather never thought to keep this tree for himself at our house, but he immediately donated it to the city of Cuttack and planted it in a public park. About twenty years after this event, he took my sister and me back to this park. The tree was doing fine, but was covered with weeds and clearly untended. A sad memento to the greatness it deserved. My grandfather got out of the rickshaw, and blind as a bat and stiff with arthritis, he used his cane to climb the four-foot fence and started pulling out weeds with his own hands.

This is how I remember my grandfather, Sachidanand Rautroy. He was a rebel, a troublemaker, and most of all, he was a man with a vision, to which he would make any sacrifice. I miss him and wish I could have had more time with him, but maybe I know him better than I think through the influences he left through his family and his writings.

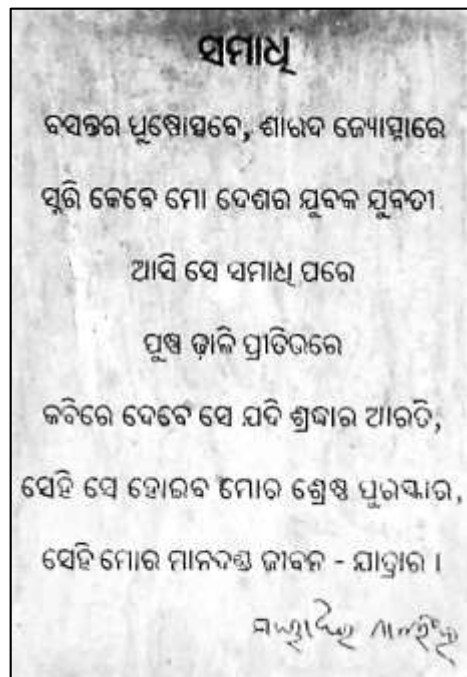
The author is a Nephrologist based in the Washington DC area. Sachi Rautroy was proud of all his nine grandchildren. Preeti is number three among them. She is the daughter of Ravi and Chitra Rout of Canton, Michigan.

Mayadhar Mansingh: My Father the Poet

Lalit Mansingh



Dr. Mayadhar Mansingh



The Memorial at Nandala Village

In a narrow stretch of land 'between the Chilika Lake and the Bay of Bengal' lies an obscure hamlet called Nandala. Its surroundings are breathtakingly beautiful, especially as one stands on the sand dunes close to the village. The golden beaches of the sea join the forests of casurina and wild cashew which border it. Within the village are verdant paddy fields and ponds full of lotus and lilies. And on the west lies the beautiful Chilika, an expanse of liquid sapphire on which nestle millions of migratory birds from places as far away as Siberia.

It was in this village that Mayadhar Mansingh was born, a hundred years ago. He was, as he was to confess, a 'nursling of nature'. His poetry reflects the translucent beauty of the Chilika Lake and the colors, sounds and fragrances of his village. Mayadhar Mansingh left the village at an early age, but the village never left him. It was his sanctuary, his inspiration, the source of his aesthetics and his values. This little boy from Nandala was orphaned at the age of four and facing the world alone, poured out his soul in his writings.

In later life, he remembered with joy the experience of witnessing the colorful 'jattras' and 'kirtans' held in the village and the pride he felt in leading the procession of swords in this Khandayat village on the day of 'Dussehra'. His ancestors were 'Paikas', the peasant soldiers of Orissa who had rebelled against Britain in 1818. Dr. Mansingh's sense of independence and dignity, so powerfully reflected in his writings, was a part of this heritage.

The first thought which comes to my mind when I recall my father was his obsession with the world of letters. At home he claimed his space as a writer and happily spent the longest hours of the day in his study-cum-bedroom, surrounded by his immense collection of books. And he was never far from his pen and paper. He would share his time between his sitting desk, his low Japanese desk and the standing desk designed by him, all the time writing on reams and reams of foolscap paper. The flow of his pen never seemed to dry.

Another powerful memory is that of his compassionate and generous nature. Any account of suffering would bring streams of tears to his eyes. I had to give up my childhood hobby of angling after he explained to me how cruel it was to the fish. His chronic state of poverty never stood in the way of his compassion. Even the 'rikshawallahs' in Cuttack knew that. He was their favorite customer, because he was the only person who gave them more money than they expected.

Dr. Mansingh was not a typical father. He did not share the homework of his children. He neither supervised their daily activities nor did he plan their careers. These mundane chores were left to my mother. He remained, nevertheless, the most powerful influence on his children, without any attempt at coercion, compulsion or admonition. We were all aware of his expectations and strived to live up to them.

Many years after his death, we discovered among his papers a manuscript entitled "My Last Will and Testament". It was his last desire, he had stated, to see his children "deeply patriotic towards both Orissa's and India's interests", and for them to establish a reputation for "fair play, justice and truthfulness". He hoped that his children would always guard "the family's reputation for culture, education and basic human virtues". These were the values he lived by, and trusted that his children would imbibe them.

Orphaned a very young age and harassed by poverty, he struggled through school and college with the help of scholarships and tuitions. An early marriage gave him the responsibility of supporting a young wife and five children. He returned from England with a doctorate in English Literature, the first doctorate earned in the State of Orissa. But, his habit of speaking his mind and his belief in the values of "fair play, justice and truthfulness" frequently brought him into conflict with the authorities.

My father's appointment as the Principal of the Gangadhar Meher College in Sambalpur brought for the first time a sense of stability in his life. After Sambalpur, however, he went through yet another phase of turmoil, right up to his retirement.

In describing some of the adversities in his life, I may have inadvertently given an impression of Mayadhar Mansingh being a character in a Greek tragedy, a hapless victim of a cruel fate. This is far from the truth. He was neither hapless, nor a victim. It is clear from his poem 'Taruna Kabira Asha' (A Young Poet's Hopes) that he had no illusions that his life as a poet would be a bed of roses.

If my father was proud to be Indian, he was passionate about being an Oriya. He felt this ardor for the rich heritage of Orissa in every drop of blood in his veins: a heritage derived from its glorious past, its unique blend of Aryan, Dravidian and Tribal cultures, its maritime traditions, its magnificent temples and its vibrant

living arts. He was deeply affected by the contrast between Orissa's golden past and its present state of destitution.

In his poem "Mahandire Jyotsna Bihar," familiar to all school children of Orissa, he laments the passing of the grand, old order.

*"Leaving behind only a prestigious past,
A cruel mockery of the despondent present"*

In "Mumursu Konarka" he exclaims:

*"Alas, Beauteous Konarka,
You are slowly dying
Day by day in indifferent silence."*

In collaboration with his close friend, Dr. Charles Fabri, my father led the efforts to revive Odissi dance and project it outside Orissa. Despite these efforts, Orissa remained the 'terra incognita' on the cultural atlas of India. This led to his obsession with a project which he described as his three cherished dreams: a set of three books in English which would explain the totality of Orissa's diverse culture. He had the satisfaction of seeing his dreams fulfilled before he died in 1973.

The first of these books was the History of Oriya Literature published by the Sahitya Akademi in 1962. The second book, entitled "History of the Art of Orissa" written by Dr. Charles Fabri, was posthumously published in 1974. The trilogy was completed with Dr. Mansingh's own "Saga of the Land of Lord Jagannatha" possibly his last book.

My father's life was based on two realities. One, that he was a poet and that was his chosen calling in life, and two, that he would express his views without fear or favour, and no higher authority could deny him this fundamental right.

Face to face with an Education Minister who was determined to show him who was the boss, Dr. Mansingh said, "Even though I am a government servant, it is my birthright to express my views independently.... There is no individual on earth who can buy my loyalty. It is the birthright of a writer to praise anything that is worth praising and to criticize anything that deserves to be condemned". As on many previous occasions in his life, Dr. Mansingh received his punishment for what was seen as a defiance of authority.

My father was far from considering himself a victim. He was prepared to take the consequences of his actions because he had the courage of his convictions. The logo on his books was a pen crossed with a sword. He was a warrior armed with a pen. To bend before the authorities and surrender his weapon was contrary to his fiercely independent spirit.

Kalidasa, in his Raghavamsa, has eulogized God as a poet. It was appropriate, because creativity and immortality are common to God and the poet. The poet's soaring spirit is not bound to the earth by time and space. This is reflected in the following lines from Mayadhar Mansingh's poem "Mahapathara Jatri" (The Eternal Traveler) from the collection "Sindhu O Bindu".

*"I am the traveler
Who moves from one life to another,
From one task to the next,
Moving from soul to soul,
Drifting from dream to dream,
I am the one who brings
Evergreen songs
To evergreen hearts*

*Free and awakened
Forever moving forward*

*Without end,
I am the great traveler
Of the whole universe
My soul engrossed
With the grand creation.*

*Having found its path at last
My soul sings
Its joyous melodies
As it wings across
The limitless space."*

(Translation: Shri J. P. Das)

That was Mayadhar Mansingh, the poet and Mayadhar Mansingh, my father. The greatest gift I have received in my life is the privilege of being Mayadhar Mansingh's son.

Mayadhar Mansingh: A brief biography

As a poet, critic, scholar and educationist, Dr. Mayadhar Mansingh dominated the intellectual life of Orissa for over five decades. He was born on 13 November 1905 in Nandala, a tiny village cradled on a narrow strip of land between the Chilika Lake and the eastern sea in Orissa.

Orphaned at the age of four, he was raised by his paternal uncle Agadhu Naik, the Dewan of the Raja of Parikud. Impressed with his performance in the local school, his uncle decided to send him out of the village for higher education. Young Mayadhar walked nearly sixty kilometres to enrol at the nearest high school in Khurda. It was in school that his exceptional talent for poetry was discovered. A series of sensual romantic poems published as 'Dhoopa' (Burning Incense) made him a household name. Even though his later poetry became more introspective and acquired a metaphysical texture, Mayadhar Mansingh retained the image of a romantic poet in the public mind. Unwittingly, he had started a new trend not only in Oriya but also in Indian literature. The Sahitya Akademi's national seminar in September 2005, on the occasion of his centenary, was aptly titled "Mayadhar Mansingh: The Beginning of Modernity in Indian Literature".

After graduating from Ravenshaw College, Cuttack and securing an M.A. from Patna University, Mayadhar Mansingh proceeded to Britain and returned with a Ph.D. from Durham University, becoming the first scholar from Orissa to achieve a doctorate in literature.

It was not easy to find a suitable job in Orissa those days, even for someone as qualified as Mansingh. He became a teacher in several schools and later served as Educational Advisor to the princely states in

Eastern India and as Inspector of Schools in Orissa. The seven years he spent as Principal of the Gangadhar Meher College in Sambalpur were perhaps the happiest and most stable period in his life.

Mansingh's strongly held beliefs and values, his progressive outlook, his fierce sense of independence and his unsparing pen brought him in frequent conflict with the higher authorities. Compromise or silence were terms which were absent from his vocabulary. Speaking to the Education Minister of Orissa after his transfer from Sambalpur, Mansingh said "Even though I am a government servant, it is my birthright to express my views independently.... There is no individual on earth who can buy my loyalty." Not unexpectedly, he was disciplined for what was seen as an act of defiance.

Mansingh's literary talents fortunately remained unaffected by the turmoil in his official life. After 'Dhoopa' he produced more romantic poetry inspired by his young wife Hemalata. These were published under the title "Hemasashya" and "Hemapushpa". His prolific writings included twenty one volumes of poetry, ten plays and short plays, nine books of essays and criticism, a novel, a travelogue, a biography, an autobiography and several works in English. Among his English publications were two of the finest books of reference on Orissa's rich literary and cultural heritage: A History of Oriya Literature and The Saga of the Land of Jagannatha.

The revival of Odissi as a classical dance is one of Mayadhar Mansingh's enduring contributions. At the suggestion of his close friend Dr. Charles Fabri, the noted Indologist and Art Critic of the Statesman, Mansingh arranged for Indrani Rahman, the then leading classical dancer of India, to learn Odissi. Indrani's performances of Odissi to rapt audiences in India and abroad brought unprecedented popularity to this relatively unknown dance form. Mansingh joined scholars like Kalicharan Patnaik in pleading for the recognition of Odissi as a classical dance by the Sangeet Natak Akademi. It took nearly a decade to achieve this.

After a long inner quest for faith, Mansingh finally converted to Buddhism. Among the last acts in his life was the successful transfer of land from the Government of Orissa to the Maha Bodhi Society for the establishment of the "Buddha Vihar" in Bhubaneswar.

Mayadhar Mansingh lived his life on his own terms, remaining passionate till the end to the causes he believed in, whether it was love, literature, education or faith. He died at the age of sixty eight in Cuttack on 11 October 1973.

Dr. Mansingh's last Will

"My Last Will and Testament

... 5. It is my last desire that all my children, sons and daughters, shall strive hard and remain alert for remaining deeply patriotic towards both Orissa's and India's interests, for radiating all around a reputation

for fair play, justice, and truthfulness, as well as being fully sensitive to human or any other suffering they might come across. While avoiding all unnecessary luxuries and scrupulously avoiding also any ostentation of wealth in jewellery, habiliments or expensive feasts, they shall all, I hope, maintain the spirit of cheerful hospitality in all their homes, to the needy as well as to their small circles of carefully selected friends. And I hope that they shall all live knit together in a cheerful spirit of give and take, each solicitous about the other, accepting the advice and leadership of the eldest in the family, always guarding the family's reputation for culture, education and basic human virtues.”

- Mayadhar Mansingh



Lalit Mansingh was the Ambassador of India to the United States and had attended several OSA Annual Conventions during his tenure as the ambassador.

Pranabandhu Kar

Dr. Gitimoy Kar



My father, the late Pranabandhu Kar, is revered and loved by many as a great teacher and a contemporary writer, but for my siblings and me, he was a loving and caring father. I remember him as a simple, sociable, yet practical man. He had no air about himself and was equally at ease with people of all ages and from all walks of life. He was a disciplinarian, but would be quick to hug us and apologize if he felt he was too stern with us. He was fond of good food and was an excellent cook himself. His sartorial pleasure was clean, well-ironed dhoti and Panjabi. He was very progressive and modern in his thinking, although he belonged to a bygone era.

He instilled in us the value of self-help and education from an early age. Education for him was not just excelling in academics, but learning social graces, civic duties, compassion towards others and awareness of the world beyond our immediate surroundings.

I recall my early childhood when we lived in Puri, where my father was a lecturer in S.C.S. College. He could have sent me to primary schools near our house, but, true to his progressive outlook, he admitted me and my younger brother to a school far away from the town, located at an idyllic place, on the shores of the Bay of Bengal and surrounded by casuarina trees. The school was affiliated with an 'ashram' for child widows, founded by Ms. Hemalata Tagore, niece of Rabindranath Tagore, and modelled after 'Shantiniketan.' Her mission was to educate and train child widows to become self-reliant. I fondly remember that some of our classes were held under the trees, on the sands of the Bay of Bengal. In addition to basic learning, we were taught gardening, pottery, spinning with a 'charkha,' weaving, and 'bratachari' (singing and dancing to Rabindra Sangeet). Although Odia was the medium of teaching, we learned to read, write and speak Bengali at a very early age. I am proud that I and my brother got this unique opportunity, early in our lives, thanks to a very progressive father.

In 1960, he was invited to the United States as a Smith-Mundt & Fulbright Scholar and spent nine months at USC in Los Angeles and Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana. I know that he was very happy with this recognition, and we were very proud of him. He used to write beautiful letters about the American education system and his experience, which gave me the impetus to come here for higher studies

after finishing at IIT. When I indicated that I would like to return to India after my Master's program, he persuaded me to continue on in the US to embark on a Ph.D. program, to take advantage of the opportunity that did not come easy. Today, I am thankful to him for his insistence and guidance.

Besides teaching in S.C.S. College in Puri, he also taught in Ravenshaw College and Radhanath Training College in Cuttack, before retiring from Ravenshaw College as the Head of the Department in Education. He also devoted his efforts as a founding father of the State Institute of Education in Bhubaneswar, which is now known as State Council of Educational Research & Training (SCERT). Teaching was his profession but he considered it as his duty to the society. I have often heard from his students that his lectures were very popular because his teaching method was interactive and humorous and encouraged them to think outside the box. He was also generous with the time and support he offered students without taking a pie from them, and in particular, he would often provide financial help to those who were needy and deserving. In his later years, when I would visit home, he would often express his dismay over the rapid decline in the quality of education. He would say that a more nurturing and personalized classroom environment had given way to a disturbing proliferation of mass-education through large, money-churning tutorial centers, run like factories. In his opinion, such a trend devalued our human capital and made us non-competitive in the national and world stage.

He was a teacher first and a writer second. Unless the mood struck him, he seldom wrote. But when he did, he produced some gems. He often required prodding from my mother, whom he acknowledged as his source of inspiration. Many a time, he would miss the deadline, but his students, actors, and publishers would not mind waiting for him to complete the story or play. He shunned requests from commercial organizations to write plays for them. He was truly a change agent who was ahead of his time and encouraged everyone around him to shed old dogmas and think progressively. He not only lived this philosophy but also projected it in his writings.

During my childhood, our house was always full of people, be it my father's students or his writer and artist friends. I had the good fortune of meeting many famous writers and artists of his generation who would come to our house. Independent of who they were or the time of the day, at my father's insistence, my mother would tirelessly entertain them with tea and snacks. My grandfather, who lived with us, would often comment that even the Raja of Dampara (our ancestral village near Banki) did not spend that kind of money entertaining his guests! On my visits home in later years, not much had changed, except the guests were now aspiring writers or graduate students seeking my father's advice.

He never believed in material possession nor savings. Life he faced as it came, and he would never budge from these principles, come what may. He loved his socialization even after retirement, which kept him happy and fit. I remember how legendary Biju Patnaik, his classmate from Ravenshaw Collegiate School in Cuttack, would crack jokes with him for his youthful exuberance even at the age of eighty.

2014 is his birth centenary and cultural organizations around Odisha are celebrating it by staging some of his well-known plays throughout the year. Besides *Matira Manisha (Kalindi Charan Panigrahi)*, my father has dramatized famous Oriya novels such as *Chha Mana Atha Guntha, Prayaschitta and*

Lachhama (all by *Fakir Mohan Senapati*) and *Nakata Chitrakara* (by *Faturananda*). These were staged by students of Ravenshaw College, S.C.B. Medical College, Radhanath Training College and various other cultural organizations. Unfortunately, the manuscripts are unavailable for publication. However, my younger brother and I are in the process of compiling and publishing various other short stories and one-act plays that are scattered in different journals over six decades.

I would like to end by paraphrasing someone who knew my father well: *Pranabandhu Kar, who over six decades made significant contributions to Orissa's educational, social, and cultural life, is not a person but is an institution. Those who were fortunate to enter his magnetic sphere of influence will always remain closely tied to him.*



Dr. Gitimoy Kar
17831 Arbor Greene Drive,
Tampa, FL 33647, USA
[gitimoykar@yahoo.com]

Dr. Gitimoy Kar is a retired executive of Corning Inc., now resides in Tampa, FL with his wife Rita.

Pranabandhu Kar (A creative genius who probed the human psyche)

Jatindra Mohan Mohanty

Pranabandhu Kar, born on December 1, 1914 at Puri to a middle class family, left this mortal world on March 30, 1998. The little child traversed a long distance in 84 years, shone like a bright star, and has touched many who gloried in his presence and basked in his great affection.

It is an immense pleasure to recollect the life of this fine creative man, which assuredly will remain as a model to many whose life he has shaped. He was an educationist by profession, but that was only a

routine part of his very illustrious life. His contribution and achievement as a creative soul is to be valued and treasured by subsequent generations.

Pranabandhu Babu started writing short stories in the 1930s on mainly social events of his time. His first short story, *Bhranti*, was published in 'Naba Bharat' edited by Pandit Nilakantha Das in 1933 and his talent was soon recognized by the literary circle. Once he carved a niche for himself as a budding story writer, he delved into the complex psychology of his characters in his subsequent writings, a trend he set in the 1940s to be followed by others. He improvised on the style, experimented with the themes and, unlike his predecessors, did not deal with human psychology in general but specialized in picking up small incidents and limited emotions that arise from specific situations. For example, once narrating a train journey in 'Hero,' he focused on the delicate mental actions and reactions of the protagonist instead of giving an account of routine physical activities.

Oriya short story writers after the 1950s more or less unconsciously and in a general way continue this trend which Kar developed. Today, the strength of an Oriya short story does not lie in social exposure but in delineating the complex and unfamiliar human psyche. In this, the stories written by Kar in the 1950s and 1960s provide the pioneering impetus.

He also carried over this trend of writing to dramas. Before him, in the 1940s and 1950s, dramas were mostly on social topics in story form; they emphasized change and growth of events in which the characters used to play their parts. These types of dramas were written by Kali Charan Pattnaik, Gopal Chhotray, Ramchandra Mishra and Manoranjan Das. Kar brought new elements into his dramas, in the sense that the emphasis shifted from plot-character to subtle human reactions and development of complex human psychology. The attitude was no longer social and socio-political; it became an involvement with human existence which comes to every human being as an organic part of his association with others. This was, in fact, a change in Oriya drama that took place towards the end of the 1960s with the plays of Bijay Mishra, Biswajit Das and Manoranjan Das. Again the unconscious and invisible impetus came from the plays of Kar, as it had come in the case of short stories.

He played a pioneering role which provided necessary creative infrastructure to Oriya short stories and plays that have come to prominence in the last four decades.

When Satya Patnaik asked me to write an article on my father the Late Pranabandhu Kar, I thought that I could not be as objective nor could I do justice to the subject. However, I remembered an excellent article written by Prof. Jatindra Mohan Mohanty (a noted literary critic, academician and Central Sahitya Academy Award winner) published in the New Indian Express on March 31, 1998 following the death of my father. I wanted Prof. Mohanty's permission to submit his article but to my utter dismay, learnt that he had passed away in 2012. I have obtained the permission from the Editor, New Indian Express to reproduce the article.

- Dr. Gitimoy Kar

The Eternal Light: Ananta Patnaik

Animesh Patnaik



“There are many who have written progressive literature and others have marched to it but there are only a few in India who have practiced what they have written. Amongst them one such person is Ananta Patnaik”. - (Oriya Encyclopedia- Gyanamandal – Binod Kanungo)

He was not just my father nor does he belong to me. It is unfair to tie down people like him to any attachments - material or family. These are souls that transcend time – they come and go – they do not belong to anyone. It would be a travesty to associate them with any bonding. When Mr. Satya Patnaik asked me to write about him, I thought long and hard whether I should. I feel I have no special privilege because I am his son. Not sure, if he would have approved my writing this on a personal level.

Here is a man who lost both his parents on the same day, when he was 5 years old and his brother Gurucharan Patnaik (founder of communist party in Odisha and also a Sahitya Akademi award winner) was 4 months old. The moment my grandfather passed away from an illness, my grandmother decided to end her own life rather than continue alone. My father and uncle had great rapport between them. Both were gifted with great fortitude which helped them all through their life. No matter how tough life was going to get they would never compromise their values and beliefs till their last breath.

He was born on June 12, 1912 to a Zamindar family in Chanahat – but fought all his life against the Zamindari system. Chanahat, a village few miles from Bhubaneswar – historically a Buddhist region – land of the Kalinga war - the river Daya flows near-by. Our village of that time was an interesting place; there were those who supported the Zamindari system and many others who fought for Independence. Many in our extended family were upset as well as scared of him - he would always side with the poor and the oppressed - always speak his mind and never afraid of anything. He went to jail many times in Odisha as well as outside for the freedom of the country. His freedom fighting activities started early in life, when he was a student at the Puri Zilla school. He was a great follower of Gandhi - wore Khadi all his life. In June 1931, Gandhiji had sent him a letter wishing the best for congress conference. That was a very turbulent period in the world – many changes were taking place and the youth of that time were getting drawn towards Marxism to fight oppression and for the rights of the workers. He too was

fascinated by it. But he had a unique ability to balance Gandhism with Marxism in the Indian context. He has written many poems on Gandhi as well as Lenin. He was a poet of the future – always looking for a better tomorrow for the downtrodden, deprived...

Lived all his life in Cuttack and owned nothing. A man who took pleasure in giving all he had and asked nothing in return. On his passing, people from all walks of life, writers, journalists, political leaders, industrialists, religious organizations, came to pay their last respects. On the 11th day of his demise, for the first time ever Odisha Sahitya Akademi published a Souvenir on the guidance of the then Chief Minister and eminent literary figure Mr. J.B. Patnaik. This has articles from almost the entire who's who of writers of that time.

When I think in a personal way – I wonder what all he could have had in life if he wanted, power – money, but he chose not to.

He was the joint secretary of the All India Students Federation and was instrumental in setting up the Students Federation in Odisha. The British police of that time kept a record of his activities and he was expelled from Ravenshaw College. Due to the efforts of Dr. P.K. Parija and others he was allowed to join college again. He started writing poems from his school days and was the first editor of the Ravenshaw collegiate school magazine.

He was a progressive person to the core - a pioneer of the progressive writers movement in India - was closely associated with Mulk Raj Anand and others. Along with Nabakrushna Choudhury, Bhagabati Panigrahi and others he was one of the founders of the progressive movement in Odisha. He was the secretary of the Nabajuga Sahitya Sansad, which was one of the first progressive organizations in India. Nabajuga sahitya sansad was formed in 1935 where as the National progressive writers association was formed in 1936. The great freedom fighter Malati Choudhury recited his poem (*Nabeen Jugara Tarun Jagare.....*) at the inaugural ceremony of Nabajuga Sahitya Sansad. The mouth piece of Nabajuga sahitya sansad was Adhunik, the first progressive literary magazine in Oriya.

It is beyond me to comprehend and analyze his level of writing...! Hence it is best I stay away from that and just pen down my personal observations and recollections.

By nature he was an impatient person, always trying to do things as if he was running out of time. From writing poetry to day to day life – it was always how tomorrow can be a better day for all. Optimism was his motto.

Most of the writers of that generation used to come to our house frequently. They would be discussing, arguing for hours together. Whoever came to our house had to eat and go – he would not let anyone go without eating. My mother would have a tough time keeping up with it as sometimes he would invite people over for lunch / dinner without informing her. Whatever was cooked had to be shared or she would have to cook again. Those days were quite different than what it is now.

I remember, one day coming back from school I was shocked to notice filmfare, screen etc on his desk – did not understand what was going on. I grew up (as many may have in the Orissa of 60's & 70's) where going to cinema was a taboo and not socially accepted. Later, I found out he was a member of the jury for the national awards for film. As he was in the committee he had to read all he can about cinema from as many sources as possible. He was always thorough in whatever he did and put 100% of his effort into it. He was in the committee the year Ankur starring the Oriya actor Sadhu Meher and Shabana Azmi won the national best film award. The same year, Sadhu Meher won the national award for best actor, AK Bir for photography and Rabi Patnaik for editing.

It was a great surprise for me as it may be for many others, to know that he was the driving force in producing the Oriya movie “Saptasajya”. He was the associate director as well as story writer, screen play writer, dialogue writer, lyricist for that film. This film was financed by the younger brother of the Dhenkanal raja. Here he was producing the movie with the younger brother of the Dhenkanal raja when the elder brother had tortured and put him in Kamakhyanagar jail for more than 2 years. He and advocate Ramchandra Ram (freedom fighter and former communist MLA), an actor in the movie would go all over Calcutta looking for heroine as oriya girls were hesitant to act in films at that time . In addition to the movies, he has written many dramas, most of which were never staged. A few times they would have everything ready for the drama to be staged with the audience seated in the auditorium when the British police would come and shut it down

He was a poet of the people. There are many instances of freedom fighters of those days going from village to village singing his poems. He always followed what he wrote by joining the masses – he was one of the six “sagadia’s” (bullock cart driver) – carrying the bodies of the great patriot Baji Raut and others all around Cuttack.

He was a powerful speaker and could captivate audiences. I have heard him speak in annual functions of colleges, universities, literary organizations, socio-cultural gatherings etc. The thing that I always observed was his humility. After a good speech, if anyone would approach him for an interview – invariably he would say “I am a simple man – just said what came to mind”. He had a kind of a unique shyness in him – as if trying to avoid the spotlight. Humble, never yearning for recognition or anything. But his literary creations have placed him as the father of the Progressive movement in Odisha...!

Reading and writing was his life. He would be either reading or writing when I went to sleep and also when I woke up. There used to be various books, magazines, newspapers all around him – that was his treasure. In our house we had books and magazines of all kinds. He was a voracious reader - it was not that he read literary works only – his range would encompass from Veda / Vedanta to Sputnik. My friends would always ask me what he is reading all the time as if appearing for an exam. He would always ask me to send him any new books that I could find here. He was very happy when I sent him the Encyclopedia Britannica from here.

For him everything had to be perfect. He would write pages and pages – then cut it all out and rewrite again – this will be going on all day – night long. All he would have is tea and cigarettes. I still visualize

the image where sometimes he would be half prostrate on the floor – scribbling – writing – tearing – writing. It had to be perfect before he would let it go.

When he was editing Sishulekha (a children’s literary magazine) he would proof read each and every word in every article to make sure that it was perfect. He has written many books and poems for Children. One of my favorite issues of the Sishulekha is the special edition that was published during the 1971 India – Pakistan war.

He never requested or bothered others for himself or the family. I remember a minor incident when I was growing up – I wanted to see cricket test match in Calcutta – those days in the 70’s it was a craze (which still is) where we used to miss school just to listen to the commentary on the radio – TV was not there that time. All he had to do was write a note or call his friend to get the tickets - but he would not do it. For him it was a trivial matter to request someone. I still remember how upset I was at that time.

Looking back, I think I now understand why he never said either yes or no to my coming to USA – I suspect this was due to his detached self – soul searching – always looking for something greater. He used to say, do what is right and move on - but never forget your country or your roots.

People like him come very rarely – they do not care if anyone likes them, respects them or recognizes them – these souls will come - do what is destined - and go their way..!

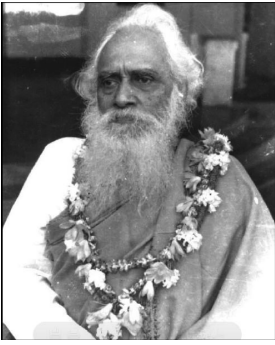
In the words of one of his closest friends, Jnanapitha award winner Dr. Gopinath Mohanty : “Anta (as he used to call him) was a good student could have done whatever he wanted – we all went worked for a living but he chose to fight for the freedom of the country. He was a tophani manisha (cyclonic person) one moment he would be calm and serene but the next moment he was like a tophan (cyclone) - his strength was his hand.” - (Ananta Patnaik memorial speech 1988)

Animesh Patnaik
4 Renfield Drive, Princeton, NJ 08540

[animeshpatnaik@yahoo.com]

I came to USA in 1982. He waited, I tried, but we never met again. Every time I go home I see him in the night sky – I am sure he sees me from where ever he is...

-Animesh Patnaik



ପଞ୍ଚିତ ନୀଳକଣ୍ଠଙ୍କୁ ମୁଁ ଯେପରି ଜାଣେ

ସୁମିତ୍ରା ପାଢ଼ୀ

ମୁଁ ସତ୍ୟ ବାବୁଙ୍କ ଠାରୁ e-mail ପାଇଲିଯେ ପଞ୍ଚିତ ନୀଳକଣ୍ଠ ଦାସଙ୍କୁ ମୁଁ ଯେପରି ଜାଣେ ସେ ବିଷୟରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ପ୍ରବନ୍ଧ ଲେଖିବାକୁ । ପଞ୍ଚିତ ନୀଳକଣ୍ଠ ମୋର ଜେଜେବାପା । ମୁଁ ତାଙ୍କର ସାନ ପୁଅଙ୍କର ବଡ଼ଝିଅ । ମୁଁ ତାଙ୍କ ବିଷୟରେ କେବେ କିଛି ଲେଖି ନଥିଲି । ମୁଁ ସ୍କୁଲ, କଲେଜରେ ପଢ଼ିବା ବେଳେ ତାଙ୍କ ବିଷୟରେ କେବେ କିଛି ପ୍ରବନ୍ଧ ପ୍ରତିଯୋଗିତା ହେଉଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ, ସେ ମୋର ଜେଜେବାପା ହୋଇଥିବାରୁ ମୋତେ ସେଥିରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେବାପାଇଁ ଲାଜ ଲାଗୁଥିଲା । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ପରିଣତ ବୟସରେ ସତ୍ୟ ବାବୁଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଏ ଅନୁରୋଧ ପାଇବାରୁ ମୋତେ ବହୁତ ଖୁସି ଲାଗିଲା । ପ୍ରବନ୍ଧ ଲେଖିବା ଯଦିଓ ମୋର ଅଭ୍ୟାସ ନୁହେଁ ତଥାପି ଭାବିଲି ପିଲାଦିନର ଯେଉଁ କେତେଗୋଟି ଘଟଣା ମୋ ଆଖି ଆଗରେ ନାଚୁଛି ସେ ସବୁ ମନେ ପକେଇ କିଛି ଲେଖିବି । ଆମ ଗାଁ ସାକ୍ଷୀଗୋପାଳ ଅନ୍ତର୍ଗତ ଶ୍ରୀରାମଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ପୁର ଶାସନ । ମୋର ବାଲ୍ୟକାଳର ବହୁତ ସମୟ ଗାଁରେ କଟିଛି । ଆମେ ଜେଜେବାପାଙ୍କୁ ‘ବାପା’ ଓ ଜେଜେମାଙ୍କୁ ‘ମା’ ବୋଲି ଡାକୁ । ନିଜର ବାପା, ମାଙ୍କୁ ନନା ଓ ବୋଉ ବୋଲି ଡାକୁ । ଜେଜେମା ଗାଁରେ ରହୁଥିଲା । ତେଣୁ ମୁଁ ଗାଁକୁ ‘ମା’ ଗାଁ’ ବୋଲି କହୁଥିଲି । ଜେଜେବାପା ପ୍ରାୟ କଟକ କି ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱରରେ ରହୁଥିଲେ । କଟକ ଗଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ଛାପାଖାନା ନବଭାରତ ପ୍ରେସ୍‌ରେ ରହି ପଢ଼ା ପଢ଼ି ଲେଖା ଲେଖିରେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ରହୁଥିଲେ । ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱରରେ ବିଧାନସଭାର ସଦସ୍ୟ, ବିରୋଧୀ ଦଳର ନେତା ବା ବାଚସ୍ପତି ହୋଇ ରାଜନୈତିକ ଜୀବନରେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ରହୁଥିଲେ । ସେ ଘର କଥା କି ଜମିବାଡ଼ି କଥା କିଛି ବୁଝୁନଥିଲେ । ମୋ ଜେଜେମା ସେ ସବୁ କାମ ସୁଚାରୁ ରୂପେ ସଂପନ୍ନ କରୁଥିଲା । ମୁଁ ଥରେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ପଚାରିଥିଲି ‘ବାପା ତୁମେ ମା’ ଗାଁକୁ ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ଯାଅ ନା ?’ ସେ ଏଥିରେ ବହୁତ ହସିଥିଲେ ।

ଜେଜେବାପା ମୋ ବାପାଙ୍କୁ ଚିଠି ଦେଲେ କି ନାତୁଣୀ ମାନଙ୍କ ବିବାହ ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ ପତ୍ର ଲେଖିଲେ ସବୁଥିରେ ‘ଜଗନ୍ନାଥେ ଭଲ କରନ୍ତୁ’ ଲେଖୁଥିଲେ । ସେ କେବେ ପୂଜା କରିବାର ମୁଁ ଦେଖି ନଥିଲି କି ମନ୍ଦିର ଯିବାର ମୋର ମନେ ନାହିଁ । ତେଣୁ ମୁଁ ଭାବୁଥିଲି କେବେତ ପୂଜା

କରୁନାହାନ୍ତି ଏମିତି ଲେଖୁଛନ୍ତି କାହିଁକି ? ପରେ ବଡ଼ ହେଲା ପରେ ତାଙ୍କ ରଚିତ ଭକ୍ତିଗାଥା ପଢ଼ିବା ପରେ ମୁଁ ଏ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନର ଉତ୍ତର ପାଇଲି । ଭକ୍ତିଗାଥାର ତିନୋଟି ପଦରୁ ମୁଁ ତାଙ୍କର ମନୋଭାବ ବୁଝି ପାରିଥିଲି ।

ବିଶାଳ ମନ୍ଦିରେ କାହିଁ ମହା ଧର୍ମ ଲାଲା
ଧାର୍ମିକ ବସଇ ସୀଫତ କଷାୟ ବସନ
ଧୂପେ କଣ୍ଠା ନାଦେ କେତେ ଶୁଙ୍ଘଳା
ବିକାଶଇ ପଦେ ପଦେ ଗୁରୁ ଦେବାର୍ଚ୍ଚନେ
ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନାର ସେ ଚହଲେ
ପଶିବି କି ସେ ମନ୍ଦିରେ
ଲୋଡ଼ିବାରେ ତବ ସ୍ନେହ ମଙ୍ଗଳ ନିଦାନେ ?

ଗୁରୁଶିଳାରାଶି ତଳେ ତାମସ ଭବନେ
ତବ ପୁଣ୍ୟ ଅଧିଷ୍ଠାନ କେସନେ ସଂଭବେ ?
ଆଲୋକ ମଞ୍ଚିତ ଧରା ସାଗର ଗଗନେ
ତୁମେ ପରା ବିରାଜ ହେ ମଙ୍ଗଳ ବିଭବେ
ସାରା ବିଶ୍ୱ ସିଂହାସନେ
ବିଦ୍ୟୋତର ସନମାନେ
ଖୋଜିକି ପାଇବି ତବ ଅମୃତ ଗୌରବେ ?
ଆତ୍ମ ସୁଖେ ମଞ୍ଜି କେତେ କରନ୍ତି ଗରବ
ଧର୍ମ ନାମେ କାମନାର ଭୋଗ ପ୍ରଚାରଣେ
ବାସନାର ଏ ବିଶ୍ୱାସେ ସତେ କି ସଂଭବ
ପୁଣ୍ୟ ଦରଶନ ତବ ଅନନ୍ତ ବିମାନେ ?
କାହାରେ ଚାହିଁବି ଭବେ ?

ନ ସହେ ମୋ ଧୃତି ଲବେ
ବିଶ୍ୱମୁଖେ ବିଶ୍ୱଦେବେ ବିରାଜ ପରାଣେ

ଉପରୋକ୍ତ ତିନୋଟି ପଦରୁ ଜଣା ପଡ଼େ ଯେ ସେ ଭଗବାନଙ୍କୁ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ କରୁଥିଲେ କିନ୍ତୁ ସବୁଦିନେ ଠାକୁରଙ୍କୁ ଭୋଗ ଦେଇ ପୂଜା

ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା କରିବା ଦରକାର ବୋଲି ଭାବୁ ନଥିଲେ । ଆଜିକାଲି କେହି ଗୁରୁକୁଳକୁ ଯାଉ ନାହାଁନ୍ତି, ତେଣୁ ଆଜିକାଲି ସମାଜରେ ଅଯଥା ପଇସା ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚ କରି ଲୋକମାନେ ଯେଉଁ ବ୍ରତଘର ଭୋଜି କରୁଛନ୍ତି, ତାହା ସେ ପସନ୍ଦ କରୁନଥିଲେ । ସମାଜକୁ ଉଦାହରଣ ଦେଖାଇବା ପାଇଁ ସେ ମୋ ନନା (ତାଙ୍କର ପୁଅ) ଙ୍କର ବ୍ରତଘର ଭୋଜି କରିନଥିଲେ । ସଂସ୍କାରକ ନୀଳକଣ୍ଠ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ମୈତ୍ରୀ ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ଏକ ଅସାଧାରଣ ଉପାସକ ଥିଲେ ।

ମୋର ଆଉ ଗୋଟାଏ ଘଟଣା ମନେ ପଡୁଛି । ଥରେ ମୋ ବୋଉ ଜେଜେବାପାଙ୍କୁ କହିଲା ‘ଆମ ଗଣିତଜ୍ଞ ବାଣଭଟ୍ଟ ଓ ଲୀଳାବତୀ ଯେଉଁସୂତ୍ର ସବୁ ବାହର କରି ଅଙ୍କ କଷ୍ଟୁଥିଲେ, ଗ୍ରୀସର ପିଥାଗୋରସ୍ ସେହି ସବୁ କରି ପଶ୍ୟିମ ଦେଶର ଅଙ୍କ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ର ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିଛନ୍ତି । ସମସ୍ତେ ପିଥାଗୋରସ୍ ଥିବେମ୍ ଆଦି କହୁଛନ୍ତି, କିନ୍ତୁ ଲୀଳାବତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ ସେପରି ବିସ୍ମାତ ହୋଇନାହିଁ । ତାର ଉତ୍ତରରେ ବାପା କହିଲେ ବାଣଭଟ୍ଟ ଓ ଲୀଳାବତୀ କେବେ ? ପିଥାଗୋରସ୍ କେବେ ? ବାଣଭଟ୍ଟ ଓ ଲୀଳାବତୀ ଯାଶୁଶ୍ରୀକ୍ଷ୍ମଙ୍କ ଜନ୍ମର ବହୁତ ପରେ, କିନ୍ତୁ ପିଥାଗୋରସ୍ ଯାଶୁକ୍ଷ୍ମ ଜନ୍ମ ବା ଶ୍ରୀକ୍ଷ୍ମାଙ୍କର ବହୁ ପୂର୍ବର ଲୋକ । ସବୁଥିରେ କେବଳ ଆମେ ବଡ଼ ଓ ପୁରାତନ କହି ଗର୍ବ କରିବା ଠିକ୍ ନୁହେଁ । ପାଶ୍ଚାତ୍ୟ ସଭ୍ୟତାରୁ ଆମର ବହୁତ କିଛି ଶିଖିବାର ଅଛି ।

ପଣ୍ଡିତ ନୀଳକଣ୍ଠ ପାଶ୍ଚାତ୍ୟ ସଭ୍ୟତାକୁ ସମ୍ମାନ ଦେଖାଉଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଅନୁକରଣ କରୁନଥିଲେ । ମୋର ଜନ୍ମର ଦୁଇ ତିନି ମାସ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ମୋର ନନା ଉଚ୍ଚଶିକ୍ଷା ପାଇଁ ୟୁକ୍ଟରାଷ୍ଟ୍ର ଆମେରିକାକୁ ଆସିଥିଲେ । ସେ “Queen Merry” ଜାହାଜରେ ଆସିଥିଲେ । ମୋର ଜଣେ ସଂପର୍କୀୟ ଦଦେଇ ମୋର ନାମ ମେରୀ ବୋଲି ଦେଲେ । ସେତେବେଳେ ବାପା ଚିତି ଯାଇ କହିଲେ ‘ଆମର କଅଣ ନାମ ନାହିଁ, ସାହେବାଣୀଙ୍କର ନାମ ଦବା କଅଣ ଦରକାର ?’ ଏବେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଗାଁରେ ମୋତେ କେତେଜଣ ମେରୀ ଡାକିଲେ ମୋତେ ଭଲ ଲାଗେ ନାହିଁ ।

ବାପା କିଛି ଅସୁବିଧା ହେଲେ ରାଗି ଯାଆନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କର ରାଗ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ରାଗ । ରାଗିଲେ ମୁହଁ ନାଲି ପଡ଼ିଯାଏ, ସେ ଥରି ଉଠନ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଯଦି ତାଙ୍କର ଭୁଲ ଥାଏ, ଭୁଲରେ ରାଗୁଛନ୍ତି ବୋଲି ତାଙ୍କୁ ବୁଝାଇ ଦେଲେ ସେ ଲଜିତ ହୋଇ ‘ମୋତେ ଆଗରୁ ସେ କଥା କାହିଁକି କହିଲ ନାହିଁ’ ବୋଲି କହନ୍ତି । ଥରେ ତାଙ୍କର ଜଣେ ପୁତୁରାଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ କଅଣ ଘରର ସମସ୍ୟା ନେଇ ୟୁକ୍ତି ହେଉଥିଲା । ସେ ରାଗିକରି ପୁତୁରାଙ୍କୁ କହିଲେ ‘କାଣି ତୁ ଗୋଟାଏ ଗଣ୍ଠ ମୂର୍ଖ’ । ତାଙ୍କ ପୁତୁରା ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଲେ ‘କକେଇ ତୁମେ ଜଣେ ପଣ୍ଡିତ ମୂର୍ଖ’ । ସେ ନିଜର ଦୋଷ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରନ୍ତି ଓ ନିଜର ଭୁଲ ବୁଝିଲେ ଯେଉଁ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଉପରେ ରୋଷ କରିଥାନ୍ତି ତାଙ୍କୁ କ୍ଷମା ମାଗନ୍ତି । ଛୋଟ, ବଡ଼, ପର

ଆପଣାର ତାଙ୍କଠାରେ କିଛି ନଥାଏ ।

ପଣ୍ଡିତ ନୀଳକଣ୍ଠଙ୍କର ଗ୍ରାମ ପ୍ରୀତି ବହୁତ ଥିଲା । ମୋର ମନେ ଅଛି ପିଲାଦିନେ ସେ ବାଟସ୍ପତି ଥିବାବେଳେ ମୁଁ ତାଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱରରୁ ଗାଁକୁ ଆସୁଥିଲି । ସେ ଦିନ ପ୍ରଥମାଷ୍ଟମୀ ଥିଲା । ମୁଁ ପ୍ରଥମ ସନ୍ତାନ ହୋଇ ଥିବାରୁ ମୋ ପାଇଁ ଜାମା କିଣା ହେବାର ସ୍ଥିର ହେଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ମୁଁ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱରରେ ଭଲ ଦୋକାନ ଅଛି କହିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେ ଶୁଣିଲେ ନାହିଁ । କହିଲେ ଆମ ଗାଁ ଦୋକାନ ଭଲ । ଶେଷରେ ମୋ ମନକୁ ନପାଇଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଅଧିକା ପଇସା ଦିଆହୋଇ ଗାଁ ଦୋକାନରୁ ଜାମା କିଣା ହେଲା । ଆମ ଘରେ କିଛି ଭଲ ଜିନିଷ ଦେଖିଲେ ସେ ଗାଁ କୁ ନବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଥିଲେ । ଗାଁକୁ ଆସିବାକ୍ଷଣି ବାପା ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ମିଶି ଗ୍ରାମର ଚାଷବାସ ଅବସ୍ଥା ଓ ଲୋକଙ୍କର ଦୁଃଖ ସୁଖ ବୁଝିବାରେ ନିଜକୁ ହଜାଇ ଦେଉଥିଲେ ।

ନାରୀ ଓ ପୁରୁଷ ଉଭୟେ ଉଭୟଙ୍କର କର୍ମସଖା ହୋଇ ଜୀବନ ଅତିବାହିତ କରିବା ଉଚିତ ବୋଲି ସେ ଭାବୁଥିଲେ । ନାରୀ ଶିକ୍ଷାର ପ୍ରସାର ପାଇଁ ସେ ବହୁତ ଧ୍ୟାନ ଦେଉଥିଲେ । ମୋର ବୋଉ ଚଉଦ ବର୍ଷ ବୟସରୁ ବାହା ହୋଇ ତାଙ୍କ ଘରକୁ ବୋହୂ ହୋଇ ଆସିଥିଲା । ସେ ତା’ର ଶିକ୍ଷା ପାଇଁ ସବୁ ବ୍ୟୟବସ୍ତୁ କରିଥିଲେ । ଗାଁରେ ଗୋଟାଏ ରକ୍ଷଣଶାଳ ପରିବାରର ବୋହୂ ହେଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେ ତା ସଙ୍ଗେ ପାଠ ବିଷୟ ଆଲୋଚନା କରୁଥିଲେ । ପଢ଼ା ପଢ଼ି କରିବାକୁ ସେ ତାଙ୍କଠାରୁ ସବୁବେଳେ ଉତ୍ସାହ ପାଉଥିଲା । କବୟତ୍ରୀ କୁନ୍ତଳା କୁମାରୀ ସାବତଙ୍କୁ ଲେଖା ଲେଖି କରିବା ପାଇଁ ସେ ସବୁବେଳେ ପ୍ରେରଣା ଦେଇ ଚିଠି ଲେଖୁଥିଲେ ।

ଆଜନ୍ମ ବିପ୍ଳବୀ ନୀଳକଣ୍ଠ କେବଳ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ସଂଗ୍ରାମରେ ନୁହେଁ, ଜାତି ଓ ଦେଶର ଉନ୍ନତିକଳ୍ପେ ପ୍ରଦେଶ ଗଠନ, ଭାଷା, ସାହିତ୍ୟ, ସଂସ୍କୃତି ସବୁ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ସଂଗ୍ରାମ କରି ଯଶସ୍ୱୀ ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି । ପଣ୍ଡିତ ନୀଳକଣ୍ଠଙ୍କ ସଂପର୍କରେ ବହୁ ପୁସ୍ତକ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ ହୋଇଛି ।

ମୁଁ ତେଣୁ ତାଙ୍କ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ବିଷୟରେ ବେଶୀ କିଛି ନଲେଖି, ମୁଁ ତାଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ମିଶିବା ବେଳେ ଯାହା ଅନୁଭବ କରିଛି ସେ ବିଷୟରେ କିଛି ଲେଖିଲି ।



Sumitra Padhy
2359, Arnold
Crst, Burlington,
Ontario, Canada



ବୋଉ ସହ ସବୁଦିନ - ପ୍ରତିଭା ଶତପଥୀ

ଅସିତା ଶତପଥୀ

ମୋର ଚାଳିଶ ବର୍ଷରୁ ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ୱ ଜୀବନ ଭିତରେ ମୋତେ ଯେଉଁମାନେ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟକ୍ଷ ଓ ପରୋକ୍ଷ ଭାବରେ ପ୍ରଭାବିତ କରିଛନ୍ତି, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ମୋ ବୋଉ ବହୁତ ଆଗରେ । ତାର କର୍ମମୟ ଜୀବନ, ତା ଭିତରେ ଚାରି ଚାରିଟି ସନ୍ତାନଙ୍କୁ ମଣିଷକରିବା, ମୋ ବାପାଙ୍କର extended ପରିବାରର ତତ୍ତ୍ୱ ନେବା ଓ ନିଜ ବାପା, ମାଆ, ଭାଇ ଭଉଣୀଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ କରିବା, ଏ ସବୁ ଭିତରେ ବି ସେ ମୋ ପାଇଁ ସବୁବେଳେ ସବୁ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତରେ ମୋ ବୋଉ ଭାବରେ ଉପସ୍ଥିତ ଥିଲା, ଏବେ ବି ଅଛି । କେତେବେଳେ ମୋ ଶିକ୍ଷକ ଶିକ୍ଷୟିତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ମୋ ପଢ଼ା ଉପରେ କଡ଼ା ନଜର ତ, କେତେବେଳେ ମୋ ଭିତରେ ଇଶ୍ୱର ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିବା, ତ କେତେବେଳେ ଭଲ ସାମାଜିକ ଦାୟିତ୍ୱବୋଧ ଥିବା ନାଗରିକ ଟିଏ ଗଢ଼ିବାର ପ୍ରଚେଷ୍ଟା । ସବୁଠୁଁ ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ୱରେ ବୋଉର ସମ୍ପେଦନଶୀଳତା ମୋତେ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣଭାବରେ ପ୍ରଭାବିତ କରିଛି ।

ମୋ elementary schoolର teacher ଶ୍ରୀମତି ବିନୋଦିନୀ ସାମଲ, ମୋ ବୋଉର student । ତେଣୁ ମୋତେ ପଢ଼ାରେ ହେଲା କରିବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ନଥାଏ । ସବୁବେଳେ ତାଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଶୁଣିବାକୁ ମିଳେ । “Madam କହିଛନ୍ତି – ତୁ ଯେମିତି ଭଲ ପଢ଼ିବୁ, ” ଯେହେତୁ ବୋଉ ପଢ଼ାଲେଖାରେ ଅନେକ ସମୟ ବିତାଏ, ତାକୁ ଦେଖାଦେଖି ମୁଁ ଛୋଟବେଳୁଁ ଗପ ବହି ପଢ଼ିବାରେ ମନଦେଲି, ଆମଘରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଭଲ library ରୁମ୍ ଥାଏ । ଯେଉଁଥିରେ ୪/୫ଟା ବୁକ୍ ଆଲମିରା ଥାଏ । ସେଥିରେ Odia, English, Hindi, Bengali ବହିଥାଏ ।

ମୋ ବୋଉର ଇଶ୍ୱର ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ଦ୍ୱାରା ମୁଁ ବହୁତ ପ୍ରଭାବିତ । ଜନ୍ମାଷ୍ଟମୀ, ମାଣବସା, ଶିବରାତ୍ରି, ରଥଯାତ୍ରା ସେ ପାଳିଥାଏ । ଜନ୍ମାଷ୍ଟମୀରେ ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣଙ୍କ ଫଟୋରେ ଚନ୍ଦନଚିପା, ଫୁଲମାଳ, ଝୁଣା ଧୁଆଁ, ଦୀପ, ଦଶମ ସ୍କନ୍ଧ ପୁରାଣ ପଢ଼ାଯାଏ । ଆମେ ଭଉଣୀମାନେ

turn ନେଇ ବିଭିନ୍ନ Chapter ପଢ଼ୁ । ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀପୂଜା-ବୁଧବାର ରାତି ୯ଟାପରେ, ଆମେ ବୋଉ ସହିତ ମିଶି ଘରର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଯାଗାରେ ଝୋଟି ଚିତା ପକାଇଥାଉ । ରଥ ଯାତ୍ରାରେ ସେ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ମୂର୍ତ୍ତି ରଙ୍ଗ କରେ । ତାଠୁଁ ଦେଖି ଆମେ ପ୍ରତିବର୍ଷ ପାଳିକରି ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ମୂର୍ତ୍ତି ରଙ୍ଗ କରିଥାଉ । ଦୁର୍ଗା ପୂଜାରେ ତା ସହ ଘରବାଡ଼ିର ଆଡ, ସୁଲପଦ୍ମ ଫୁଲଧରି ଆମେ କଟକ ଦେବା ମେଳାକୁ ଯାଉ । ମୁଁ ଏଠି ମଧ୍ୟ ଠିକ୍ ସେହିପରି ପର୍ବପର୍ବାଣି ପାଳିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରିଛି । କନିନପାରିଲେ ସେ ସବୁକୁ ସ୍ମରଣ କରୁଛି ।

ପ୍ରତିବର୍ଷ ଶୀତଦିନ ଆଗରୁ ଆମର ସତ୍ୟଭାମାପୁର ଅନାଥାଶ୍ରମ ଯିବା ଏକ ନିୟମିତ ବ୍ୟାପାର । ଶ୍ରୀମତି ରମାଦେବୀଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ କସ୍ତୁରୀ ମାତୃମଙ୍ଗଳ କେନ୍ଦ୍ରରେ ରହିଥିବା ଅନାଥାଶ୍ରମର ଗରିବ, ମେଧାବୀ ପିଲାଙ୍କ କଲେଜ ପଢ଼ିବାପାଇଁ ବୋଉ ଆର୍ଥିକ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରେ । ଆମେ ଶୀତ ବସ, ଖାଇବା ଦେବା ସହ, ଗୋଟିଏ ଦିନ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ଗହଣରେ ବିତାଉ ।

ବୋଉର ସହନ ଶକ୍ତି ଅକଳନୀୟ, ନାନା ପ୍ରତିକୂଳ ପରିସ୍ଥିତି ଦେଇ ସେ ନିଜେ ବଢ଼ିଛି ଓ ଆମମାନଙ୍କୁ ବଢ଼େଇଛି । ଏବେବି ମୋର stressful situationରେ ତା ସହ telephonic conversation ଓ ତାର ନିୟମିତ ମୋ ପାଖକୁ ଆସୁଥିବା ଚିଠି ମୋତେ ଉତ୍ସାହ ଦିଏ । ମୋ ବୋଉର ଲେଖାର ଗୋଟିଏ stanza ମୋ ମନରେ ବହୁତ ଦମ୍ଭ ଓ ଆଶାବାଦ ଭରିଦିଏ । ନିମ୍ନୋକ୍ତ ଧାଡ଼ି ଗୁଡ଼ିକରେ ବୋଉ ମୋ ପାଇଁ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଦେଖୁଛି, ମୁଁ ସେ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ପୂରା କରିପାରେ କି ନକରି ପାରେ –

“ଐର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଓ ଦୃଢ଼ତା ତୋର, ଶକ୍ତ ଏକ ସେତୁ
ସେଇ ସେତୁ ପରେ ଛାଡ଼ି ଫୁଲାଇ ତୁ
ଚାଲି ଯାଉଥିବାର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ମୁଁ
ଖାସ୍ ଏବେ ଦେଖୁଅଛି ପାହାନ୍ତା ରାତିରେ ।”

(ଝିଅ ପାଇଁ ଗୋଟିଏ କବିତା-ନିୟତ ବସୁଧା)

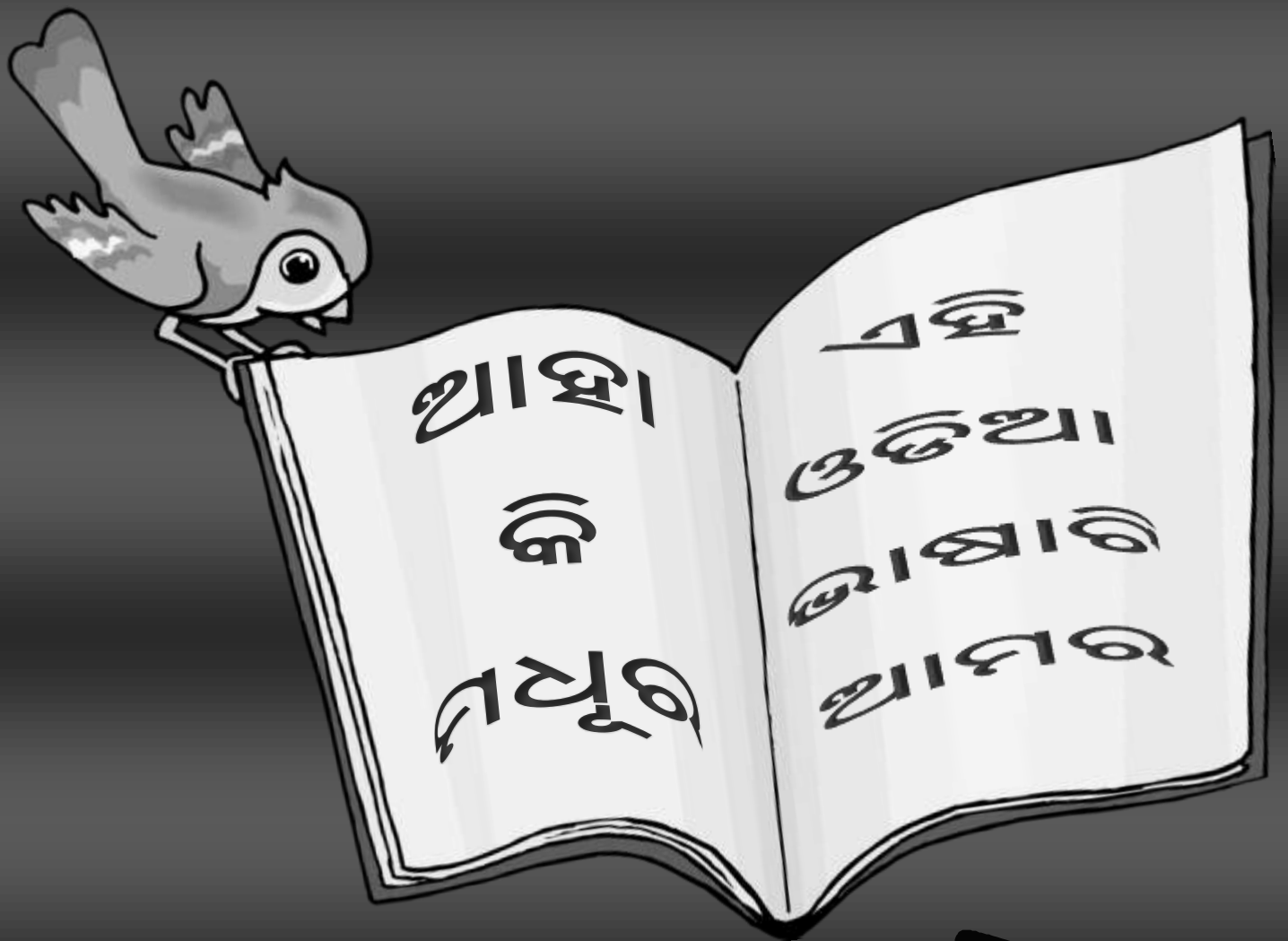
ମୁଁ ତ ବହୁତ ବର୍ଷରୁ ବାହାରକୁ ଚାଲିଆସିଛି । ତେଣୁ ମୋ ବୋଉର ସବୁ ପୁରସ୍କାର ଉତ୍ସବର ପ୍ରତ୍ୟକ୍ଷଦର୍ଶୀ ହୋଇପାରିନି । ମୋର ଏବେ ବି ମନେ ଅଛି IMFA ଶିଳ୍ପ ଗୋଷ୍ଠିର prestigious ସାରଳା award ର ପ୍ରାପ୍ତି ଅବସରରେ ମୁଁ ଥିଲି । ମୋର ଛାତି କୁଣ୍ଡେ ମୋଟ ହୋଇଯାଉଥିଲା । ତାର ସେଠି ଦେଇଥିବା ହୃଦୟସ୍ପର୍ଶୀ speech ଏବେ ବି ମୋ କାନରେ ଗୁଞ୍ଜରିତ । ତାହା ମୋତେ ପ୍ରେରଣା ଦେଇଥିଲା ଭଲ ମଣିଷଟିଏ ହେବାପାଇଁ, ଭଲ ମାଆଟିଏ ହେବାପାଇଁ, ଆଶାବାଦୀ ହେବାପାଇଁ, ଇଶ୍ଵରଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ବିଶ୍ଵାସ ରଖିବାପାଇଁ ଓ ଜୀବନକୁ ଏକ ଆହ୍ଵାନ ଭାବେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିବା ନିମିତ୍ତ ।

ମୁଁ ଯେତେବେଳେ ବୋଉକୁ ପଚାରେ ତୁ ଲେଖିବାକୁ କାହାଠୁ ପ୍ରେରଣା ପାଇଲୁ, ସେ କୁହେ— “ପ୍ରଖ୍ୟାତ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟିକ ଭାଷାକେଷ ପ୍ରଣେତା ତାର ଜେଜେବାପା, ସ୍ଵର୍ଗତ ଗୋପାଳ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ପ୍ରହରାଜଙ୍କ

ପରିବାରର ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଓ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ସଚେତନତା, ଓ ତାର ବୋଉର ଓଡ଼ିଆ କାବ୍ୟ କବିତାର କରୁଣ କୋମଳ ପଦାବଳୀର ଗାନ ତାକୁ ଶବ୍ଦ ଓ ଛନ୍ଦ ପ୍ରତି ଆଗ୍ରହୀ ଓ ଆବେଗ ପ୍ରବଣ କରାଇଛି ।”

ତାର ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀ “ଶୈଶବରୁ ସଂସାର” ସତ୍ୟାଶ୍ରୟୀ, ଆତ୍ମଜୀବନୀ ସଂପର୍କରେ ସେ ନିଜର ଅର୍ତ୍ତଚେତନାକୁ ବିଶ୍ଳେଷଣ କରି ବୁଝିଛନ୍ତି “ଗୋଟିଏ ଗ୍ରାମ୍ୟ ବାଳିକାର ଜୀବନଗାଥା ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ କାଳରେ ଜଣେ କବିର ମର୍ମସ୍ପର୍ଶୀ ଅନ୍ତର୍ବେଦନା ନେଇ ଉଚ୍ଚାରିତ ହୋଇଛି ।”

Asita Satpathy
2701 Cape Brett Dr.
Flower Mound, TX



ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷ

ବାମା ଚରଣ ମିତ୍ର

ଆ ପଣ କେବେ ଯେବେ ନରିପୁର ଆଡ଼େ ଯାଇଥିବେ ତେବେ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ଛାୟା ତଳେ ବସି ବିଶ୍ରାମ ନେଇଥିବେ । (ହାୟ ! ସେ ମହାପୁରୁଷ ଆଉ ନାହାନ୍ତି । ମଣିଷମାନଙ୍କ ଦାଉରେ ପଡ଼ି ତାଙ୍କୁ ଇହଧାମ ଛାଡ଼ିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିଛି !)

ନରିପୁର ଗାଁ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ଆସ୍ଥାନ । ପ୍ରକାଶ ମହାରୁହ । ଅସଂଖ୍ୟ ଓହଳମାନ ଓହଳି ପ୍ରକାଶ ପ୍ରକାଶ ଖମ୍ବ ପାଲଟି ଗଲାଣି । ପ୍ରାୟ ମାଣେ ଜମି ମାଡ଼ିବସିତନ୍ତ୍ର ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷ । ତଳଟି ପରିଷ୍ଠିତ ପରିଚ୍ଛନ୍ନ, ଯେପରି ପକ୍କା ଚଟାଣ । ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ତଳ ଦେଇ ସଡ଼କ ଚାଲିଯାଇଛି ପଶିମରୁ ପୂର୍ବକୁ । ପୂର୍ବକୁ ଡିହସାହି, ଦଇତାପୁର, ଧାନୁଆଁ, ଗମରା ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଗାଁମାନ । ପଶିମକୁ ନୁଆଗାଁ, ନୁଆପାଟଣା, ଅହମ୍ମଦପୁର ଇତ୍ୟାଦି । ଏସବୁ ଗାଁ ନରିପୁର ଠାରୁ ଅଳ୍ପ ଦୂରରେ ।

ସଡ଼କ ଉତ୍ତର ପଟକୁ ଲାଗି ନରିପୁର ଗାଁ ମଣାଣି । ସେଠି ସାନ ବଡ଼ କେତେ ମଣିଷ ମୁଣ୍ଡ, କେତେ ଛିଣ୍ଡା ମସିଣା ତକିଆ ଆଦି ପଡ଼ିଛି । ଆହୁରି ପଡ଼ିବ । ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ ‘ବୋଲ ହରି, ହରି ବୋଲ’ କୁହାଟରେ ମଣାଣି କମ୍ପି ଉଠେ । ଦାଉ ଦାଉ ଚିତା ଜଳି ଉଠେ । ତା’ପରେ ଶୁନ୍‌ଶାନ୍ କିଛିକ୍ଷଣ ପାଇଁ । ଗାଁ ମାଇପିମାନେ କାନ୍ଦବୋବାଳି ଛାଡ଼ୁ ଛାଡ଼ୁ ହାଣ୍ଡି ମାଠିଆ ଧରି ସେଠି ରୁଣ୍ଡ ହୁଅନ୍ତି । ହାଣ୍ଡି ହେରିକା ମଣାଣିରେ ଫୋପାଡ଼ି ଦେଇ ପାଖ ପୋଖରୀରେ ଗାଧୋଇ ପାଧୋଇ ପୁଣି କାନ୍ଦି କାନ୍ଦି ଫେରିଯାଆନ୍ତି ଯେ ଯାହା ଘରକୁ । ଦିନେ ଦି’ଦିନ କାନ୍ଦନ୍ତି । କାନ୍ଦଣା ଅମି ଆସେ । କିଛି ଦିନ ପରେ ପୁଣି ହସ ଖୁସି । ଯିଏ ମଲା ସିଏ ଗଲା । ତା’ର ଦେହ ନରିପୁର ମଣାଣିରେ ମାଟି ହୋଇ ମିଶି ଘାସ ବା ଗଜସ ଗଛକୁ ସାର ଯୋଗାଇଲା । ଆଉ ତାର ଆତ୍ମା ? କିରସ୍ତାନମାନେ କହିବେ, ସବୁ ଆତ୍ମାଯାକ ଯାଇ ପ୍ରକାଶ ଗୋଟାଏ ଘରେ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରି ରହିବେ । କଳ୍ପ ଶେଷରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ବିଚାର ହେବ । ତା’ପରେ କେହି ଅନନ୍ତ କାଳ ପାଇଁ ନରକ ଯିବେ । କେହି ବା ସ୍ୱର୍ଗ । ହିନ୍ଦୁଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ସ୍ୱର୍ଗ ନରକ ଛଡ଼ା ପୁଣି ପୁନର୍ଜନ୍ମ ବି

ଅଛି, ଆଜି ନ ହେଲେ କାଲି, କାଲି ନ ହେଲେ ଦୁଇଶ ବର୍ଷ ପରେ । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ନାସ୍ତିକ କହିବେ ଭସ୍ମାଭୂତସ୍ୟ ଦେହସ୍ୟ ପୁନରାଗମନଂ କୃତଃ, ପୋଡ଼ି ପାଉଁଶ ହୋଇଥିବା ଦେହ ପୁଣି କୁଆଡୁ ଆସିବ ? ଗୀତା କହେ ଆତ୍ମା ଅମର ! ପଣ୍ଡିତେ ଯିଏ ଯାହା କହନ୍ତୁ, ନରିପୁର ଲୋକେ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟକ୍ଷ ପ୍ରମାଣ ପାଇତନ୍ତି ଯେ ପୁନର୍ଜନ୍ମକୁ ଡେରି ହେଲେ ଅନେକ ଭସ୍ମାଭୂତ ଦେହ ଭୂତ ହୋଇ ନିଜ ଘର ବା ଘର ଲୋକର ମାୟା ଛାଡ଼ି ନ ପାରି ଏଇ ବଟମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ଦେହରେ ଆଶ୍ରା କରି ରହିଯାଆନ୍ତି । ସ୍ୱର୍ଗକୁ ଯିବାକୁ ବି ଇଚ୍ଛା କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଏଇ ତ ସେଦିନ ଅନ୍ଧା, ଗଜା ଟୋକାଟା, ଗୋଟାଏ ଝାଡ଼ା ପରେ ଗଜା ଟୋକୀ ବୋହୂଟାକୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ଚାଲିଗଲା । ଏଇ ଶୁଣାନରେ ତା ବୋହୂ କାନ୍ଦି କାନ୍ଦି ମୂର୍ଚ୍ଛା ଯାଇଥିଲା । ତା’ ଶବ ଦାହ କରି ଲୋକେ ଫେରୁଥିବା ବେଳେ ଦେଖିଲେ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ଗୋଟାଏ ମୋଟା ତାଳ ମଟ ମଟ କରି ଭାଙ୍ଗି ପଡ଼ିଗଲା, ଅଧତ ଝଡ଼ ନାହିଁ କି ବତାସ ନାହିଁ । ସମସ୍ତେ ଜାଣିଲେ ବୋହୂ ମାୟା ଛାଡ଼ି ନ ପାରି ଅନ୍ଧା ବଟମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ଗୋଟାଏ ତାଳରେ ବସା ବାନ୍ଧି ରହିଲା । ମାସେ ନ ପୁରୁଣୁ ଅନ୍ଧା ବୋହୂ ରାମ ପ୍ରଧାନ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ କଲିକତା ପଲେଇଲା । ଅନେକ କୁହାକୁହି ହେଲେ, କଥାଟି ବି ଜଣା ପଡ଼ିଗଲା । ରାମ ପ୍ରଧାନ କୁଶିକ୍ଷାରେ ଅନ୍ଧା ବୋହୂ, ଅନ୍ଧାକୁ ବିଷ ଦେଇ ମାରି ଦେଇଛି । ତଥାପି ଏ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଅନ୍ଧା, ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ତାଳରେ ଅଛି, ଲୋକେ ଦେଖୁଛନ୍ତି । ଏମିତି କେତେ ଯେ ଭୂତ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ଦେହରେ ରହିଲେଣି କିଏ ତାର କଳନା କରିବ ! କେହି କେହି ଦେଖିଚିନ୍ତି ରାତି ଅଧରେ ଅସଂଖ୍ୟ ଭୂତ ସେ ଗଛରୁ ଓହ୍ଲାଇ ସଡ଼କେ ସଡ଼କେ କୁଆଡ଼େ ଯାଆନ୍ତି । ଖାଲି ଯେ ନରିପୁର ଭୂତମାନେ ବଟମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କଠି ଅଛନ୍ତି ତା’ ନୁହେଁ, ଆଖପାଖ ପଟିଶଖଣ୍ଡ ଗାଁର ଭୂତମାନେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେଠି ରହନ୍ତି; ଏମିତି ଶୁଣାଯାଏ ।

ବଟମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ତଳେ ବର୍ଷା ଟୋପାଏ କି ଖରା ଚେନାଏ ବି ପଡ଼େ ନାହିଁ । ଶୀତ ଦିନରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ତାଙ୍କ ତଳଟି ଉଷୁମ, ମା’ କୋଳ

ଭଳି । ଘୋର ବର୍ଷା ଆସିଲେ ଗାଈଆଳ ପିଲାଏ ଗାଈ ଗୋଠକୁ ବିଲରୁ ବା ଦଣ୍ଡାରୁ ଘଉଡ଼େଇ ନେଇ ଆସନ୍ତି ବଟମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ତଳକୁ । ଗାଈ, ଛେଳି, ମେଣ୍ଟା ଆଦି ଶହ ଶହ ପଶୁ ନିରାପଦରେ ଶୁଖିଲାରେ ଗଛ ତଳେ ଚାରିକାତ ମେଲେଇ ଦେଇ ଦେହକୁ ଦେହ ଲଗେଇ ଦେଇ ଅଳସ ଭାଙ୍ଗନ୍ତି, ପାକୁଳି କରନ୍ତି । ଗାଈଆଳ ପିଲାଏ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ରାସ୍ତା ପରି ଲମ୍ବା ଚଉଡ଼ା ତାଳମାନଙ୍କରେ ଦଉଡ଼ା ଦଉଡ଼ି କରନ୍ତି ଆନନ୍ଦରେ । କେହି ବା ଗୋଟାଏ ତାଳରେ ଶୋଇ ଆନନ୍ଦରେ ଗୀତ ଛାଡ଼େ, କହ କହ ବାଳା କାହାର ଅବଳା, କିମ୍ପା ଏକା ବସି କାନ୍ଦୁରୁରେ, କହ କହ ବାଳା... । ଆଉ କେହି ବା ଗୋଟାଏ ଓହଲରେ ଦୋଳି ଖେଳେ । ଖରାଦିନର ଉଦୁଉଦିଆ ଖରାବେଳେ ବାଟୋଇ ଦଉଡୁଥାଏ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କୁ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ କରି । ପାଖ ହୋଇଗଲା ମାତ୍ରେ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ଦେହରୁ ଝଲକାଏ ହେମାଳ ପବନ ବାଟୋଇକୁ ପାଛୋଟି ଆଣେ । ବାଟୋଇ ମୁଣ୍ଡରୁ ଠେକାଟା ଫିଟାଇ ଦେଇ ଝାଳ ପୋଛି ଥକ୍କା ମାରି ଗୋଟାଏ ଓହଲକୁ ଡେରି ବସିଯାଏ ଦଣ୍ଡେ । ତା'ପରେ ପାଣିଛତ୍ରରୁ ଲଙ୍କାମରିଚ ଗୋଳା ହୋଇଥିବା ଥଣ୍ଡା ତୋରାଣିରୁ ଏକା ନିଶ୍ୱାସକେ ପେଟେ ପିଇ ବଟମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ଗୋଟାଏ ପାଦରେ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ରଖି ବେହୋସ ହୋଇ ଶୋଇଯାଏ । ଉଠେ ଛାଇ-ନେଉଟାଣି ବେଳକୁ । ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ପାଦ ଛୁଇଁ ଜୁହାର ହୋଇ ଚାଲିଯାଏ ବାଟେ ବାଟେ । ଶୀତଦିନ ରାତିରେ ମହାଜନମାନଙ୍କ ୩୦/୪୦ ଖଣ୍ଡ ମାଲ ବୁହା ବଳଦ ଗାଡ଼ିର କେଁ କଟର ବନ୍ଦ ହୋଇଯାଏ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ଆସ୍ଥାନ ତଳେ । ବଳଦମାନଙ୍କୁ ଫିଟାଇ ଦେଇ ଓହଲମାନଙ୍କରେ ବାନ୍ଧି ଦେଇ ରୋଷେଇ କରିବାରେ ଲାଗିଯାନ୍ତି । ଖିଆପିଆ ପରେ ବଳଦମାନଙ୍କୁ ଖାଇବାକୁ ଦେଇ ଆରାମରେ ଶୋଇଯାନ୍ତି ବଟମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ତଳେ । ବାହାରର ଥଣ୍ଡା ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ସ୍ୱର୍ଗ କରିପାରେ ନାହିଁ, ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷ ଖଣ୍ଡେ ଅଦୃଶ୍ୟ ଉଷ୍ମ କମ୍ପଳ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଘୋଡ଼ାଇ ଦିଅନ୍ତି । ସକାଳୁ ଉଠି ସେମାନେ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ଆସ୍ଥାନ ପରିଷ୍କାର କରି ଦେଇ ଜୁହାର ହୋଇ ଚାଲିଯାଆନ୍ତି ।

ଏ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କୁ ଆଣିଥିଲେ ବଟବିହାରୀ । ସେ ଚାରିପୁରୁଷ ଆଗ କଥା । ବଟବିହାରୀ ଥିଲେ ଅତି ଧାର୍ମିକ, ସତ୍ୟବାନ, ନିଷ୍ଠାବାନ ଅଥଚ ନୀରବ ମୌନୀ ଲୋକ । ଗାଁ ଗାଁ ଭିତରେ ଯେତେବେଳେ କନ୍ଦଳ କୁମ୍ଭେ ବୃଦ୍ଧି ପାଇବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲା ସେତେବେଳେ ସେ ବ୍ୟଥିତ ହୋଇ ଚାଲିଗଲେ ହିମାଳୟକୁ ତପସ୍ୟା କରିବାକୁ । ସେ ଯୁଗରେ ସମାଜରେ ପାପବୃଦ୍ଧି ହେଲେ ନେତା ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀବାଦ, ସମାଜବାଦ, କୃତନୀତି, ରାଜନୀତି, ପେଞ୍ଚ ପ୍ରୟୋଗ କରୁ ନଥିଲେ । ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ

ପାପକୁ ନିଜର ପାପ ବୋଲି ଧରି ନେଇ ତାକୁ ଦୂର କରିବାକୁ ତପସ୍ୟା କରୁଥିଲେ, ଉପବାସ କରୁଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ତପସ୍ୟା ପରେ ଆସି ପୁଣି ଧର୍ମ, ଆଧ୍ୟାତ୍ମିକତା ସଂସ୍ଥାପନ କରିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଯାଉଥିଲେ । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଯୁଗରେ ନେତାଏ ପ୍ରଚାର କରୁଛନ୍ତି, ଧର୍ମ, ଆଧ୍ୟାତ୍ମିକତା ଫିଙ୍ଗିଦିଅ, ବିଜ୍ଞାନଯୁଗରେ ସେ ସବୁର ସ୍ଥାନ ନାହିଁ, ଶିକ୍ଷ ବ୍ୟବସାୟ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଅର୍ଥ ଉପାର୍ଜନ ବଢ଼ାଅ, ତାହାହିଁ ଜୀବନର ଏକମାତ୍ର ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ । ଧର୍ମ ଅଳୀକ କଳ୍ପନା, ଅର୍ଥ ବାସ୍ତବ ସତ୍ୟ । କିଏ ଭଲ, କିଏ ଠିକ୍ ମହାକାଳ କେବଳ ଜାଣନ୍ତି । ହୁଏତ ମିଥ୍ୟାଟା ହିଁ ସତ୍ୟ, ସତ୍ୟଟା ହିଁ ମିଥ୍ୟା ! ହୁଏତ ସେ କଳ୍ପନା ମଣିଷକୁ କରାଏ ଦେବତା, ଆଉ ସେ ସତ୍ୟ କରାଏ ରାକ୍ଷସ ! ବର୍ଷେକାଳ ହିମାଳୟରେ ତପସ୍ୟା କରିବା ପରେ ବଟବିହାରୀ ଫେରିଲେ ନରିପୁର, ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ବରଗଛର ଚାରା ଧରି । ଆଖପାଖ ପଟିଶଖଣ୍ଡ ଗାଁର ଲୋକେ ମହାଉଷାହରେ ଓ ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧରେ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କୁ ସ୍ଥାପନା କଲେ । ସାତଦିନ ଧରି ଧୂମଧାମ୍ରେ ଖିଆପିଆ ଚାଲିଲା । ସେଇ ଚାରା ଆଜି ବିରାଟ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷ । ତାଙ୍କରି ଯୋଗୁଁ ସମସ୍ତ ବାଦବିବାଦ ଭୁଲି ପୁଣି ମିଳିତ ହେଲେ ତାଙ୍କରି ଶତ ଶତ ବାହୁଛାୟା ତଳେ । ବଟବିହାରୀ ଦେହତ୍ୟାଗ କଲା ପରେ ସ୍ୱର୍ଗ ନଯାଇ ରହିଗଲେ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ଦେହରେ । ଏ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ତା'ଙ୍କ ବଂଶରୁ କେହି ହେଲେ ଜଣେ ଖରାଦିନରେ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ତଳେ ପାଣିଛତ୍ର ଦିଅନ୍ତି । ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ଲଗାଏତ ବଟେଶ୍ୱର ମହାଦେବଙ୍କ ପୂଜା କରନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କ ବଂଶର ବଟସୁନ୍ଦର ଯେତେବେଳେ ମନ୍ଦିର ଭିତରେ ଶିବାଷ୍ଟକ ବୋଲୁଥିଲେ —

“ଗିରିରାଜସୁତାନ୍ୱିତବାମତନୁ ତନୁନିନ୍ଦିତରାଜିତକୋଟିବିଧୁମ୍
 ବିଧୁଖଣ୍ଡବିଖଣ୍ଡିତ ଭାଲତଟମ୍ ପ୍ରଣମାମି ଶିବମ୍ ଶିବକଳ୍ପତରୁମ୍ ॥”
 କିମ୍ପା ରାବଣଙ୍କ ଶିବତାଣ୍ଡବ ବୋଲୁଥିଲେ —

“ଜଟାଟବାଗଳଜଳପ୍ରବାହପ୍ଲାବିତସ୍ତୁଲେ
 ଗଲେଏବଲମ୍ବ୍ୟଲମ୍ବିତାମ ଭୁଜଙ୍ଗତୁଙ୍ଗମାଳିକାମ୍ ।
 ତମତମ ତମତମ ନିନାଦ ବଡ଼ତମବର୍ତ୍ତମ୍
 ତକାରତଣ୍ଡତାଣ୍ଡବମ୍ ତନୋତୁ ନଃ ଶିବଃ ଶିବମ୍ ॥”

ସେତେବେଳେ ମନ୍ଦିର ଭିତର ଗମଗମ ହୋଇ ଉଠୁଥିଲା । ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆବେଗରେ କର୍ମି ଉଠୁଥିଲେ । ବଟସୁନ୍ଦରଙ୍କ ମରକଲେବର ନରିପୁର ମଶାଣିରେ ମିଶି ଯାଇଛି । କିନ୍ତୁ ସେ ବି ନରିପୁର ମାୟା ନ ଛାଡ଼ି ରହିଯାଇଛନ୍ତି ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ଦେହରେ ।

ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ବର୍ଷ ଦ୍ଵିତୀୟା ଓଷା ଦିନ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ମାର୍ଜନା, ସ୍ନାନ ହୁଏ । ପୂଜା ହୁଏ । ଭୋଲ ମହୁରି ବାଜେ । ଗୁଡ଼ପଣା ଭୋଗ ହୁଏ । ଗାଁ ମାଜପିମାନଙ୍କ ଶଙ୍ଖ ହୁଲହୁଲି ଶବ୍ଦରେ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷ ଆନନ୍ଦରେ କମ୍ପି ଯାଆନ୍ତି । ସ୍ନାନ ହୁଏ । ତା'ପରେ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷ ପିନ୍ଧନ୍ତି ନୁଆଲୁଗା । ତା'ଙ୍କର ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଓହଲରେ ଓ ମୂଳରେ ସିନ୍ଦୂର ଲାଗିହୁଏ । ଧୂପଝୁଣା ବାସନାରେ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ଆସ୍ଥାନ ମହକି ଉଠେ । ତା'ପରେ ଚାଲେ ଭୋଜି ଭାତ । ପଚିଶ ଖଣ୍ଡ ଗାଁର ଲୋକେ, ଏପରି କି ଅହମ୍ମଦପୁରର ପଠାଣମାନେ ବି, ଏକାଠି ବସି ଖାଆନ୍ତି । ଦିନରାତି ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ତଳେ ଯାତ୍ରା, ବାଦାପାଲା, ଦୋକାନପତ୍ର ବସେ । ଇୟେ ହେଲା ତାଙ୍କର ବାର୍ଷିକ ପୂଜା କିନ୍ତୁ କାହାରି ପିଲାହେଲେ, ବା କାହାରି ମନସ୍କାମନା ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ହେଲେ, ପୁଅ ଚାକିରି ପାଇଲେ ବା ବାହାଘର ହେଲେ, ସେ ପୂଜା କରାଏ । ଏମିତି ପୂଜା ଲାଗିଥାଏ ବର୍ଷସାରା । ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କୁ କେନ୍ଦ୍ରକରି ପଚିଶଖଣ୍ଡ ଗାଁ ଭେଦାଭେଦ ଦୂର କରି ମିଳିମିଶି ଚଳନ୍ତି ।

ହିମାଳୟର ଏ ମହାରୁହ ହିମାଳୟପରି ନରିପୁର ସାମାରେ ଏବଂ ପଚିଶ ଖଣ୍ଡ ଗାଁର କେନ୍ଦ୍ରସ୍ଥଳରେ ବିରାଜମାନ ଚାରିପୁରୁଷ ହେବ ।

ନରିପୁର ଗାଁ ମଶାଣିକୁ ଲାଗି ଉତ୍ତରପଟେ ହଳଦିଆ ଗାଁ । ବଡ଼ ଗାଁଟାଏ । ହଳଦିଆର ଲୋକେ ନରିପୁରିଆମାନଙ୍କ ଠାରୁ ଅଧିକ ଶିକ୍ଷିତ ଓ ଥିଲାବାଲା । ନରିପୁରରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଉଚ୍ଚ ପ୍ରାଥମିକ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ, ମାଜନର ସ୍କୁଲରେ ପରିଣତ ହୋଇପାରି ନାହିଁ । ତା'ର ଦରକାର ପଡ଼ିନାହିଁ, କାରଣ ପିଲାଏ 'କଳାକଳେବର କହ୍ନାଇ ସଙ୍ଗେ ରୋହେଣୀ ସୁତ ...' ବୋଲି ଶିଖୁ ନ ଶିଖୁଣୁ ବଳଦଲାଙ୍ଗୁଡ଼ ମୋଡ଼ି ହେଃ ହେଃ ଶଳା ବଳଦ ମୋର ... କହୁ କହୁ ବିଲକୁ ଦୌଡ଼ନ୍ତି ସକାଳୁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ହଳଦିଆର ମାଜନର ସ୍କୁଲ ଉଚ୍ଚ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ପରିଣତ ହେଲାଣି ଅନେକ ଦିନୁ । ଆଉ ଅଳ୍ପ ଦିନ ଭିତରେ ସେ କଲେଜରେ ପରିଣତ ହେବ । ହଳଦିଆର ଅଧିକାଂଶ ଚାକିରିଆ ଓ ବଡ଼ ବ୍ୟବସାୟୀ । ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରୁ ଅନେକ ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ଚାକିରିଆ ବି ଅଛନ୍ତି । ବିଧାନସଭାର ସଭ୍ୟ, ସରପଞ୍ଚ, ପଞ୍ଚାୟତ ସମିତି ଚେୟାରମେନ୍ ମଧ୍ୟ ହଳଦିଆର ଲୋକେ । ନରିପୁରରେ ଖାଲି ନୁଆଣିଆ ଅନ୍ଧାରୁଆ ଚାଳଘର । ମଣିଷ ରହିବା, ଘରଠାରୁ ଗାଈଗୋରୁ ରହିବା ଘର ବଡ଼ । କିନ୍ତୁ ହଳଦିଆରେ ଅନେକ କୋଠାବାଡ଼ି ।

ହେଲେ, ନରିପୁରର ଗର୍ବ ତାର ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷ । ଯେତେବଡ଼ ଗାଁ ହେଉନା ପଛକେ ତାକୁ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ନୁଆଇବାକୁ ହେବ ନରିପୁରର ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ତଳେ । କଳ୍ପତରୁ ସେ । ପ୍ରତ୍ୟକ୍ଷ ଦେବତା ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ହେଲେ କଅଣ ହେଲା, ଯୁଗ ବଦଳୁଛି । ପଞ୍ଚାୟତରାଜ ଚାଲିଛି । ଲୋକେ ଶିକ୍ଷିତ ହେଲେଣି । ଦେଶର ଭଗୀରଥ ବିଦେଶମାନଙ୍କରୁ ଟଙ୍କା ସ୍ରୋତ ସବୁ ମୁହାଁଇ ଦିଲ୍ଲୀକୁ ଆଣିଲେଣି । ସେଠି ସବୁ ଠୁଳ କରି ପୁଣି ମୁହେଁଇ ଦିଆ ହେଉଛି ସବୁ ରାଜ୍ୟକୁ । ପୁଣି ରାଜ୍ୟରୁ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଗାଁକୁ ସୁଅ ଚାଲିଛି । କେଉଁ କେଉଁ ରାଜ୍ୟର ଭଗୀରଥମାନେ ପୁଣି ସିଧାସଳଖ ବିଦେଶରୁ ସେ ସୁଅକୁ ନିଜ ନିଜ ରାଜ୍ୟକୁ ଆଣିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ଅନେକ କପଟି ମହାଦେବ ବା ଜାନୁମୁନି ସେ ସୁଅକୁ ଜଟରେ ଛପାଇ ଦେଉଛନ୍ତି ବା ଚଳୁକରି ଦେଉଛନ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ସେଥିରେ କିଛି ଯାଏ ଆସେ ନାହିଁ । ସୁଅ ତ ମାଡ଼ି ଆସୁଛି । କିଏ କେତେ ଛପାଇ ରଖୁଛି, କିଏ କେତେ ଚଳୁ କରୁଛି କରୁ ! ଦେଖାଯିବ ପରେ ! କ୍ୟା ପରଓ୍ଵା ।

ହେଲେ, ଗୋଳମାଳ ହେଲା, ଫାଇଦା ଉଠାଇ ନପାରିବା ଲୋକ ଯେତେବେଳେ ହଠାତ୍ ଦେଶପ୍ରେମୀ, କର୍ମୀ ହୋଇ ଉଠିଲେ, ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ଧଳା ଟୋପି ନାଲିଲେ, କାନ୍ଧରେ ମୁଣା ଝୁଲାଇଲେ ଓ ଆଖୁ ଉପରକୁ ମୋଟ ଧୋତି ପିନ୍ଧିଲେ । ନରିପୁରର ବଟକୃଷ୍ଣ ଦିନେ ଏମିତି ବେଶ ବଦଳେଇଲେ । ସେ କଲିକତାରେ ଝୋଟ କଲରେ କଅଣ କାମ କରୁଥିଲେ । ଶାଗୁଣା ମଡ଼ ଗନ୍ଧ ପାଇ ଛୁଟିଲା ପରି ସେ କଲିକତା ଛାଡ଼ି ଗାଁକୁ ଆସି ଆସ୍ଥାନ ଜମାଇଲେ । ନିମିଷେକେ ସେ ଅବସ୍ଥାଟା ହୃଦୟଙ୍ଗମ କଲେ ଯେ ଯେଉଁ ସୁଅ ହଳଦିଆକୁ ଚାଲିଛି ତା'ର ଗୋଟାଏ ଧାର ନରିପୁରକୁ ଆଣିବାକୁ ହେଲେ ବେଶ୍ କିଛି ବୁଦ୍ଧି ଖରଚ କରିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ ।

ତେଣୁ ସେ ପ୍ରଥମେ ସ୍ଥାପନ କଲେ 'ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷ ଉନ୍ନତି ସମିତି' । ସଭା ବସିଲା । ପଚିଶଖଣ୍ଡ ଗାଁର ଲୋକେ ସଭାରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେଲେ । ନିୟମ ହେଲା ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଗାଁବାଲା ମାସକୁ ଅଣାଏ ଚାନ୍ଦା ଦେବେ । ଯିଏ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ସ୍ଵେସିୟାଲ୍ ପୂଜା କରାଇବ ସେ ଦୁଇଟଙ୍କା ଦେବ । ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଚୈତ୍ରରେ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ନୂତନ କଲେବର ବେଳେ ଯେଉଁ ହିମାଳୟ ପ୍ରମାଣ ପତର ଝଡ଼େ ତାକୁ ଆଉ ଧୋବଣୀ ପାଲୁଣୀମାନେ ମାଗଣା ନେଇ ପାରିବେ ନାହିଁ, ଟୋକେଇକୁ ଏକ ନୁଆପଇସା ମାସୁଲ ଦେବେ, ଇତ୍ୟାଦି । ବଟକୃଷ୍ଣ ସମିତିର ସେକ୍ରେଟେରି ହେଲେ । ଖୁବ୍ ଟଙ୍କା ଆଦାୟ ହେଲା । ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ମୂଳ ଚାରିପଟେ ପ୍ରକାଶ୍ଟ ଚଉତରା ଗଢ଼ା ହେଲା ଏବଂ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଓହଲ ଚାରିପଟେ ବି ସାନ ସାନ ଚଉତରା ଗଢ଼ା ହେଲା । ତା ସାଙ୍ଗେ ସାଙ୍ଗେ ବଟକୃଷ୍ଣଙ୍କ ଆଶ୍ରମ ମଧ୍ୟ ପକାହେଲା । ବଟକୃଷ୍ଣ, ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ

ଆୟ ଆହୁରି ଏକ ଅଭିନବ ଉପାୟରେ ବଢ଼ାଇବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲେ । ଅହମ୍ମଦପୁରର ଜାନ୍ ମହମ୍ମଦ ହେଉଛନ୍ତି ଗଣକବି । ‘ଶାଶୁ-ବୋହୂ କଳି’ ‘କଟକିଆଣୀ’ ଆଦି କବିତା ଲେଖି ଛପାଇ ସେ ଗ୍ରାମେ ଗ୍ରାମେ ବୁଲି ବିକନ୍ତି । ଅନ୍ଧା ବୋହୂ, ଅନ୍ଧାକୁ ବିଷ ଦେଇ ମାରି, ରାମ ପ୍ରଧାନ ସହିତ କଲିକତା ପଲେଇ ଯିବା କାହାଣୀ ସେ କବିତାରେ ଲେଖି ଛପାଇ ଗ୍ରାମେ ଗ୍ରାମେ ବୁଲି ପ୍ରଚାର କରିଥିଲେ । ସେ ବହି ତାଙ୍କର ଭାରି କାଚଡ଼ି ହୋଇଥିଲା, ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଗାଁର ବୋହୂମାନେ ତାକୁ କିଣି ପଢ଼ିଚନ୍ତି । ବଚକୃଷ୍ଣ ତାକୁ ଧରିଲେ ‘ବଚମହାପୁରୁଷ ମାହାତ୍ମ୍ୟ’ ଲେଖି ପ୍ରଚାର କରିବାକୁ । ‘ବଚ ମହାପୁରୁଷ ମାହାତ୍ମ୍ୟ’ ଲେଖା ହେଲା, ସେଥିରେ ଭଣିତା ହେଲା ‘ଦାନ ସେବକ ବଚକୃଷ୍ଣ’ । ବଚ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ନାନା ଅଲୌକିକ କାହାଣୀ ଶୁଣି ଯାତ୍ରୀ ବଢ଼ିଲେ । ସେ ଦିଗରୁ ବେଶ୍ କିଛି ଅର୍ଥ ବଚକୃଷ୍ଣଙ୍କ ହାତପୈଠ ହେଲା ଏବଂ ବଚ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ମାହାତ୍ମ୍ୟ ସହିତ ବଚକୃଷ୍ଣଙ୍କ ମହାତ୍ମ୍ୟ ମଧ୍ୟ ପଚାରିତ ହେଲା ।

ବଚକୃଷ୍ଣ ଅଙ୍ଗୁଳି ପ୍ରବେଶ କରାଇଲେ ପଞ୍ଚାୟତରେ ସାମାନ୍ୟ ମେମ୍ବରଟିଏ ହୋଇ । କିଛିଦିନ ପରେ ଜନରବ ହେଲା ଯେ ସରପଞ୍ଚଙ୍କ ବିରୁଦ୍ଧରେ ଅନାସ୍ତ୍ରା ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଆସିବ । ସରପଞ୍ଚ ହେଉଛନ୍ତି ହଳଦିଆର ବଚୁକ । ତାଙ୍କ ଦୋତାଲାର ମୁଣ୍ଡି ମରା ହୋଇ ନାହିଁ । ସେ ପ୍ରମାଦ ଗଣିଲେ । ବଚୁକ ମାମଲାବାଜ ଲୋକ । ସେ ଦାଉ ସାଧନ୍ତି ଆଇନ ଅଦାଲତ ଜରିଆରେ । ତାଙ୍କ ହାତମୁଠାରେ ଅନେକ ସାକ୍ଷୀ ଅଛନ୍ତି, ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଅଦାଲତରେ ‘ନିୟମ କରୁଛି ଯାହା କହିବି ସତ କହିବି, କିଛି ମିଛ କହିବି ନାହିଁ, କିଛି ଲୁଚାଇବି ନାହିଁ’ ଶପଥ ନେଲା ପରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ‘ଆମେ କାହିଁକି ମିଛ କହିବୁ, ଆମେ ମିଛ କହିଲାବାଲା ନହୁଁ’ ଯୋଡ଼ି ଦେଇ ଅନର୍ଗଳ ମିଛ କହିଯାଆନ୍ତି, ଆଉ ଜେରାରେ ଧରା ପଡ଼ିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ନିର୍ଲଜ ଭାବରେ ମିଛ କହିଯାଆନ୍ତି ଓ ସାକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ଦେଇ ସାରିବା ପରେ ଦୁଇଟଙ୍କା ପାରିଶ୍ରମିକ ନେଇ ହୋଟେଲରେ ମାଗଣା ଖାଇ ଘରକୁ ଫେରନ୍ତି । ବିଚାରକ ବିଚାରା ଜବାନବନ୍ଦି ପଢ଼ୁ ପଢ଼ୁ ଭାବୁଥାଏ –

*‘ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ନ ଦିଶେ ମେଘାଛନେ
ମିଥ୍ୟା ବଚନେ ସତ୍ୟ ଯେହ୍ନେ ।’*

ବଚୁକକୁ ତେଣୁ ସମସ୍ତେ ଭୟ କରନ୍ତି । ପଞ୍ଚାୟତ ସଭା ବସିବା ଆଗରୁ ସେ ବଚକୃଷ୍ଣଙ୍କ ନାମରେ ନାରୀଧର୍ଷଣ, ଚୋରି, ଠକେଇ ଆଦି ପିଙ୍ଗଳକୋଡ଼ର ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ଦଫାରେ ଚାରି ପାଞ୍ଚଟା ମାମଲା ଯୋଡ଼ି ଦେଲେ । ବଚକୃଷ୍ଣ ବଚ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ଅଧିଆ ପଢ଼ିଲେ ।

ଆହୁରି ଜୋର ସୋରରେ ‘ବଚ ମହାପୁରୁଷ ମାହାତ୍ମ୍ୟ’ ପ୍ରଚାର ଚଳାଇଲେ । ବଚ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ପାଣ୍ଡିରୁ ମକଦ୍ଦମା ଖରଚ ଚଳାଇଲେ, ସାକ୍ଷୀ ଭଙ୍ଗେଇଲେ । ପଞ୍ଚାୟତ ସଭାରେ ବଚୁକ ହାରିଗଲେ । ବଚକୃଷ୍ଣ ସରପଞ୍ଚ ହେଲେ । ବଚକୃଷ୍ଣ କିନ୍ତୁ କହିଲେ ବଚ ମହାପୁରୁଷ ଜିଣିଲେ । ନରିପୁର ଆଉ ହଳଦିଆ ଗାଁ ଭିତରେ ବିବାଦ ତେଜି ଉଠିଲା । ଖାଲି ସେତିକି ନୁହଁ, ସବୁ ଗାଁ ଭିତରେ ଫାଟ ଦୁଣିଲା ।

ବଚୁକ ଏଥର ଭଲକରି ଅଣ୍ଟା ଭିଡ଼ିଲେ । ସେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଅନାସ୍ତ୍ରା ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଆଣିବା ପାଇଁ ଯୋଗାଡ଼ ଚଳାଇଲେ । ମେମ୍ବରମାନଙ୍କୁ ଟଙ୍କା ପଇସା ଦେଇ ହାତ କରି ରାତାରାତି ଗୋଟାଏ ଟ୍ରକରେ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର ଯାଇ ମହାଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ଶପଥ କରାଇ ଲିଙ୍ଗରାଜଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ମହାପ୍ରସାଦ ଛୁଆଇଁ ଶପଥ କରାଇ ରାତି ନ ପାହୁଣ୍ଡୁ ଓପସ୍ ।

*‘ତଳେ ତଳେ ଗଲା ତଳ ଗଢ଼ିଶା,
କେହି ନ ଜାଣିଲେ ସାଇ ପଢ଼ିଶା !’*

କିନ୍ତୁ ଲିଙ୍ଗରାଜଙ୍କ ପ୍ରଭାବ ନରିପୁର ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ପଡ଼େ ନାହିଁ ବୋଧହୁଏ । ଏଠି ବଚ ମହାପୁରୁଷ ସର୍ବେସର୍ବା । ଦାସ କାଠିଆ ଦଳ, ପାଲାବାଲା, ଜାନ୍ ମହମ୍ମଦ ସମସ୍ତେ ଗାଁ ଗାଁ ବୁଲି ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ମାହାତ୍ମ୍ୟ ଓ ତା ସହିତ ବଚକୃଷ୍ଣଙ୍କ ମାହାତ୍ମ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଚାର ଚଳାଇଛନ୍ତି । ସେ ପ୍ରଚାର ପ୍ରାଚୀର ଭେଦ କରି ଲିଙ୍ଗରାଜ ପଶି ପାରିଲେ ନାହିଁ କି ମହାଙ୍କ ମନ୍ଦିର ମଧ୍ୟ କାରୁ କଲା ନାହିଁ । ବଚକୃଷ୍ଣ ବଚ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ମାହାତ୍ମ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଚାର କରି ବରଗଛ ସଙ୍କେତ ଧରି ପଞ୍ଚାୟତ ସମିତି ଚେୟାରମେନ୍ ପଦକୁ ଆଖେଇ ଆଖେଇ ପାଖେଇଲେଣି ।

ଏତେଦିନକେ ବଚୁକଙ୍କ ଚେତା ପଶିଲା । ସେ ବୁଝିଲେ ଯେ ପ୍ରଥମେ ବଚ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ମାହାତ୍ମ୍ୟ ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚ କରିବାକୁ ହେବ ।

ଦିନେ ହଠାତ୍ ଦେଖାଗଲା ହଳଦିଆ ଗାଁ ମଶାଣିରେ ଏକ ବାବାଜି ଆସ୍ଥାନ ଜମାଇ ବସିଚନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କ ନାଁ ବଟିଆ ବାବା ।

ପ୍ରଚାର ହୋଇଗଲା ବଟିଆ ବାବା ଜଣେ ଭାରି କାଳୀସାଧକ । ପ୍ରତି ଅମାବାସ୍ୟା ରାତିରେ ସେ ଶବ ସାଧନା କରନ୍ତି । ବୀର ପେଶି ଜାଣନ୍ତି ବି । ଆଉ ତାଙ୍କ ବଚୁଆରୁ ଟିକିଏ ଟିକିଏ ହୋମ ପାଉଁଶ ଦେଇ ସବୁ ରୋଗ ଭଲ କରି ଦେଇ ପାରନ୍ତି । ଅଳ୍ପଦିନ ଭିତରେ ପଚିଶି ଖଣ୍ଡ ଗାଁରେ ଏ ସମ୍ପାଦ ବିଜୁଳି ଭଳି ଖେଳିଗଲା । ଲୋକସ୍ତୁ ଲାଗିଲା ବଟିଆ ବାବା ପାଖକୁ ।

କେତେକ ଦିନ ପରେ ଗାଁ, ଗାଁରେ ଏକ ନୂଆ ଆତଙ୍କ ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହେଲା । ରାତି ଅଧରେ ଅନେକଙ୍କ ଘରେ ଚେକା, ଭୂଷା ଘୁଅ ପଡ଼ିବାକୁ

ଗଲାବେଳେ ଧୂଳିଆ ବସ୍ତୁକ ଶିକ୍ଷାମତେ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ପାଦତଳେ ଅତି କରୁବିଷ ପୋତି ଦେଇଗଲା ।

ପରଦିନ ଦେଖାଗଲା ଆଠଜଣଙ୍କ ମୃତଦେହ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ତଳେ ପଡ଼ିଛି । ଆଉ ପନ୍ଦରଜଣ ସାଂଘାତିକ ଭାବର ଜଖମ ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଛନ୍ତି । ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଅପେକ୍ଷାକୃତ ଅଳ୍ପ ଜଖମ ହୋଇଥିଲେ ସେମାନେ କୌଣସି ମତେ ପଳାଇ ପାରିଛନ୍ତି ।

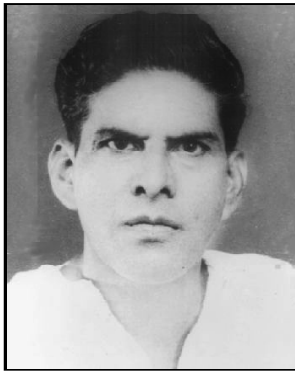
ପୁଲିସ ଆସିଲା । ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ଆସ୍ଥାନ ଉପରେ ୧୪୪ ଧାରା ଜାରି ହେଲା । ସବୁ ଗାଁରୁ ପ୍ରାୟ ଶହେ ସରିକି ଲୋକ ହାତକଡ଼ା ପିନ୍ଧି ଧରା ହୋଇଗଲେ । ବସ୍ତୁକ ଓ ବଟକୃଷ୍ଣ ମଧ୍ୟ ଧରା ହେଲେ । ଧୂଳିଆ ଭୂତମାନଙ୍କ ବିପକ୍ଷରେ ଯେଉଁ ଦଫାମାନ ଯୋଡ଼ି ମକଦ୍ଦମା କରିବାକୁ ବସ୍ତୁକଙ୍କୁ ପରାମର୍ଶ ଦେଇଥିଲା, ସେ ଦଫାମାନଙ୍କରୁ ଅନେକ ଓ ତା ସହିତ ହତ୍ୟାପାଇଁ ୩୦୨ ଦଫା ଯୋଡ଼ା ହୋଇ ମକଦ୍ଦମା ଚାଲିଲା । ମଡ଼ ପଡ଼ିଥିବାର ଦେଖି ଶାଗୁଣା ବିଲୁଆ କୁକୁରମାନେ ଯେମିତି ଗଦା ହୋଇପଡ଼ନ୍ତି, ସେମିତି ଟାଉଟର ଆଦିମାନେ ଗଦା ହୋଇପଡ଼ି ଟଙ୍କା ଶୋଷିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲେ । ବସ୍ତୁକ ଓ ବଟକୃଷ୍ଣଙ୍କ ଧନ ନିଆଁ ପୁଆଁରେ ଯିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲା ।

ଏ ଘଟଣାର ଅଳ୍ପଦିନ ପରେ ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷ ଝାଉଁଳି ପଡ଼ିଲେ । ବିରାଟ ମହାରୁହ ସତେ ଯେପରି ଧାନମଗ୍ନ । ଅତୀତର କଥା ମନେ

ପକାଇ ସେ ବୋଧହୁଏ ଧାନମଗ୍ନ ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ୍ ଚିନ୍ତାରେ । ମହାକାଳ ମଧ୍ୟ ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କର କଲ୍ୟାଣପାଇଁ ବିଷପାନ କରିଥିଲେ । ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷ ମହାକାଳ ବଟେଶ୍ୱରଙ୍କୁ ମନେ ମନେ ପ୍ରଣାମ କରି ମହାପ୍ରୟାଣ କଲେ । ନାରାୟଣ ପ୍ରାପ୍ତି ତ ନୁହଁ, ହତ୍ୟା ! କିନ୍ତୁ ଗଛର କି ପ୍ରାଣ ଅଛି ଯେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ମାରିଲେ ମଣିଷ ତିଆରି ପିଙ୍ଗଳକୋର୍ଡର ୩୦୨ ଦଫା ଲାଗିବ । ଆହା ବୋଲିବାକୁ ମଧ୍ୟ କେହି ନାହିଁ ।

ସରକାର ସେ ଗଛକୁ ନିଲାମ କରାଇ ଦେଲେ । ନରିପୁର, ହଳଦିଆ ଆଦି ଗ୍ରାମର ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କ କ୍ଷମତା ନାହିଁ ସେ ବିରାଟ ଗଛକୁ ନିଲାମ ଧରିବାକୁ । ସବୁ ପଇସା ତ ନିଆଁପୁଆଁରେ ଯାଇଛି । ଅହମ୍ମଦପୁରର ପଠାଣମାନେ କିନ୍ତୁ ନିଲାମ ଧରିଲେ । ବାକିତକ ଗାଁବାଲାମାନେ ଗୁଣ୍ଡଘାଷ ଦେଇ ଚୋରେଇ ବୋହି ନେଇ ଜାଲିଲେ । ଦୁଇଦିନ ଭିତରେ ସବୁ ସଫା । ବଟ ମହାପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ଆସ୍ଥାନ ଶୂନ୍ୟଗାନ୍ । ଗୋଟାଏ ସଭ୍ୟତା ଗଲା, ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ସଭ୍ୟତା ଆସିଗଲା । କିଛି ଡରିବାର ନାହିଁ । ମହାକାଳ ସଦା ଜାଗ୍ରତ ।

ଆଜି ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବି ରାତିରେ ବଟବିହାରୀଙ୍କୁ ଲୋକେ ସେଠି ବୁଲୁଥିବାର ଦେଖିଛନ୍ତି । ତା'ଙ୍କ କଠଉ ଠକ୍ ଠକ୍ ଓ ଦୀର୍ଘନିଶ୍ୱାସ ପକାଇବାର ଶବ୍ଦ ଅନେକ ଶୁଣୁଛନ୍ତି ।



Story courtesy :
Twisampati Mitra,
10460 Imperial Ave,
Cupertino, CA 95014

ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଅସ୍ଥିତା

ପ୍ରଫେସର୍ ନିତ୍ୟାନନ୍ଦ ସାହୁ

ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଅସ୍ଥିତା କହିଲେ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ରତା, ଯାହାକୁ ନେଇ ସେ ଗର୍ବ କରିପାରେ, ଗୌରବ ମଣ୍ଡିତ ହୋଇପାରେ । ମୁଁ ଏଠାରେ ଇତିହାସ ପୃଷ୍ଠାରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ବାଣିଜ୍ୟିକ ପରମ୍ପରାର କଥା କହିବାକୁ ଯାଉନାହିଁ; ଯାହା, ସୁମାତ୍ରା, ବାଲି ପ୍ରଭୃତି ଦ୍ୱୀପରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିବାକୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାଧକ ପୁଅ ସମୁଦ୍ର ବକ୍ଷରେ କେମିତି ଯାତ୍ରା କରୁଥିଲା, ଆଜିର କାର୍ତ୍ତିକ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣିମାରେ ଆକାଶଦୀପ ଓ ବୋଇତ ବନ୍ଦାଣ ତଥା ବାଲିଯାତ୍ରା ପ୍ରଭୃତିରେ ତାହା କିପରି ପ୍ରତିଫଳିତ, ସେହି ସେହି ଦ୍ୱୀପରେ “କ୍ଲିଙ୍ଗ” ନାମରେ ଅତୀତର କଳିଙ୍ଗବାସୀ କିପରି ରୁପାନ୍ତରିତ ହୋଇ ରହିଛନ୍ତି, ଏପରିକି ବନ୍ଧୁଙ୍କର ଦନ୍ତ କିପରି କଳିଙ୍ଗରୁ ଶ୍ରୀଲଙ୍କା ଯାଇଥିଲା, ଏ ସବୁ ବିଷୟ ବିସ୍ତାରିତ ଭାବେ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନା କରିବାର ଉଦ୍ୟମ କରୁନାହିଁ । ଓଡ଼ିଆର ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଯାହା ଅଛି, ଯାହା ତାହାର ଅସ୍ଥିତାର ଉଦ୍‌ଗାତା ହୋଇ ଉଠିବ ତାହା ହିଁ ସଂକ୍ଷେପରେ ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ କରୁଛି ।

୧. ନିଜ ଭାଷା :

ପ୍ରଥମତଃ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ଏକ ନିଜ ଭାଷା ଅଛି, ଯାହା ଏକ ଅତି ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ଭାଷା । ଭାରତବର୍ଷରେ ଅନେକ ରାଜ୍ୟ ଅଛନ୍ତି ଯେଉଁ ମାନଙ୍କର ନିଜସ୍ୱପରିଚୟ ବହନ କରି କୌଣସି ଭାଷା ନାହିଁ । ସେମାନେ ବିସ୍ତୃତ ଅଂଚଳର ଅଧିବାସୀ ହୋଇପାରନ୍ତି, ବହୁ ସଂଖ୍ୟାରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଭାଷା କଥିତ ହୋଇପାରେ, ମାତ୍ର ବହୁ ରାଜ୍ୟର ଲୋକେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଭାଷାକୁ ଆଶ୍ରା କରିଛନ୍ତି । ୭ମ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀରୁ ଜନ୍ମଲାଭ କରିଥିବା ଆମ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାର ଏକ ସମୃଦ୍ଧ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ମଧ୍ୟ ରହିଛି, ଯେଉଁଥିରେ ତିନି ଜଣ ଜ୍ଞାନପୀଠ ପୁରସ୍କାର ଲାଭ କରି ସାରିଛନ୍ତି ।

୨. ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଲିପି :

ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟତଃ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ଗୋଟେ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଲିପି ଅଛି । ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡ, ଆମେରିକା ଓ ଅନେକ ପଶ୍ଚିମୀ ଦେଶ ସେହି ଗୋଟିଏ ରୋମାନ୍ ଲିପିରେ ଚଳନ୍ତି । ଦେବନାଗରୀ ଲିପିରେ ହିନ୍ଦୀ ଅଂଚଳ ଭାବ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତ କରେ । ଆସାମୀ ଭାଷାଭାଷୀ ବଂଶ ଲିପିରେ ଚଳନ୍ତି ।

୩. ଛନ୍ଦଭରା ନୃତ୍ୟକଳା :

ତୃତୀୟତଃ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ଏକ ସବୁର ନୃତ୍ୟକଳା ଅଛି ଯାହା ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ନାମରେ ଆଜି ଜଗତ ବିଖ୍ୟାତ । ସାରା ଭାରତବର୍ଷରେ ଭାରତନାଟ୍ୟମ୍, କୁଚିପୁଡ଼ି, ମଣିପୁରୀ, କଥକକୁ ଛାଡ଼ିଦେଲେ ଆଉ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ନୃତ୍ୟକଳା ନାହିଁ । ହୁଏତ ଲୋକକଳାର କିଛି ନୃତ୍ୟ କଥା କୁହାଯାଇ ପାରେ, ମାତ୍ର ସେଥିରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ସମ୍ବଳପୁରୀ, ଛଉ, ଘୁମୁରୀ ପ୍ରଭୃତି ନିଜର ଉତ୍କର୍ଷର କଥା ହିଁ ଘୋଷଣା କରନ୍ତି ।

୪. ଲାଳିତ୍ୟମୟ ସଂଗୀତ :

ଚତୁର୍ଥତଃ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ଅଛି ଏକ ବିଶିଷ୍ଟ ଗାୟନଶୈଳୀ । ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତ ଭାବରେ ଏହା ଜନାଦୃତ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ଛାନ୍ଦ, ଚମ୍ପୂର ସଂଗୀତ ଏଇ ଗାୟନଶୈଳୀର ପରିଚାୟକ ।

୫. ଜୀବନ୍ତ ଶିଳ୍ପକଳା :

ପଞ୍ଚମତଃ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ଶିଳ୍ପକଳା – ଯାହା କୋଣାର୍କ, ପୁରୀ ଓ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱରର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ଉତ୍କର୍ଷ ହୋଇ ରହିଛି । କୋଣାର୍କ ମନ୍ଦିର, ଏହାର ଚକ୍ର, ମୁକ୍ତେଶ୍ୱରର ତୋରଣ, ଏ ସବୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଶିଳ୍ପର ମହତ୍ତ୍ୱ ପ୍ରକଟ କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ଏବେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଓଡ଼ିଆ କାରିଗର ପ୍ରସ୍ତର ଦେହରେ ଶିଳ୍ପର ଜୀବନ୍ୟାସ କରିବାରେ ସମର୍ଥ । ଏହା ପୁରାତନ ସତ, ହେଲେ ମୃତ ନୁହେଁ, ଜୀବନ୍ତ, ଗତିଶୀଳ । ତା ସହିତ ମିଶାଇ ଦିଅନ୍ତୁ ସୁନା ଓ ରୂପାର ତାରକସି କାମ । ତୁଳନାୟ ଓ ସମୃଦ୍ଧ ଏହାର ଦିଗନ୍ତ ।

୬. ଅନନ୍ୟ ମନ୍ଦିରଶୈଳୀ :

ଷଷ୍ଠତଃ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ରହିଛି ମନ୍ଦିର ଗଠନର ଏକ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଶୈଳୀ । ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ଭାରତ କିମ୍ବା ଉତ୍ତର ଭାରତର ମନ୍ଦିର ଶୈଳୀଠାରୁ ଏହା ଭିନ୍ନ । ଏଇ ଭିନ୍ନତା ତା’ର ଚିତ୍ରାର ଭିନ୍ନତା, ତା’ର କୌଶଳର ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ରତା, ଓ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱର ବୈଶିଷ୍ଟ୍ୟ ହିଁ ପ୍ରତିପାଦନ କରେ ।

୭. ମାନବୀୟ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ

ସପ୍ତମତଃ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଠାକୁର ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ରତ୍ନସିଂହାସନରୁ ଓହ୍ଲାଇ ମଣିଷ ମେଳରେ, ମଣିଷର ହାତଟଣା ରଥରେ ବସି ରଥଦାଣ୍ଡରେ ଯାଏ । ମାଉସୀ ମା ଘରେ ପିଠା ଖାଏ, ଗୁଣ୍ଡିଚା ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ରହି ପୁଣି ରତ୍ନ ସିଂହାସନକୁ ଫେରେ । ତାକୁ ଜର ହୁଏ, ସେ ପଥି ଖାଏ । ବାର ବରଷରେ ତା'ର ନବ କଳେବର ହୁଏ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ କବି ଜୟଦେବର ଗୀତଗୋବିନ୍ଦ ବୋଲାହୋଇ ନୃତ୍ୟ ହେଲେ ସେ ପହୁଡ଼କୁ ଯାଏ । ହାଣ୍ଡି ଉପରେ ହାଣ୍ଡି ରହି କେବଳ ତଳୁ ନିଆଁ ଦିଆଯାଇ ତାର ମହାପ୍ରସାଦ - ମହୁର, ବେସର, ଡାଲି, ଶାଗ, ଖଟା ତିଆରି ହୁଏ । ତା'ର ବାର ମାସରେ ତେର ପରବ ହୁଏ । ସେ ଅନନ୍ୟତାର ଠାକୁର । ଦାରୁହୁଙ୍କୁ ରେତନାର ସମୁଦ୍ଧଳ ପ୍ରତୀକ ।

୮. ସଜ୍ଜ ପଖାଳ :

ଅଷ୍ଟମତଃ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପଖାଳ । ଭାରତବର୍ଷରେ କେଉଁଠି ମିଳିବ ଖାଦ୍ୟର ଏ ଦୁର୍ଲ୍ଲଭ ପ୍ରକାର ? ଖରାଦିନେ ଗଣ୍ଡେ ପଖାଳ ଧରି ବସିଲେ, ତା ସାଙ୍ଗକୁ ଶାଗ ହେଉ, ଭଜା ହେଉ, ବଡ଼ିଚୁରା ହେଉ, ଯାହା ମିଳିଲେ ବି ଆତ୍ମା ଶାନ୍ତି ହୋଇଯାଏ । ପଖାଳରେ ଟିକେ ଅଦା ପକାଇବେ ?

ଟିକେ ଲେମ୍ବୁ ପକାଇବେ ? ଟିକିଏ କଷି ଆମ୍ବପତର ଦଳିଦେବେ ? ଦିଅନ୍ତୁ, ପଖାଳର ସ୍ବାଦ ବଢ଼ାଇଦେବ । ଗ୍ରୀଷ୍ମର ଦାଉରୁ ରକ୍ଷା ପାଇବା ପାଇଁ ପଖାଳଠୁଁ ଭଲ କ'ଣ ଅଛି ? ତାନ୍ତ୍ରମାନେ ପରା କହିଲେଣି, ଅଂଶୁଘାତରୁ ରକ୍ଷା ପାଇବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଛ ତ ପଖାଳ ଭାତରେ ତୋରାଣି ପିଅ ବୋଲି । କେତେ ଯୁଗରୁ ଏକଥା ଆମ ଓଡ଼ିଆଏ ଜାଣିଲେଣି, ଏବଂ ତାକୁ ସେମିତି ଚଳାଇ ରଖିଛନ୍ତି । ଏ କ'ଣ କମ୍ ଗୌରବର କଥା !

ରୁଚିମୟ ପାକଶୈଳୀ :

ନବମତଃ ଏବଂ ସର୍ବୋପରି ଏକ ରକ୍ଷନଶୈଳୀ, ଯାହା ଏହାର ପରିପାର୍ଶ୍ଵର ଚାପ ସତ୍ତ୍ଵେ ନିଜର ସ୍ଵତନ୍ତ୍ରତା ବଜାୟ ରଖିଛି । ଏଥିରେ ଲଙ୍କାମରିଚ ଓ ଖଟାର ପ୍ରଳୟ ନାହିଁ କିମ୍ବା ତୈଳ ପ୍ରାବଲ୍ୟ /ଧୂକ୍ୟ ଓ ମସଲାକଣ୍ଠର ପ୍ରଭାବ ନାହିଁ; ଅଥଚ ଏହା ସ୍ଵାସ୍ଥ୍ୟପ୍ରଦ ଓ ସ୍ଵାଦିଷ୍ଟ ।

ଅସ୍ମିତାର ଏହି ନବଗୁଣ ଉପବୀତଧାରୀ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଆଜି ଯଦି ଶୈର୍ଯ୍ୟମୟ, ତେଜୋମୟ ନ ହେବେ, ତେବେ କାହାକୁ କହିବା ? କପାଳରେ ସିନା କର ଥାପିବା ।

C/O Tapas Sahoo,
11396 Classic Lane,
Frisco, TX 75034





ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଓ ସଂସ୍କୃତି-ଏକ ନୂତନ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିପାତ

(ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାର ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ମାନ୍ୟତା ଉପଲକ୍ଷେ)

ବିଜୟମୋହନ ମିଶ୍ର

ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା କହିଲେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଆଞ୍ଚଳିକ ଭାଷା ବୋଲି ବୁଝାଯାଏ । ଏହା ପ୍ରତ୍ୟୟ ହୁଏନାହିଁ ଯେ’ ଏହା ଏକ ଆଦିମ ଭାଷା, ଆଦି ମଣିଷର କଥାରୁ ରୂପାୟିତ ହୋଇ ଏହାର ସୃଷ୍ଟି । ଏହା କିପରି କଥା ? ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାର ବ୍ୟୁତ୍ପତ୍ତି ଓ ଶବ୍ଦଯୋଜନା ସଂପର୍କରେ ଗବେଷଣା ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ ହୋଇନାହିଁ, ଯାହା ହୋଇଛି ସଂସ୍କୃତର ଅନୁକରଣରେ ହୋଇଛି । ସଂସ୍କୃତ ଭାଷାରୁ ଅପଭ୍ରଂଶ ହୋଇ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ସୃଷ୍ଟି ବୋଲି କେହି ଇଂରାଜୀ ଗବେଷକ ଅନୁମାନ କରିଥିଲେ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଶିକ୍ଷା ସମାଜ ସେହି ଧାରଣାର ବଶବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ହୋଇ ନିଜର ମୌଳିକତା ଖୋଜିବାକୁ ସମୟ ଦେଇନାହାନ୍ତି । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଓ ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ମୌଳିକତା ଆଲୋଚନା କରିବା ଏହି ପ୍ରବନ୍ଧର ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟ ।

ସଂସ୍କୃତ ଭାଷା ଭାରତବର୍ଷରେ ବହୁତ ପୁରୁଣା କାଳରୁ ଅଛି । ତେଣୁ ତା’ର କିଛି ଇତିହାସ ବା ଉପତ୍ତି ଥାଇପାରେ, ସେ’ ବିଷୟରେ ଧ୍ୟାନ ଉଣା ଦିଆଯାଇଛି । ଦେଶର ଅଶିକ୍ଷା ଓ ଧର୍ମର ସୁଯୋଗ ନେଇ କିଛି ବିଦ୍ୟାସଂପନ୍ନ ଲୋକ ସଂସ୍କୃତକୁ ‘ଦେବ ଭାଷା’ ବୋଲି ନାମ ଦେଇ ଏହା “ଆକାଶରୁ ଉତ୍ପତ୍ତି” ବୋଲି ବହି ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତି । ଔପନିବେଶିକତାବାଦୀ ପଣ୍ଡିତମାନେ ଏ’ ଆକାଶକୁ ଖୋଜିବାକୁ ଯାଇ ଯୁରୋପୀୟ ଭାଷା ଜରିଆରେ ‘ଆର୍ଯ୍ୟ’ ନାମକ ଏକ ‘ସଭ୍ୟ’ ଜାତି ଭାରତବର୍ଷ ପ୍ରବେଶ କରି ସଂସ୍କୃତ ଭାଷା ଉପତ୍ତି କରିଛନ୍ତି ବୋଲି ନୂଆ ବହି ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତି । ଆମ୍ଭେମାନେ ଏହି ବହିମାନଙ୍କର ଗ୍ରହଣାତୀ ।

ନୂତନ ଗବେଷଣା ଫଳରେ ସଂସ୍କୃତ ଭାଷାରେ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ଶବ୍ଦମାନଙ୍କର ସୃଷ୍ଟି ଓ ବାସତ୍ୟ ଭାରତବର୍ଷରେ ହିଁ ବୋଲି ପ୍ରମାଣ ମିଳୁଛି । ସମୟର ଚଳଣିରେ ଭାଷା ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତିତ ହୁଏ, ତେଣୁ ଅନେକ ଶବ୍ଦ ପୁରୁଣା ନ ରହି ନୂଆ ଭାଷା ନିଏ । ତା’ ଯୋଗୁଁ ଶବ୍ଦମାନଙ୍କୁ ଚିହ୍ନିବା ସହଜ ହୁଏ ନାହିଁ । ତଥାପି ଅନେକ ଶବ୍ଦ ଲୋକଭାଷାରେ, ମଣିଷର ଦୈନନ୍ଦିନ କଥାରେ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ରହି ବସା ବାନ୍ଧିଥିବାର ଜଣାପଡ଼େ । ଯେଉଁ ଦେଶର ଲୋକ ଯେତେ ଆପଣା ଘରଠିକ୍ କାମରେ ଜଡ଼ିତ, ସେ’ ସ୍ଥଳରେ ପୁରୁଣା ଭାଷାର ସଂକେତ ମିଳିବା କଥା । ଏ’ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଗୋଟିଏ ଉତ୍ତମ ଗବେଷଣା କ୍ଷେତ୍ର ।

ଭାଷାର ତାତ୍ପର୍ଯ୍ୟ :

ତାମିଲ୍, କନ୍ନଡ଼ ଓ ତେଲୁଗୁ ଭାଷାର ଲିଖିତ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଲିଖିତ ସାହିତ୍ୟଠାରୁ ପୁରୁଣା । କିନ୍ତୁ କଥିତ ସାହିତ୍ୟରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ସ୍ଥାନ ଖୁବ୍ ପୁରୁଣା ବୋଲି ଅନୁମାନ କରାଯାଇଛି । ସଂସ୍କୃତ ଭାଷାର ପ୍ରଥମ ଅନୁଶୀଳନ ଓ ଚର୍ଚ୍ଚା ଭାରତବର୍ଷର ପଞ୍ଜାବ ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ ହୋଇଛି ବୋଲି ବେଦସାହିତ୍ୟରୁ ପ୍ରମାଣିତ ହେଉଛି । କିନ୍ତୁ ମୌଳିକ ଶବ୍ଦମାନଙ୍କୁ ଅନୁସରଣ କଲେ ଆମକୁ ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ଝାଡ଼ଖଣ୍ଡ ଓ ଉତ୍ତର ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ପାର୍ବତ୍ୟ ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିବାକୁ ହେବ । ମୁଣ୍ଡାଜାତିର କଥନି ଓ ଚଳଣି ବୈଦିକ ଭାଷାକୁ ପ୍ରଭାବିତ କରିଛି ବୋଲି ଭାଷାବିତମାନେ ମତ ଦେଉଛନ୍ତି । ଏହା ସମ୍ଭବ ଯେ’ ସମସ୍ତ ଉତ୍ତର ଭାରତରେ କୌଣସି ସମୟରେ ଏହି ମୁଣ୍ଡା ଭାଷାର ପ୍ରଚଳନ ଥିଲା ଏବଂ ସମୟକ୍ରମେ ତା’ ଲୋପ ପାଇଯାଇଛି । କିନ୍ତୁ ସେ’ ଭାଷା ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ମଧ୍ୟ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଜୀବିତ ଅଛି ଏବଂ ସେଥିରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଶବ୍ଦ ସମ୍ଭାରରେ ରସାଣିତ ହୋଇଛି ।

ଶବ୍ଦର ଉତ୍ପତ୍ତି ଭାବରୁ । ବାପ, ମାଁ, ଭାଇ, ଗଛ, ନଈ, ଭୂଇଁ, ତାରା, ଆଲୁଅ, ଦିନ, ରାତି -ଏ’ ସମସ୍ତ ପଛରେ ଭାବ ଅଛି । ତେବେ କି’ ଭାବରେ ପ୍ରଥମେ ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ଏ’ ଶବ୍ଦ ସବୁକୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଥାଇପାରେ, ତା’ର ବୈଜ୍ଞାନିକ ବିଶ୍ଳେଷଣ ହୋଇନାହିଁ । ଶବ୍ଦ ମାନଙ୍କର ଉଚ୍ଚାରଣରେ ମନର ଛାପ ଅଛି ଏବଂ ଶବ୍ଦଗତ ଭାବ ମନରେ ପ୍ରତିଫଳିତ ହେଉଛି । ତେଣୁ ଶବ୍ଦ ଭିତରେ ଶବ୍ଦର ଭାବ ନିହିତ ଅଛି ବୋଲି ବୈଦ୍ୟକରଣିକମାନେ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରରେ ମତ ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି । ଏହି ନିହିତ ଭାବକୁ ଶବ୍ଦର ‘ସ୍ଫୋଟ’ ବୋଲି କୁହାଯାଉଛି । ‘ସ୍ଫୋଟ’ର ସଂପର୍କ ମସ୍ତିଷ୍କ ଉପରେ । ‘ସ୍ଫୋଟ’ର ଉତ୍ପତ୍ତି ଫଳରେ ଆମେ ଶବ୍ଦକୁ ହୃଦୟଙ୍ଗମ କରିପାରିଥାଉ । “ସ୍ଫୋଟ”ର ସୃଷ୍ଟି ଆମର କହିବା ଢଙ୍ଗରେ ଅଛି ଏବଂ ଆମର କହିବା ଢଙ୍ଗ ଶବ୍ଦର ଆକୃତି ଉପରେ ନିର୍ଭର କରୁଛି । ପୁରୁଣା ଶବ୍ଦ ନ ଥାଇ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆମେ ମନମତାଣିଆ ଶବ୍ଦ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରିଥାଉ । ଶିଶୁର ଭାଷା ଏହି ପ୍ରକାରର ।

ଏହି ଆଲୋଚନାରୁ ଆମେ ଚିନ୍ତା ଦେବା ଯେ' ବସ୍ତୁର ଭାବପ୍ରତ୍ୟୟ ମନୁଷ୍ୟର ପ୍ରକୃତିଗତ । ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ବସ୍ତୁରେ କିଛି ନା କିଛି ରସ ଅଛି ଏବଂ ସେ' ରସ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିବା ଶକ୍ତି ମନୁଷ୍ୟର ଅଛି । ରସକୁ ମଞ୍ଚିଷ୍ଟରେ ଅବଗତ କରି କଣ୍ଠଦ୍ୱାରା ପ୍ରକାଶ କଲେ ଆମେ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତ ଭାଷାରେ ପହଞ୍ଚି । କିନ୍ତୁ ରସ କିପରି ଶବ୍ଦରେ ପରିଣତ ହୁଏ, ତା'ର ଅନୁଶୀଳନ ଆମେ କରିନାହିଁ । ଆମେ ଜାଣି “ମା” ଭଲ, “ମଧୁ” ଭଲ, ଉଭୟରେ “ମ” ଅକ୍ଷର ଅଛି । କିନ୍ତୁ “ମ” ଅକ୍ଷର କାହିଁକି ସୁଖକର ଆମେ ଜାଣୁନାହିଁ ।

ଧ୍ୱନି ଓ ଶବ୍ଦ :

ଭାବର ଅଭିବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଧ୍ୱନି । ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଧ୍ୱନି ନାଦର ସଂପ୍ରସାରଣ । ଭାବର ପ୍ରବର୍ତ୍ତନେ ନାଦର ସୃଷ୍ଟି, ନାଦ ଯୋଗୁଁ ଶାରୀରିକ ପ୍ରକ୍ରିୟା ଓ ଶ୍ୱାସକ୍ରିୟା । ଧ୍ୱନି ବର୍ଣ୍ଣମାନଙ୍କର ସମୂହ । ରସରୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା, ଇଚ୍ଛାରୁ ଭାବ, ଭାବରୁ ବ୍ୟଞ୍ଜନ, ବ୍ୟଞ୍ଜନରୁ ଉଚ୍ଚାରଣ – ଉଚ୍ଚାରଣ ହିଁ ଧ୍ୱନି । ବସ୍ତୁଗତ ଭାବ ଧ୍ୱନିରେ ବ୍ୟଞ୍ଜନ ଭାବରେ ନିହିତ । ତାହା ହିଁ ଧ୍ୱନିରେ ବସ୍ତୁର ଶ୍ଳୋକ । ଭାବର ବିଷମତା ନେଇ ଏକାଧିକ ବ୍ୟଞ୍ଜନର ପ୍ରୟୋଗ କରାଯାଇପାରେ, କିନ୍ତୁ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ବ୍ୟଞ୍ଜନ ଏକ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଭାବ ।

ଧ୍ୱନିର ସରଳତାରୁ ଭାଷାର ମୌଳିକତା ଉପଲବ୍ଧି କରାଯାଇପାରେ । ଏହି କାରଣରୁ ମୁଖ୍ୟ ଭାଷାକୁ ଆଦିମ ଭାଷା ବୋଲି କୁହାଯାଏ । ଭାବପ୍ରଧାନ ହେଲେ ଭାଷା ସରଳ । ଭାବପ୍ରଧାନ ଭାଷାରେ ସ୍ୱରର ପ୍ରୟୋଗ ବେଶୀ । ଭାବର ରୂପାନ୍ତର ସ୍ୱର ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ କରାଯାଇପାରେ ବା ନୂତନ ବ୍ୟଞ୍ଜନ ଜରିଆରେ କରାଯାଇପାରେ । ଭାବପ୍ରଧାନ ପୁରୁଣା ଭାଷା ମାନଙ୍କରେ ବିଶେଷଣର ପ୍ରୟୋଗ ଉଣା । ‘ଉଚ୍ଚା’ ଶବ୍ଦଟିଏ ତିଆରି କରି ତା’କୁ ‘ବଡ଼’, ‘ଅଧିକ’, ‘ଗୁରୁତର’ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ବ୍ୟବହାର କରାଯାଇପାରେ । ‘ଏ ଗଛ ସେ’ ଗଛ ଠାରୁ ଉଚ୍ଚା’ରେ ବସ୍ତୁଗତ ଆକାର ଜଡ଼ିତ, କିନ୍ତୁ ‘ତା’ଙ୍କ ଘର ଆମଘରଠାରୁ ଉଚ୍ଚା’ରେ ଜାତି, କୁଳ, ସମ୍ପତ୍ତି, ପାଣ୍ଡିତ୍ୟ ଆଦି ସବୁ ଯୋଡ଼ା ହୋଇପାରେ । ଏହା ଭାଷାର ଆଦିମତାର ଲକ୍ଷଣ ।

ଶବ୍ଦର, ଭୂୟାଁ ଓ ମୁଖ୍ୟ ଭାଷାର ଏକାକ୍ଷରୀ ଶବ୍ଦ ସଂପର୍କୀୟ ଗବେଷଣା ନୁହେଁ । ଏକାକ୍ଷରୀ ସହିତ ସଂସ୍କୃତର ଧାତୁ ଜଡ଼ିତ । ଏକାକ୍ଷରୀ ଶବ୍ଦ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ବସ୍ତୁଗତ, ଆଲଙ୍କାରିକ ବା ତୁଳନାତ୍ମକ ନୁହେଁ । “ବା”ର ଅର୍ଥ “ପବନ”, “ବା’ ସୁ ସୁ”ର ଅର୍ଥ “ପ୍ରଖର ପବନ” । ‘ସୁ’ ଏକ ପ୍ରକାରର ବିଶେଷଣ । ତେଣୁ ‘ମନ’ ଶବ୍ଦରେ ଯୋଡ଼ିକରି ସଂସ୍କୃତରେ ‘ସୁମନ’ । ‘ମନ’ ବସ୍ତୁଗତ ନୁହେଁ, ‘ମନ’ ଶବ୍ଦ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରଗତ ବା କଳ୍ପନାଗତ – ଏହି ପ୍ରକାରେ ଆମେ ଶବ୍ଦର ଇତିହାସ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିପାରୁ ।

ଧ୍ୱନି ଭାଷାର ସଂକେତ, ଲିପି ନୁହେଁ । ଧ୍ୱନି ଓ ଲିପି ମଧ୍ୟରେ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟକ୍ତ ପାର୍ଥକ୍ୟ । ଆମେ ଭାଷାକୁ ଲେଖୁଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଭାଷାର କଥନଶୈଳୀକୁ ମାର୍ଜିତ କରି ପରିବେଷଣ କରିବା ଲେଖକର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ । ଧ୍ୱନି ମଧୁର, ରସାତ୍ମକ । ଲିପି ମୃତ । ଲିପିକୁ ଜୀବନ୍ତ କରିବାରେ ଭାବୋତ୍ପତ୍ତି ଆବଶ୍ୟକ । ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଲୋକଗୀତ ଓ ଲୋକକବିତ୍ତ ଏହି ଧ୍ୱନିର ରସ ପରିବେଷଣରେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରନ୍ତି । ଏ’ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଲୋକସଂଗୀତ ପରମ୍ପରା ଅନନ୍ୟ । ଧ୍ୱନିରେ ଭାବ ପ୍ରୟୋଗ ଭାଷାର ଚାରୁରୀ ।

ବ୍ୟାକରଣ :

ଶବ୍ଦ କେବଳ ବସ୍ତୁରୂପାତ୍ମକ ନ ହୋଇ କ୍ରିୟାତ୍ମକ ହେଲେ ବ୍ୟାକରଣ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ହୁଏ । କେହି କେହି ଭାଷାବିତ୍‌ଙ୍କର ଧାରଣା ଯେ’ ବ୍ୟାକରଣ ମନୁଷ୍ୟର ପ୍ରକୃତିଗତ । କର୍ତ୍ତା, କ୍ରିୟା, କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ମନୁଷ୍ୟକୁ ଶିଖାଇବାକୁ ପଡେ ନାହିଁ । ବାଲୁକ ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ସାମାନ୍ୟ ପ୍ରେରଣାରେ ଶିଶୁ ଏହା ଆପଣା ଛାଁକୁ ଶିଖିନିଏ । ଏ’ ପ୍ରକାର ତଥ୍ୟରେ ବ୍ୟାକରଣର ଉତ୍ପତ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ବିଶ୍ଳେଷଣ କଲେ ଜଣାପଡ଼େ ଯେ’ ପ୍ରଥମ ବ୍ୟାକରଣ ହେଉଛି ମନୁଷ୍ୟର ସ୍ୱର ଓ ସ୍ୱରବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଯୋଜନା । “ଆ”, “ଇ”, “ଉ” ପ୍ରୟୋଗରେ ଆମେ ସମୟସୂଚକ ଭାବ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିପାରୁ । ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ “ହ”, ହଇ, ହଉ” – ପ୍ରୟୋଗରେ ଆମେ ଆମର ସମ୍ପତ୍ତି ତିନୋଟି ଭିନ୍ନ ଉପାୟରେ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିଥାଉ । ସାମାନ୍ୟ ସମ୍ପତ୍ତି “ହ”, ଆଜ୍ଞା ପ୍ରାପ୍ତ ସମ୍ପତ୍ତି “ହଇ”, ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ବୋଧ ନ ପାଇ ସମ୍ପତ୍ତି “ହଉ” । କାର୍ଯ୍ୟରେ ଅନ୍ୟମାନେ ସାମିଲ୍ ଥିଲେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମ୍ପତ୍ତି “ହେଉ” ।

ଚିରାଚରିତ ନିୟମ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ “ହୁଏ” ବ୍ୟବହାର କରାଯାଏ । ମନୁଷ୍ୟକୃତ ନିୟମ ହେଲେ “କରା ହୁଏ” । “କ”ର ଅର୍ଥ “ରୁହାଣ୍ଡ”, “ର”ର ଅର୍ଥ “ସୃଜନ”, “କର”ର ଅର୍ଥ “ରୁହାଣ୍ଡ ସୃଜନ” – ବସ୍ତୁ ଅର୍ଥରେ ମନୁଷ୍ୟର ହାତ । ତେଣୁ ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ତିଆରି କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ସବୁ “କରା”, କରି, କରୁ” ଇତ୍ୟାଦିରେ ବ୍ୟବହୃତ ହୁଏ । “ମୁଁ କରିଥାଏ” ଏବଂ “ଆମେ କରିଥାଉ” । “ମୁଁ କରୁଥାଏ” ଏବଂ “ଆମେ କରୁଥାଉ” । ଏହିପରି ଭାବରେ ସ୍ୱରବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ସଂଯୋଜନା କରି ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ ବ୍ୟାକରଣର ପ୍ରୟୋଗ ହୁଏ । ଏ’ ପ୍ରକାର ପ୍ରୟୋଗ ଅନ୍ୟ ଭାଷାରେ ନାହିଁ । ସଂସ୍କୃତ ତୁଳନାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ ଉପପଦ ପ୍ରଚଳନ ବହୁତ ବିରଳ । “ଥାଏ, ଥାଉ”, ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ସମୟର ସ୍ଥିତି ସହ ସଂପୃକ୍ତ, ସେମାନେ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ପଦ ।

ଶବ୍ଦକୁ ସଂଜ୍ଞାସୂଚକ ବ୍ୟବହାର ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତେ ଜାତିବାଚକ ବ୍ୟବହାରରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ମୌଳିକତା । “ରାମ ଫଳ ଖାଏ” ବାକ୍ୟରେ “ଫଳ” ଜାତିବାଚକ । ଏ’ପରି “ଗାଈ ଚରୁଛି”ରେ ଗାଈ ଜାତିବାଚକ । ଜାତିବାଚକରୁ ସଂଜ୍ଞାବାଚକ ତିଆରି କରିବାପାଇଁ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ବିଶେଷଣର ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ଅଛି । “ରାମ ମଧୁର ଫଳ ଖାଏ”ର ପ୍ରୟୋଗ ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ ନାହିଁ, ଫଳର ମଧୁରତା ଫଳ ଉପରେ ନିର୍ଭର କରେ ନାହିଁ । ଏ’ପରି ଭାବ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବ୍ୟାକରଣ ଅନ୍ୟ ବ୍ୟାକରଣମାନଙ୍କଠାରୁ ନିଆରା ଓ ପୁରୁଣା ।

ବର୍ଣ୍ଣମାଳା :

ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟପୂର୍ବ ଷଷ୍ଠ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀରେ ସଂସ୍କୃତ ପଣ୍ଡିତ ପାଣିନି ପ୍ରଥମେ ସଂସ୍କୃତ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣମାଳା ଉନ୍ମୋଚନ କରିଥିଲେ ଚଉଦଟି ସୂତ୍ର ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ । ବର୍ଣ୍ଣମାଳାର ଆବିଷ୍କାର କିପରି ହେଲା, ତା’ର କୌଣସି ବିବରଣୀ ମିଳିନାହିଁ । ସଂସ୍କୃତ ଭାଷାର ବେଦସାହିତ୍ୟ ସମ୍ପୃକ୍ତ, ସେଥିରେ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣମାନଙ୍କୁ ଚିହ୍ନିବା ସହଜସାଧ୍ୟ ନୁହେଁ । କେହି କେହି କହନ୍ତି – ମୁଖର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଆକୃତି ନରୀକ୍ଷଣ କରି ସେଥିରେ ଜିହ୍ୱାକୁ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଭାବରେ ପ୍ରୟୋଗ କରି ପଞ୍ଚିତମାନେ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣୋତ୍ପତ୍ତି ଉପରେ ଗବେଷଣା କରିଥାଇପାରନ୍ତି । ବେଦସାହିତ୍ୟରେ ଦ୍ୱିବର୍ଣ୍ଣ, ତ୍ରିବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଓ ଚତୁର୍ବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ସମାହାରର ଯୁକ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ପ୍ରଚାର ପରିମାଣରେ ପରିଲକ୍ଷିତ ହୁଏ । ତେଣୁ ବେଦର ରଚନା ଏକାକ୍ଷରୀ ଶବ୍ଦ ପ୍ରଚଳନର ବହୁ କାଳପରେ ହୋଇଥାଇପାରେ ବୋଲି ଅନୁମାନ କରାଯାଇପାରେ ।

ଏକାକ୍ଷରୀ ଶବ୍ଦ କିପରି ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହେଲା – ତା’ର ନଜିର ନଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଏକାକ୍ଷରୀ ଶବ୍ଦ ହିଁ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣମାଳାର ପ୍ରତୀକ ବୋଲି କୁହାଯାଇପାରେ । ଏକାକ୍ଷରୀ ଭାଷାରେ ସ୍ୱରବର୍ଣ୍ଣର ବହୁଳ ବ୍ୟବହାର ଫଳରେ ଅକ୍ଷରମାନଙ୍କର ବିଭିନ୍ନତା ନିରୂପଣ ସ୍ପଷ୍ଟ ହୋଇପାରେ । ସଂସ୍କୃତ ସମେତ ଉତ୍ତର ଭାରତର ଅନ୍ୟ ଭାଷାମାନେ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣବାଚକ ହେଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣର ଶୁଦ୍ଧତା ରକ୍ଷା କରି ନପାରି ଶବ୍ଦବାଚକ ଭାବରେ ବ୍ୟବହୃତ ହୋଇଥା’ନ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ହିଁ ପାଣିନି ସୂତ୍ରର ଜ୍ଞାପକ । ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଚଉତିଶା ସାହିତ୍ୟର ବିସ୍ତୃତ ଗବେଷଣା ହୋଇନାହିଁ । ଏକାକ୍ଷରୀ ଶବ୍ଦ ପରେ ଅକ୍ଷରୀ ଶବ୍ଦ । ଦୁଇ ବା ତିନୋଟି ବର୍ଣ୍ଣରୁ ଅଧିକ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣସମୂହର ଓଡ଼ିଆର ବର୍ଣ୍ଣମାନ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ଶବ୍ଦ ଓଡ଼ିଆଭାଷା ପ୍ରସୂତ ନୁହେଁ । ଅକ୍ଷରୀ ଶବ୍ଦର ସାହିତ୍ୟରେ ଉପମା ବା ଅଳଙ୍କାରର ପ୍ରୟୋଗ ଉଣା । ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ ଏକଶବ୍ଦ “ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରମୁଖୀ” ନ ହୋଇ ଦୁଇ ଶବ୍ଦ “ଗୋଲ ମୁହଁ”ର ପ୍ରଚଳନ । ଭାଷାର ପବୃତ୍ତି ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ ଭୂମିଗତ, ପ୍ରକୃତିଗତ । ସାଧାରଣରେ ସହଜ ବୁଝା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାର ବୈଶିଷ୍ଟ୍ୟ ।

ଅକ୍ଷରୀ ହେଲାଫଳରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ ସକ୍ଷିର ପ୍ରୟୋଗ ଉଣା । ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଶବ୍ଦ ଅଲଗା ବ୍ୟବହାର କରାହୁଏ – “ଧଳା କଇଁ” ଦୁଇଟା ଶବ୍ଦ । ସଂପ୍ରସାରଣର ପ୍ରୟୋଗ ମଧ୍ୟ ଉଣା – “ବାର ଅଣା”କୁ ଶୀଘ୍ର କହିଲେ “ଅ” ସଂପ୍ରସାରିତ ନ ହୋଇ ଲୋପ ପାଏ । ଏ’ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ପ୍ରୟୋଗ ଅନ୍ୟଭାଷାଠାରୁ ଅଲଗା ।

ଶବ୍ଦ ପ୍ରୟୋଗ :

ଅକ୍ଷରୀ ହେଲା ଫଳରେ ଶବ୍ଦ ପ୍ରୟୋଗରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାରେ କ୍ଳେଶ ଉଣା । ଏ’ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ “ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଭାଷା”ନ ହୋଇ ଏକ “ଲୋକଭାଷା” ଭାବରେ ଉଦ୍ଭୂତ ଏବଂ ବ୍ୟବହୃତ । ଶବ୍ଦର ଭାବକୁ ନେଇ ବିଶେଷଣ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିବା ଓଡ଼ିଆର ପ୍ରାଧାନ୍ୟ । “ସାପ” ବ୍ୟବହାର କରୁଥିବା ଲୋକ “ସାପୁଆ”, ସାପ ପରି ବ୍ୟବହାର କରୁଥିବା ଲୋକ ମଧ୍ୟ “ସାପୁଆ” । ପ୍ରଥମ “ସାପୁଆ” ବିଶେଷଣ, ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ ସାପୁଆ ବିଶେଷ୍ୟ । “ସେ’ ଘରୁଆ ଲୋକ’ – “ଘରୁଆ” ବିଶେଷଣ – ଆପଣା ସଂସାର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ସହ ଲିପ୍ତ । “ଘରୁଆ ଆସିନାହିଁ” – ଯେଉଁ ଲୋକ ଘର ଛାଡ଼ି ବାହାରକୁ ଯିବାକୁ କୁଣ୍ଠା ବୋଧକରେ – ତା’କୁ “ଘରୁଆ” କୁହାଗଲା ।

କୌଣସି ଲୋକକୁ ଘର ବାରଣ କରାଗଲା – ତା’ ହେଲେ “ଉ” ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତେ “ଇ”ର ପ୍ରୟୋଗ – ଯେପରି “ଏକଘରିଆ” । ପତାରେ କେହି ନ ରହିଲେ “ପଡ଼ିଆ”, ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ବାଳ ନ ଥିଲେ “ମୁଣ୍ଡିଆ”, କଳା ନ ଥାଇ ଗର୍ବ ଥିଲେ “ଫୁଲିଆ” । ଏ’ ପ୍ରକାର ପ୍ରୟୋଗର ବ୍ୟାକରଣ ଗତ ବିଶ୍ଳେଷଣ ହୋଇନାହିଁ ।

ଶବ୍ଦ ବସ୍ତୁଗତ ବା କ୍ରିୟାଗତ ବା ଭାବଗତ ହେଲେ ବସ୍ତୁ, କ୍ରିୟା ବା ଭାବର ଅଭାବରେ “ଅ” ଉପପଦ ବ୍ୟବହାର କରି ବିପରୀତ ବୋଧ କରିବା ଓଡ଼ିଆର ଅନ୍ୟତମ ଚଳଣି । ଅଗୁଣ, ଅଦୟା, ଅବସ୍ତୁ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଶବ୍ଦର ଭାବଗତ ଅର୍ଥ କରାଯାଇନାହିଁ । ବିପରୀତ ବୋଧ ହୋଇପାରେ, କିନ୍ତୁ ତା’ର ଅର୍ଥ କ’ଣ ? “ଅଦୟା” “ଦୟା”ର ଅଭାବ – ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦୟ ବା ନିଷ୍ଠୁର ନୁହେଁ । ଏ’ପରି “ଅଗୁଣ” “ଗୁଣ”ର ଅଭାବ – ନିର୍ଗୁଣ ନୁହେଁ । ନିର୍ଗୁଣର ଜନ୍ମ ନାହିଁ – ଅଜନ୍ମା, ଓଡ଼ିଆ “ଅଗୁଣ” ଅଜନ୍ମା ନୁହେଁ, ଏହା ଅନ୍ୟ ଏକ ଭାବ । ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଘଟଣାର କିଛି କାରଣ ଥିବା ବେଦର ବିଚାର । ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ “ଅକାରଣ” ଶବ୍ଦ ବ୍ୟବହାର ହୁଏ । “ଅକାରଣ”ର ଅର୍ଥ “କାରଣ”ର ଅଭାବ । ଏ’ ପ୍ରଚଳନରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆଭାଷା ବେଦବର୍ଣ୍ଣନଠାରୁ ପୃଥକ୍ ବୋଲି ମନେ କରାଯାଇପାରେ ।

ଜୀବନ ଦର୍ଶନ :

ଉପେନ୍ଦ୍ର ଭଞ୍ଜ ଆଦି କବିମାନେ କାବ୍ୟରେ ଅଳଙ୍କାରର ପ୍ରଚୁର ପ୍ରୟୋଗ କରିଥିଲେହେଁ ଅସଲ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ରସ ପ୍ରଗାଢ଼ । ଶବ୍ଦ ପ୍ରୟୋଗରେ ଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ ଓ ତୀକ୍ଷ୍ଣ ବକ୍ତୃତ୍ତ୍ୱ ଓଡ଼ିଆକୁ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନର ଚପା ସମାଜରେ ଅସାମାଜିକ ବୋଲି କୁହାଯିବ । ସମାଜର ଶାଳୀନତାକୁ ଭ୍ରୁକ୍ଷେପ ନକରି ଏ” ପ୍ରକାର ପ୍ରୟୋଗରୁ ଭାଷାର ଆଦିମତା ଅନୁମାନ କରାଯାଏ । ମନ ଖୋଲା ଅଭିବ୍ୟକ୍ତିରେ ଛଳ ନଥାଏ, କିମ୍ବା ସ୍ୱାର୍ଥ ନ ଥାଏ, କିନ୍ତୁ ତା’ ବ୍ୟବସାୟ, ବାଣିଜ୍ୟ ବା ରାଜନୈତିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟରେ ନିହାତି ସଫଳ ନ ହୋଇପାରେ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ରସରେ ଶୃଙ୍ଗାରପ୍ରବଣତା ଅଧିକ । ସଂଭ୍ରାନ୍ତ ଓ ସ୍ୱଚ୍ଛଳ ଜୀବନଶୈଳୀକୁ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସହ ତୁଳନା କରିବା ଦୁଷ୍ପର । ଶୃଙ୍ଗାର ଭାବ ଅଛି – କିନ୍ତୁ ତା’ ଅକପଟ ନୁହେଁ ।

ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଚାଷୀ, ଜମି ଚାଷ କରେ । ତା’ର ପରିଶ୍ରମ ଶାରୀରିକ, ଆନନ୍ଦ ଦୈହିକ । ପ୍ରକୃତିସମ୍ଭାରରେ ସେ’ ବନ୍ଧା । ତା’ର ନୀତିବଳତା ଜନ୍ମ ଓ ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ପ୍ରାସଂଗିକ । ଠାକୁର ତା’ର ଅଶାକାର ବ୍ରହ୍ମ । ଗୀତ, ନାଚ, ଭୋଜିଭାତରେ ଆନନ୍ଦ । ଜୀବନଟା ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ ନୁହେଁ, ଜୀବନଟା ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ – କର୍ମ ମନୁଷ୍ୟର ଗତି ନିରୂପଣ କରେ । ଜୈନ ଧର୍ମର ମୂଳଦୁଆ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇଥିବା ଅନୁମାନ କରାଯାଇପାରେ । ନୀତି ବ୍ରହ୍ମଗତ ନୁହେଁ, ନୀତି କର୍ମଗତ । କର୍ମରୁ ହିଁ ଜୀବନ ବିଚାର । କର୍ମର ନୀତିରେ ସୁକର୍ମ ଓ କୁକର୍ମର ଫରକ୍ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଗାଢ଼ – ଭୁଇଁ ଚାଷ କରି ନିଜେ ଖାଦ୍ୟ ଉତ୍ପାଦନ କରି ଅନ୍ୟକୁ ଖୁଆଇପାରିବା ସୁକର୍ମ, ଅନ୍ୟଠାରୁ ଖାଇବା କୁକର୍ମ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନଚେତା । ଭୁଇଁ ତା’ର ମା’ ।

ବୈଦିକ ଧର୍ମର ପ୍ରଚାର ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ସଫଳ ହୋଇନାହିଁ । ଶରୀର ଉପରେ ମନର ଆୟତ୍ତ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ଆବିଷ୍କାର । ମନ ପରିଷ୍କାର ଲାଗି ଶାରୀରିକ ପରିଶ୍ରମ, ବ୍ୟାୟାମ, ଖେଳ କସରତ୍ ଲୋଡ଼ା । ମନକୁ ଆୟତ୍ତକୁ ଆଣିଲେ ଦୁଃସାଧ୍ୟ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ସାଧ୍ୟ ହୋଇପାରେ । ଏଥିରୁ ତନ୍ତ୍ରଶାସ୍ତ୍ରର ଉତ୍ପତ୍ତି । ମନକୁ ଅସ୍ତ୍ର ପରି ବ୍ୟବହାର କରିବା ଏକ ଅଭୂତ ଯୋଗବିଦ୍ୟା । ହିତ, ଅହିତ, ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ, ସଂପତ୍ତି, ବିଦ୍ୟା, ବିଭ୍ର – ସମସ୍ତ ମନଠାରୁ ଉତ୍ପନ୍ନ । ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଅଜସ୍ର ଲୋକଗୀତ ଓ ସୂକ୍ତି ମନର ସ୍ତୁତି । ନିଷ୍ଠା, ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧା ଓ ଏକାଗ୍ରତା ମନର ଗୁଣ, ଭ୍ରାନ୍ତି ମନର ଅବଗୁଣ । ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ ସଗୁଣ ବ୍ରହ୍ମର ପ୍ରବଳ ପ୍ରଚଳନ ସମୟରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ନିର୍ଗୁଣ ବ୍ରହ୍ମର ପୂଜା – ମନୋରୂପୀ ସୁଦର୍ଶନ ।

ସଂସ୍କୃତି :

ପ୍ରାୟ ଚାଳିଶ ହଜାର ବର୍ଷ ତଳେ ଆଫ୍ରିକାରୁ ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ଉପକୂଳଦେଇ ଆସି ନର୍ମଦା ନଦୀ ଅବବାହିକାରେ ବସବାସ କରିଥିବାର ପ୍ରତ୍ନତାତ୍ତ୍ୱିକ ତଥ୍ୟ ଅଛି । ପର୍ବତ ଗୁହାରେ ଚିତ୍ର ଓ ନଦୀକୂଳସ୍ଥ ବସତିରୁ ଏହିମାନେ ନଦୀ କୂଳେ କୂଳେ ପୂର୍ବାଭିମୁଖୀ ହୋଇଥିବାର ଜଣାପଡ଼ୁଛି । ମହାନଦୀ ଅବବାହିକାରେ ପୁରୁଣା ବସତିମାନଙ୍କର ଚିହ୍ନ ମିଳୁଥିଲେହେଁ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ପ୍ରତ୍ନତାତ୍ତ୍ୱିକ ଖନନ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରାଯାଇନାହିଁ । ବିଷୟ ପର୍ବତର ଦକ୍ଷିଣସ୍ଥ ନଦୀ ଉପତ୍ୟକା ଭାରତବର୍ଷର ଲୌକିକ ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ଆଦିମୂଳ ବୋଲି ଅନୁମାନ କରାଯାଏ ।

କୃଷିଗତ ସମାଜ ହେଲା ଫଳରେ ଫସଲ ଓ ଆମଦାନି ସଂପର୍କୀୟ ଶବ୍ଦ ଓ କଥା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଲୋକ ଚଳଣିରେ ରସ ଆଣିଥାଏ । ଫସଲର କର୍ତ୍ତା ଧରିତ୍ରୀ ଓ ସମ୍ଭାରର କର୍ତ୍ତା ସୁଫଳା ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ । ଦେବୀପୂଜା ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ବହୁ ପୁରୁଣା । ରୋଗ, ମହାମାରୀ, ମରୁଡ଼ି, ଝଡ଼, ବାଣିଜ୍ୟ, ବ୍ୟବସାୟ, ପରିବାର, ସନ୍ତାନ ସନ୍ତତି, ଜନ୍ମମୃତ୍ୟୁ – ଏ’ ସମସ୍ତ ଦେବୀର କରଣି ବୋଲି ଓଡ଼ିଆର ଧାରଣା । ଦୁଃସାଧ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ସାଧନ କରିବା ନିମିତ୍ତ ବଳି ଅର୍ପଣ କରିବା ଏକ ପୁରୁଣା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଲୋକମତ । ଏବେ ବଳିପ୍ରଥା ନିରାକରଣ ହେଲାପରେ ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କୁ କୃଷି, ଫସଲ ଓ ଜଳବାୟୁ ଉପରେ ଶିକ୍ଷା ଦେବାର ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା ହୋଇନାହିଁ । ଅତୀତର ଅଶିକ୍ଷାରୁ ନୂତନ ସମାଜ କୁଶିକ୍ଷା ବିତରଣରେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ।

ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ଉପାଦାନ ହେଲା ସାମାଜିକ ଶୃଙ୍ଖଳା ଓ ମୈତ୍ରୀଭାବ । ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟକୁ ମିତ୍ର ହିସାବରେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିବାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ସଦ୍‌ବୁଦ୍ଧି । ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଯେପରି ମନୁଷ୍ୟର ଉପକାର କରି ବନ୍ଧୁସମ୍ପର୍କ ରଖେ, ସେ’ପରି ପୃଥିବୀର ବସ୍ତୁମାନେ ମନୁଷ୍ୟର ମୈତ୍ର ହୋଇପାରନ୍ତି । ଏ’ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ଗଛ, ଫଳ, ଫୁଲ, ବର୍ଷା, ସ୍ରୀ, ଭାଇ, ବାପ, ମା’, ପତିଶା – ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ମୈତ୍ର ସୂତ୍ରରେ ବନ୍ଧାଯାଇପାରେ । ଅମୈତ୍ର ଓଡ଼ିଆପଣ ନୁହେଁ । ଦୁଇଟି ପଦାର୍ଥ ଭିତରେ କିଛି ନା କିଛି ମେଳ ଅଛି । ଅମେଳ, ଦୈଷ କୁକର୍ମ । କୁକର୍ମର ଦଣ୍ଡ ଅଛି, ଦଣ୍ଡବିଧାନ ଠାକୁରାଣୀର ।

ସମାଜ ପ୍ରଚଳନ :

କୃଷିପ୍ରଧାନ ସମାଜରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ କିପରି କାରିଗର ହେଲା – ତା’ର କୌଣସି ଏତିହାସିକ ତଦନ୍ତ ହୋଇନାହିଁ । ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଲାଭଦାୟକ କୃଷି ଫଳରେ ଶସ୍ୟସୃଷ୍ଟି ହୋଇଥାଇପାରେ । ଶସ୍ୟବାଣିଜ୍ୟରୁ ନୌବାଣିଜ୍ୟ ଏବଂ ବିଦେଶବସତି । ବାଣିଜ୍ୟ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ଅଧିକ ସୂକ୍ଷ୍ମ କାମର ନିର୍ମାଣ ଓ ବିକ୍ରୟ ପ୍ରଥା ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହୋଇଥାଇପାରେ । ସପ୍ତମ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀବେଳକୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ଏତିହ୍ୟ ଓ ଅଧିକାର ବିସ୍ତୃତ ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ ବ୍ୟାପ୍ତ ଥିଲା ବୋଲି ନଜିର

ମିଳୁଛି । ଏ’ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ସାମ୍ରାଜ୍ୟର ମୂଳକର୍ତ୍ତା କେଉଁମାନେ – ତା’ର ଇତିହାସରୁ ସିଦ୍ଧାନ୍ତ ହୋଇନାହିଁ । ତେବେ ଜୈନ, ବୌଦ୍ଧ ଓ ହିନ୍ଦୁ ଧର୍ମର ପ୍ରବର୍ତ୍ତକମାନେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ସମ୍ପଦ ଓ ଜ୍ଞାନର ବରିଷ୍ଠ କ୍ଷେତ୍ର ହିସାବରେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିଛନ୍ତି ।

ନୌବାଣିଜ୍ୟ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ସାମ୍ରାଜ୍ୟର ଦକ୍ଷିଣରେ ତେଲୁଗୁ ରାଜ୍ୟ ସହ ଗଭୀର ମିତ୍ରତା ଥିବା ଅନୁମିତ ହୁଏ । ତେଲୁଗୁ ଶତବାହନ ରାଜୁତିରେ ଆନ୍ଧ୍ରବାସୀ ଅନ୍ୟଦେଶକୁ ଆକ୍ରମଣ କରି ଦେଶ ବିସ୍ତାରରେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ଥିଲାବେଳେ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ଆପଣାର ସ୍ଵାଧୀନତା ବଜାୟ ରଖିବାକୁ ସମର୍ଥ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ଶତବାହନ ସାମ୍ରାଜ୍ୟରେ କଳାକୃତିର ପ୍ରଭୁତ ପ୍ରସାର ଚାଲିଥିବା ସମୟରେ କଳିଙ୍ଗ କାରିଗର ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର କଳା ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିଥିଲା । ଏହି ସମୟରେ ହିଁ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସଙ୍ଗୀତ, ନୃତ୍ୟ ଓ କାରିଗରି କାମର ନିର୍ମାଣ । ପଥର ଖୋଦେଇରେ ମୂର୍ତ୍ତି ନିର୍ମାଣ ଏବଂ ସେଥିରେ ଭାବ ଓ ମୁଦ୍ରା ପ୍ରତିଫଳନ ଓଡ଼ିଆ କାରିଗରର ବିବେକ ଦକ୍ଷତା । ଭାଷାର ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବିକାଶ ନହେଲେ ଏ’ ପ୍ରକାର କାରିଗରିକୁ ବସ୍ତୁଗତ ଭାବରେ ରୂପାନ୍ତରିତ କରିବା ଦୁଃସାଧ୍ୟ ହୋଇପାରେ । ଜୟଦେବଙ୍କର ଲାଳିତ୍ୟପୁଣ୍ଠି ସଂସ୍କୃତ କବିତାକୁ ଏକାଦଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ପ୍ରସୂତ ବୋଲି ଐତିହାସିକ ମାନଙ୍କର ମତ ।

ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର ମନ୍ଦିର ସମାରୋହଠାରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରି କୋଣାର୍କ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସୁପତି କଳା ତିନିଶ’ ବର୍ଷର ନିଦର୍ଶନ ବୋଲି ଧାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରାଯାଉଛି । ଏ’ ସମୟରେ ରାଜତ୍ୱ କରୁଥିବା ଗଙ୍ଗ ବଂଶର ରାଜାମାନେ ନିହାତି ଓଡ଼ିଆଭାଷା ନୁହଁନ୍ତି ବୋଲି ଅନୁମାନ କରାଯାଏ । ପଞ୍ଚଦଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀରେ ଶାରଳାଦାସଙ୍କର ଆବିର୍ଭାବ ଏବଂ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ଭାଷା ଓ ଭାବ ଦକ୍ଷତା ପ୍ରାଞ୍ଜଳ ଭାବରେ ଅଭିବ୍ୟକ୍ତ । ମହାଭାରତ ପୁନରାବୃତ୍ତି କରୁଥିଲେ ହେଁ – ତା’ଙ୍କର କାହାଣୀ ନିଜସ୍ୱ, କାହ୍ନିକ । ମହାଭାରତର ଐତିହାସିକ ସ୍ଥଳ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଦେଶ । କବିଚାତୁରୀରେ ଏ’ ଅଭୁତ ସ୍ଵାଧୀନ ଚିନ୍ତାଧାରା ପୃଥିବୀ ଇତିହାସରେ ବିରଳ । ମନ ଭିତରେ କିଛି ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟ ରଖି ପ୍ରଚାରଣା ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟରେ ପୃଥିବୀରେ କେହି କେହି କଥାକ୍ତର କରିଥା’ନ୍ତି । ଶାରଳାଦାସଙ୍କର ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟ ଉତ୍କଳ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନା, ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜ ଚିତ୍ରଣ । ମା’ ଶାରଳାଠାରେ ସେ’ ଅନୁଗୃହୀତ ।

ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କଠାରେ ଅତଳା ଭକ୍ତି ଓ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତିର ଏକ ପ୍ରଧାନ ଲକ୍ଷଣ । ଏ’ ଭକ୍ତି କିପରି ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇଛି ଏବଂ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ପ୍ରତିମାର ଉତ୍ପତ୍ତି ସମ୍ପର୍କରେ କୌଣସି ଐତିହାସିକ ତଥ୍ୟ ମିଳିନାହିଁ । ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କର ରଥଯାତ୍ରା ଓ ନବକଳେବର ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ମୌଳିକ ଉତ୍ସବ । ସମସ୍ତ ରୂପବାନ୍ ପଦାର୍ଥ କାଳାଶୟୀ – ଏହା ଓଡ଼ିଆର ପ୍ରାକୃତିକ ସତ୍ୟ । ବ୍ରହ୍ମର ଏକମାତ୍ର ବିକାର ଦାରୁ, ପ୍ରସ୍ତର ନୁହେଁ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବ୍ରହ୍ମ ସଜୀବ ।

ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଦାସ ଓ ପଞ୍ଚସଖା ଓଡ଼ିଆର ଅନନ୍ୟ ମୌଳିକ ସମ୍ଭାର । ଆଗରୁ କୁହାଯାଇଥିବା ସରଳ ଭାଷା ପ୍ରୟୋଗରେ ଶାରଳା ଓ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କର ଶବ୍ଦ ଯୋଜନା ଭାବ ସାହିତ୍ୟର କରାମତି । ମନ ଓ ଯୋଗ ଉପରେ ଅରୁ୍ୟତଙ୍କର କୃତି ପ୍ରଗଳ୍ଭ । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ହିଁ ଭବିଷ୍ୟତର କର୍ତ୍ତା, ତେଣୁ କାଳର ନିୟାମକ “ଅକାରଣ” ନ ହୋଇ ନିଜକର୍ମର ପ୍ରତିଫଳନ – ଏହା ଅରୁ୍ୟତଙ୍କର ବାଣୀ । ଏହି ବାଣୀରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାମାଜିକ ଚିନ୍ତାଧାରା ନିହିତ । ଯୋଗ, ତନ୍ତ୍ର ଏବଂ ଶୂନ୍ୟଶାସ୍ତ୍ରର ପ୍ରଭୁତ ବିସ୍ତୃତି ଏବେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଅଛି, ତେବେ ସାଧକ ସେତେ ନାହାଁନ୍ତି । ଭବିଷ୍ୟବାଣୀ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ପକ୍ଷରେ ସମ୍ଭବ ନୁହେଁ ।

ନୂଆ ସମାଜ :

ଅଷାଦଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ବେଳକୁ ମୁସଲମାନ ଓ ମରାଠୀ ପ୍ରଭାବ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ପଡ଼ିଛି । ଅନେକ ଶବ୍ଦ ଓ ଢଙ୍ଗ ଏହି ବିଦେଶୀ ସଭ୍ୟତାରୁ ଆମଦାନୀ ହୋଇଛି । ସଜାପୀର, ସତ୍ୟନାରାୟଣ, ଜନବିଭାଜନ ଓ ଶତ୍ରୁ ଭୟ ଏହି ସମୟରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ଆସୁତ କରିଛି । ଇଂରେଜମାନଙ୍କ ଆଗମନରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାଦେଶ କ୍ଳାନ୍ତ ହୋଇଛି । ମୁସଲମାନ, ମରାଠୀ ଚିକସଠାରୁ ଇଂରେଜ ଚିକସ ଶହଶୁଣ ଅଧିକା । ବଳାକ୍ରୀରରେ ଜମି ଦଖଲ । ଆଗରୁ ବି ଦୁର୍ଭିକ୍ଷ ଥାଏ – କିନ୍ତୁ ଇଂରେଜ ଅମଳର ଦୁର୍ଭିକ୍ଷରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ତ୍ରସ୍ତ, ଭୀତ ଏବଂ ଆତୁର । ବଙ୍ଗଭାଷାଙ୍କ ସାହଚର୍ଯ୍ୟରେ ଇଂରେଜ ସରକାର ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାକୁ ଧ୍ୱଂସ କରିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରିଛନ୍ତି ।

ତେବେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜ ହରିନାହିଁ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ମାଟିର ସନ୍ତାନ ଏକନିଷ୍ଠ, ମାତୃଭକ୍ତ, ଓଡ଼ିଆ ରକ୍ଷକବାବୁ ବିଶ୍ୱନାଥ ମିଶ୍ର ଓ ବାବୁ ମଧୁସୂଦନ ଦାସଙ୍କର ଅଦମ୍ୟ ଉତ୍ସାହରେ ଭାରତବର୍ଷରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପ୍ରଥମ ଆଞ୍ଚଳିକ ଭାଷା ପ୍ରଦେଶ ହିସାବରେ ଗୃହୀତ । ବହୁକାଳର ଅବହେଳା ପରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ନୃତ୍ୟର ଲାସ୍ୟ, ଭାବ, ମୁଦ୍ରା ଓ ଭଙ୍ଗୀ ବିଶ୍ୱ ଆଦୃତ । ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସଂଗୀତର ମୌଳିକତା ପ୍ରତିପାଦନରେ ଅନେକ ଅନୁରାଗୀ ଆଗେଇଛନ୍ତି । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରୀୟ ଭାଷା ଭାବରେ ଭାରତବର୍ଷରେ ଅନୁମୋଦିତ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସ୍ଥାପତ୍ୟର ଚିରଶୋଭା ପରି ଓଡ଼ିଆର କଳା ଓ ଚାତୁରୀର ଶୋଭାପ୍ରଚାର ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଆପଣା ଧର୍ମ ହିସାବରେ ସ୍ୱୀକାର କରିଛି । ତାହା ହିଁ ଓଡ଼ିଆମାତାର ଗର୍ବ ।

ମା’ର ଭାଷା ଅଛି । ସେ’ ଭାଷାରେ ମା’ କଥା କହେ । ଏ ଭାଷାଟି ପୁରୁଣା । ସମସ୍ତେ ଭାଇ ଓ ଭଉଣୀ ମିଶିକରି ଏ’ ଭାଷାର ସମ୍ଭାର ଖୋଜି ତଥ୍ୟ ସଂଗ୍ରହ କଲେ ମା’ଟି ଆମର ଆନନ୍ଦିତ ହେବ ।

Boston, Massachusetts

ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଓ ସାହିତ୍ୟର ଇତିହାସ

ସୁମିତ୍ରା ପାଢ଼ୀ

କୌଣସି ସମାଜ ବିକାଶର ପ୍ରକାଶ ହେଉଛି ସାହିତ୍ୟ । ସମାଜର ଚଳଣିକୁ ସଂସ୍କୃତି କୁହାଯାଏ । ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଦ୍ଵାରା ଏ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ମପା ହୁଏ । ସମାଜର ଚଳଣି ଠାରୁ କଳା, କବିତା, ଆଲୋଚନା, ବିଜ୍ଞାନ, ବ୍ୟବହାର, ଚିତ୍ର ଓ ସ୍ଥାପତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଭୃତି ସାହିତ୍ୟର ଅନ୍ତର୍ଗତ । ସ୍ଵଳ୍ପ ଲେଖାରେ ପ୍ରକାଶ ପାଇଲେ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଦେଖିବା ଓ ବୁଝିବା ସୁଗମ ହୁଏ, ତେଣୁ ସାଧାରଣତଃ ଲେଖା ସାହିତ୍ୟକୁ ହିଁ ସାହିତ୍ୟ କହନ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଲେଖାରେ ପ୍ରକାଶ ନପାଇ କଥାରେ ବା ପରଂପରାରେ ଶୁଣି ଶିଖିବା ଗୀତ, ଗପ ଓ କାହାଣୀରେ ଲେଖା ସାହିତ୍ୟଠାରୁ ଅଧିକ ସରସ ଓ ଜୀବନ୍ତ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଅଛି । ଭାରତୀୟ ଆର୍ଯ୍ୟ ମାନଙ୍କର ବେଦ ଥିଲା ଶୁଦ୍ଧି । ଶୁଦ୍ଧିର ଅର୍ଥ ଶୁଣି, ଶୁଣି ଲୋକେ ଯାହା ମନେରଖନ୍ତି । ବୈଦିକ ସ୍ତୁତି ଓ ଗାନ ସବୁ ପୁରୁଷାନୁ କ୍ରମେ ଲୋକେ ଶୁଣି ଶୁଣି ମନେ ରଖୁଥିଲେ । ପ୍ରାଚୀନ କାଳରେ ଅକ୍ଷରର ବ୍ୟବହାର ନଥିଲା । ତେଣୁ ବ୍ରତକଥା, ଲୋକକଥା ବା ରୂପକଥା ଶିଶୁ ବୁଝା ଓ ଶିଶୁଗୀତ, ପୁରାଣ, କାହାଣୀ ଓ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଗୀତ ପ୍ରଭୃତି ଶୁଣିବାର ପରଂପରାରେ ଚଳୁଥିଲା ।

ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଏକ ପୁରାତନ ଭାଷା । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ବହୁ ଆକ୍ରମଣର ଧକ୍କା ସହିଛି ଓ ସମ୍ଭାଳି ନିଜକୁ ଠିକ୍ ରଖିଛି । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଥରକୁ ଥର ଉଠିଛି, ପଡ଼ିଛି, ଭାଙ୍ଗିଛି, ପୁଣି ସେଇ ଭାଙ୍ଗିବାରେ ଆପଣାକୁ ସଜାଡ଼ି ଗଢ଼ି ହୋଇ ଉଠିଛି । କାଳ କ୍ରମେ ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ମାନବଗୋଷ୍ଠୀ ସବୁ ଭାଙ୍ଗି ଉଡେଇଯାଉଛି । ତେଣୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପରି ଆଉ ଗୋଟାଏ ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ଓ ଜୀବନ୍ତ ମାନବଗୋଷ୍ଠୀ ପୃଥିବୀରେ ଅଛି କିନା ସନ୍ଦେହ । ଶବ୍ଦର ମାନେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଆଦିମ ଅଧିବାସୀ । ପରେ ଭୂୟାଁ, ଭୂମିଜ, ଓଡ଼, କନ୍ଧ, ସାନ୍ତାଳ, ଗାଦବା, ମୁଣ୍ଡା, ହୋ, ଗଣ୍ଡ ଏବଂ ଭାଲ ପ୍ରଭୃତି ଜାତିର ଲୋକମାନେ ଆସିଥିଲେ । ଏବେ ବି ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଏ ଆଦିମ ଅଧିବାସୀଙ୍କ ସଂଖ୍ୟା ପ୍ରାୟ ୩୦ ଲକ୍ଷ ହବ । କନ୍ଧ, ସାନ୍ତାଳ, ଗଣ୍ଡ, ଭାଲ ଓ ଶବ୍ଦର ପ୍ରଭୃତି ଅନେକ ଭାଷାର ସାହିତ୍ୟ ପୂରା ବା ଆଂଶିକ ଭାବରେ ଲୋପ ପାଇଛି । ଅନ୍ୟ ଭାଷା ଓ ସାହିତ୍ୟର ଆକ୍ରମଣରେ ଏହା ହୋଇଛି ।

ଶବ୍ଦର ମାନେ ହେଉଛନ୍ତି ଭାରତର ଅତି ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ମାନବ ସମାଜର ଅବଶେଷ । ପଣ୍ଡିତ ମାନଙ୍କ ମତରେ ଅତି ଆଦିମ କାଳରୁ ଶବ୍ଦର ମାନେ ଭାରତରୁ ଅଷ୍ଟ୍ରେଲିଆ ବାଟେ ଆମେରିକା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଦ୍ଵୀପ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ଯାଇଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ସେଠାରେ ନିଜର ଭାଷା ଓ ସଭ୍ୟତାର ପ୍ରଚାର କରିଥିଲେ । ପଣ୍ଡିତମାନେ ଏମାନଙ୍କୁ ‘ଅଷ୍ଟିକ’ ବା ଦକ୍ଷିଣୀ ଜାତିର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀ ବୋଲି କହନ୍ତି । ଏମାନଙ୍କ ଲିଖିତ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ବା ଭାଷାରେ ନିଜ ଲିପି ନାହିଁ । ଶବ୍ଦର ମାନେ ଆଦିମ କାଳରୁ ସୁସଭ୍ୟ ଥିଲେ । ଶବ୍ଦର ଭାଷା ଲୋପ ପାଇ ଆସୁଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆଧୁନିକ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାରେ ତାର ବହୁତ ପ୍ରଭାବ ଅଛି । ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଦେବତା ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଏବେ ବି ‘ଶବ୍ଦର ଦେବତା’ । ତାଙ୍କ ସେବକଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ଏବେ ବି ଶବ୍ଦର ଅଛନ୍ତି ।

ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାର ଉତ୍ପତ୍ତି ଜାଣିବାକୁ ହେଲେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଆୟତନ ଓ ଇତିହାସ ଜାଣିବାକୁ ହବ । ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ମଧ୍ୟ କୁହାଯାଏ । କଳିଙ୍ଗ ନାମଟି ବଡ଼ ପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧ । ମାତ୍ର ଆଦ୍ୟରୁ ଏହା ଏକ ମାନବ ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀର ନାମ ଥିଲା କି ଭୂମିର ନାମ ଥିଲା ଜଣା ନାହିଁ । କେହି କେହି କହନ୍ତି ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ତାମିଲରେ କପା ସୂତା ଓ ଲୁଗାକୁ କହୁଥିଲେ କଳିଙ୍ଗ । ତେଣୁ ଏ ଦେଶରେ କପା ସୂତା ଓ ଲୁଗା ପ୍ରଥମେ ହୋଇଥିବାରୁ ଏ ଦେଶର ନାମ କଳିଙ୍ଗ । ଏ ଦେଶରେ କପା, ସୂତା, ଲୁଗା ପ୍ରଥମେ ହୋଇଥିବାରୁ ଅଥବା କୌଣସି ସୂତା ଓ ଲୁଗା ଏଠାରେ ପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧ ଥିବାରୁ ଏ ଦେଶର ନାମ କଳିଙ୍ଗ । କେତେ ଜଣଙ୍କ ମତରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭୂମିର ହାତୀଙ୍କ ନାମ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ବା କଳିଙ୍ଗକ ଥିଲା । ଉର୍ବର ଭୂମିକୁ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ବା କଳନ୍ଦ କହୁଥିଲେ । ଏବେ ମଧ୍ୟ ବଡ଼ ଛତା, ଦାମୁଡ଼ି, ବଳଦ ଓ ଷଣ୍ଢକୁ କଳିଙ୍ଗା ଛତା, କଳିଙ୍ଗା ଦାମୁଡ଼ି, କଳିଙ୍ଗା ବଳଦ ଓ କଳିଙ୍ଗା ଷଣ୍ଢ କହନ୍ତି । ଏବେ ବି ଗଞ୍ଜାମରେ କଳଙ୍ଗାଳ କାଳିଙ୍ଗି ବୋଲି ଜାତି ଅଛନ୍ତି । ତେଣୁ ଯାହା ଜଣା ପଡ଼ୁଛି ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଓ ଶବ୍ଦରଙ୍କ ପରି କଳିଙ୍ଗ ଗୋଟାଏ ଜନ ସମାଜ ଥିଲା । ଅତି ପ୍ରାଚୀନ କାଳରୁ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ନାମରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଉପକୂଳର ବିଶାଳ ଭୂମିଖଣ୍ଡ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ନାମରେ ନାମିତ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଭାଷା ଥିଲା ତାମିଲ-ମୂଳକ ।

କଳିଙ୍ଗ ଅତି ପୁରାତନ ରାଜ୍ୟ । ଋକ୍ ବେଦ ରଚନା ସମୟରୁ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟପୂର୍ବ ଦ୍ଵିତୀୟ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଉତ୍କଳ ବା ଉତ୍ତ ନାମରେ ରାଜ୍ୟ ନଥିଲା । କେବଳ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ରାଜ୍ୟ ଥିଲା । ଶାକ୍ୟମୁନି ବୁଦ୍ଧ ଓ ମହାବୀରଜୈନଙ୍କର ବହୁ ପୂର୍ବରୁ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ସ୍ଵତନ୍ତ୍ର ସଭ୍ୟତାରେ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ ଓ ପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧ ହୋଇ ସାରିଥିଲା । କଳିଙ୍ଗ ରାଜ୍ୟ କପିଳା ବା ମେଦିନୀପୁରର କଂସାଇ ନଇଠାରୁ ଗୋଦାବରୀ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବିସ୍ତୃତ ଥିଲା ଓ ସ୍ଥାନେ ସ୍ଥାନେ କୃଷ୍ଣା ନଦୀ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବ୍ୟାପ୍ତ ଥିଲା । ଏବର ଦେଓଘର-ବୈଦ୍ୟନାଥଠାରୁ ଇନ୍ଦ୍ରାବତୀ-ଗୋଦାବରୀର ସଂଗମସ୍ଥଳ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବ୍ୟାପିଥିବା ସମସ୍ତ ଝାଡ଼ଖଣ୍ଡରେ କଳିଙ୍ଗର ପ୍ରଭାବ ଥିବାର ଅନୁମାନ ହୁଏ । ଦୁଇ ହଜାର କି ଏକୋଇଶ ଶହ ବର୍ଷ ତଳର ଗ୍ରୀକ୍ ଭୂଗୋଳବିତ୍ମାନେ ତିନୋଟି କଳିଙ୍ଗ ଥିଲା ବୋଲି ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତି । (୧) ଗାଙ୍ଗାରାତି ବା ଗାଙ୍ଗେୟ କଳିଙ୍ଗ, (୨) ମୋଙ୍ଗୋ ବା ମଧ୍ୟ କଳିଙ୍ଗ, (୩) ମାକକୋ ବା ମୁଖ୍ୟ କଳିଙ୍ଗ । ଗ୍ରୀକ୍ ଐତିହାସିକ ପ୍ଲିନିଂଙ୍କ ମତରେ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ରାଜ୍ୟର ରାଜା ତ୍ରିକଳିଙ୍ଗାଧିପତି ଶାସନର ସୁବିଧା ପାଇଁ ସେ ରାଜ୍ୟକୁ ଏପରି ୩ ଭାଗରେ ବିଭକ୍ତ କରିଥିଲେ । ଗାଙ୍ଗେୟ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ଗଙ୍ଗା କୁଳରୁ ରାଜ, ବରାଜ ସୀମା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଥିଲା । ଏହା ଗଙ୍ଗା ଓ ଶୋଣ ନଦୀ କୁଳରେ ଥିଲା । ଏହାକୁ ଉତ୍ତର କଳିଙ୍ଗ ମଧ୍ୟ କହୁଥିଲେ । ଏହାର ପଶ୍ଚିମ ଓ ଦକ୍ଷିଣକୁ ଲାଗିକରି ଉତ୍କଳ ବା ଉତ୍କଳ ରାଜ୍ୟ ଥିଲା । ଉତ୍ତରରେ ମେଦିନୀପୁର ଜିଲ୍ଲାସ୍ଥ କଂସାଇ ନଦୀର ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ତଟରୁ ଦକ୍ଷିଣରେ ପୁରୀ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଏବଂ ପୂର୍ବରେ ବଙ୍ଗୋପସାଗରଠାରୁ ଉତ୍ତର ପଶ୍ଚିମରେ ଗୟା ଜିଲ୍ଲା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଓ ଦକ୍ଷିଣ-ପଶ୍ଚିମରେ ସୋନପୁର ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଉତ୍କଳ ରାଜ୍ୟ ବିସ୍ତୃତ ଥିଲା । ଉତ୍କଳର ଦକ୍ଷିଣରୁ ପ୍ରାୟ ଋଷିକୁଲ୍ୟା ନଦୀର ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ତଟର ସମୀପବର୍ତ୍ତୀ କୌଣସି ସ୍ଥାନ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ କୋଦଙ୍ଗ ରାଜ୍ୟ ବିସ୍ତୃତ ଥିଲା । କୋଦଙ୍ଗକୁ ଉତ୍ତ ମଧ୍ୟ କହୁଥିଲେ । ଉତ୍ତ, କଳିଙ୍ଗ ଓ ଉତ୍କଳ ରାଜ୍ୟମାନେ ସମଜାତୀୟ ଓ ସମଭାଷୀ ଭାଷୀ ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ଥିବାର ଜଣାଯାଏ । କାଳକ୍ରମେ ଉତ୍ତ ଓ ଉତ୍କଳ ଏକ ହୋଇ ଯାଇଥିଲେ । କଳିଙ୍ଗ ଓ ଉତ୍କଳର ମିଳିତ ସାମ୍ରାଜ୍ୟ ଦିନକୁ ଦିନ ବୃଦ୍ଧି ଲାଭ କରୁଥିଲା । କାଳକ୍ରମେ କଳିଙ୍ଗର ବିରାଟ ଓ ବିଶାଳ ସଭ୍ୟତା ଉତ୍କଳ, ଓଡ଼ ଓ ଶବର ସଭ୍ୟତାରେ ମିଶି ଏକାକାର ହବାର ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ଆମ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଓ ସଭ୍ୟତା ସୌଧର ମୂଳଦୁଆ ଏଠାରୁ ହେଲା । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ଶବର, ଉତ୍ତ ପ୍ରଭୃତିଙ୍କ ଭିତରୁ ଅନେକ ଜଣ ବଣ ଜଙ୍ଗଲରେ ରହି ସଭ୍ୟତାରେ ଉପେଲ ନପାରି ପଛୁଆ ହୋଇ ରହିଯାଇଥିଲେ । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ମଧ୍ୟ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଜୟପୁର, କଳାହାଣ୍ଡି ପ୍ରଭୃତି ସ୍ଥାନରେ ବ୍ରାହ୍ମଣ ପୁରୋହିତମାନେ ‘ବିଶାରି’ (କନ୍ଧ, ଶବର ଆଦିଙ୍କ ପୁରୋହିତ) ଓ

ବୈଦ୍ୟମାନେ ‘ଗୁଣିଆ’ (କନ୍ଧ, ଶବର ଆଦିଙ୍କ ଚିକିତ୍ସକ) ହୋଇ ରହି ଯାଇଛନ୍ତି । ଏ ପଛୁଆ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ଚଳୁଥିବା ଲୋକକଥା, ପର୍ବ, ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ଏବେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ରହିଛି । ଲେଖା ସାହିତ୍ୟ ନଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ନୃତ୍ୟ, ଗାନରେ ଯେଉଁ ସଂଗୀତ ଓ ପ୍ରଣୟ, ଗୃହସ୍ଥତା ଓ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ପ୍ରଭୃତିର ଚିତ୍ର ରହିଛି ତାହା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟର ଏକ ଉପାଦେୟ ଅଂଶ । ସବୁ ଦେଶରେ ସବୁ କାଳରେ ଧର୍ମ ପ୍ରଚାର ଦ୍ଵାରା ଭାଷା ଓ ସାହିତ୍ୟର ଉନ୍ନତି ଘଟିଥାଏ । ପ୍ରଥମେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଶବର ଭାଷା ଓ ତାମିଲ ମୂଳକ ଭାଷା ହୋଇ ରହିଥିଲା । ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟ ପୂର୍ବ ତୃତୀୟ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଅଶୋକ ବୌଦ୍ଧ ଧର୍ମ ପ୍ରଚାର କରାଇଥିଲେ । ପୁଣି ଆନ୍ଧ୍ର ଦେଶର ରାଜା ନାଗାର୍ଜୁନ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟପର ଦ୍ଵିତୀୟ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ରାଜାଙ୍କୁ ବୌଦ୍ଧ ଧର୍ମରେ ଦୀକ୍ଷିତ କରାଇଲେ । ବୌଦ୍ଧ ଧର୍ମ ପ୍ରଭାବରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ପାଲି ଭାଷାର ପ୍ରଚାର ଘଟିଲା । ତେଣୁ ଦ୍ରାବିଡ଼ୀ ଭାଷା ଓ ପାଲି ଭାଷାର ସମିଶ୍ରଣରେ ଉତ୍ତ ନାମକ ଗୋଟାଏ ବିଭାଷା ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହୋଇଥିଲା । ଭରତ ମୁନିଙ୍କ ନାଟ୍ୟ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରରେ ଲେଖାଅଛି ଯେ ଓଡ଼ ଓ ଶବର ଜାତି ରଙ୍ଗମଞ୍ଚରେ ଓଡ଼ ବିଭାଷା ବ୍ୟବହାର କରିବେ ।

ପ୍ରାଚୀନ କାଳରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଦ୍ରାବିଡ଼ୀ ଭାଷା ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ହେଉଥିଲା । କ୍ରମେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ଆର୍ଯ୍ୟମାନେ ଆସିବା ପରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସଂସ୍ଵରରେ ରହି ଓଡ଼ିଆମାନଙ୍କ ଜାତୀୟ ଉଚ୍ଚାରଣ ପ୍ରଣାଳୀ କ୍ରମଶଃ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତିତ ହେଲା । ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଭାଷାରେ ବହୁଳ ତତ୍ତ୍ଵ ଓ ତତ୍ତ୍ଵ ଶବ୍ଦ ମାନ ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ହେଲା । ଏଣେ ଆଦିମ ଜାତିଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ମିଶି ନବାଗତ ଆର୍ଯ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କର ଭାଷାରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଘଟିଲା । ଏହିପରି କାଳକ୍ରମେ ଉତ୍କଳ ଭାଷାର ସମିଶ୍ରଣରେ ‘ଉତ୍ତ’ ବିଭାଷା ‘ପ୍ରାକୃତ’ରେ ପରିଣତ ହେଲା । ଏହି ପ୍ରାକୃତ ଭାଷାରେ ବହୁତ ଆର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଭାଷାର ଶବ୍ଦ ମିଶିବାରୁ ଏହା ଭାରତର ଦକ୍ଷିଣାଞ୍ଚଳର ଭାଷାମାନଙ୍କ ଶ୍ରେଣୀଭୁକ୍ତ ନ ହୋଇ ଉତ୍ତରାଞ୍ଚଳ ଭାଷା ମାନଙ୍କର ଶ୍ରେଣୀଭୁକ୍ତ ହେଲା ।

ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟ ସପ୍ତମ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀଠାରୁ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟ ୧୧ଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଅପଭ୍ରଂଶ ଭାଷାର ରଚିତ କେତେକ ରଚନାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାର ଆଦି ସ୍ଵରୂପ ପ୍ରତିଭାତ ହୁଏ । ଏ ରଚନା ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ମୁଖ୍ୟତଃ ଥିଲା ଧର୍ମ ସମ୍ବଳିତ । ଆଧୁନିକ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଦ୍ଵାଦଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀରେ ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହେବାର ଜଣା ପଡ଼ୁଛି । ଦ୍ଵାଦଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଗଙ୍ଗବଂଶର ରାଜ୍ୟ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ଗଙ୍ଗ ବଂଶୀୟ ରାଜାମାନେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାର ଉନ୍ନତି ନିମନ୍ତେ ଯତ୍ନଶୀଳ ଥିଲେ । ଗଙ୍ଗ ବଂଶର ରାଜାମାନେ ଦ୍ଵାଦଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀର ଆରମ୍ଭରୁ ଚତୁର୍ଦ୍ଦଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀର ଶେଷ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ରାଜତ୍ଵ କରିଥିଲେ । ତ୍ରୟୋଦଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ

ଶିଳାଲିପିରେ ଗନ୍ଧ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବ୍ୟବହୃତ ହୋଇଛି । ଯେଣୁ ସବୁ ଦେଶରେ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଥମେ ପଦ୍ୟ ରଚନାରୁ ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହୁଏ ତେଣୁ ତ୍ରୟୋଦଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ଆଗରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପଦ୍ୟ ରଚନା ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହୋଇଥିବ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଛତା ଭାରତର ଉତ୍ତରାଞ୍ଚଳରେ ତ୍ରୟୋଦଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀର ଅନ୍ୟ କୌଣସି ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକ ଭାଷାର ନିଦର୍ଶନ ଏ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ମିଳି ନାହିଁ । ଏହା ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପକ୍ଷରେ ଗୌରବର ବିଷୟ ।

ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସଭ୍ୟତାର ତୁଙ୍ଗ ଓ ବିଶାଳ ଇତିହାସ ଅଛି । ସାହିତ୍ୟରେ ତାହା ପ୍ରକାଶ ପାଇଛି । ନାନା ଆଘାତ ଓ ସଂଘର୍ଷ ଭିତରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟର ସ୍ୱରୂପ ବିକାଶ ପାଇଛି । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟରେ ତିନୋଟି ଧାରା ମୋଟା ମୋଟି ଦେଖାଯାଏ । ତାହା ହେଲା ଶବର, କଳିଙ୍ଗ ଓ ଆର୍ଯ୍ୟ । ଆର୍ଯ୍ୟ ସଭ୍ୟତାର ଛାଞ୍ଚ, ଆବରଣ ଓ ରସାଣରେ ମୋଟା ମୋଟି ସମସ୍ତ ସଭ୍ୟତା ପ୍ରକାଶ । କିନ୍ତୁ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ଓ ଶବର ସଭ୍ୟତା

ଦିଓଟି ସେଥିରେ ପ୍ରଚ୍ଛନ୍ନ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ପରଂପରା ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠାରେ ଆତ୍ମବାନ । ବେଞ୍ଚନୀର ପ୍ରେରଣା ଘେନି ପୁଣି ସେହି ବେଞ୍ଚନୀକୁ ପ୍ରଭାବିତ କରି ଜୀବନ୍ତ ଓ ଜାଗ୍ରତ ମାନବ ସମାଜ ତଥା ଭାରତ ସମାଜରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ବଳିଷ୍ଠ ଓ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱ ପ୍ରକାଶ ପାଇ ଆସୁଛି, ଆସୁଥିବ ।

ଏହି ପ୍ରବନ୍ଧର କେତେକାଂଶ ପଣ୍ଡିତ ନୀଳକଣ୍ଠ ଦାସଙ୍କର ‘ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟର କ୍ରମ ପରିଣାମ’ ଏବଂ ପଣ୍ଡିତ ବିନାୟକ ମିଶ୍ରଙ୍କର ‘ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରକାଶ’ ପୁସ୍ତକରୁ ଉଦ୍ଧୃତ ହୋଇଛି ।



2359 Arnold Cir, Burlington,
ON L7P 4J1, Canada

ଆମେରିକାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଚିନ୍ତା

ଅନାଦି ନାୟକ



ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଉନ୍ନତିମୂଳକ କାମ କରିବା ଲାଗି ଉତ୍ତର ଆମେରିକାରେ ଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଭିତରୁ ଅନେକେ ଖୁବ୍ ଉତ୍ସୁକ । ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଚିନ୍ତା ଓ କାମ ସଫଳ ହେବ କି ନ ହେବ ସିଏ ତ ଦୂରର କଥା । ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପରେ ତାଙ୍କ ପିଲା ଓ ନାତି ନାତୁଣୀ କେମିତି ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଉନ୍ନତି କରିବାକୁ ଉତ୍ସାହିତ ହେବେ – ସେଥିପାଇଁ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଚିନ୍ତା ରହିଛି । ସେମାନେ ଧରି ନେଇଛନ୍ତି ଯେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଅନୁନ୍ନତ ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ରହିଥିବ; ତାର ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ଓ ସଂସ୍ଥା ଗୁଡ଼ାକ ବେମରାମତ ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଥିବେ; ଅଥଚ ବିଦେଶରେ ଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଲୋକେ ଖରା କି ଶୀତ ଛୁଟିରେ ଯାଇ ନହେଲେ ଟେଲିଫୋନ୍ କି ଇ-ମେଲ୍ ଯୋଗେ ଏଠୁ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶ ଦେଉଥିବେ । ଉନ୍ନତ କାମପାଇଁ ଟଙ୍କା ପଠାଉଥିବେ । ଶୀତଦିନେ କି ଖରାଦିନେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଘେରଟାଏ ମାରି ଦେଇ ପ୍ରୋଜେକ୍ଟର ନିରୀକ୍ଷଣ କରୁଥିବେ ।

ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଆଖି ଦୁରୁଖିଆ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ସବୁ ଦୟନୀୟ ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ଅଛନ୍ତି । ସେ ସବୁକୁ ନସୁଧାରିଲେ ବା ସେଠାର ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ସବୁକୁ ବାହାର ଦେଶର ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ସହିତ ତୁଳନାୟ ନ କଲେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ “ଉନ୍ନତ” ବୋଲି ଆଦୌ କହି ହେବନାହିଁ । ସେଥିଲାଗି ଓଡ଼ିଶାରୁ ପାଠ ଶାଠ ପଢ଼ି ଆସି ଯୁ.ଏସ୍.କିମ୍ବା କାନାଡ଼ାରେ ଚାକିରୀ, ଘର ଦୁଆର କରି ରହିଥିବା ବିଶିଷ୍ଟ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିମାନଙ୍କର ଚିନ୍ତା ରହିଛି ।

ଶିକ୍ଷା, ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ, ନିଯୁକ୍ତି, ଶିଳ୍ପ ପ୍ରସାର ପରି ସବୁ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଆଜି ଅଭାବର ସୀମା ନାହିଁ । ସେ ସବୁକୁ ପ୍ରଭାବିତ କରିବା ଲାଗି ଉତ୍ତର ଆମେରିକାରେ ଥିବା ଲୋକେ ଯେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରୁନାହାନ୍ତି ସେକଥା ନୁହେଁ । ଉଦାହରଣ ସ୍ୱରୂପ ଗାଆଁରେ ହାଇସ୍କୁଲ ତିଆରୀ କରିବା ସାଙ୍ଗକୁ ଗାଆଁ ହାଇସ୍କୁଲକୁ ମରାମତ କରିବା, ଗାଆଁ ସ୍କୁଲକୁ ବହିପତ୍ର ଓ ଯନ୍ତ୍ରପାତି ଯୋଗାଇବା, ନିଜ ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ କଲେଜ ବସାଇବା, ଶିକ୍ଷକମାନଙ୍କୁ ଆଞ୍ଚଳିକ ସ୍ତରରେ ତାଲିମ ଦେବା ଭଳି କାମ କରାଯାଉଛି । ଗଣିତ ଜ୍ଞାନର ଓ

ବିଜ୍ଞାନର ବିକାଶ ପାଇଁ ବୃତ୍ତି ମଧ୍ୟ ଦିଆଯାଉଛି । ସେମିତି ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ହସ୍ପିଟାଲ୍ ଓ କ୍ଲିନିକ୍ ଖୋଲି ଚିକିତ୍ସାର ଅତ୍ୟାଧୁନିକ ପଦ୍ଧତି ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ପ୍ରୟୋଗ କରାଯାଉଛି । କେତେକ ଡାକ୍ତରଖାନାକୁ ଯନ୍ତ୍ରପାତି ଯୋଗାଇ ଦିଆଯାଉଛି । ରୋଗୀଙ୍କଲାଗି ମାଗଣାରେ ଔଷଧ ଦିଆଯାଉଛି । ଆଇ.ଟି.ରେ କାମ କରୁଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଯୁବକ ଯୁବତୀ ବେଶ୍ କାମ ପାଉଛନ୍ତି ସେମାନଙ୍କର ବିଦେଶରେ ଥିବା ବନ୍ଧୁ ଓ ପରିଚିତ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ସାହାଯ୍ୟରେ । ଏଠା ପଇସାରେ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର, ରାଉରକେଲା କି ପୁରୀ ପରି ସହରମାନଙ୍କରେ ଘର ତୋଳି, ଭାଇ ବନ୍ଧୁ କୁଟୁମ୍ବକୁ ବ୍ୟବସାୟରେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରି, ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ ନିଯୁକ୍ତି ଦେଇ ପାରୁଛନ୍ତି ବୋଲି ଅନେକେ ଭାବୁଛନ୍ତି । ଏଥିରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ରହି କାମ କରୁଥିବା ଲୋକଙ୍କର ତ ଉପକାର ଓ ଉନ୍ନତି ହେଉଛି । ବାହାରେ ରହି ଏ ସବୁ କାମ ପାଇଁ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରୁଥିବା ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ବିଶେଷଙ୍କୁ ବିଦେଶରେ ରହିଥିବା ଆତ୍ମଗ୍ନାନାରୁ ଏକପ୍ରକାରେ ରକ୍ଷା ମିଳୁଛି । କିଛି ନ କରି ରୁପ୍ ଚାପ୍ ଘରେ ବସିବା ଅପେକ୍ଷା ଗୋଡ଼ ହାତ ହଲେଇ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଉପକାର କରିବାଲାଗି କିଛି ଗୋଟାଏ କରିବା ନିଷ୍ପତ୍ତି ଏକ ସୁଖର କଥା । ଏଥିରେ ମୋକ୍ଷ ମିଳୁ କି ନ ମିଳୁ ଅନ୍ତତଃ ଆତ୍ମଶୁଦ୍ଧି ଅନୁଭୂତ ହେବାର ସମ୍ଭାବନା ରହିଛି ।

ମାତ୍ର ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ପରିସ୍ଥିତିର ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଆଣିବା ଲାଗି ବାହାରୁ ଯେତେ ଯାହା କରାଗଲେ ବି ତା’ର ପରିଣାମ ବିଶେଷ କିଛି ହେବାର ସମ୍ଭାବନା ନାହିଁ । ଶିକ୍ଷା, ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ, ନିଯୁକ୍ତି, ଶିଳ୍ପାକରଣ – ଏ ସବୁ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ବ୍ୟାପକ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଦରକାର । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏହା ଆଣିବାକୁ ହେଲେ ଅସଲ ବୋର୍ଡ଼ି ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ ଉଠାଇବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ । ବାହାରେ ରହିଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଆମାନେ ଭାଇ, ବନ୍ଧୁ କୁଟୁମ୍ବ ହିସାବରେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିପାରିବେ ମାତ୍ର ।

ଉନ୍ନତ କଥା ଧରାଯାଉ । ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସାମୁହିକ ଉନ୍ନତି କିମ୍ବା ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ପ୍ରଚଳିତ ସ୍ଥିତିର ମୌଳିକ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ନିର୍ଭର କରୁଛି ସମୁଦାୟ

ଦେଶର ଆର୍ଥିକ, ରାଜନୈତିକ ସ୍ଥିତି ଉପରେ । ଅନେକ ଦିନ ତଳର କଥା । ଯେତେବେଳେ ବିଜୁ-ବୀରେନ୍-ସଦାଶିବଙ୍କ କଂଗ୍ରେସ ମନ୍ତ୍ରୀମଣ୍ଡଳ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଥିଲା, କେନ୍ଦ୍ରର କଂଗ୍ରେସ ସରକାର ତାଙ୍କୁ ଆସନ୍ତା ପଞ୍ଚ ବାର୍ଷିକ ଯୋଜନାରେ ମିଳିବାକୁ ଥିବା ଟଙ୍କାରୁ ଅଗ୍ରୀମ ଦେଇଥିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କ ପରେ ଆସିଥିବା ବିଶ୍ୱନାଥ ଦାଶ ସରକାର କୌଣସି ମତେ ଚଳେଇ ନେଲେ । ମାତ୍ର ତା ପରେ ଆସିଲା ସିଂହଦେଓ ସରକାର । ସେତେବେଳକୁ ଭାଷ୍ଟ ଖାଲି । ଫଳରେ ସରକାରୀ ହାଇସ୍କୁଲରେ ଶିକ୍ଷକ ଓ ଶିକ୍ଷୟତ୍ରୀମାନେ ଆଠ ମାସ କାଳ ଦରମା ନପାଇ ହୀନସ୍ତା ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି । ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଯୋଜନାଗତ ସୁବିଧା ଅସୁବିଧା କେନ୍ଦ୍ରରେ ଥିବା ନେତାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକ ନେତାଙ୍କ ସମ୍ପର୍କ ଉପରେ ନିର୍ଭର କରୁଛି । ଜୟଲଳିତା, ମମତା ବାନାର୍ଜୀ ଏ ବିଷୟରେ ବହୁତ କହି ପାରିବେ ।

ପଠାଣୀ ସାମନ୍ତଙ୍କ ବିଷୟରେ କହିବାକୁ ଯାଇ କବି ପଦ୍ମଚରଣ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତି –

“ମନାଷା ଦରବାରେ ବସିବାପାଇଁ, ଆଜି ଏ ଦେଶେ ତୁମ ସରିସା କାହିଁ” । ପୁଣି ବିଚ୍ଛନ୍ଦ ଚରଣ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକଙ୍କ ତୁଣ୍ଡରୁ ଆସିଛି “କହମା ଶାରଳେ କାହିଁକି ଉକୁଳେ ଆଉ ତୋ ବୀଣା ନ ବାଜେ” । ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ପ୍ରାପ୍ତିର ଅଳ୍ପ ଦିନ ପରର ଲେଖା ଇଏ ସବୁ ।

ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ପ୍ରାପ୍ତିର ଦଶ ବର୍ଷ ଭିତରେ ଆମ ଗାଆଁ ସ୍କୁଲରେ ପଢୁଥିବା ମୁଁ କି ମୋର ପରି ଅନ୍ୟ ପିଲାମାନେ ଯଥା ଗୋକୁଳନନ୍ଦ ଦାସ, ଭାଗବତ ଜେନା, ଗିରୀଶ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ରାୟ, ସୁପ୍ରଭାତ ଦେ ଭାବି ନଥିଲୁ ଯେ ଆମେ କେହି ବିଦେଶ ଯିବୁ କି ଆମ ଭିତରୁ କିଏ ଉତ୍ତର ଆମେରିକାରେ ବସା ବାଣିବ । ସେତେବେଳେ ବିଚ୍ଛନ୍ଦବାବୁ କି ପଦ ବାବୁଙ୍କ କବିତା ସତବୋଲି ଲାଗୁଥିଲା । ମାତ୍ର ଆଜିର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସେଦିନର ଓଡ଼ିଶାଠାରୁ ବହୁତ ଦୂରରେ । ରବିରାୟଙ୍କୁ ଲୋକସଭାର ବାଚସ୍ପତି, ଲଳିତ ମାନସିଂହଙ୍କୁ ଆମେରିକାରେ ଭାରତର ରାଷ୍ଟ୍ରଦୂତ ଓ ରଙ୍ଗନାଥ ମିଶ୍ରଙ୍କୁ ମୁଖ୍ୟ ବିଚାରପତି ହେବାର ଦେଖି ଆଜି ବାହାରେ ଥିବା ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଗୋଦାବରୀଶ ମିଶ୍ରଙ୍କ ପରି ଘୋଷଣା କରିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଛି “ଆଧୁନିକ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଓ ତହିଁରେ ମୋ ସ୍ଥାନ ।” ଓଡ଼ିଶାରୁ ଏବେ ବହୁତ ମନାଷୀ ବାହାରିଲେଣି ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବାହାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାର ଆଲୋଚନା ହେଲାଣି ।

ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଗଲେ ଭାରତର ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ବହୁ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ପରି ଓଡ଼ିଶା ମୋଟାମୋଟି ଭାବରେ କେତେ କଥାରେ ଉପରେ ଅଛି ତ ଆଉ

କେତେକ କଥାରେ ତଳେ ପଡ଼ିଛି । ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଆଦିବାସୀ ସମସ୍ୟା କଥା ଧରାଯାଉ । ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଥିବା ଆଦିବାସୀ ସଉରା, ସାତ୍ତାଳ, କନ୍ଧ, କୋହ୍ଲୁଙ୍କ ଅବସ୍ଥା ରାଜସ୍ଥାନ, ଛତିଶ ଗଡ଼ କି ଝାଡ଼ଖଣ୍ଡରେ ଥିବା ଆଦିବାସୀମାନଙ୍କ ତୁଳନାରେ ପ୍ରାୟ ଏକାଭଳି । ସେମିତି ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ରେଭେନ୍ସା କଲେଜ, ଉତ୍କଳ ବିଶ୍ୱ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ, ଜ୍ୟୋତି ବିହାର, ସାମନ୍ତ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଶେଖର କଲେଜ ଓ ଖଲିକୋଟ କଲେଜର ଶାରୀରିକ ସ୍ଥିତି ଯାହା ସେଇଟା ସାରା ଦେଶର ମୌଳିକ ଭିତ୍ତି ବା infrastructure ପ୍ରତି ଥିବା ଅବହେଳାର ବାସ୍ତବ ନମୁନା । ଏ ସବୁ ଜଣା ଶୁଣା ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନକୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ଦେଲେ ଗାଉଁଳୀ କଲେଜ କି ହାଇସ୍କୁଲ ମାନଙ୍କର କେଉଁଠି ଛାତ ଉଡ଼ି ଗଲାଣି ତ ଆଉ କେଉଁଠି ପିଲାଙ୍କ ଲାଗି ବାଥ ରୁମ୍ ନାହିଁ । ଲାଇବ୍ରେରୀ ଓ ଲାବୋରେଟାରୀ ଅବସ୍ଥା ପୁରାପୁରି ଦୟନୀୟ । ବ୍ରିଟିଶ ଅମଳରୁ ହାଇସ୍କୁଲ ମାନଙ୍କରେ ଚଳି ଆସିଥିବା ପାସ ଫେଲ କାରବାର ଯୋଗୁ ଅଧିପାଠୁଆ ଗୋକାମାନେ ଗାଆଁ ଭିତରେ ରାଜନୀତି ଓ ଗ୍ରାମସେବା ନାଆଁରେ ସବୁ ରକମର ଗୋଳମାଳ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ଖାଲି ସେତିକି ନୁହେଁ । ନଈ ଗୁଡ଼ାକର ମୁହାଁଣ ପୋତି ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିବାରୁ ସମୁଦ୍ରକୁ ସେ ସବୁର ପାଣି ସହଜରେ ନିଷ୍କାସିତ ହୋଇପାରୁନାହିଁ । ପରିଣାମରେ ଧୋଇଆ ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ ବନ୍ୟା ବହୁ ଦିନ ଧରି ଲାଗି ରହୁଛି । ଭୂମି କ୍ଷୟ ଯୋଗୁ ନଈ ଭିତରସବୁ ପୋତି ହୋଇ ଗଲାଣି । ଏଣୁ ଖରାଦିନେ ଅନେକ ନଦୀ ପୁରାପୁରି ଶୁଖିଲା ।

ଅନ୍ୟପଟେ ଲକ୍ଷ ଲକ୍ଷ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଲାଗି ନିଯୁକ୍ତିର ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ଥିବା ବେଳେ କାରଖାନା ବସାଇ ଏଣୁ ତେଣୁ ସଂସ୍ଥା ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ସରକାର ତରଫରୁ ହଜାର ହଜାର ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ କାମ ଦେବାର ଯୋଜନା ହେଉଛି । ଆମେରିକାରେ ଶହକେ ଛ କି ସାତ ଜଣ କାମ ନ ପାଇଲେ ହଜଗୋଳ ପଡ଼ୁଛି । ଅଥଚ ବ୍ୟାପକ ବେକାରୀ ସମସ୍ୟାର ସମାଧାନ ଲାଗି କୌଣସି ଧାରାବାହିକ ଚିନ୍ତା ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ନାହିଁ । ହଁ, ଏଠି ସେଠି ପୋଖରୀ ଖୋଳି, ଗଛ ଲଗେଇ, ଆଇ.ଟି.ସେକ୍ଟର ଖୋଳି କେତେକ ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ କାମ ଦେଇ ହେବ । ମାତ୍ର ସେ ସବୁ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ-ନିଯୁକ୍ତି ଯୋଜନାଠାରୁ ବହୁ ଦୂରରେ । ଲୋକେ ଏକଜୁଟ ହୋଇ ଏଥିପାଇଁ କାମ କରିବାକୁ ବାହାରିବେ ତ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ନିଯୁକ୍ତି ସମ୍ଭବ ହୋଇ ପାରିବ ।

ସରକାରୀ କଳର କର୍ମଚାରୀମାନେ ସରକାରୀ ଯୋଜନାକୁ ସଫଳତାର ସହିତ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକାରୀ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ ଉତ୍ସାହିତ କରିବା କଥା । ସରକାର ଓ ସାଧାରଣ ଜନତା ଭିତରେ ଥିବା ଦୂରତାକୁ

କମାଇବା ପାଇଁ ସେମାନେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିବା କଥା । ମାତ୍ର ଚାକିରୀ ଖଣ୍ଡିଏ ପାଇଲା ପରେ ସେମାନେ ଲୋକଙ୍କର ସେବକ ହେବେ କଅଣ ଲୋକଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଅଲଗା ହୋଇ ଯାଉଛନ୍ତି । ଯେତେ ବଡ଼ ଚାକିରୀ, ସେତିକି ପରିମାଣରେ ସାଧାରଣ ଲୋକଙ୍କଠାରୁ ସାତ ଅଲଗା । ଅଥଚ ବଡ଼ ଚାକିରୀ କରିଥିବା ଭାଇ, ପୁତୁରା, ଭାଇଁ କି ଶଳାଟିଏ ପାଇଲେ ଆମର ମନ କୁଣ୍ଠେ ମୋଟ ।

ଭଲ ସରକାରୀ କର୍ମଚାରୀ ଯେ ନାହାନ୍ତି କି ଅନେକ ଜାଗାରେ ସରକାରୀ ଯୋଜନା ଓ ଲୋକଙ୍କର ସାମୁହିକ ଉଦ୍ୟମ ସଫଳତାର ସହିତ ପ୍ରୟୋଗ କରାଯାଉ ନାହିଁ ସେ କଥା ନୁହେଁ । ମାତ୍ର ମୋଟା ମୋଟି ପରିସ୍ଥିତି ହେଲା ଏଇଆ ।

ନଜରକୁ ଆସୁଥିବା ସବୁ ସମସ୍ୟାଗୁଡ଼ାକ ପରସ୍ପର ସହିତ ଛନ୍ଦାଛନ୍ଦି । ସୁତରାଂ ଛୋଟ ହେଉ କି ବଡ଼ ହେଉ କୌଣସି ଗୋଟିଏ ସମସ୍ୟାକୁ ସମାଧାନ କରିବାକୁ ଯିବା ବେଳକୁ ତା ସହିତ ସଂଲଗ୍ନ ଅନ୍ୟ ଅନେକ ସମସ୍ୟାକୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ସମାଧାନ କରିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ । ଅନେକେ ଯୁକ୍ତି କରି ପାରନ୍ତି “ଏଭଳି ଭାବିଲେ ତ କିଛି ହୋଇ ପାରିବ ନାହିଁ ।” ଏବେ ତ ତାହାହିଁ ଘଟି ଚାଲିଛି ।

ଉଦ୍‌ବେଗ ଓ ଉତ୍ସାହ ନେଇ ବିଦେଶରେ ଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଆମାନେ ବିଭିନ୍ନ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ଉନ୍ନତମାନୁଲକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହାତକୁ ନେଇ ତାକୁ ସଫଳତାର ସହିତ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ କରିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରିଛନ୍ତି ଓ କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ମାତ୍ର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଆହୁରି ବହୁତ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ସଦିକ୍ଷା ଓ ସହଯୋଗ ଉପରେ ନିର୍ଭର କରୁଛି । ଯଥା ସମୟରେ ସେ ସବୁ ସବୁବେଳେ ମିଳୁନାହିଁ । ତତ୍ପରା ଉଦ୍‌ବେଗ ବଢ଼ୁଛି ଓ ବିଦେଶୀ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ମାନଙ୍କର ମନ ଭାଙ୍ଗି ଯାଉଛି ।

ଓଡ଼ିଶାରୁ ଆସିଥିବା ପ୍ରଥମ ପାଢ଼ିର ଲୋକେ ସ୍ଵାଭାବିକ ଭାବରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପ୍ରତି ଆଶକ୍ତ । ବଡ଼ିଚୁରା, ଶୁଖୁଆ ଭଜା, ଶାକର, ଆମ ଚଟଣୀ ଓ ପଖାଳ ଖାଇ ବଢ଼ିଥିବାରୁ ସେ ସବୁ କଥା ଅନବରତ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ମନେ ପଡ଼ୁଛି । ସତରୁପିର ହାତଭଙ୍ଗା ଶୀତ, କିଭଲ୍ୟାଣ୍ଡର ତୁଷାର ବର୍ଷା କି ଗେଦର୍ସବର୍ଗର ଶୀତୁଆ ମେଘୁଆ ପରିବେଶରେ ପଖାଳ ଓ ବଡ଼ିଚୁରା ବଦଳରେ ପିଜା ନହେଲେ ଆମଲେଟ ଖାଇବାକୁ ମନ ହେଉଛି । ଆଦିବାସୀ ଲୋକ ତା କାନ୍ଧରେ ଝୁଲୁଥିବା ଗାନ୍ଧୀ ଫଟୋକୁ ପୂଜା କରିବାକୁ ଯାଇ ସଦ୍ୟ ମାରିଥିବା କୁକୁଡ଼ା ରକ୍ତରୁ ବୁନ୍ଦାଏ ଆଣି ଫଟୋ ଦେହରେ ଲଗାଇଲା ପରି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଘରେ ଛେଳି କି କୁକୁଡ଼ା ତରକାରୀର ମହକ ଯେତେ ଉଠୁ ନା କାହିଁକି ଘର ଭିତରେ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ

ମୂର୍ତ୍ତି ନହେଲେ ଫଟୋଟାଏ ଅଲବତ ରହିବ । ସୁଦଶା ବ୍ରତ, ସାବିତ୍ରୀ ବ୍ରତ, କୁମାର ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣିମା, ପ୍ରଥମାଷ୍ଟମୀ, ରଜ ଭଳି ପର୍ବ ପର୍ବାଣି ଓ ପୂଜା ଲାଗି ପ୍ରଥମ ପାଢ଼ିରେ ଆସିଥିବା ମହିଳାମାନଙ୍କର ଆନୁଗତ୍ୟ ରହିଛି । ଇଏ ହେଲା ଆମେରିକାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଘରର ଅନୁଭୂତି । ମାତ୍ର ଆମେରିକାରେ ବଢ଼ିଥିବା ଓ ବଢୁଥିବା ଦ୍ଵିତୀୟ ପାଢ଼ିକ ପାଇଁ ଏ ସବୁର ଖାସ୍ କିଛି ଅର୍ଥ ନାହିଁ । ସ୍କୁଲରେ, ସାଙ୍ଗ ମେଳରେ ସେମାନେ ବଢୁଛନ୍ତି ଏକ ସ୍ଵତନ୍ତ୍ର ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଓ ପରିବେଶ ଭିତରେ । ଧର୍ମପଦ କି ଏକଲବ୍ୟ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରେରଣା ଯୋଗାଇ ପାରୁ ନାହିଁ । ସେମାନେ ଆକାଶଚର Astronaut ସୁନୀତା ଉଲ୍‌ଲିୟମସ, ଗର୍ଭର୍ଷ୍ଟର ନିକି ହେଲି, ବବି ଜିନ୍‌ଲ, ତାନ୍ତ୍ର ସାମ୍ବାଦିକ ପ୍ରଣାୟ ଗୁପ୍ତା ଭଳି ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ ନଜରରେ ରଖି ବଢୁଛନ୍ତି । ଅଜା-ଆଇ, ଜେଜେ-ମା, ଦାଦା-ଖୁଡ଼ି, କିମ୍ବା ମାମୁ-ମାଇଁଙ୍କ ଯୋଗୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପ୍ରତି ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧା ରହିଛି । ମାତ୍ର ବୟସ ଓ ଦାୟିତ୍ଵ ବଢ଼ିବା ସାଙ୍ଗେ ସାଙ୍ଗେ ସେ ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧାର ପରିସର ସେମାନଙ୍କର ସଙ୍କୁଚିତ ହୋଇ ଆସୁଛି । ତେଣୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଆର୍ଥିକ ଉନ୍ନତିପାଇଁ କାମ କରିବା ଏବଂ ଉଗାଣ୍ଡା କିମ୍ବା ଆପାଲେସିଆରେ ଥିବା ଗରିବ ଗୁରୁବାଙ୍କ ଆର୍ଥିକ ଉନ୍ନତି ଲାଗି କାମ କରିବା ଭିତରେ ସେମାନେ କିଛି ପାର୍ଥିକ୍ୟ ଦେଖୁ ନାହାନ୍ତି । “ମୋ ଜୀବନ ପଛେ ନକେଁ ପଡ଼ିଥାଉ, ଜଗତ ଉଦ୍ଧାର ହେଉ” – ଭୀମ ଭୋଇଙ୍କର ଏ ଉକ୍ତିକୁ ସେମାନେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କଲେ ହେଁ ଏଇଟା ଯେ କେବଳ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସେବାଲାଗି ପ୍ରୟତ୍ନ ସେକଥା ସେମାନେ ଭାବୁ ନାହାନ୍ତି । ରାଜୀବ ସାହା କି ଶ୍ରୀନିବାସନ ଯଥାକ୍ରମେ ଆମେରିକା ସରକାରର ଦାତବ୍ୟ ସଂସ୍ଥା USAID ର ତାଲରେକ୍ଟର ଓ ସାର୍କିଲ୍ କୋର୍ଟର ବିଚାରପତି ହୋଇଥିବାରୁ ଗୁଜୁରାତ ଓ ଦିଲ୍ଲୀ ଗର୍ବ ଅନୁଭବ କରୁଛି । ସାହା ଓ ଶ୍ରୀନିବାସନ ଗୁଜୁରାତ କି ଦିଲ୍ଲୀପାଇଁ କିଛି କରନ୍ତୁ କି ନ କରନ୍ତୁ ନିଜ ନିଜ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ଅର୍ଜିଥିବା ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠାରେ ସେମାନେ ସେ ସବୁ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ପାଇଁ ସହାୟକ ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି । ସେମିତି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପିଲା ଏଠି ରାଜନୀତି, ବ୍ୟବସାୟ, ଅଧ୍ୟାପନା, ସଙ୍ଗୀତ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ର, ସେବା କିମ୍ବା ଗବେଷଣା ଭଳି ଭିନ୍ନ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା ପାଇଲେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଗର୍ବ କରିବ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆମାନେ ଗର୍ବ କରିବେ ସନ୍ଦେହ ନାହିଁ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବୋହୂ ନିଶା ବିଶ୍ଵାଳ ଏବେ ଯୁକ୍ତରାଷ୍ଟ୍ର ଆମେରିକାର ବୈଦେଶିକ ବିଭାଗର ଜଣେ ଆସିଷ୍ଟାଣ୍ଟ ସେକ୍ରେଟାରୀ ।” ହାତୀ ବନସ୍ତରେ ବୁଲୁଥିଲେ ବି ରଜାର” ବୋଲି କଥା ଅଛି ।

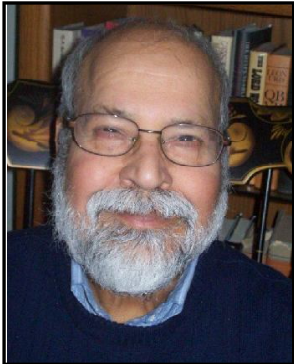
ନିଆଁରେ ହାତ ପୁରାଇ ଅଣ୍ଟା ଅନୁଭବ କରିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରିବା ଯେମିତି ବାସ୍ତବତାର ବିରୋଧୀ ଠିକ୍ ସେମିତି ଦ୍ଵିତୀୟ ପାଢ଼ିର ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଲାଗି ଆକୃଷ୍ଟ କରାଇବା ଏକ ଅସ୍ଵାଭାବିକ ଉଦ୍ୟମ । ନିଜ ନିଜ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ କାମ କରୁଥିବା ବେଳେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା କଥା ସେମାନଙ୍କ ମନକୁ ଆସିବ ତ ଖୁବ୍ ଭଲ କଥା । ମାତ୍ର ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଟାଣି ଓଟାରି ଏ ଆଡ଼କୁ ଆଣିଲେ ଫଳ ଓଲଟା ହେବ । ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଯେଉଁ ଲୋକେ ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ଖାଉଟି ଜିନିଷର ଅଭାବ, ଦରଦାମ ବୃଦ୍ଧି, ସରକାରୀ କର୍ମଚାରୀଙ୍କ ଅପାରଗତା, ରାଜନୈତିକ ପେସ୍ତ ପାସ୍ତ, ଦୁର୍ନୀତି, ଶୋଷଣ ଇତ୍ୟାଦିର ସମ୍ମୁଖୀନ ହେଉଛନ୍ତି ସେହିମାନଙ୍କ ଦ୍ଵାରାହିଁ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସମସ୍ୟା ସବୁର ସମାଧାନ ହୋଇ ପାରିବ । ସେମାନେ ନିଜ ଭିତରୁ ପ୍ରେରଣା ପାଇ କାମ କରିବେ ତ ବାହାରେ ରହୁଥିବା ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ବିଶେଷ ନିଜର ବିଦ୍ୟା ବୁଦ୍ଧି, ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତା ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ଦେଇପାରନ୍ତି । ମାତ୍ର ଏ ଆଡ଼ର ବୁଦ୍ଧିଆ ଲୋକେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଯାଇ ନିଜ ଯୋଜନା, ନିଜ ଚିନ୍ତାକୁ ନିଜ ପଇସା ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚ କରି ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଦ୍ଵାରା କରାଇବାକୁ ଗଲେ କିଛିଟା କାମ ହୁଏତ ହେବ । ମାତ୍ର ତଦ୍ଵାରା ଲୋକଶକ୍ତିର ଅଭ୍ୟୁଦୟ ଘଟିବ ନାହିଁ । ସବୁ ଆତ୍ମ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଆଣିବା ଲାଗି ଲୋକଙ୍କର ସାମୂହିକ, ମିଳିତ ଉଦ୍ୟମ ହିଁ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ସବୁଠାରୁ ବେଶି ଦରକାର ।

ଏବେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାକୁ “ପ୍ରାଚୀନ” ଆଖ୍ୟା ମିଳିଲା ବୋଲି ଅନେକେ ଖୁବ୍ ଦମ୍ଭରେ ଛାଡ଼ି ବାଡ଼ୋଉଛନ୍ତି । ସରକାରୀ ଖାତାରେ “ପ୍ରାଚୀନ” ଭାବରେ ସ୍ଵୀକୃତ ହେଲା ବୋଲି ଯେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଏକ ପ୍ରାଚୀନ ଭାଷା ସେ କଥା ନୁହେଁ । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାଭାଷୀଙ୍କ ମନ ଭିତରେ ଏହା ବୈତରଣୀ, ରକ୍ଷିକୂଲ୍ୟା କିମ୍ବା ଗନ୍ଧର୍ଘନୀ ପରି ଯୁଗ ଯୁଗରୁ ପ୍ରାଚୀନତାର ସ୍ଥାନ ପାଇ ଆସିଛି । ଏବେ ସରକାରୀ ତହବିଲରେ ନାଆଁ ରହିଲା ପରେ କିଛି ମାଲ ପାଣି ଆସିବ – ଅସଲ କଥା ହେଲା ସେଇଠି ।

ଅବଶ୍ୟ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଗର୍ବର କିଛି ସୁରାକ ତା ଭିତରେ ରହିଛି । “ପିଚା ଲଙ୍ଗଳା, ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ଠେକା” ପରି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାର ଦର ଯେତେବେଳେ ବହୁଛି ଠିକ୍ ସେତିକିବେଳେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ବିଶ୍ଵବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ମାନଙ୍କରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପଢ଼ିବାକୁ ଛାତ୍ର ମିଳୁ ନାହାନ୍ତି । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଶାପାଇଁ ବକ୍ତୃତା ଦେଉଥିବା ଲୋକଙ୍କ ପିଲାମାନେ ଇଂରାଜୀ ମାଧ୍ୟମ ସ୍କୁଲରେ ପଢ଼ୁଛନ୍ତି । ପ୍ରକାଶକମାନେ ପାଠ୍ୟପୁସ୍ତକ ଛାପିବା ଛଡ଼ା କବିତା, ଗଳ୍ପ କିମ୍ବା ଜୀବନୀ ଛାପିବାରେ ମୂଳଧନ ଖଟାଇବାକୁ ନାରାଜ କାରଣ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବହି କିଣିବାକୁ ଜନତାର ଆଗ୍ରହ ନାହିଁ । ସରକାରୀ ମହଲର ପୁରସ୍କାର ଗୁଡ଼ାକୁ ଲେଖକ ଭାବରେ ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ିଆ ଅଫିସରମାନେ ଝାମ୍ପି ନେଉଛନ୍ତି । ଭାଗବତ, ଗୀତା, ରାମାୟଣ କି ମହାଭାରତର ଚିନ୍ତାଧାରା ବଦଳରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଚିନ୍ତାଧାରା ପୁଷ୍ଟ ହୋଇଛି ପାଶ୍ଚାତ୍ୟ ଲେଖକଙ୍କ ଛାୟାରେ । ଏଣୁ ଜନତାର ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧାର ପ୍ରତୀକ ଭାବରେ ‘ବିଶ୍ଵ କବି’, “ଜାତୀୟ କବି”, “କବି ସମ୍ରାଟ” କି “ବ୍ୟାସ” ହେବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ମିଳୁ ନାହିଁ । କେବଳ “ସରକାରଙ୍କ ଦ୍ଵାରା ପୁରସ୍କୃତ” ଉପାଧି ପାଇ ସେମାନେ ନିଜକୁ ସାବାସ ବୋଲି କହୁଛନ୍ତି । ସୁତରାଂ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାର ପ୍ରସାରଣ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଅର୍ଥନୈତିକ ଉନ୍ନତି ପରସ୍ପର ସହିତ ଅଙ୍ଗ ଅଙ୍ଗି ଭାବରେ ଜଡ଼ିତ । ଗୋଟିକୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ଅନ୍ୟଟି ତିଷ୍ଠିପାରିବ ନାହିଁ ।

ଆଜି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଓ ସାହିତ୍ୟର ବିକାଶ ପାଇଁ ଦାୟିତ୍ଵ ପଡ଼ୁଛି ଗାଆଁ ଓ ସହରରେ ରହୁଥିବା ଅନାମଧେୟ ସାଧାରଣ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଉପରେ । ଏଣୁ କହିଲେ ଅତ୍ୟୁକ୍ତି ହେବ ନାହିଁ ଯେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଉନ୍ନୟନ ସମ୍ଭବ ହେବ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବାହାରେ ଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଦ୍ଵାରା ନୁହେଁ; ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସତ୍ତ୍ଵେ ।

(ଅନାଦି ନାୟକଙ୍କ ମନ୍ତବ୍ୟ ପ୍ରତି ସପ୍ତାହରେ Express India ଓ India this week ରେ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ ହୁଏ । ସେ ମେରିଲ୍ୟାଣ୍ଡରେ ରହନ୍ତି ।)



16625 Bahner Ct, Mount Airy,
MD 21771

ଶାନ୍ତିର ଚକ୍ରବ୍ୟୁତ

ବିଜ୍ଞାନୀ ଦାସ

ସରି ଯାଉଥିଲା ମୁଣ୍ଡ । ଶାନ୍ତି ଖୋଜିଖୋଜି ଏବେ ଚକ୍ରବ୍ୟୁତରେ ପଡ଼ିଯାଇଛନ୍ତି ରତିକାନ୍ତ ବାବୁ । ଯେଉଁ ଦିଗରେ ଟିକେ ଶାନ୍ତିର ଝଲକ ଦେଖି ସେ ଦିଗକୁ ଅଗ୍ରସର ହେଉଛନ୍ତି, ବାଟସାରା କେବଳ ଅଶାନ୍ତିରେ ହତସନ୍ତ ହେବା ହିଁ ସାର ହେଉଛି । ଶାନ୍ତି ସେମିତି ରହିଯାଇଛି ଦୂରରେ, କେବଳ ମାୟାଜାଲ ବିଛାଇ, ମିଛ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଦେଖାଇ । ଏମିତି କେତେ ପଥରେ ଖୋଜିଛନ୍ତି ସେ ଶାନ୍ତିକୁ, ସ୍ୱାମୀ ତନ୍ମୟାନନ୍ଦଙ୍କ ଆଶ୍ରମରେ, ହରେକୃଷ୍ଣ କାର୍ତ୍ତନ ମଧ୍ୟରେ, ମାତା ଜ୍ଞାନମୟୀଙ୍କ ରିଟ୍ରିଟ୍‌ରେ, ସତ୍ୟଜଙ୍ଗରେ ଓ ରାଜଧାନୀ ମନ୍ଦିରର ଭଜନ ସମାରୋହରେ କିନ୍ତୁ ସବୁଠି କ୍ଷଣକ ପାଇଁ ତନ୍ମୟ ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି ସିନା, ହେଲେ ଫେରିଛନ୍ତି ଅନେକ ଅଶାନ୍ତ ହୃଦୟ ନେଇ । କେବେ ମନ୍ଦିରପାଇଁ ରୋଷେଇ କରିକରି କ୍ଳାନ୍ତ ହୋଇଥିବା ପତ୍ନୀ ନିର୍ମଳାଙ୍କର ନିର୍ମମ ବ୍ୟବହାରର ସମ୍ମୁଖୀନ ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି ତ, କେତେବେଳେ ରାତିରେ ମନ୍ଦିରକୁ ଯିବା କିମ୍ବା ମନ୍ଦିରରୁ ଫେରିବା ବାଟରେ ଗ୍ରୀଫିକ୍‌ଜାମରେ ପଡ଼ି ନିଜ ଭାଗ୍ୟର ନିନ୍ଦା କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚ ବି ତ କମ୍ ନୁହେଁ । ଯେଉଁଠିକୁ ଯାଅ, ଦକ୍ଷିଣା ଦେବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ, ପୁଣି ସଂସ୍ଥାମାନଙ୍କର ଫର୍ଣ୍ଣରେଜିଙ୍ଗ, ଗାଡ଼ିର ତେଲ ଦାମ୍, ରୋଷେଇ ପାଇଁ ଡାଲି, ଚାଉଳର ଦାମ୍, ଆଉ ସବୁଠାରୁ ହେଲା ସମୟର ମୂଲ୍ୟ । ହେଲେ ଶାନ୍ତି କାହିଁ, କେଉଁଠି ଅଛି ଶାନ୍ତି ?

ଏଥର ତେଣୁ ଭାରତଯାତ୍ରା ବେଳେ ରତିକାନ୍ତ ବାବୁ ସ୍ଥିରକଲେ ସେ ମାଉଣ୍ଡଆବୁ ଯିବେ ଓ ସେଠିକାର ଶାନ୍ତିବନରେ ଶାନ୍ତିକୁ ପାଇବାର ଚେଷ୍ଟାକରିବେ । ତାହାହିଁ ବନ୍ଧୁ ରୁଦ୍ରନାରାୟଣ କହିଥିଲେ । “ବହୁତ ଶାନ୍ତ ପରିବେଶ, ମିଷ୍ଟଭାଷୀ, ସ୍ୱେଦିଳ ଅନ୍ତଃବାସୀ, ମୋଟ ଉପରେ ଏକ ନୈସର୍ଗିକ ଆନନ୍ଦର ଭୂମି । ଟିକେ ବୁଲିଆସ । ଏସବୁ ନିଜେ ଅନୁଭବ ନକଲେ ଜାଣିହେବନି ।” ହେଲେ ପ୍ରଥମରୁ ହିଁ ଅଶାନ୍ତିର ସୂଚନା ମିଳିଲାଣି । ସ୍ୱାଇସ୍‌ଜେଟ୍ ଏୟାରଲାଇନ୍‌ସର ଫ୍ଲାଇଟ୍ ଦୁଇଘଣ୍ଟା ଲେଟ୍ । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ନିର୍ମଳାଙ୍କ ମୁତ୍ ଖରାପ । ପତ୍ନୀଙ୍କୁ ଖୁସି କରାଇବା ପାଇଁ ରତିକାନ୍ତ ବାବୁ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବଦେଲେ, “ଚାଲ ଦୋସା ଖାଇବା ।”

“ମତେତ ଏବେ ଭୋକ ନାହିଁ । ତମକୁ ଭୋକ ଲାଗୁଛି ଯଦି ଖାଅ ।” ନିର୍ମଳା ତାଙ୍କର ମନମରା ଉତ୍ତରଟିଏ ଫୋପାଡ଼ିଦେଲେ ଓ ପହୁଥିବା ହିନ୍ଦି ପତ୍ରିକାରେ ପୁନଶ୍ଚ ମନୋନିବେଶ କଲେ ।

କ’ଣ ଆଉ କରିବେ ରତିକାନ୍ତ ବାବୁ ? ଗୋଟିଏ ସ୍ଥାନରେ ବସି ପଢ଼ାପଢ଼ି କରିବା ତାଙ୍କଦ୍ୱାରା ହୋଇପାରେନି । ତେଣୁ ସେ ଏକାଏକା ଏୟାରପୋର୍ଟ ସାରା ଏପଟସେପଟ ହୋଇ ସବୁ ଦୋକାନ ଭିତରକୁ ଯାଇ ବୁଲି ଦେଖିଲେ ଓ ଜିନିଷପତ୍ରର ମୂଲ୍ୟଚାଲ କଲେ । ଗୋଟିଏ କୁକି ପ୍ୟାକେଟ୍ କିଣିଲେ ସରୋଜ ଭାଇଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ, ୨୫୦ ଟଙ୍କା । ଜିନିଷପତ୍ରର ଦାମ୍ ସବୁ ଏତେ ଅଧିକ ହୋଇଗଲାଣି ବୋଲି ଧାରଣା ନଥିଲା ତାଙ୍କର । ଏମିତି ବୁଲିବୁଲି, ଏୟାରଲାଇନ୍ ଷ୍ଟାଫ୍‌ଙ୍କୁ ବାରମ୍ବାର ଏକାକଥା ପଚାରି ପଚାରି ଘଣ୍ଟାକ ପରେ ପୁଣି ପତ୍ନୀଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଗଲେ ଓ ଦୋସା ଖାଇବାର ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ରଖିଲେ । ଏଥର ନିର୍ମଳା ରାଜିହେଲେ ଓ ଠାକୁରାଣୀଙ୍କ ଭଳି ଆସି ଗୋଟିଏ ଟେବୁଲ୍ ଅଧିକାର କରି ବସିଗଲେ । କୋଡିଏ ମିନିଟ୍ ଲାଇନ୍‌ରେ ଠିଆହୋଇ ଦୁଇଟି ଦୋସା ପ୍ଲେଟ୍ ଧରି ରତିକାନ୍ତ ବାବୁ ଟେବୁଲ୍ ପାଖରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଛନ୍ତି ତ ଆନାଉନ୍‌ସମେଣ୍ଟ ହେଲା ଯେ ଫ୍ଲାଇଟ୍ ପୁଣି ଘଣ୍ଟାଏ ଲେଟ୍ ହେବ । ନିର୍ମଳାଙ୍କ ମଗଜ ବିଗିଡ଼ିଗଲା । “ଏମାନେ ତ ଏଠି ଏତେ ତେରି କଲେଣି, ଆମେ ଆଉ ଆଜି କିଛି ବି ଦେଖି ପାରିବାନି ।”

ପତ୍ନୀଙ୍କ ଅସନ୍ତୋଷ ବୁଝିଲେ ରତିକାନ୍ତ । କହିଲେ, “ଆମର ତ କିଛି ନିୟନ୍ତ୍ରଣ ନାହିଁ; ଭଗବାନଙ୍କୁ ଡାକ ଆଉ ଅଧିକ ଲେଟ୍ ନ ହେଉ ।”

ଯାହାହେଉ, ହୁଏତ ଭଗବାନ ଶୁଣିଲେ । ଆଉ ଅଧିକ ଲେଟ୍ ହେବାର ଘୋଷଣା ହେଲାନି । ସେମାନେ ଭଲରେ ଆସି ଉଦୟପୁର ଏୟାରପୋର୍ଟରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଗଲେ । ସେତେବେଳକୁ ଦିନବାରଟା । ଭ୍ରାଜଭର୍ ସୁନିଲଙ୍କୁ ଫୋନ୍ ଲଗାଇବାରୁ ସେ ଆସି ପାଞ୍ଚମିନିଟ୍ ଭିତରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଗଲା । ରତିକାନ୍ତ ସୁନିଲ୍ ସହିତ ଆଲୋଚନା କରି ଠିକ୍‌କଲେ

ଯେ ସେମାନେ ଆଉ ଉଦୟପୁରରେ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ ନଖାଇ ସିଧା ମାଉଷୁଆକୁ ଚାଲିଯିବେ ଓ ସେଠାରେ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ ଖାଇବେ; ତାପରେ ରହିବା ଓ ବୁଲାଇବା କରିବା ବିଷୟରେ ଯୋଜନା କରିବେ ।

ଗାଡ଼ି ଚାଲିଥାଏ । ନିର୍ମଳା ଭିଡ଼ିଓ କ୍ୟାମେରା ବାହାର କରି ରେକର୍ଡ଼ିଂ କରିବା ଆରମ୍ଭକଲେ । ଦେଖିଲେ ସେମିତି କିଛି ଖାସ୍ ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ନଥାଏ । ଖାଲି ସେମିତି ରାସ୍ତା ଓ ନୂଆ ସ୍ଥାନମାନଙ୍କର ଅଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ ଚିହ୍ନଟ ଯାହା । ରତିକାନ୍ତ, ସୁନିଲ୍ ସହିତ ଗପ ଯୋଡ଼ିଦେଇଥାନ୍ତି । କହୁକହୁ ସୁନିଲ୍ କହିଲା, “ଏ ଯେଉଁ ରାସ୍ତାରେ ଆମେ ଯାଉଛନ୍ତି, ତାର ଉଭୟପାର୍ଶ୍ୱରେ ଆଦିବାସୀମାନେ ରହନ୍ତି । ସେମାନେ ତାରମାରି ଗାଡ଼ି ଅଟକାଇଦିଅନ୍ତି ଓ ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ଲୁଚିନିଅନ୍ତି । ଏମିତି ଜଣେ ଦଂପତି ଯାଉଥିଲେ ଯେ, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଟଙ୍କା, ଗହଣା ସବୁ ଦିନ ଦ୍ୱିପ୍ରହରରେ ଲୁଚିନେଲେ । ଏଥିରେ ରତିକାନ୍ତଙ୍କର ରକ୍ତଚାପ ବଢ଼ିଗଲା । ସେ ନିର୍ମଳାଙ୍କୁ ଡାକିବୁ କରି କହିଲେ, “କ୍ୟାମେରା ସବୁ ଭିତରେ ରଖିଦିଅ ।” ନିଜ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବି ସେ ଟିକେ ପ୍ୟାଣ୍ଟ ଅଣ୍ଟାଳି ଚେକ୍ କରିନେଲେ । ଏମିତି କିଛି ସମୟପରେ ସୁନିଲ୍ ହଠାତ୍ ଗାଡ଼ିକୁ ସାଇଡ୍ କରିଦେଲା । ସେତେବେଳକୁ ଉଭୟ ରତିକାନ୍ତ ଓ ନିର୍ମଳାଙ୍କର ରକ୍ତଚାପ ବଢ଼ିଗଲାଣି । ଏ ଭାଇଭଉଣକୁ ବା ବିଶ୍ୱାସ କ’ଣ ? ସେ ଯଦି କିଛି କରିବସେ ? ତଥାପି ସାହସ କରି ରତିକାନ୍ତ ପଚାରିଲେ, “ଗାଡ଼ି କାହିଁକି ରଖିଲ ?”

ସୁନିଲ୍ କହିଲା, “ଏଠିକାର ଆତ ବହୁତ ମିଠା, ଏଠୁ ଆମେ କିଛି ଆତ କିଣିନେବା ।”

ଦେଖିଲାବେଳକୁ ସତକୁ ସତ ରାସ୍ତାକଡ଼ରୁ ବାହାରି ଆସିଲେ ଛଅ-ସାତ ଜଣ ପିଲା, ଆଠରୁ ଦଶ ବର୍ଷ ଭିତରେ ବୟସ ହେବ ବୋଧହୁଏ । ସେମାନେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଗୋଟିଏ ଆତ ପାଛିଆ ମୁଣ୍ଡାଇ ଥାଆନ୍ତି । ସେମାନେ ହଠାତ୍ ସୁନିଲ୍ ପାଖରେ ଜମା ହୋଇଗଲେ ଓ ‘ମୋ ଆତ କିଣ, ମୋର ଭଲ ପାଟିଲା ଆତ’ ଦୋହରାଇବାରେ ଲାଗିଲେ । ସୁନିଲ୍ ମୁଲଚାଲ କରି ଆତ ପାଛିଆ ପିଛା ପଟିଶରୁ ପନ୍ଦର ଟଙ୍କା ଦେବାକୁ ରାଜିହେଲା ଓ ଦୁଇଟି ପିଲାଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଦୁଇପାଛିଆ ଆତ କିଣିବାକୁ ସ୍ଥିର କରିନେଲା । ହେଲେ ସେ ଯେଉଁ ପାଛିଆଟିକୁ ପାଟିଲା ଆତ ଭାବିଥିଲା, ଦେଖିବାବେଳକୁ ସେ ପାଛିଆର ଉପରେ ପାଟିଲା ଆତ ଓ ତଳେ ସବୁଗୁଡ଼ା କଞ୍ଚା । ତେଣୁ ସେ ଟଙ୍କା କମାଇବାକୁ ଚାହିଁବାରୁ ସେ ଛୋଟ ଝିଅଟି, ଭାରି ଯୁକ୍ତିତର୍କ କଲା । ରତିକାନ୍ତ ଦେଖିଲେ ଅନ୍ୟ ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କ ମୁହଁ ସବୁ ଶୁଖିଯାଇଛି, ସେମାନେ ଅତି ଆଶାୟୀ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ଆତକୁ ଚାହୁଁଥାନ୍ତି ଓ ‘ମୋ ଆତ ବି କିଣ

ବାକୁ’ କହୁଥାନ୍ତି । ରତିକାନ୍ତଙ୍କର ଦୟାହେଲା । ସେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ତିନି ଚାରୋଟି ଲେଖାଏଁ ପାଟିଲା ଆତ କିଣିଲେ ଓ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ପାଞ୍ଚଟଙ୍କାଏ ଲେଖାଏଁ ଦେଇ ଖୁସି କରାଇଲେ ।

ଗାଡ଼ି ପୁଣି ଚାଲିବାକୁ ଆରମ୍ଭକଲା । ବାଟସାରା ସବୁ ଏମିତି ଆତ ବିକିବା ପାଇଁ ଛୋଟ ପିଲାମାନେ ଠିଆ ହୋଇଥାନ୍ତି ଓ ରାସ୍ତାର ଏ କଡ଼ରୁ ସେ କଡ଼କୁ ଆସୁଥିବା ଗାଡ଼ିକୁ ଭୟ ନକରି ଦଉଡ଼ୁଥାନ୍ତି । ରତିକାନ୍ତ ପଚାରିଲେ, “ଏମିତି ଗାଡ଼ି ରଖିବା କ’ଣ ନିରାପଦ ?”

ସୁନିଲ୍ କହିଲା, “ହଁ, ହଁ, ଏବେ ସବୁ ସରକାର ଆଦିବାସୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ରାସ୍ତାକାମରେ ନିୟୁକ୍ତକରି ସେମାନଙ୍କ ରୋଜଗାରର ପତ୍ତା ବାହାର କରିଦେଇଛନ୍ତି । ତେଣୁ ସେମାନେ ଆଉ ଚୋରି କରୁନାହାନ୍ତି । ଏ ଯେଉଁ କଥା ମୁଁ କହୁଥିଲି, ତିନି-ଚାରି ବର୍ଷ ତଳର କଥା । ହେଲେ ତଥାପି ରାତିବେଳେ ଟିକେ ଡର ।”

ଏକଥା ଶୁଣିବାପରେ ରତିକାନ୍ତ ଓ ନିର୍ମଳା ଟିକେ ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହେଲେ ଓ ନିର୍ମଳା ପୁନଶ୍ଚ ନିଜ ଭିଡ଼ିଓ କ୍ୟାମେରା ବାହାରକରି ଆତବିକାଳି ଛୁଆଁଙ୍କର ରେକର୍ଡ଼ିଂ କରିବାରେ ଲାଗିଲେ ।

ଆରୁ ପର୍ବତର ପାଦଦେଶରେ ଏକ ରେଷ୍ଟୁରାଣ୍ଟରେ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ ସାରି ସେମାନେ ପ୍ରାୟ ତିନିଟାବେଳେ ମଧୁବନରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଗଲେ । ସେଠି ଭିଜିଟର୍ ସେକ୍ଟରରେ ଥିବା ନରେଶ ଭାଇଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଆଗରୁ ସରୋଜ ଭାଇ କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା କରିଥିଲେ । ତେଣୁ ରୁମ୍ ପାଇବାରେ କିଛି ଅସୁବିଧା ହେଲାନାହିଁ । ତଥାପି ନିୟମ ଅନୁଯାୟୀ ନରେଶ ଭାଇ ନିର୍ମଳାଙ୍କୁ ପଚାରିଥିଲେ, “ଆପଣ ଓ ରତିକାନ୍ତ ବାବୁଙ୍କର ସଂପର୍କ କଣ ?” ଉତ୍ତରରେ ନିର୍ମଳା ବହୁତ ହସିଥିଲେ, “ଆମେମାନେ ପତିପତ୍ନୀ, ଏ ବୟସରେ ସଂପର୍କ ଆଉ କ’ଣ ହୋଇପାରେ ।”

ନରେଶଭାଇ ପୁଣି ପଚାରିଥିଲେ, “ଆପଣଙ୍କର ମଧୁବନ ଆସିବାର ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟ କ’ଣ ?”

“ଆମେ ଏମିତି ମାଉଷୁଆକୁ ବୁଲି ଆସିଛୁ । ସରୋଜଭାଇଙ୍କୁ ପରାମର୍ଶ କରିଥିଲୁ ଓ ସେ ଆମକୁ ମଧୁବନ ଆସି ବୁଲିଯିବାକୁ କହିଥିଲେ ।” — ରତିକାନ୍ତ କହିଲେ ।

ହେଲେ ନିର୍ମଳା ଏ ବିଷୟରେ ବୁଦ୍ଧିମତୀ । ସେ କହିଲେ, “ପ୍ରକୃତରେ ଆମେ ଏ ମଧୁବନର ବାତାବରଣକୁ ଅନୁଭବ କରିବାକୁ ଆସିଛୁ । ଏଠି ଶାନ୍ତିର ସନ୍ଧାନ କରିବାକୁ ଆସିଛୁ ।”

ନିର୍ମଳାଙ୍କ ଉତ୍ତର ନରେଶଭାଇଙ୍କୁ ଖୁସି କରାଇଲା । ତାପରେ ସେ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ବିଷୁପୁରୀର ରୁମ୍ ନମ୍ବର ୪୭୧ର ଚାବିଦେଇ ସେଠାକୁ ଯିବାକୁ ରାସ୍ତା ବତାଇଦେଲେ ।

“କେତେ ଟଙ୍କା ଦେବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ ?” —ରତିକାନ୍ତ ପଚାରିଲେ ।

“ବୁଝାବାବାଙ୍କ ନିୟମ ଅନୁଯାୟୀ, ସମସ୍ତେ ତାଙ୍କର ସନ୍ତାନ ଓ ତାଙ୍କ ସଂସ୍କାର ଦ୍ଵାରା ସବୁବେଳେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଖୋଲା । ସନ୍ତାନ କ’ଣ ପିତାଙ୍କ ଘରକୁ ଆସି ଉଡ଼ାଦେଇ ରହିବ ?” — ନରେଶ ଭାଇ ବୁଝାଇ କହିଲେ ।

ରତିକାନ୍ତ ବୁଝିଗଲେ । ଭ୍ରାଜଭର ସୁନିଲ ବି ବୁଝେଇଦେଲା । ସେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେଠାରେ ଗୋଟିଏ କୋଠାରେ ରହିବାକୁ ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା କରାଇ ଚାହିଁ ଆଣିଲା ।

ସେଦିନ ସେମାନେ ବୁଲାଇଲି କଲେ, ‘ଦିଲ୍‌ଘୋରା’ ଜୈନ ମନ୍ଦିର, ନାକି ଲୋକ, ସନସେଟ୍ ପଏଣ୍ଟ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ବୁଲିଦେଖିଲେ । ତାପରେ ସେମାନେ ‘ଓଁ ଶାନ୍ତି’ ଭବନ ଓ ପାଣ୍ଡବ ଭବନରେ ଥିବା ମେଡିଟେସନ୍ ହଲ୍ ମାନଙ୍କରେ ଯାଇ କିଛି ସମୟ ଶାନ୍ତ ହୋଇ ବସିରହିବାର ପବିତ୍ର ଅନୁଭୂତି ପ୍ରାପ୍ତକଲେ । ସବୁଠାରେ ଆଧୁନିକତା ଓ ଇଶ୍ଵର ଅନୁଭବର ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ ସମନ୍ୱୟ । ଧ୍ୟାନ ପାଇଁ, ଶାନ୍ତି ଅନୁଭବ କରିବାପାଇଁ ସାନ, ବଡ଼ କେତେ ସବୁ କୋଠା, ଖୋଲା ପ୍ରାଙ୍ଗଣ ଓ ବିରାଟ ବିରାଟ ଅତିଚୋରିୟମ୍ । ସବୁ ସଫା, ସବୁ ରଙ୍ଗମୟ ଓ ଅତ୍ୟାଧୁନିକ ଉପକରଣରେ ସଜା । ସବୁରି ମୁହଁରେ ମମତ୍ତ ଓ ପ୍ରଫୁଲ୍ଲତା । ସେଦିନ ସେମାନେ ମଧୁବନର ଭୋଜନାଳୟରେ ରାତ୍ରିଭୋଜନ କରି ବିଶ୍ରାମନେଲେ ।

ତା’ ପରଦିନ ସକାଳେ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ମେଡିଟେସନ୍ ଓ ଯୋଗ ଆଚେଷ୍ଟ କରିବାର ଥାଏ । ତେଣୁ ଶୀଘ୍ର ଉଠି ସେମାନେ ଗାଧୋଇପାଧୋଇ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ ହୋଇଗଲେ । ସେତେବେଳକୁ ତଥାପି ଅନ୍ଧାର ଥାଏ । ହେଲେ ଲୋକ ସବୁ ଉଠି ପ୍ରଭାତ ଭ୍ରମଣ କରୁଥାନ୍ତି । ରତିକାନ୍ତ ଓ ନିର୍ମଳା ମେଡିଟେସନ୍ ହଲକୁ ଯିବା ବାଟରେ ଦେଖିଲେ ବହୁତ ଲୋକ ଭୋଜନାଳୟ ସାମନାରେ ରୁଣ୍ଡ ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି । ସେତେବେଳକୁ ଭୋଜନାଳୟରେ ଗରମ କ୍ଷୀର ଓ ଚାହା ବଣ୍ଟନ କରାଯାଉଥାଏ । ସମସ୍ତେ ଚାହା ପିଇ ମେଡିଟେସନ୍ କରିବାପାଇଁ ଯାଉଥାନ୍ତି । ରତିକାନ୍ତ ଓ ନିର୍ମଳା ବି ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଯୋଗଦେଲେ । ‘ୟୁନିଭର୍ସାଲ୍ ପିସ୍’ ହଲର ଦ୍ଵିତୀୟ ମହଲାରେ ଅତିଚୋରିୟମ୍ ଥାଏ ଅନ୍ତଃବାସୀ ମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଓ ତୃତୀୟ ମହଲାରେ ଅତିଚୋରିୟମ୍ ଥାଏ ପରିଦର୍ଶକ ମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ । ସେମାନେ ତୃତୀୟ ମହଲାରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିବା ବେଳକୁ ପ୍ରାୟ ପାଞ୍ଚଶହ, ଛଅଶହ ଲୋକ ମହକୁଦ୍ ଥାଆନ୍ତି । ରେକର୍ଡରେ ଭାସି ଆସୁଥାଏ ‘ଓଁ ମନ୍ତ୍ର’ର ଉଚ୍ଚାରଣ । ମଞ୍ଚ ଉପରେ ବୁଝାବାବାଙ୍କର

ପ୍ରତିଛବି ପ୍ରତିଫଳିତ ହେଉଥାଏ ଏବଂ ଏକ ଜ୍ୟୋତିରେଖା ଉପରୁ ତଳକୁ ଓ ତଳୁ ଉପରକୁ ସଞ୍ଚାରିତ ହେଉଥାଏ । ସମସ୍ତେ ନୀରବରେ ବସିଥାନ୍ତି । ପୁରୁଷ ଓ ମହିଳାମାନେ ଅଲଗା ଅଲଗା ଧାଡ଼ିରେ ବସିଥିବାର ଦେଖି ରତିକାନ୍ତ ପୁରୁଷମାନଙ୍କ ଧାଡ଼ିରେ ଯାଇ ବସିଲେ । ଯଦିଓ ନିର୍ମଳା ଓ ତାଙ୍କ ବସିବା ମଧ୍ୟରେ ବ୍ୟବଧାନ କେବଳ ପାଦଚଲା ପାଇଁ ଉଦ୍ଦିଷ୍ଟ ଫାଙ୍କ ରାସ୍ତା । କିଛି ସମୟ ଏମିତି ନୀରବରେ ବସିବାପରେ ଆଖିକୁ ନିଦ ଆସୁଥାଏ । ରତିକାନ୍ତଙ୍କ ସ୍ମୃତିପଟରେ ଭାସିଆସୁଥିଲା ଗୋଟିଏ ଛବି, ଏଇ ମେଡିଟେସନ୍‌କୁ ନେଇ ତାଙ୍କ ଜୀବନ କେମିତି ଦୁର୍ବସହ ହୋଇଉଠିଥିଲା । ଘଟଣାଟି ଏମିତି

ହଠାତ୍ ନିର୍ମଳାଙ୍କର ମାତା ଜ୍ଞାନମୟୀଙ୍କ ସଂସ୍ଥାପିତ ଆକର୍ଷଣ ଆସିଗଲା । କ’ଣନା, ମା’ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଆସି ସ୍ଵପ୍ନରେ ଦେଖା ଦେଉଛନ୍ତି, ଆଶୀର୍ବାଦ କରୁଛନ୍ତି, ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶ ଦେଉଛନ୍ତି । ରତିକାନ୍ତ ବୈଜ୍ଞାନିକ, ଏକଥା ବିଶ୍ଵାସ କରନ୍ତିନି । ନିର୍ମଳା ବି ତ ଶିକ୍ଷିତା, ପ୍ରାଣାବିଜ୍ଞାନ ଅନର୍ସ ନେଇ ବି.ଏସ୍.ସି. ପାସ୍ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ହେଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ଯେଉଁ ମାତା ଜ୍ଞାନମୟୀଙ୍କ ଭୂତ ପଶିଲା, ସେଥିରେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ଜୀବନ ଦୁର୍ବସହ ହୋଇଗଲା । ପୁଅଟାକୁ ଜ୍ଵର ହୋଇଥିଲା, ମା’ଙ୍କ ନାମ ସ୍ମରଣ କଲାରୁ ଭଲ ହୋଇଗଲା । ପୁଅ ଔଷଧ ବି ତ ଖାଇଥିଲା । ତଥାପି ନିର୍ମଳାର ବିଶ୍ଵାସରେ ଜ୍ଵର ଭଲ ହୋଇଗଲା ମା’ଙ୍କ କୃପାରେ । ସେମିତି ଥରେ ତାଙ୍କର ଗାତି ଆକ୍ସିଡେଣ୍ଟ ହେଲା, ଗାଡିଟା ତୁରନ୍ତ ହୋଇଗଲା, ହେଲେ ସମସ୍ତେ କୁଶଳରେ ଥିଲେ । ସେଇଟା ବି ମା’ଙ୍କ କୃପାରୁ । ମାତା ଜ୍ଞାନମୟୀଙ୍କ ମେଡିଟେସନ୍ ସଂସଦର ଜଣେ ବଡ଼ ପୃଷ୍ଠପୋଷକ ପାଲଟିଗଲେ ନିର୍ମଳା । ପ୍ରତି ସପ୍ତାହରେ ମେଡିଟେସନ୍ ଗ୍ରୁପ୍‌ଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ରକ୍ଷାବତ୍ତା, କେତେ ରକମର ସ୍ଵେଚ୍ଛାସେବୀ ଓ ତା’ ସହିତ ରତିକାନ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଟଣାଓଟରା । ପାଞ୍ଚଦିନର କାମପରେ ରତିକାନ୍ତ ଚାହାନ୍ତି ବିଶ୍ରାମ, ଶାନ୍ତି; ହେଲେ ନିର୍ମଳା ସେ ଶାନ୍ତି ପାଆନ୍ତି ମାତା ଜ୍ଞାନମୟୀଙ୍କ ଆଶ୍ରମରେ, କୋଳାହଳ ଭିତରେ, ରୋଷେଇ କରି, ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ ଖାଇବାକୁ ଦେଇ, ଆଶ୍ରମର ମେଡିଟେସନ୍ ରିଟ୍ରିଟ୍ ଆୟୋଜନ କରାଇ, ଫଣ୍ଡରେଜିଙ୍ଗ୍ କରାଇ । ତା ଭିତରେ ପୁଣି ସ୍ଵାମୀ ତନ୍ମୟାନନ୍ଦଙ୍କ ଆଶ୍ରମ ଯିବା, ହରେକୃଷ୍ଣ ମନ୍ଦିର ଯିବା, ଆଜି ସୋମବାର, କାଲି ଗୁରୁବାର, ଏଠି ଥାଉ ଶାନ୍ତି କାହିଁ । ବୃଥା ଅର୍ଥହାନୀ, ପ୍ରାଣପୀଡ଼ା କହିଲେ ଯଥାର୍ଥ ହେବ ।

ଥରେ ସେମିତି ନିର୍ମଳା ନିଜଘରେ ମେଡିଟେସନ୍ ରିଟ୍ରିଟ୍ କରାଇବାର ଆୟୋଜନ କରୁଥାନ୍ତି । ରତିକାନ୍ତ ଅସହ୍ୟ ହୋଇ

ଉଠୁଥିଲେ । ଦିନ ଯେତେ ପାଖେଇ ଆସୁଥିଲା, ତାଙ୍କ ଅସହାୟତା ବଢୁଥିଲା । ଶେଷରେ ସେ ଏକ ଯୋଜନାକଲେ । ବୁଧବାର ଦିନ ଆସି କହିଲେ, “ମୋର ଗୋଟିଏ ମିଟିଙ୍ଗ୍ ଅଛି, ଏଇ ଶୁକ୍ରବାର ଦିନ ଯିବାକୁ ପଡିବ ।”

“କ’ଣ ହଠାତ୍ ମିଟିଙ୍ଗ୍ । ମୁଁ ଯେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ କରିଦେଇଛି ଏ ଶନିବାର ପାଇଁ ।” – ନିର୍ମଳା କହିଲେ । “ସରକାରୀ ଚାକିରି, ଦାନାପାଣି କଥା ।” – ମିଛଟାକୁ ସତକରି କହିପକାଇଲେ ରତିକାନ୍ତ ।

ପ୍ରକୃତରେ ସେଇ ଶୁକ୍ରବାରଦିନ କାମପରେ ଦୁଇଘଣ୍ଟା ଭ୍ରାଜୁ କରି ପାଖ ସହରରେ ଏକ ରାସ୍ତାକଡ଼ ଶସ୍ତା ହୋଟେଲରେ ଭତାନେଇ ରହିଲେ ଓ ରବିବାର ଦିନ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାବେଳେ ଆସି ପହଞ୍ଚିଲେ ।

“ମିଟିଙ୍ଗ୍ କେମିତି ରହିଲା ?” – ପଚାରିଲେ ନିର୍ମଳା ।

“ଭଲ । ଆଉ ତମ ରିଟ୍ରିଟ୍ କେମିତି ରହିଲା ?” – ପଚାରିଲେ ରତିକାନ୍ତ ।

“ମୁଁ ସେଇଟା କ୍ୟାନ୍ସଲ୍ କରିଦେଲି । ତମେ ନ ରହିପାରିଲେ ମୁଁ କ’ଣ ଏତେ କାମ ଏକା ସମ୍ଭାଳି ପାରିଥାନ୍ତି ? ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଆସନ୍ତା ଶନିବାରକୁ ରିଟ୍ରିଟ୍ ରଖିଛି ।”

ରତିକାନ୍ତଙ୍କ ମୁହଁ କରୁଣ ଦିଶିଲା । ଯେଉଁଥିପାଇଁ ତରି ସେ ମିଥ୍ୟାର ଆଶ୍ରୟନେଇ ହୋଟେଲରେ ରହିଲେ, ପୁଣି ସେଇ ଅଶାନ୍ତି ତାଙ୍କୁ ଗ୍ରାସ କରିବାକୁ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରିବସିଛି । ନିର୍ମଳାଙ୍କୁ ସେ ଭଲପାଆନ୍ତି; ତାଙ୍କ ମନରେ ଦୁଃଖଦେବାକୁ ଚାହାନ୍ତିନି ସେ । ହେଲେ ନିର୍ମଳାଙ୍କର ଅନ୍ଧବିଶ୍ୱାସ ପାଇଁ ସେ ଯେ ଏତେ ଅଶାନ୍ତ ହୋଇଯିବେ, ଭାବିପାରିନଥିଲେ । “ନିଜେ ଡାକିବ, ନିଜେ ବୁଝ; ସେକଥା ନାହିଁ ।” ରତିକାନ୍ତଙ୍କୁ କଷ୍ଟଦେବାପାଇଁ ଏଇଟା ଯେମିତି କିଏ ଚକ୍ରାନ୍ତ କରି ନିର୍ମଳାଙ୍କ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ଭର୍ତ୍ତି କରିଛି ।

ରତିକାନ୍ତ ବି ବେଳେବେଳେ ରାଗ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଥରେ ସେ ସିଧାସିଧା କହିଦେଲେ, “ଘଣ୍ଟାଏ ମେଡିଟେସନ୍ ଆଟେଣ୍ଟ୍ କରିବାପାଇଁ ତମେ ଦେଉଁଛନ୍ତି ତ୍ରାଜୁ କରି ଯିବ, ଦେଉଁଛନ୍ତି ତ୍ରାଜୁ କରି ଫେରିବ, ତିନି ଘଣ୍ଟା ରୋଷେଇ କରିବ, ତା’ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ବଜାର ସଉଦା କରିବ; ସେତିକି ସମୟ ଘରେ ବସି ମେଡିଟେସନ୍ କରୁନ ।”

ସେତିକିରେ ନିର୍ମଳା ମାତା ଜ୍ଞାନମୟୀଙ୍କ ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟରେ ହାତଯୋଡ଼ି କ୍ଷମାମାଗିଲେ ଓ ରତିକାନ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ବୁଝାଇଲେ, “ଏମିତି ଆଉ

କହିବନି, ପାପ ହେବ ।” ରତିକାନ୍ତ ଜାଣନ୍ତି, ନିର୍ମଳାଙ୍କୁ ବୁଝାଇବା ଯାହା, ଲଟା, ପଥରକୁ କଥା କହିବା ତାହା । ନିର୍ମଳାଙ୍କ ମନ ରଖିବାକୁ ସେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଅନେକବାର ମେଡିଟେସନ୍ କରିବାକୁ ଯାଇଛନ୍ତି, ପ୍ରବଚନ ଶୁଣିଛନ୍ତି । ସେଇ ଏକା କଥା ଶୁଣିଶୁଣି ସେ ବିରକ୍ତ । ସମସ୍ତେ ଶାନ୍ତି ପାଇଁ ପଥ ବତାଇଦେଉଛନ୍ତି, ଖାଲି କଥାରେ । ସବୁଠାରୁ ଅଶାନ୍ତ ହୋଇ ଫେରିଛନ୍ତି ରତିକାନ୍ତ ।

ବନ୍ଧୁ ଅଖିଲେଶ କହିଥିଲେ, “ଶାନ୍ତି ତ ଏ ମନ ଭିତରେ । ମନରେ ଭଲକଥା ଭାବ, ଆନନ୍ଦ ଓ ଶାନ୍ତି; ମନରେ ଖରାପ କଥା ଭାବ, ଦୁଃଖ ଓ ଅଶାନ୍ତି । ସିଧା କଥା । ତାପାଇଁ କୌଣସି ମନ୍ଦିର, ଆଶ୍ରମ ଯିବାର କିଛି ବି ଦରକାର ନାହିଁ, ଅର୍ଥ ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚ କରିବାର କୌଣସି ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ନାହିଁ କି ଅଯଥା ପରିଶ୍ରମ ଓ ସମୟ ଅପତୟ କରିବାର ଦରକାର ନାହିଁ ।”

ହସରେ ଉଡେଇଦେଇଥିଲେ ନିର୍ମଳା, “ତମ ବନ୍ଧୁ ଅଖିଲେଶ ଅସଲରେ ମହା କଞ୍ଚୁସ୍ । ପଇସା ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚ ହେବ ବୋଲି ମନ୍ଦିର କଥା ଛାଡ, ଏମିତି କି ଆମ କମ୍ୟୁନିଟିରେ ବି କାହା ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ ରଖୁନାହାନ୍ତି ।”

ରତିକାନ୍ତଙ୍କ ଭାବନାରେ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣଚ୍ଛେଦ ପକାଇ ଭଗିନୀ ଶାନ୍ତାଙ୍କର ବାଣୀ ପ୍ରତିଧ୍ୱନିତ ହେଲା । ରାଜଯୋଗ ଚର୍ଚ୍ଚାକରି ସେଇକଥା ହିଁ ସେ କହୁଥିଲେ । “ମନକୁ ନିୟନ୍ତ୍ରଣ କରି ରଖ । ଜ୍ଞାନମୁରଲୀର ସ୍ୱରକୁ ଶୁଣ । ଯଦି ଆଉ କିଛି ଚିନ୍ତା ସେ ସମୟରେ ମନ ଭିତରକୁ ଆସୁଛି, ତେବେ ତାକୁ କୁହ – ରେ ଅନ୍ୟଚିନ୍ତା, ତୁ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କର । ମୁଁ ଏ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତରେ ମୋର ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନର ଅତି ପ୍ରିୟ ବିଷୟ ଉପରେ ମନୋନିବେଶ କରୁଛି । ତୋ ପାଇଁ ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ସମୟ ବାହାର କରି ମୁଁ ତୋତେ ନିଜର କରିବି । ଏବେ ତୁ ମୋ ମନଭିତରୁ ଯା ଓ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କର ।”

ନିର୍ମଳାଙ୍କ ଆଡେ ଚିକେ ଚାହିଁଲେ ରତିକାନ୍ତ । ସେତେବେଳକୁ ନିର୍ମଳାଙ୍କ ଚକ୍ଷୁ ମୁଦ୍ରିତଥିଲା । ସିଏ ଶୋଇଥିଲେ କି ଅତି ମନୋଯୋଗ ଦେଇ ଶୁଣୁଥିଲେ, ତାହା ରତିକାନ୍ତ ଜାଣନ୍ତିନି, ହେଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ବସିଥିବା ପୃଥୁଳା ଭଦ୍ରମହିଳା ଜଣକ ଆରାମରେ ଶୋଇ ଘୁଙ୍ଗୁଡ଼ି ମାରୁଥିଲେ ।

ଭଗିନୀ ଶାନ୍ତା କହି ଚାଲିଥିଲେ, “ଜ୍ଞାନମୁରଲୀ ହିଁ ସମସ୍ତ ଶାନ୍ତିର ଉତ୍ସ ।”



4525 Rutherford Way,
Dayton, MD 21036

ଅନ୍ଧାର ରାତିର ଜହ୍ନ

ଶାନ୍ତିଲତା ମିଶ୍ର

ସକାଳ ପାହିବାର କିଛି କ୍ଷଣ ପୂର୍ବରୁ “ଝୋଲା” ନଈରୁ ଦିଗା ମାଛ ବନସି କଣ୍ଠାରେ ଧରି ଆଣି ତାକୁ ପୋଡ଼ି ଦେଇ ଲୁଣ, ଲଙ୍କା ଓ ଲେମ୍ବୁ ଦେଇ ପଖାଳ କଂସେ ପେଟେ ଖାଇ ଦେଇ ହାଟକୁ ବାହାରି ଗଲା “ବଗୁଲା” ସାଙ୍ଗରେ । ପ୍ରତି ସୋମବାର ଓ ଗୁରୁବାର ଦିନ ତା ରହିବା ଜାଗାରୁ ଦୁଇ ମାଇଲ ଦୂରରେ ହାଟ ବସେ । ଆଜି ସୋମବାର ସେ ଜାଣେ ଆଜି ହାଟରେ ବହୁତ ଭିଡ଼ ହେବ । ଆଗକୁ ହୋଲି ଆସୁଛି । ଲୋକ ଗହଳି ହେବ ହିଁ ହେବ ।

ତା ଜିନିଷ ଗୁଡ଼ିକ ହୋଲି ସଂପର୍କୀୟ ନ ହେଲେବି ତା ଜିନିଷ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ବିକ୍ରି ହୋଇଯିବ । ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କର ଅନେକ ଜିନିଷ ଦରକାର ଥାଉ ବା ନଥାଉ ଆଖିରେ ପଡ଼ିଲେ ସେମାନେ କିଣି ନିଅନ୍ତି । ଏତକ ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତା ତାର ଦଶ ବର୍ଷ ଭିତରେ ହୋଇ ସାରିଛି । ସେ ହାଟକୁ ଯେବେବି ଯାହାବି ନେଇକି ଯାଇଛି ତାର ପ୍ରାୟ ବିକ୍ରି ହୋଇଯାଇଛି । ତେଣୁ ସେ ନିଶ୍ଚିତ, କିନ୍ତୁ ଏତେ ବାଟ ଚାଲି ଚାଲି ଯିବାକୁ ହେବ ଖରା ଦାଉରୁ ରକ୍ଷା ପାଇବାକୁ ହେଲେ ଶିଘ୍ର ଯିବା ଦରକାର । ଶିଘ୍ର ପହଞ୍ଚିଲେ ଶିଘ୍ର ଜିନିଷ ବିକ୍ରି ହୋଇଯିବ । ତା ବ୍ୟତୀତ ସେ ଶିଘ୍ର ମଧ୍ୟ ଘରକୁ ଫେରି ଆସିବ ସଂଧ୍ୟା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ।

ସତକୁ ସତ ସେ ନେଇଥିବା ସବୁ କଇଁଅଁ, ବରକୋଳି, କେନ୍ଦୁ, ବାଡ଼ି କଞ୍ଚା ଲଙ୍କା, ଆମ୍ବୁଲ, କଇଁ ଫୁଲ ସବୁ ସେଦିନ ବିକ୍ରି ହୋଇଗଲା । ଆଶା କରିଥିବା ଠାରୁ ଅଧିକ ପଇସା ମଧ୍ୟ ସେଦିନ ମିଳିଗଲା । ଘରକୁ ଫେରିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ତା ପାଇଁ ଦି ଟା ଶାଢ଼ି କିଣି ଆଣିଲା । ନିଜ ଶାଢ଼ି ବହୁତ ପୁରୁଣା ହୋଇ ଗଲାଣି ଅନେକ ଜାଗା ଚିରି ଗଲାଣି । କେତେ ତାଳି ପକେଇବ । କୋଉ କାଲୁ ନୁଆ ରୁଡ଼ି ସେ ପିନ୍ଧି ନାହିଁ । ସେଥିରୁ ବି ଦି ମୁଠା ନାଲି ନେଲି ରଂଗର କିଣି ଆଣିଲା । ତା ନିଜ ସଉକି ଯୋଗୁ ଯେତିକି କିଣିନି ହାଟର ଅନ୍ୟ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କ ହାତର ରୁଡ଼ି ଦେଖି ତାର ଏ ଲୋଭ । ଯୁଗେ ହେଲା ହୁଏତ ସେ ନୁଆ ରୁଡ଼ି ପିନ୍ଧି ନାହିଁ । ତାର ସେ ଦିଗକୁ ଲକ୍ଷ ବା କାହିଁ । ପେଟ ପୋଷୁ ପୋଷୁ ତ ତାର ଦିନ ଯାଏ ।

ଘରକୁ ଆସି ନିତି ଦିନ ପରି ଶିଘ୍ର କାମ ସାରି ଖାଇ ପି’ ଦେଇ ଶୋଇଗଲା । ସକାଳୁ ବଡ଼ି ଭୋରରୁ ପୁଣି ଉଠି ଜିନିଷ ଗୋଟେଇ ପୋଟେଇ ଏକାଠି କରିବ, ଆସନ୍ତା ଗୁରୁବାର ହାଟପାଳି ପାଇଁ । ଏଥରକ ପୋଖରୀରୁ ଅଧିକ କିଛି କଇଁ ଫୁଲ ତୋଳିକି ନେବ ବିକିବା ପାଇଁ । ଗଲା ହାଟ ପାଳିରେ ଏଇ କଇଁ ଫୁଲକୁ ଆକୃଷ୍ଟ ହୋଇ ବହୁତ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଲୋକ ତା ପାଖକୁ ଆସି ଫୁଲ ନଈ ନଈ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଜିନିଷ ବି କିଣି ନେଲେ । ଫୁଲକୁ ସେ ଦିନ ସକାଳୁ ହିଁ ତୋଳିବ । ମାଠିଆ ଭିତରେ ପାଣି ସହିତ ଫୁଲକୁ ରଖିବା ଦରକାର ତାଜା ରଖିବା ପାଇଁ । ଅନେକ କିଛି କରିବାର ଅଛି ସକାଳୁ । ତେଣୁ ଏଇ ଦୁଇ ଦିନ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଜିନିଷ ଜଙ୍ଗଲରୁ ଯୋଗାଡ଼ କରିବା ଦରକାର ।

ପର ଦିନ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ସକାଳୁ ଉଠିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ସେ ବାହାରି ଗଲା ଜଙ୍ଗଲ ଆଡ଼େ ତା’ର ପ୍ରିୟ ସାଙ୍ଗ “କୁକୁର ବଗୁଲା” ସାଙ୍ଗରେ । ନଈ କୂଳେ କୂଳେ ଏକ ମୁହାଁ ବଗୁଲା ସାଙ୍ଗେ ଗପସପ ହୋଇ ଚାଲୁ ଚାଲୁ ପାଦ ତାର ଅଟକି ଗଲା, ଗୋଟାଏ ଲୋକର ଶବ ପରି ଦିଶୁଥିବା ବା ସେହିପରି କିଛି କ’ଣ ଦେଖି । ଲୋକଟାଏ ଲହୁ ଲୁହାଣ ହୋଇ ଜଙ୍ଗଲ ଭିତରେ ପଡ଼ିଛି ମୃତ ପ୍ରାୟ । ଲୋକର ମୁହଁ ଗୋଡ଼ ହାତ ରକ୍ତରେ ଲୁହୁ ସୁତୁ । ରକ୍ତ ଏବେବି ତାଜା ଦିଶୁଛି । କିଛି ଘଣ୍ଟା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଅନ୍ଧାର ଥିବା ଭିତରେ କେହି ଆଣି ଏଠି ଫୋପାଡ଼ି ଦେଇ ଯାଇଛି ବୋଧେ । କେହି ଜନ୍ତୁ ଜୁହା କାମୁଡ଼ିଲା ପରି ଲାଗୁନାହିଁ । କେହି ମଣିଷର ଏ କାମ । ମଣିଷ ହିଁ ଏଇ କାମ କରିପାରେ କେବଳ । ସେ କ’ଣ ମଣିଷ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ଚିହ୍ନିନି । ଏଇ ଜଙ୍ଗଲ ଭିତରେ ଦଶ ବର୍ଷ ହେଲାଣି ଘର କରି ଏକା ଏକା ରହିଛି । କେବେ କୋଉ ଜନ୍ତୁ ଆସି ତାକୁ ଏପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ କାମୁଡ଼ିନି । ତାକୁ ଏଇ ମଣିଷମାନଙ୍କୁ ବେଶି ଡର ଜନ୍ତୁ ମାନଙ୍କଠାରୁ । ବାଡ଼ି ଖଣ୍ଡେ ଦେଖେଇ ହୁସ୍ କରିଦେଲେ ଜନ୍ତୁମାନେ ମାଇଲିଏ ଦୂର ଛାଡ଼ି ପଳାନ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ମଣିଷ ଗୋଡେଇ ଗୋଡେଇ ମାରିବା କି ମରିବା ଯାଏ ଛାଡ଼ିବେନି ।

ବଗୁଲା ଯାଇ ଲୋକଟିକୁ ଏହା ଭିତରେ ଶୁଦ୍ଧିବା ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଦେଲାଣି । ବଗୁଲୀକୁ ଯେତେ ଡାକିଲେ ବି ସେ ଶୁଣୁନି ଲୋକଟିର ଚାରିକଡ଼ ଚକ୍ରାକାରରେ ବୁଲୁଛି । ଅଗତ୍ୟା ବାଧ୍ୟ ହୋଇ ଝୋଲା ଲୋକଟିର ଅଧିକ ନିକଟତର ହୋଇ ତାକୁ ପରୀକ୍ଷା ନିରୀକ୍ଷା କରିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲା । ଲୋକଟୀ ମଲାଙ୍କ ପରି ପଡ଼ିଥିଲେ ବି ବେଶ୍ ସତେଜ ଦିଶୁଥିଲା । ଝୋଲା, ନାକରେ ହାତ ମାରି ଜାଣିଲା ନିଶ୍ଚାସ ଟିକେ ଟିକେ ଯାଉଛି । ନଜରୁ ପତ୍ର ଠୋଲାରେ ପାଣି ଆଣି ଲୋକଟି ଉପରେ ଛିଆଡ଼ିଲା । ତା ପାଟିରେ ପାଣି ଦେଲା । ଲୋକଟୀର ଦେହଟା ବି ବେଶ୍ ଥଣ୍ଡା ପଡ଼ିଯାଇଛି । ସାଙ୍ଗେ ସାଙ୍ଗେ ପତ୍ର ସବୁ ଏକାଠି କରି ଘରୁ ଯାଇ ଦିଆସିଲି ଆଣି ଲୋକଟିର ଚାରି ପଟ ସତର୍କତାର ସହିତ ସେଥିରେ ନିଆଁ ଧରେଇଦେଲା । କିଛି ସମୟ ପରେ ଅତ୍ୟଧିକ ଧୂଆଁ ଯୋଗୁ ଲୋକଟି କାସି ଉଠିଲା ।

ଝୋଲା ଏବେ ନିଶ୍ଚିତ ଭାବେ ଜାଣି ପାରିଲା ଯେ ଲୋକଟି ବଞ୍ଚିଛି ବୋଲି । ଏ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସନ୍ଦେହରେ ଥିଲା । ଦେଖିବାକୁ ବେଶ୍ ସୁସ୍ଥ ସବଳ ତାଗତା ମଣିଷଟାଏ କିନ୍ତୁ ଏପରି ଅସହାୟ ଅବସ୍ଥା କିଛି ବୁଝାପତୁ ନଥାଏ ଘଟଣା କ’ଣ । ଯାହା ବି ହେଉ ଲୋକଟିକୁ ଏପରି ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ଛାଡ଼ି ଦେଇ ପାରିବନି । ବିବେକ ଆଉ ଦୟା, ଧର୍ମ ବୋଲି ଗୋଟାଏ ଜିନିଷ ତ କିଛି ଏ ସଂସାରରେ ଅଛି । କାହାର ଆଉ ବା ନଥାଉ ତାର ତ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଅଛି ।

ସେଦିନର ଭାବିଥିବା ତା ନିଜ କାମକୁ ବାତିଲ କରି ସେ ଲୋକଟିର ସେବାରେ ଲାଗିଗଲା । ନଜରୁ ପାଣି ଆଣି ତାର ରକ୍ତ ସବୁ ଧୀରେ ଧୀରେ ସଫା କରିଦେଲା । କ୍ଷତ ଯାଗାରେ “ବିଶଲ୍ୟ କରଣି ପତ୍ର” ହାତରେ ମକଟି ତାର ରସ ଲଗେଇଦେଲା । ତାର ସୀମିତ ବୁଦ୍ଧିରେ ସେ ଯାହା ଜାଣିଥିଲା ସବୁ ପ୍ରକାର ସେବା କରି ଚାଲିଲା । ପ୍ରାୟ ଅପରାହ୍ଣ ସମୟ ବେଳକୁ ଲୋକଟି ବଡ଼ କଷ୍ଟରେ ଆଖି ଖୋଲି ଧିମା ସ୍ଵରରେ କିଛି କହିଲା । ଝୋଲା କିଛି ବୁଝି ପାରୁନାଥାଏ । ଶେଷରେ ଲୋକଟି ଠାରି ପାଣି ପିଇବାକୁ ମାଗିଲା । ସେ ତାକୁ ପାଣି ପିଇବାକୁ ଦେଲା ଓ ଘରୁ ଯାଇ କିଛି ଖାଇବା ଜିନିଷ ଆଣି ଦେଲା । ଲୋକଟି ଉଠିବା ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ନଥିଲା ।

ଝୋଲା ତାକୁ ବହୁ କଷ୍ଟରେ ଉଠେଇ ବସେଇ ଦେଇ ଖୁଆଇଦେଲା । ଲୋକଟି ଉଃ ଆଃ ହୋଇ ଯନ୍ତ୍ରଣାରେ ଛଟପଟ ହେଉଥିଲେ ବି କିଛି ଖାଇନେଲା । ସେ କିଛି କହୁଥାଏ କିନ୍ତୁ ଝୋଲାର ବୁଝିବାର ବାହାରେ ସେ ଭାଷା । ତେଣୁ ଠରା ଠରି ଭାଷା ସେମାନେ ବ୍ୟବହାରରେ ପରସ୍ପରକୁ ବୁଝିବାକୁ ଓ ବୁଝେଇବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କଲେ ।

ଲୋକଟିକୁ ବହୁ କଷ୍ଟରେ ନିଜ କାନ୍ଧର ଭରା ସାହାଯ୍ୟରେ ଅଧା ଘୋଷାରି ଘୋଷାରି ନିଜ କୁଡ଼ିଆକୁ ନେଇ ବାରଣ୍ଡାରେ ଶୁଆଇ ଦେଲା ।

ସେଇ ଗୁରୁବାର ହାଟ ଯିବା ତା ପକ୍ଷେ ଆଉ ସମ୍ଭବ ହେଲାନି । ମାଛ ନଜରୁ ଆଣି ଜଙ୍ଗଲରୁ ଦେଶୀ ଆଳୁ, ସାରୁ, ତେନ୍ତୁଳି ଓ ପୋଖରୀରୁ ଶାଗ ଯାହା ପାଇଲା ଶିଝେଇ ଶାଝେଇ ନିଜେ ଖାଇଲା ଓ ଲୋକଟିକୁ ଖାଇବାକୁ ଦେଲା । ବଗୁଲାର ମାଛ କଣ୍ଠାରେ ଭାରି ଲୋଭ । ତାକୁ ବି ଅଧିକ ମାଛ ଓ କଣ୍ଠା ଖାଇବାକୁ ମିଳୁଥାଏ । ସେ ବି ଖୁସି । ଲୋକଟି ଧୀରେ ଧୀରେ ସୁସ୍ଥ ହେବାକୁ ଲାଗୁଥାଏ । ସବୁଦିନ ତାର କ୍ଷତ ଜାଗା ଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ଧୋଇ ଦିନକୁ ଚାରି ପାଞ୍ଚ ଥର ବିଶଲ୍ୟ କରଣି ପତ୍ରର ରସ ଲଗେଇ ଦେଉଥାଏ । ରାତିରେ ଶୋଇବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ସୋରିଷ ତେଲ ରସୁଣ ଅଦା ଛେଚି ଗରମ କରି ଦେହ ସାରା ମାଲିଷ୍ କରି ଦେଉଥାଏ । ଲୋକଟି କିଛି କହୁଥାଏ ଏବଂ ଝୋଲା ବି ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ହଜାରେ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ କରୁଥାଏ ତାର ଏପରି ଦଶା କିପରି ହେଲା, କିଏ କଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ କେହି କାହାର ଭାଷା ବୁଝୁ ନଥାନ୍ତି । ଉଭୟଙ୍କ ଉତ୍ତର କେବଳ ଚେନାଏ ହସ ଦ୍ଵାରା ବିନିମୟ ହେଉଥାଏ ।

“ପାଣି ପିଇବୁ”, “ଭାତ ଖାଇବୁ”, “ଗାଧେଇବୁ” ଏହି ପରି ଝୋଲାର କିଛି ଶବ୍ଦ ବାରମ୍ବାର ବ୍ୟବହାରରୁ ଲୋକଟି ଅନେକ ଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ଶବ୍ଦ ବୁଝି କହିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲାଣି । ତାଙ୍କ ନାମ “ଧର୍ମବୀର” । ସେ ଜଣେ ପୋଲିଷ୍ ଅଫିସର୍ ଥିଲେ । ଥରେ ସେ ଗୋଟେ ତାକୁ ଦଳକୁ ଧରି ଜେଲରେ ପୁରେଇ ଦେଇ ଥିବାରୁ ସେମାନେ ସେଇ ଦିନୁ ରାଗ ରଖିଥିଲେ । ସେତେବେଳେ ସେ ଜାଣି ନଥିଲେ ଯେ ତାକୁ ଦଳର ମାତ୍ର ଅଧିକ ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ ସେ ଧରିଥିଲେ ବୋଲି । ଆଉ ଅଧିକ ଲୋକ ଏବେବି ବାହାରେ ଲୁଚିକି ଥିଲେ, ଯେତେବେଳେ ତାକୁମାନେ ଜାଣିଲେ ଯେ ତାଙ୍କ ସାଥୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ପୋଲିଷ୍ ଏବଂ କେଉଁ ପୋଲିଷ୍ ଧରି ନେଇଛି ବୋଲି ସେମାନେ ଦିନେ ରାତି ଅଧରେ ଆସି ଧର୍ମବୀରଙ୍କ ବାପ, ମା, ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଓ ଦୁଇ ଛୋଟ ପୁଅଙ୍କୁ ଗୁଳି କରି ମାରିଦେଲେ । ସେତେବେଳେ ସିଏ କିଛି କାମରେ ଅନ୍ୟ ଏକ ସହରକୁ ଯାଇଥିଲେ ।

ଏ ମର୍ମହୁଦ୍ ଘଟଣା ପରେ ଧର୍ମବୀରଙ୍କର ମାନସିକ ସ୍ଥିତି ଆଉ ଠିକ୍ ରହିଲାନି । ବଞ୍ଚିବାର ମୋହ କଟିଗଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ପ୍ରତିହୁଁସା ମନରେ ପ୍ରବଳ ହୋଇଗଲା । ଆଖିରୁ ତାଙ୍କର ଲୁହ ନୁହେଁ ନିଆଁ ଝରୁଥିଲା । ତାପରେ ଚାକିରୀରୁ ଇସ୍ତଫା ଦେଇ ପାଗଳଙ୍କ ପରି ଏଇ ତାକୁ ଦଳକୁ ଖୋଜିବାରେ ଲାଗି ଗଲେ । ପ୍ରତିଶୋଧ ନେଲା ପରେ ହିଁ ସେ ସଂସାରରୁ ଯିବେ, ଭୀରୁ ପରି ନୁହେଁ । ଏପରି ସର୍ବସ୍ଵ ହରେଇ ବଞ୍ଚିବାର କିଛି ମାନେ ନାହିଁ । ସେ ତ କେବଳ ତାଙ୍କର କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ କରିଥିଲେ । ଜଣେ

ପୋଲିସ୍ ଅଫିସରର ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ତୁଲାଇଥିଲେ । ଏପରି ଶାସ୍ତି ? ? । ଭଗବାନ ନିରବ ରହିଲେ କିପରି । ଭଗବାନଙ୍କ ସଂଗେ ତାଙ୍କର କଥା ବାଣୀ ପରେ ହେବ । ଆଗ ଏଇ ପାଳି ମାନଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ଦେଖା ଚାହାଁ ହେବାଟା ନିହାତି ଜରୁରି ।

ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଶେଷରେ ଠାବ କରିଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଧରି ପାରି ନଥିଲେ । ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପିଛା କରି କରି ଦିନ ରାତି, ସେ ଅନେକ ବାଟ ଚାଲି ଆସିଥିଲେ ନିଜ ସହରଠାରୁ ବହୁ ଦୂରକୁ । ଶେଷରେ ସେଇ ଦଳର କିଛି ଦୁର୍ଭିକ୍ଷ ତାଙ୍କୁ ସହିତ ସେଦିନ ତାଙ୍କର ଧସ୍ତା ଧସ୍ତି ହୋଇଗଲା । ସେ ଏକାକୀ ଏତେ ଗୁଡ଼ାଏ ତାଙ୍କୁ ସହିତ ଲଢ଼ିବା ଯଦିଓ ସମ୍ଭବ ନଥିଲା ତାଙ୍କର ପରାସ୍ତ ହେବାଟା ନିଶ୍ଚିତ ଜାଣି ସୁଦ୍ଧା, ଜୀବନକୁ ଲୋଭ ନରଖି ସେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଲଢ଼ିଥିଲେ । ହାରି ବି ଗଲେ । ତାକୁ ମାନେ ଏପରି ଲହୁ ଲୁହାଣ କରି ଏଇ ଜଙ୍ଗଲରେ ଆଣି ଫୋପାଡ଼ି ଦେଇ ଯାଇଥିଲେ ସେଦିନ ରାତିରେ । ଧରା ନ ପଡ଼ିବାପାଇଁ ସେମାନେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଆଡ଼ୁ ସ୍ଥଳରୁ ଏତେ ଦୂରରେ ଆଣି ଫୋପାଡ଼ି ଦେଇ ଯାଇଥିଲେ । ମିଶାମିଶି ଭାଷାରେ ସେ ଏତକ କହିଦେଲେ, ଝୋଲା ତାଙ୍କ କଥାକୁ ବୁଝୁଛି କି ନାହିଁ ଅପେକ୍ଷା ନ କରି । କାରଣ ସେ ଝୋଲାର ତାଙ୍କ ବିଷୟରେ ଥିବା ସନ୍ଦେହ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନକୁ ସବୁଦିନ ତା ଆଖିରୁ ପଡ଼ି ନିଅନ୍ତି । ଝୋଲା ହୁଏତ କିଛି କିଛି ବୁଝିଗଲା ବା ଅନୁମାନ କରିନେଲା ପରିସ୍ଥିତିର ଗମ୍ଭୀରତା ବିଷୟରେ । ତାର ବିସ୍ମୃତିତ ଆଖିର ନିରବତା ତାର ମନର ଭାବକୁ ସୂଚେଇ ଦେଉଥାଏ ।

ଧର୍ମବୀରଙ୍କର ଆଉ ବଞ୍ଚିବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା ନଥିଲା । ପରିବାରର ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ହରେଇ ଏକା ଏକା ବଞ୍ଚିବାରେ ଆଉ କ'ଣ ଥାଏ । ତାକୁମାନେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ମାରି ଦେଇଥିଲେ ବରଂ ଭଲ ହୋଇଥାନ୍ତା । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏପରି ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧ ମୃତ ଭାବେ ପକେଇ ଦେଇ କାହିଁକି ଗଲେ ସେ ଜାଣି ପାରିଲେନି । ହୁଏତ ସେମାନେ ଧରି ନେଇଥିଲେ ଯେ ସେ ମରି ଯାଇଛନ୍ତି ବୋଲି । ସେ ଯାହା ହେଉ ଏବେ ଝୋଲା ତାଙ୍କୁ ସେବା ଯତ୍ନରେ ବଞ୍ଚେଇ ଦେଇଥିବାରୁ ସେ ତାକୁ ଧନ୍ୟବାଦ ଦେଲେ ସତ । କିନ୍ତୁ ବାହାର ଦୁନିଆଁକୁ ଯାଇ ତାଙ୍କର ଆଉ ବଞ୍ଚିବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା ନାହିଁ । ସବୁବେଳେ ମନେ ପକେଇ ଦେବ ତାଙ୍କର ଦୁର୍ଭାଗ୍ୟକୁ, ଅସହାୟତାକୁ, ନିର୍ଜନତାକୁ ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ଝୋଲା କାହିଁକି ଏ ଜଙ୍ଗଲରେ ଏକାକି ରହୁଛି ତା'ର କାରଣ କ'ଣ ହୋଇପାରେ । ଜାଣିବାକୁ ତାଙ୍କର ବହୁତ ଇଚ୍ଛା ଥିଲେ ବି କିଛି ପଚାରି ପାରିଲେନି । ଜଣେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଲୋକର ଏପରି ଏକା ଏ ଜଙ୍ଗଲ ଭିତରେ ରହିବା ପଛରେ ଗୁରୁତର କାରଣ ତ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ କ'ଣ ହୋଇପାରେ । ହୁଏତ ସେ ବି ତାଙ୍କରି ପରି କିଛି ବିରାଟ ସମସ୍ୟାରେ ପଡ଼ି ଜନ ସମାଜରୁ ଦୂରରେ ରହିବାକୁ ବାଛି ନେଇ ଥାଇପାରେ ।

ଗଲା ହାଟ ପାଳି ସିନା ଝୋଲା ଯାଇ ପାରିଲାନି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଆସନ୍ତା ସୋମ ବାର ହାଟକୁ ସେ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଯିବ । କାରଣ ତାର ଡାଲି, ଚାଉଳ, ତେଲ, ଲୁଣ ତ ଦରକାର । ଆଗେ ଜଣେ ପେଟ । ଯେମିତି ସେମିତି ଚଳେଇ ନେଉଥିଲା । ଏବେ ଦୁଇ ପେଟ ପାଇଁ ଘରେ ଖାଦ୍ୟ ବିଶେଷ ନାହିଁ । ତଥାପି ସାତ ଦିନ ହୋଇ ଗଲାଣି ସେ ସେଥିରେ ଯେମିତି ସେମିତି କରି ଘର ଚଳେଇ ଚାଲିଛି । ଝୋଲା ତାର ଚକ ଲଗା ଏକ ବଡ଼ କାଠ ଡବାରେ ଅନ୍ୟ ଦିନ ପରି ଯାହା ଜଙ୍ଗଲରୁ ପାଇଲା ଭର୍ତ୍ତି କରି ହାଟକୁ ଯାଉଛି ବୋଲି କହି ଚାଲିଗଲା ବଗୁଲା ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ହାତେ ଓଡ଼ଣା ଦେଇ । ଲୋକଟି ପାଇଁ କିଛି ରୁଡ଼ା, ମୁଟି ବେଲ ପଣା କରି ରଖି ଦେଇଗଲା । ଧର୍ମବୀର ବୁଝିଗଲେ ସେ କୁଆଡ଼େ ଯାଉଛି ବୋଲି ପଚାରିବାର ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ନାହିଁ ।

ଫେରିଲା ବେଳେ ହାଟରୁ ତା କାଠ ବାକୁ ବୋଝେଇ ଜିନିଷ ଆଜି ସେ ଆଣିଥିଲା ଆଠ ଦିନ ପାଇଁ । ପୁଣି ପର ହାଟ ପାଳିକୁ ସେ ଯାଇ ପାରିବନି । ଲୋକଟି ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଭଲ ନହୋଇ ଗଲା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସେ ସମ୍ପ୍ରାହକୁ ଥରେ ମାତ୍ର ଯିବ ବୋଲି ଠିକ୍ କରିନେଲା । ଲୋକଟି ଏବେ ଟିକେ ଟିକେ ବାଡ଼ି ଖଣ୍ଡେ ଧରି ଚଲାବୁଲା କରିବାକୁ ସକ୍ଷମ ହୋଇଗଲାଣି । ଝୋଲା ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ମିଶି ପତ୍ର ଗୋଟେଇବା, କାଠ ଭାଙ୍ଗି ଆଣିବ. ମାଛ ଧରିବା, ଶାଗ ତୋଳିବା, ତା ବାଡ଼ି ପଟ କଞ୍ଚା ଲଙ୍କା ଓ ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ପରିବା ଗଛରେ ପାଣି ଦବା ପ୍ରଭୃତି କାମରେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କଲାଣି । କିନ୍ତୁ ବେଶା କରି ପାରୁନି । ଟିକେକରେ ଥକି ଯାଏ । ଝୋଲା ମନା କରେ କାମ କରିବାକୁ କିନ୍ତୁ ସେ ହସି ହସି କୁହନ୍ତି ତାଙ୍କୁ ଆନନ୍ଦ ମିଳୁଛି ତାକୁ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିବାରେ । ତା ବ୍ୟତିତ କେତେ ବା ବସିବେ । ଝୋଲାର ଏ ଏକା ଏକା ବଞ୍ଚିବା ପାଇଁ ସଂଘର୍ଷରୁ ସେ ବି ବଞ୍ଚିବା ପାଇଁ ବେଶ୍ କିଛି ପ୍ରେରଣା ପାଇ ଯାଉଛନ୍ତି ।

ଏହା ଭିତରେ ଚାରି/ପାଞ୍ଚ ମାସ ଚାଲିଗଲାଣି । ଧର୍ମବୀର ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଭଲ ହୋଇ ଗଲେଣି । ସେ ବି ଝୋଲା ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ହାଟକୁ ଯାଇ ଜିନିଷ ବିକ୍ରି କରିବାରେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରନ୍ତି । ଝୋଲାର କିଛି ଆପତ୍ତି ନଥିଲା ତା ପାଖରେ ସେ ରହିବା ପାଇଁ । ଏକାକୀ ଜୀବନଠାରୁ ଜଣେ ସାଥୀ ମିଳିଗଲେ ଖୁସି ତ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଲାଗିବ । ଲୋକ ଜଣକ ଏବେ ଝୋଲାର ଭାଷା ବେଶ୍ ଟିକେ ଟିକେ ବୁଝି ଗଲେଣି । ଦିନ ରାତି ଝୋଲା ତାଙ୍କ ସଙ୍ଗେ ବକର ବକର ଏତେ ହୋଇଛି ଯେ କୌଣସି ଶିକ୍ଷକ ବି ତାଙ୍କୁ ଏତେ ଶୀଘ୍ର କୌଣସି ନୂଆ ଭାଷା ଶିଖେଇବାରେ ସକ୍ଷମ ହୋଇ ନଥାନ୍ତା । ଗୋଟିଏ ଶବ୍ଦକୁ ଦଶଧର କହିବା ଦ୍ୱାରା ତାଙ୍କର ସେ ସବୁ ମନେ ରହିଯାଏ । ଝୋଲା ବଗୁଲା ସାଙ୍ଗେ ବି ଦିନ ଯାକ ବକର ବକର

ହୁଏ । ବଗୁଲା ସିନା କଥା କହି ପାରେନା କିନ୍ତୁ ଝୋଲା ଯାହା କହେ ସବୁ ବୁଝି ଯାଏ ।

ପ୍ରତି ବର୍ଷ ବର୍ଷା ଦିନ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଝୋଲା ତାର ଘରର ଛାତରେ ନୂଆ ତାଳ ପତ୍ର ଆଣି ପକେଇ ତାକୁ ମଜଭୁତ କରିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରେ । ନୂଆ ମାଟି ଆଣି ଘରର କାନ୍ଥରେ ଲଗାଇ ତାକୁ ଅଧିକ ଶକ୍ତ କରେ, ଘର ଦ୍ଵାରକୁ ଲିପା ପୋଛା କରିଦିଏ । ତାକୁ ଏଇ ବର୍ଷା ଦିନଟା ବେଶୀ ଭଲ ଲାଗେନା । ଅଧେ ଦିନ କୁଆଡ଼େ ଯାଇ ହୁଏନା । କୁଡ଼ିଆ ଭିତରେ ଏକାକୀ ବଗୁଲା ସହିତ ପଡ଼ି ରହେ । ଦୁଃଖ ଲାଗେ, କାନ୍ଦ ଲାଗେ, ମା କଥା ମନେ ପଡ଼େ, ବଞ୍ଚିବାକୁ ବି ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ଇଚ୍ଛା ହୁଏନା । କିନ୍ତୁ କ'ଣ କରିବ । ମା' କହିକି ଯାଇଛି ଜୀବନକୁ ଭଲ ନ ପାଇବା ଅର୍ଥ ଭଗବାନଙ୍କୁ ଭଲ ନ ପାଇବା, ତାଙ୍କୁ ଅସମ୍ମାନ କରିବା । ଏ ଜୀବନ ତାଙ୍କର ଦାନ । ତେଣୁ ଯେତେ କଷ୍ଟ ଆସୁ ସେ ତୁମକୁ ନନେଲା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ତାଙ୍କ ସଂସାରରେ ରହିବାକୁ ତୁମେ ବାଧ୍ୟ । ଏହା ତାଙ୍କର ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶ । ଭଗବାନଙ୍କ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶ ଯୋଗୁ ନ ହେଲେ ବି ମା'ର ଉପଦେଶ ମାନି ସେ ଆଜି ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ନିଜକୁ ବଞ୍ଚେଇ ରଖିଛି ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ଏ ବର୍ଷ ଧର୍ମିବୀର ତାକୁ ବହୁତ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କଲେ । ଘରଟିକୁ ମଜଭୁତ କରିବା ସହିତ ଆଉ ଏକ ବଡ଼ କୁଡ଼ିଆ ତିଆରି କରିଦେଲେ । ଘର ଚାରିକଡ଼େ ବାଡ଼ ଲଗେଇଦେଲେ । ଦୁଇଜଣ ପରିଶ୍ରମ କରିବାଦ୍ଵାରା ରୋଜଗାର ବି ଟିକେ ଅଧିକା ହଉଛି । ଆଗ ପରି ଆଉ ଭଲ ମନ୍ଦ କିଛି ଖାଇବାର ଲାଳସାକୁ ବେଶୀ ଦମନ କରିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ୁନାହିଁ ।

ସେଦିନ ଭାତ, ଡାଲି, ମସଲା ଦିଆ ମାଛ ଝୋଲ ସହିତ ଗୁଡ଼ ମିଶା ଖିରି ସେମାନେ ତିଆରି କରିଥିଲେ ରାତି ଖାଇବା ପାଇଁ । କେବେଠୁ ଖିରି ଖିଆ ହୋଇନି । ଗଲା ଗୁରୁଦିନ ହାଟରୁ ସେମାନେ ଖଜୁରି ଗୁଡ଼ କିଣି କରି ଆଣିଥିଲେ । ଖାଇ ସାରି ସେମାନେ ବଗୁଲାକୁ ଧରି ନଈକୂଳ ଆଡ଼େ ଚାଲିଲେ । ସେଦିନ ଆକାଶରେ ଥିଲା ସେଇ ମାୟାବୀ ଜହ୍ନ ରାତିର କୁହୁକିନୀ ଆମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ । ଝରା ଝରା ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର କିରଣ ଜଙ୍ଗଲ ସାରା ବିଛାଡ଼ି ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଥିଲା । ତୋଫା ଜହ୍ନଟା ଦେହ ମନକୁ ବେଶ୍ ଆବେଶ କରି ରଖିଥାଏ । ନଈ ବାଲିରେ ଯାଇ ଦୁହେଁ ବସିଗଲେ । ବଗୁଲା ତା'ର ଦୌଡ଼ା ଦୌଡ଼ି କରି ନିଜକୁ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ରଖିଲା ।

ହଠାତ୍ ଧର୍ମିବୀର ପଚାରି ବସିଲେ ଝୋଲାକୁ ତା'ର ଏଠାରେ ଏପରି ଭାବରେ ଏକା ରହିବାର କାରଣ କ'ଣ । ତାର କ'ଣ ଏ ସଂସାରରେ କେହି ନାହାଁନ୍ତି ? ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଇତ୍ୟାଦି । ମନରେ କେବେଠୁ ଉଚ୍ଚ ମାରୁଥିବା ଅନେକ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ । କିଛିକ୍ଷଣ ଝୋଲା ନିରବ ରହି କଥା ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲା ।

ସେ ଓ ତା'ର ବିଧବା ମାଆ ଏଇ ନଈ ଆର ପଟ, ପାଖା ପାଖି ଦୁଇ ମାଇଲ ଦୂରରେ ଏକ ଗାଁରେ ରହୁଥିଲେ । ଏଇ ଛୋଟିଆ ପାହାଡ଼ ଉପରେ ଠିଆ ହେଲେ ବା ଗଛରେ ଚଢ଼ି ଚାହିଁଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ଗାଁ ଦେଖାଯିବ । ସେ ପିଲାବେଳକୁ ବହୁତ ଅସୁନ୍ଦର ହୋଇ ଜନ୍ମ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ତାର ବୟସ ଯେତିକି ବହୁଥାଏ ତାର ରୂପ ସେତିକି କଦାକାର ଆଉ ମୋଟି ବି ହୋଇ ଯାଉଥାଏ । ଗାଁ ଲୋକ ସାଙ୍ଗ ସାଥୁକ ଅଜା ପରିହାସ ତାର ରୂପକୁ ନେଇ ଅସହ୍ୟ ହେଉଥାଏ । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ସେ କେତେଥର ମରିଯିବା ପାଇଁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା ମଧ୍ୟ କରିଛି । ତା ମାଆ କିନ୍ତୁ ତାକୁ ବହୁତ ଭଲ ପାଏ । ମାଆର ବି ଏ ସଂସାରରେ ଆଉ କେହି ନଥାନ୍ତି ତା ବ୍ୟତୀତ । ମାଆ ତାକୁ ଅନେକ ସାଙ୍ଗୁନା ଦେଇ ବୁଝେଇ ବାଝେଇ କାହାରି କଥାକୁ ନ ଶୁଣିବାକୁ ପରାମର୍ଶ ଦେଉଥାଏ । ତା ମାଆର ଆଖିରେ ସେ କୌଣସି ରାଜକୁମାରୀଠାରୁ କମ୍ ନୁହେଁ ।

ଏ ସଂସାରର ସୃଷ୍ଟି କର୍ତ୍ତା ହେଲେ ଭଗବାନ । ତାଙ୍କରି ଇଚ୍ଛାରେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଏ ସଂସାରକୁ ଆସନ୍ତି ଓ ଯାଆନ୍ତି । ସେ ଯାହାକୁ ଯାହା ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି ସେଥିରେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଖୁସିରେ ରହିବା ଅର୍ଥ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଖୁସି କରିବା । ତାଙ୍କ ଇଚ୍ଛା ଓ ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟକୁ ସମ୍ମାନ ଦେବା । ମାଆ ଏହିପରି ବହୁତ କଥା ବୁଝାଏ ସତ କିନ୍ତୁ ଯେତେବେଳେ ସେ ଲୋକଙ୍କ କରୁଛି ଶୁଣେ ମାଆର ସବୁ ଉପଦେଶ ସେ ଭୁଲିଯାଏ । ଦେହରେ ତାର ନିଆଁ ଲାଗିଯାଏ । କାହାକୁ ମାରିବ ବା ନିଜକୁ ମାରିବ ଜାଣି ପାରେନା । ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ବହୁତ ଅସତ୍ୟ ଭାଷାରେ ଗାଳି ଗୁଲଜ କରି ମନର ଓରମାନ ମେଣ୍ଟାଏ କେବଳ ।

ମା ଦିନେ ତା ବାପ ଘର ଗାଁକୁ ଯାଇ ତା'ର ପିଲାବେଳର ସାଙ୍ଗ “ମରୁଆ” ର ଏକ ପୁଅ ସଂଗରେ ଝୋଲାର ବାହାଘର ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ପକେଇଲା । ମରୁଆର ଚାରି ପୁଅ ଏବଂ ସେମାନେ ଭାରି ଗରିବ । ଦିନେ ଖାଇଲେ ଦି ଦିନ ଉପାସ । ତାର ମଝିଆଁ ପୁଅରୁ ଜଣକୁ ଘର କୁଆଁଇ କରି ନେଇ ଆସିବାକୁ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଦେବାରୁ ମରୁଆ ରାଜି ହୋଇଗଲା । ଝୋଲା ତ ଗୋଟିଏ ଝିଅ ସବୁ ସଂପତ୍ତି ତା ପୁଅ “ଶଂକରା”ର ହୋଇ ଯିବ । ମରୁଆର ଅରାଜି ହେବାର କାରଣ କିଛି ନାହିଁ । ଝୋଲାକୁ ସେତେବେଳେ ପଦର ବର୍ଷ ଆଉ ଶଙ୍କରାକୁ ଅଠର ।

ବାହାଘର ତିଥି ଅନୁସାରେ ବାହାଘର ହୋଇଗଲା । ହାତେ ଓଡ଼ଣା ଭିତରୁ କେହି ଝୋଲାକୁ ଦେଖି ପାରିଲେନି । ମା ବି ତାକୁ କହିଥାଏ ସବୁବେଳେ ଓଡ଼ଣା ଭିତରେ ରହିଥିବୁ । କାହାକୁ ମୁହଁ ଦେଖେଇବା କିଛି ଦରକାର ନାହିଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଶଙ୍କରା ଯୋଉଦିନ ପ୍ରଥମ ଥର ପାଇଁ ଝୋଲାର ମୁହଁ ଦେଖିଲା, ଇଲୋ ବୋଉଲୋ ଏ ମୁହଁକୁ

ବାସ ବି ଦେଖିଲେ ତରି ଯିବ କହି ଘର ଛାଡ଼ି ପଳେଇ ଗଲା ।
ସେଇଦିନ ଠାରୁ ଝୋଲାର ଭାଗ୍ୟରେ ଆହୁରି ନିଆଁ ଲାଗିଗଲା । ତା
ମୁହଁ ଆଉ କେହି ଚାହିଁବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା କଲେନି । ଅଲକ୍ଷଣୀ ତାହାଣି କହି
ଦୂର ଦୂର କଲେ । ସେଇ ଦିନଠୁ ସେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଭିତରେ ରହିଲା ସତ ତା
ଆଖିର ଲୁହ କିନ୍ତୁ ଶୁଖିଲାନି ।

ଚିନ୍ତାଗ୍ରସ୍ତା ମା ରୋଗାକ୍ରାନ୍ତ ହୋଇ ଶେଯରେ ପଡ଼ି ପଡ଼ି ଦିନେ
ଆଖି ବୁଜିଲା । ଲୋକମାନେ ଝୋଲାକୁ ଆଉ ଗାଁରେ ରଖିବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା
କଲେନି । ତା ଛାଇ ପଡ଼ିଲେ ଅନ୍ୟ ମାନଙ୍କର ଅଶୁଭ ଭାବି ତାକୁ
ଦେଖିଲେ ଟେକା ପଥର ପକେଇ ମାରିବାକୁ ଛାଡ଼ିଲେନି । “ତାହାଣୀ”
ନାମଟା ତା ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ସବୁଦିନ ପାଇଁ ଯୋଡ଼ି ହୋଇଗଲା । ତା ନିଜ
ନାମ ପବନରେ କୁଆଡ଼େ ମିଳେଇ ଗଲା । ସବୁରି ମୁହଁରୁ ହେଇ
ତାହାଣୀ ଆସୁଛିର ଶବ୍ଦ । ସେ ତ କେବେ କାହାରି ଭଲରେ ବା ମନ୍ଦରେ
ନଥାଏ । କାହିଁକି ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କର ଏ ଦୁର୍ବ୍ୟବହାର ତା ପ୍ରତି । ସେ ତ
ତା ନିଜକୁ ତିଆରି କରିନାହିଁ । ଦୁଃଖରେ କଲିଜା ତାର ରକ୍ତାକ୍ତ ହୁଏ ।

ମାଆର ଭଗବାନଙ୍କ ଦ୍ଵାହି, ସାନ୍ତ୍ଵନା ବାଣୀକୁ ମନେ ପକେଇ
କିଛି ଦିନ ଘର ଭିତରେ କବାଟ ବନ୍ଦ କରି ସେ ରହିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ କେତେ
ଦିନ । ତାର ପେଟ ତ ଅଛି । ସଉଦା ପତ୍ର ପାଇଁ ବାହାରକୁ ଯିବ ।
ପାଣି ଆଣିବାକୁ ଯିବ କିନ୍ତୁ କିପରି ତାହା ସମ୍ଭବ । ଦିନକୁ ଦିନ ମାନସିକ
କଷଣ ଅପେକ୍ଷା ଲୋକ ମାନଙ୍କର ଶାରୀରିକ କଷଣ ଦେବା ବେଶୀ
ବଢ଼ିଗଲା । ଶେଷରେ ମାଆର ରାଣ ଆଉ ଉପଦେଶ କିଛି କାମ
ଦେଲାନି । ଶେଷରେ ଦିନେ ରାତିରେ ସେ ଘର ଛାଡ଼ି ଚାଲି ଆସିଥିଲା
ଏଇ ନଇ କୂଳେ କୂଳେ । ଏଇ ଛୋଟ ନଇଟି ଯାଇ ଯୋଉଠି ଏକ
ବଡ଼ ନଇ ସହିତ ମିଶିଛି ସେଇ ତ୍ରିକୋଣ ଅଞ୍ଚଳକୁ ସେ ଚାଲି ଆସିଲା ।
ନଇକୁ ଡେଇଁ ପ୍ରାଣ ଦେଇ ନିଶ୍ଚିନ୍ତ ହେବ । ସବୁଦିନ ପାଇଁ ମାଆ
ପାଖକୁ ଚାଲିଯିବ ।

ସେଦିନ ବି ଥିଲା ଏହିପରି ଏକ ଜହ୍ନ ଭରା ରାତି । ଚାରି ଆଡ଼
ତୋଫା ଜହ୍ନର ଏକ କୁହୁକ ଭରା ମାୟାବା ପରିବେଶ । କ’ଣ ହେଲା
କେଜାଣି ମରିବାକୁ ଆଉ ଇଚ୍ଛା ହେଲାନି ସେ ମୁଣ୍ଡରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶା କାଢ଼ିଦେଲା ।
ଆକାଶକୁ ଜହ୍ନକୁ ଚାହିଁଲା ଓ ତାପରେ ପାଣିକୁ ଚାହିଁ ନିଜର ପ୍ରତିଛବି
ଦେଖିଲା । ଜୀବନ ପ୍ରତି ମୋହ ଆସିଗଲା । ମାଆ କହିଥିଲା ଜୀବନ
ନେବା ଅର୍ଥ ଭଗବାନଙ୍କୁ ଅସମ୍ମାନ କରିବା । ସେଇଠି ବସି ବସି
ନଇକୂଳେ ଏକ ଗଛମୂଳେ ସେ ଅନେକ କିଛି ଭାବୁ ଭାବୁ ଶୋଇଗଲା ।
ସକାଳର ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ କିରଣ ମୁହଁରେ ପଡ଼ିବାରୁ ସେ ଉଠିଲା ।

ରାତିଠାରୁ ଦିନରେ ଏ ନଇ ଏ ବଣ ଜଙ୍ଗଲର ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ଏତେ
ସୁନ୍ଦର ଦିଶୁଛି ସେ ଭାବି ବି ପାରୁନଥିଲା । ଏ ବାତାବରଣରେ କେତେ
ପ୍ରଶାନ୍ତି । ଚଢ଼େଇ ମାନଙ୍କର ମନ ମୁଗଧକର କଲରବ । ମୃଦୁ ମୃଦୁ
ଦୋଳାୟିତ ନଦୀ ଜଳର ଲହରୀ । ଧୀର ପବନ । ଆଉ ବିଭିନ୍ନ
ରଂଗର ଚାରିଆଡ଼େ ଫୁଟି ଥିବା ଛୋଟ ବଡ଼ ଫୁଲ, କେଜାଣି ଜୀବନ
ପ୍ରତି ମୋହ ବଢ଼ି ବଢ଼ି ଚାଲିଛି । ଏଇଠି ରହିଗଲେ କ୍ଷତି ବା କ’ଣ ।
ମନେ ପଡ଼ି ଯାଉଥିଲା ମାଆର ପିଲା ଦିନର ଗପରେ ଏହିପରି କେତେ
ଦୃଶ୍ୟର ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନା । ସୀତା ଠାକୁରାଣୀଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଦ୍ରୋପଦୀ, ଶକୁନ୍ତଳାଙ୍କ
ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ । ସେମାନେ ବି ତ ଏଇ ଜଙ୍ଗଲରେ ବଢ଼ିଥିଲେ । ସେମାନେ
ବି ତ ତାରି ପରି ଝିଅ ଥିଲେ । ସେମାନେ ଜଙ୍ଗଲରେ ରହିବାକୁ
କୁଣ୍ଠାବୋଧ କରି ନଥିଲେ । ସେମାନେ ତ ତା ଠାରୁ ଆଖି ପାଉ ନଥିବା
କାହିଁ କେତେ ସୌଭାଗ୍ୟରେ ଭୋଗ ବିଳାସରେ ବଢ଼ିଥିଲେ । ଆଉ
କେତେ ସୁନ୍ଦରୀ ବି ଥିଲେ ।

ଜଙ୍ଗଲରୁ ଦି ଚାରିଟା ଡାଳ ଭାଙ୍ଗି ଆଣି ସେଥିରେ ଝାଡୁ ପରି
ତାକୁ ବ୍ୟବହାର କରି ଗୋଟିଏ ବଡ଼ ଗଛ ତଳକୁ ସଫା କରିଦେଲା ।
ଜଙ୍ଗଲରୁ ଯାହା ପାଇଲା ତେନ୍ତୁଳି, କୋଳି ଆଣି ଖାଇ ଦିନଟି ବିତେଇ
ଦେଲା । ରାତିରେ ପୁଣି ଥରେ ଘରକୁ ଯାଇ ଲୁଗାପଟା ବାସନ କୁସନ
ଯାହା ଦରକାରି ଜିନିଷ ଥିଲା କିଛି ନେଇ ଆସିଲା ।

ଏହିପରି କିଛି ରାତି ସେଠାକୁ ଯାଇ ଧୀରେ ଧୀରେ ସବୁ ଜିନିଷ
ସେ ନେଇ ଆସିଲା । ଲୋକମାନେ ଜାଣିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଘର ଖାଲି
କରିଦେଲା । ଗଛମୂଳେ ସବୁ ରଖିଦେଲା । ଦୁଇ ଗଛ ଡାଳରେ ତାର
ଶାଢ଼ିରୁ ଗୋଟିଏକୁ ବାନ୍ଧି ଦେଇ ସେଥିରେ ଶୋଇଗଲା । ଅନେକ ମାସ
ତାକୁ ଲାଗି ଯାଇଥିଲା ଜଙ୍ଗଲ ସାରା ବୁଲି ବୁଲି କ’ଣ କୋଉଠି ଅଛି
ଜାଣିବାକୁ । ଦିନେ ବୁଲୁ ବୁଲୁ ବହୁ ଦୂରକୁ ଚାଲି ଯାଇଥିଲା ସେଦିନ
ଦେଖିଥିଲା କିଛି ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଲୋକ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ଜିନିଷ ନେଇ କୁଆଡ଼େ ଯାଉଛନ୍ତି ।
ପଚାରି ଜାଣିଲା ସେଠାରୁ କିଛି ବାଟ ଦୂରରେ ହାଟ ବସେ । ସେ ବି
ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଦେଇ ସେଠାକୁ ଗଲା । ସେଇ ଦିନଠୁ ସେ ହାଟକୁ
ଯାଏ । ସେଠାରେ ବିକିବାକୁ କିଣିବାକୁ ନୂଆ ଜିନିଷ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଭଲ
ଲାଗେ ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ବାହାରକୁ ଗଲେ ବା କେହି ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖିଲେ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ
ସେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଦେଇଦିଏ । କ’ଣ ଦରକାର ଏ ଅହଙ୍କାର ଅସହିଷ୍ଣୁ ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ
ମୁହଁ ଦେଖେଇ ସେମାନଙ୍କ କୁରତାର ଶିକାର ହେବା । ଯେ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ
ଲୋକ ତା ମୁହଁକୁ ଦେଖି ନାହାଁନ୍ତି ସେମାନେ ବେଶ୍ ଭଲରେ କଥା

ବାଉଁ କରନ୍ତି । ମୁହଁ ଦେଖିଦେଲେ ଏମିତି ନିଆଁ ପରି କାହିଁ ହୁଅନ୍ତି । ଜ୍ଞାନର ଅଭାବ ବୋଲି ସେ ଏବେ ଧରିନେଲା । ଦିନେ ହାତକୁ ମାଛ ନେଇ କରି ଯାଇଥିଲା ବିକିବାକୁ । କିଛି ମାଛ ବଳି ଯାଇଥିଲା । ମେଘ ବଡ଼ ଜୋରରେ ଘୋଟି ଥିଲା ବର୍ଷା ହେବା ଆଗରୁ ସେ ଘରକୁ ଫେରି ଆସିବାର ଠିକ୍‌କଲା । ମାଛ ବିକା ସେଇଠି ବନ୍ଦ କରି ସେ ଘରକୁ ଫେରିଥିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ବାଟରେ ମାଛ ବାସ୍ତାରେ ଏଇ ବଗୁଲା ତା ପଛେ ପଛେ ବହୁତ ବାଟ ତା ଘର ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଚାଲି ଆସିଥିଲା । ଗୋଟାଏ ଯୋଡ଼ାଏ ମାଛ ତା ମୁହଁ ପାଖକୁ ପକେଇ ଦେଲା ସେ ।

ସେଇ ଦିନଠୁ ବଗୁଲା ଏଇଠି, ତାର ବଡ଼ ସାଙ୍ଗ । ସବୁଦିନ ତା ପାଇଁ ମାଛ ଭାତର ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା ଝୋଲା କରେ । ଗୋଟାଏ ପଶୁର ମନରେ ଏତେ ସ୍ନେହ ଦୟାଭାବ ଦେଖି ସେ ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ । ତାରି ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ଦୁଃଖ ସୁଖ ହୁଏ ସେ । ସେଇ ଦିନଠୁ ସେ ବି ଏଇଠି । ମଣିଷ ସମାଜଠାରୁ ଦୂରରେ । ତାକୁ ଏ ସମାଜରୁ କ’ଣ ମିଳୁଛି । ଯେ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବଞ୍ଚିଛି ସେ ବଞ୍ଚିଛି ଯୋଉଦିନ ମରିଯିବ ତ ମରିଯିବ । ଜୀବନ ପ୍ରତି ସେପରି ବିରାଟ ଲୋଭ ନାହିଁ ସତ କିନ୍ତୁ ମରିବାକୁ ବି ସେ ଚାହେଁନା ।

ତା ଜୀବନର କାହାଣୀ କହି ସାରିବା ପରେ ଆଖିରୁ ତାର କେତେ ଯେ ଲୁହ ଅନାୟସରେ ଗଡ଼ି ଯାଇଥିଲା ତାର ଠିକଣା ନଥିଲା । ଧର୍ମିବୀର ତା ଆଖିରୁ ଲୁହ ନିଜ ହାତରେ ପୋଛି ଦେଇଥିଲେ । କହିଥିଲେ ଝୋଲା ତୁ ସବୁଠାରୁ ଏ ପୃଥିବୀର ଏକ ସୁନ୍ଦରୀ ନାରୀ । ତୋ ମନ ଭିତରେ ଏତେ ସ୍ନେହ, ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧା, ଦୟା, କ୍ଷମା ଓ ସେବା ଭାବ ଭରି ରହିଛି ତା ଠୁ ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟର ଅନ୍ୟ ନାମ କ’ଣ ଆଇପାରେ । ତୋର ଓଡ଼ଣା ଦ୍ଵାରା ମୁହଁ ଲୁଚେଇବାର କିଛି ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ନାହିଁ । ଏ ସଂସାର ଚା କାହାର ନିଜସ୍ଵ ସଂପତ୍ତି ନୁହେଁ । ଅନ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କ ପରି ତୋର ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଅଧିକାର ଅଛି ଏ ସଂସାରରେ ବଞ୍ଚି ରହିବାର ।

ସେଇ ଦିନଠାରୁ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଦୁନିଆଁ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଜୀବନ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ବଦଳି ଯାଇଥିଲା । ଗଛ, ପତ୍ର, ନଈ ଓ ବଗୁଲାକୁ ସାକ୍ଷୀ ରଖି ସେମାନେ ବିବାହ କରିଥିଲେ । ନାଲି, ଧଳା, ହଳଦିଆ, ନୀଳ କଇଁ ଫୁଲ ଦ୍ଵାରା ସେମାନେ ଘରର ଚାରିଦିଗ ସଜେଇଥିଲେ । ଝୋଲାକୁ ବଡ଼ିସ ପାଖା ପାଖି ଆଉ ଧର୍ମିବୀରଙ୍କୁ ଚାଳିଶ ଉପରେ ତ କ’ଣ ହେଲା । ଯୋଉଠି ମନ ସହିତ ମନ ମିଳିଲା ସେଠି ସବୁ ସୁନ୍ଦର, ସବୁ କରଣୀୟ, ସବୁ ଗ୍ରହଣୀୟ । ସମାଜ ସ୍ଵୀକୃତିର କ’ଣ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ । ତା ବ୍ୟତୀତ ଏଇ ବିକୃତ, ଅନ୍ୟାୟୀ, ସ୍ଵାର୍ଥପର ସମାଜର ତାର ତ ମୋଟରୁ ଦରକାର ନାହିଁ ।

ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପାଞ୍ଚ ପୁଅରୁ ଆଜି ଏଇ ପାହାଡ଼ ତଳି ନଈ କୂଳର ଗାଁର ସୃଷ୍ଟି । ଗାଆଁର ନାମ “ଝୋଧର୍ମୀ” । ଝୋଲା ଆଉ ଧର୍ମିବୀରଙ୍କ ନାମ ଅନୁସାରେ ନାମାଙ୍କିତ । ସେ ଭଗବାନଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ଯେତିକି କୃତଜ୍ଞ ତା ମାଆ ପାଖରେ ତାଠାରୁ ବେଶୀ କୃତଜ୍ଞ । ସେଦିନ ସେ ତା କଥା ଅନୁସାରେ ନ ଯାଇ ନଈରେ ଝାସ ଦେଇଥିଲେ ତାକୁ ଏପରି ସୌଭାଗ୍ୟ ମିଳି ନଥାନ୍ତା । ତାର ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେଇ ଉପଦେଶ ସେ ଦେଇଥିଲା । ଏ ସଂସାରର ସବୁ ଝଡ଼ ଝଞ୍ଜାକୁ ଅତିକ୍ରମ କରି ଜୀବନର ଶେଷ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବଞ୍ଚି ରହିବାର ଅର୍ଥ ଭଗବାନଙ୍କୁ ସମ୍ମାନ ଦେବା, ତାଙ୍କୁ ଅବଜ୍ଞା ନ କରିବା । ଅକାଳରେ ନିଜର ବା ଅନ୍ୟର ଜୀବନ ନେବା ଅର୍ଥ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଅସମ୍ମାନିତ ବା ଅପମାନିତ କରିବା । କୌଣସି ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟ ନେଇ ସେ ଏ ସଂସାରକୁ ଗଢ଼ିଛନ୍ତି ।

ହଁ ବେଳେବେଳେ ସିଏ ଅଦରକାରୀ ପରୀକ୍ଷା ନିରୀକ୍ଷା କରନ୍ତି ସତ । ମଣିଷକୁ ଅନିଚ୍ଛା ସତ୍ତ୍ୱେ ତାଙ୍କ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶକୁ ମଥା ପାତି ସହିବାକୁ ପଡ଼େ ସତ । ଅନେକ ଅସହ୍ୟ ଯନ୍ତ୍ରଣା ଭୋଗିବାକୁ ପଡ଼େ ସତ କିନ୍ତୁ ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ବେଶ୍ ମନ ଲାଖି ପୁରସ୍କାର ବି ଦିଅନ୍ତି । ଏଇ ଯେମିତି ଝୋଲା, ଆଜି ଖୁସିର ଲହରୀରେ ଭାଷି ଚାଲିଛି । ସେଦିନ ନଈକୁ ଝାସ ଦେଇଥିଲେ ଏତେ ସୁଖ ସଂସାରରେ ଅଛି ବୋଲି ସେ ଜାଣି ପାରି ନଥାନ୍ତା । କେବଳ ଧୈର୍ଯ୍ୟ ରଖି ଭଗବାନଙ୍କ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶକୁ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରି ପାରିଲେ ହେଲା ।

ଝୋଲା ବହୁତ ବର୍ଷ ବଞ୍ଚୁଥିଲା ତାର ଚାରି ପିଢ଼ିର ସନ୍ତାନମାନଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖିବା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଧର୍ମିବୀର ବେଶୀ ଦିନ ବଞ୍ଚି ନଥିଲେ ପଘର ବର୍ଷର ଘର ସଂସାର ପରେ ଚାଲି ଯାଇଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ସେଇ ଗୋଟିଏ କଥା ଝୋଲାର ମାଆଙ୍କ କଥାକୁ ସର୍ବଦା ଦୋହରାଇ ଥିଲେ ସେ । ଜୀବନକୁ ଭଲ ପାଇବା ଅର୍ଥ ଭଗବାନଙ୍କୁ ଭଲ ପାଇବା । ଧର୍ମିବୀରଙ୍କୁ ମନେ ନ ପକାଇ ଜୀବନର ଶେଷ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଖୁସିରେ ଜୀବନ ବିତେଇବାକୁ ପରାମର୍ଶ ଦେଇ ଯାଇଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଝୋଲାକୁ ଏବଂ ସେ ବିତେଇ ଥିଲା ମଧ୍ୟ । ଭଗବାନଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ତାର କୃତଜ୍ଞତା ସ୍ଵରୂପ ଏକ ଛୋଟ ମନ୍ଦିର ଗାଁ’ର ଶେଷ ଭାଗରେ ତିଆରି କରି ଦେଇଥିଲା ଝୋଲା । ତା ପୁଅ, ବୋହୂ ନାତି ନାତୁଣୀଙ୍କ ସହାୟତାରେ ।

1726 Northern Heights Ln NE, Rochester, MN 55906

ନଷ୍ଟ ନୀତି

ବୀରେନ୍ଦ୍ର ଜେନା

ଫେ ବୃଥାରୀ ମାସର ଶୀତୁଆ କଅଁଳିଆ ଅପରାହ୍ନରେ ଫାମିଲିରୁମ୍ କାଉଟ ଉପରେ ବସି ଫାୟାର ପ୍ଲେସ ଉପରେ ଟଙ୍କା ହୋଇଥିବା ସୁନନ୍ଦାଙ୍କ ଫଟୋକୁ ଚାହିଁ ସ୍ମୃତି ଚାରଣ କରୁଥିଲେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ । ପଢ଼ା ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କର ଫ୍ୟୁନେରାଲ ସର୍ଭିସ ସରିଗଲା ପରେ ଯେଉଁ କେତେଜଣ ବନ୍ଧୁ ଶଙ୍ଖୁଳିବାକୁ ଘରକୁ ଆସିଥିଲେ ସେମାନେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଚାଲି ଗଲେଣି । ସବା ଶେଷକୁ ଥିଲେ ମିଷ୍ଟର ଏବଂ ମିସେସ୍ ହ୍ଲାଇର୍, - ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କ ବାପା ଓ ମା । ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ବିଦାୟ ଦେଲା ପରେ ଥକାମାରି ବସି ଥିଲା ବେଳେ ନଜର ପଡ଼ିଲା ସୁନନ୍ଦାଙ୍କ ଫଟୋ ଉପରେ । ସୁନନ୍ଦା ଥିଲେ ତାଙ୍କର ପ୍ରଥମ ପତ୍ନୀ । ଅତୀତର ଘଟଣା ସବୁ ଚଳଚ୍ଚିତ୍ର ପରି ତାଙ୍କ ଆଖି ସାମ୍ନାରେ ଭାସି ଯାଉଥିଲା । ସତରେ ତାଙ୍କର ଏଇ ଛୋଟିଆ ଜୀବନ କାଳ ଭିତରେ କେତେ କଅଣ ଘଟି ନଗଲା ।

ଦେବକାନ୍ତ ଥିଲେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସଚିବାଳୟର ଜଣେ କର୍ମଚାରୀ ସୁଧାକର ମହାପାତ୍ରଙ୍କ ବଡ଼ପୁଅ । ସୁଧାକର ବାବୁ ପରିବାର ସହିତ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱରରେ ରହୁଥିବାରୁ ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କ ପିଲାଦିନ କଟିଥିଲା ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱରରେ । ତେଣୁ ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କର ପ୍ରକୃତ ଘର କେନ୍ଦ୍ରାପଡ଼ା ପାଖର ଗୋଟିଏ ଗାଁରେ ହୋଇଥିଲେ ବି ମାର୍କେଟ ବିଲ୍ଡିଂ ପଛ ଆଡ଼େ ଥିବା ଦୁଇ ନମ୍ବର ୟୁନିଟର ବାପାଙ୍କ ସରକାରୀ କ୍ୱାର୍ଟରକୁ ସେ ତାଙ୍କର ଘର ବୋଲି ଜାଣିଥିଲେ । ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କ ତଳେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଭାଇ, ଶୁଭକାନ୍ତ ଓ ସବା ସାନ ଭଉଣୀ ରୀନା । ଖୁବ ଶାନ୍ତ ସୁଧାର ପିଲା ଭାବରେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କର ସାହି ପଢ଼ିଣା ଓ ବନ୍ଧୁବାନ୍ଧବ ମହଲରେ ବେଶ ସୁନାମ ଥିଲା । ସବୁବେଳେ କ୍ଲବରେ ଫାଷ୍ଟ ହେଉଥିବା ଦେବକାନ୍ତ ପ୍ରଥମେ କ୍ୟାପିଟାଲ ହାଇସ୍କୁଲରୁ ମ୍ୟାଟ୍ରିକ ଓ ପରେ ବିଜେବି କଲେଜରୁ ପ୍ରି-ୟୁନିଭର୍ସିଟି ପାଶ କଲାପରେ ମେକାନିକାଲ ଇଞ୍ଜିନିଅରିଂ ପଢ଼ିବାପାଇଁ ଇଞ୍ଜିନିଅରିଂ କଲେଜରେ ନାଁ ଲେଖେଇଥିଲେ । ପାଞ୍ଚବର୍ଷ ପରେ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟର ବେଷ୍ଟ ଗ୍ରାଜୁଏଟ ହୋଇ ବାହାରି ସେଠିବି ନିଜ କୁତାତ୍ମର ପରିଚୟ ଦେଇଥିଲେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ ।

ପିଲାଦିନରୁ ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କର ଗୋଟାଏ ବଡ଼ ଆକାଂକ୍ଷା ଥିଲା ଆମେରିକା ଯାଇ ପାଠ ପଢ଼ିବେ । ତେଣୁ ଇଞ୍ଜିନିଅରିଂ ପଢୁଥିଲା ବେଳେ ସେ ଆମେରିକାର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟକୁ ସ୍ନାତକୋତ୍ତର ଶିକ୍ଷା ପାଇଁ ଦରଖାସ୍ତ କରିଥିଲେ ଏବଂ କେତେଟା ଜାଗାରେ ଆଡମିଶନ ମଧ୍ୟ ମିଳିଥିଲା । ଶେଷରେ କଲେଜର ପ୍ରଫେସର ଓ ଅନ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ପରାମର୍ଶ କରି ଗୋଟିଏ ନାମଜାଦା ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ଯାଇ ପଢ଼ିବା ପାଇଁ ସ୍ଥିର କଲେ ।

ସ୍ନାତକୋତ୍ତର ଶିକ୍ଷାଲାଭ କରିବାକୁ ଆମେରିକା ଆସିଲେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ । ପ୍ରଥମେ ମାଷରସ୍ ଓ ତା'ପରେ ପି.ଏଚ.ଡି । ପି.ଏଚ୍.ଡି. ସରୁ ସରୁ ଗୋଟାଏ ପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧ କୁଚିପ କଂପାନିରେ ରିସର୍ଚ୍ଚ ଇଞ୍ଜିନିଅର ଚାକିରି ମିଳିଗଲା । ଚାକିରି ପରେ ବିବାହ । ପାଠପଢ଼ା ଚାଲିଥିବା ବେଳେ ବାହାହେବା ପାଇଁ ଘର ଆଡୁ ବେଶ ଚାପ ପଡୁଥିଲା, କିନ୍ତୁ ପଢ଼ା ବାହାନାରେ ତାକୁ ଏତାଇ ଯାଇଥିଲେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ । କିନ୍ତୁ ପଢ଼ା ସରିଲାପରେ ଆଉ ତାଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ କିଛି ବାହାନା ନଥିଲା । ତେଣୁ ବାହାହେବାକୁ ରାଜି ହେବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିଲା ।

ବିବାହ କରିବାକୁ ଛୁଟିନେଇ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଗଲେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଯାଇ ଝିଅ ଖୋଜିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିଲା ନାହିଁ । ଘର ଲୋକେ ଆଗରୁ ଝିଅ ଠିକ୍ କରି ରଖିଥିଲେ । ଖାଲି ଦେବକାନ୍ତ ଆସି ରାଜି ହେଲେ ବାହାଘର ଦିନ ସ୍ଥିର ହେବ । ଝିଅଟିର ନାଁ ସୁନନ୍ଦା । ଘର ଭଦ୍ରଖ ପାଖରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଗାଁରେ । ସୁନନ୍ଦା ଥିଲେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କ ସାନ ଭଉଣୀ ରୀନାର ସହପାଠିନୀ । ବାଣୀବିହାରରେ ଏକା ସଂଗେ ପାଠ ପଢୁଥିଲା ବେଳେ ଦୁହଁଙ୍କର ପରିଚୟ ହୋଇଥିଲା ଓ ତାପରେ ଆସ୍ତେ ଆସ୍ତେ ଘନିଷ୍ଠତା ବଢ଼ିଥିଲା । ହଷ୍ଟେଲରେ ରହୁଥିବା ସୁନନ୍ଦା, ରୀନା ସହିତ ଅନେକ ସମୟରେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କ ଘରକୁ ଆସୁଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ଏଇ ଅବସରରେ ତାଙ୍କ ପରିବାରର ଅନ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ପରିଚୟ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ସୁନନ୍ଦାଙ୍କ ଆଚାର ବ୍ୟବହାର ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କ ପରିବାରର

ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ ବେଶ୍ ଆକୃଷ୍ଟ କରିଥିଲା ଓ ସେମାନେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଘରର ବୋହୂ କରି ଆଣିବା ପାଇଁ ଠିକ୍ କରିଦେଇ ଥିଲେ । ଘରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଲା ପରେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ ଶୁଣିଲେ ସୁନନ୍ଦାଙ୍କର ରୂପ ଗୁଣର ଭୁରି ଭୁରି ପ୍ରଶଂସା । ସବୁଠୁ ବଡ଼ ସୁପାରିଶ ରୀନାର, “ସୁନନ୍ଦାକୁ ବାହାହୁଅ ଭାଇ, ସେ ବହୁତ ଭଲ ଝିଅ, ତାକୁ ବାହାହେଲେ ତୁମେ ବହୁତ ଖୁସିରେ ରହିବ ।” ପରିବାରର ବାଧ୍ୟ ସନ୍ତାନ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ ସୁନନ୍ଦାକୁ ବାହା ହେବାକୁ ରାଜି ହେଇଗଲେ । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ତା ଛଡ଼ା ତାଙ୍କର ଅନ୍ୟକିଛି ଚାରା ନ ଥିଲା । ବାହାର ଦୁନିଆଁ ସହିତ ବହୁତ କମ୍ ସଂପର୍କ ରଖିଥିବା ଦେବକାନ୍ତ ଝିଅମାନଙ୍କ ବିଷୟରେ କ’ଣ ବା ଜାଣିଛନ୍ତି ଯେ ନିଜେ ଯାଇ ଝିଅ ବାଛିବେ ? ସୁନନ୍ଦାକୁ ବିବାହ କରିବାକୁ ରାଜି ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲେ ବି ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କ ମନରେ ଗୋଟାଏ ସଂଶୟ ଉଠିଯାଇ ଥିଲା । ଝିଅଟିକୁ ତାଙ୍କ ଘର ଲୋକେ ବାଛିଦେଲେ ସିନା, କିନ୍ତୁ ଗାଉଁଲି ଝିଅଟି ଆମେରିକାରେ ଯାଇ ଚଳି ପାରିବ ତ ? ଅବଶ୍ୟ ଏ କଥା ମନ ଖୋଲି କାହା ଆଗରେ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରି ନଥିଲେ । ଏପରିକି ରୀନା ଆଗରେ ବି ନୁହେଁ ।

ବେଶ୍ ଧୁମ୍‌ଧାମ୍‌ରେ ବାହାଘରଟା ହୋଇଗଲା । ନବବଧୂ ସୁନନ୍ଦାକୁ ଧରି ଆମେରିକା ଆସିଲେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ । ସେଇଠୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହେଲା ଦାମ୍ପତ୍ୟ ଜୀବନ । ଆମେରିକାରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିବାର ପ୍ରଥମ କେତେମାସ ସୁନନ୍ଦାଙ୍କୁ ଖୁବ୍ ଖାପଛଡ଼ା ଲାଗିଲା । ନୂଆ ଯାଗା, କେହି ଜଣା ଶୁଣା ଲୋକ ପାଖରେ ନାହାନ୍ତି । ଏପରିକି ଯାହାକୁ ବାହାହେଇ ଆସିଛନ୍ତି ସେ ବି ତାଙ୍କପାଇଁ ନୂଆ । ତା’ ଉପରେ ପୁଣି ଏ ଦେଶର ଚାଲି ଚଳଣ ବଡ଼ ଅଖାଡୁଆ । କିଛିଦିନ ପରେ କିନ୍ତୁ ସବୁ ଆସ୍ତେ ଆସ୍ତେ ବାଗରେ ପଡ଼ିଗଲା । ଆମେରିକୀୟ ଜୀବନ ସହିତ ନିଜକୁ ମିଳାଇ ନେଲେ ସୁନନ୍ଦା । ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କ ମନର ସଂଶୟକୁ ଦୂରୀଭୂତ କରି ଘର ବାହାର ସବୁ କାମ ବୁଝିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲେ । ରୋଷେଇ, ଘର ସଫା କରିବା ଛଡ଼ା, ବିଲ ପେମେଣ୍ଟ, ଦୋକାନ ବଜାର, ସଉଦା ପତ୍ର, ବ୍ୟାଙ୍କ କାମ ସବୁ ବୁଝିଲେ ସୁନନ୍ଦା । ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କୁ କୌଣସି ବିଷୟରେ ଚିନ୍ତା କରିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିଲା ନାହିଁ । ରୀନା ପ୍ରକୃତରେ ସତକଥା କହିଥିଲା । ସୁନନ୍ଦା କେବଳ ସୁନ୍ଦରୀ ନଥିଲେ, ସେ ଥିଲେ ସବୁକାମରେ ନିପୁଣା । ତା ଛଡ଼ା ଏତେ କମ୍ ଦିନ ଭିତରେ ଯେମିତି ଆମେରିକୀୟ ଜୀବନ ସହିତ ନିଜକୁ ମିଶେଇଦେଲେ ତାହା ଦେଖି ଖାଲି ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କ ମନର ସଂଶୟ ଦୂର ହୋଇଥିଲା ତାହା ନୁହେଁ, ସୁନନ୍ଦାଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ବେଶ୍ ସମ୍ମାନ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆସି ଯାଇଥିଲା । ଏ ପରି ଏକ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀକୁ ପାଇଛନ୍ତି ବୋଲି ସେ

ମନରେ ବେଶ୍ ଗର୍ବ ଅନୁଭବ କରୁଥିଲେ । ଘରକଥା ବୁଝିବା ଛଡ଼ା ସହରର ଛୋଟିଆ ଭାରତୀୟ କମ୍ୟୁନିଟିରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ବେଶ୍ ଲୋକପ୍ରୀୟ ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲେ ସୁନନ୍ଦା ।

ଏମିତି ହସଖୁସିରେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ - ସୁନନ୍ଦାଙ୍କ ଜୀବନ ଗତିଚାଲିଲା । ଆସ୍ତେ ଆସ୍ତେ ପରିବାର ବି ବଢ଼ିଲା । ପ୍ରଥମେ ପରିବାରକୁ ଆସିଲା ପୁଅ ଦୀପକ, ତା ଚାରି ବର୍ଷ ପରେ ଝିଅ ନିକି । ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କ ଜଞ୍ଜାଳରେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ରହିଲେ ସୁନନ୍ଦା । ନିକିକୁ ଚାରିବର୍ଷ ହେଲା ପରେ ତାକୁ କିଣ୍ଡରଗାର୍ଟନରେ ଭର୍ତ୍ତି କରେଇ ସୁନନ୍ଦା କାମ କରିବାକୁ ଆରମ୍ଭକଲେ ଗୋଟାଏ ଡେ କେୟାର ସେଣ୍ଟରରେ । ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ କାମ କରିବାକୁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ବେଶ୍ ଭଲ ଲାଗୁଥିଲା ।

ଏମିତି ଭାବରେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ ଓ ସୁନନ୍ଦାଙ୍କର ସୁଖର ସଂସାର ଗଢ଼ିଚାଲିଥିଲା ବେଳେ ଅଚାନକ ଗୋଟାଏ ଚତକ ପଡ଼ିଲା । ଦିନେ ସକାଳେ ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କୁ ସ୍କୁଲରେ ଛାଡ଼ି କାମକୁ ଯାଉଥିଲାବେଳେ ଗୋଟାଏ ଗାଡ଼ି ଖୁବ୍ ଜୋରରେ ଆସି ସୁନନ୍ଦାଙ୍କ ଗାଡ଼ିର ବାଁ ପଟରେ ପିଟି ହୋଇଗଲା । ଚାରିଛକି ରାସ୍ତାରେ ସୁନନ୍ଦାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଷ୍ଟପ ସାଇନ୍ ନଥିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ବାଁ ପଟରୁ ଆସୁଥିବା ହାଇସ୍କୁଲ ଛାତ୍ରଟି ସ୍କୁଲ ଡେରି ହେଇଯାଉଛି ବୋଲି ବେଶ୍ ଜୋରରେ ଗାଡ଼ି ଚଳାଇ ଆସୁଥିଲା ଓ ଷ୍ଟପ ସାଇନ୍ ନ ମାନି ଆସି ସୁନନ୍ଦାଙ୍କ ଗାଡ଼ିକୁ ଧକ୍କା ଦେଇଥିଲା । ଦୁର୍ଘଟଣାର ଇମ୍ପ୍ୟାକ୍ଟରେ ଖାଲି ଗାଡ଼ି ଛତୁ ହୋଇଗଲା ତା ନୁହେଁ, ସୁନନ୍ଦା ମଧ୍ୟ ଗୁରୁତର ଭାବରେ ଆଘାତ ପ୍ରାପ୍ତ ହେଲେ । ଆୟୁଲାନର୍ସ ଆସି ତାଙ୍କୁ ଡାକ୍ତରଖାନାକୁ ନେଲାବେଳକୁ ବାଟରେ ତାଙ୍କର ପ୍ରାଣବାୟୁ ଉଡ଼ିଯାଇଥିଲା ।

ଆଖିପିଛୁଳାକେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ-ସୁନନ୍ଦାଙ୍କ ସଂସାର ଭାଙ୍ଗି ରୁର୍ମାର ହୋଇଗଲା । ସେତେବେଳକୁ ଦୀପକକୁ ଦଶବର୍ଷ ଓ ନିକିକୁ ଚାରିବର୍ଷ ହୋଇଥାଏ । ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଚାରିଆଡ଼ ଅନ୍ଧାର ଦିଶିଲା । ସୁନନ୍ଦାଙ୍କ ବିନା ସେ କେମିତି ଚଳିବେ । ତା’ ଉପରେ ପୁଣି ଦୁଇଟି ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ ପିଲା । ସୁନନ୍ଦାଙ୍କୁ ସେ ଏମିତି ଭାବରେ ହରାଇ ବସିବେ ବୋଲି କଳ୍ପନାରେ ବି କେବେ ଭାବି ନଥିଲେ । ତଥାପି ଦେବକାନ୍ତ ଦମ୍ଭବାନ୍ଧିଲେ । ସବୁ ବାଧାବିଘ୍ନକୁ ଅତିକ୍ରମ କରି ପିଲା ଦୁହଁଙ୍କୁ ମଣିଷ କରିବାକୁ ବନ୍ଧପରିକର ହେଲେ । ଆଉଥରେ ବିବାହ କରିବାକୁ ତାଙ୍କର ଆଉ ଇଚ୍ଛା ନଥିଲା । ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କ ବୋଉ ବହୁତ ନେହୁରା ହୋଇ ଲେଖୁଥିଲେ, ‘ଦେବୁରେ ପିଲା ଦୁଇଟାଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ କାହିଁକି ଏକଲା ହସ୍ତସତ୍ତ ହବୁ ଆଉଥରେ ବାହା ହୋଇପଡ଼ । ବହୁତ ଯୋଗ୍ୟ ପାତ୍ରୀ ମିଳିବେ,

ଅନେକ ଚାକିରିଆ ଝିଅ ବାହା ନ ହେଇପାରି ଅଛନ୍ତି, ତୁ ଆସି ବାହା ହୋଇ ଯା” । କିନ୍ତୁ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ ମନାକଲେ । ଆଉଥରେ ନୂଆକରି ଆଉ ଜଣକ ସହିତ ସଂସାର ବସେଇବାକୁ ତାଙ୍କର ଆଗ୍ରହ ନଥିଲା । ତା ଛଡ଼ା ଆଉ କେହି ଆସି ସୁନୟାଙ୍କର ଶୂନ୍ୟସ୍ଥାନ ପୂରଣ କରିପାରିବ ସେ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ମଧ୍ୟ ତାଙ୍କର ନଥିଲା ।

ଏହାପରେ ଆରମ୍ଭହୋଇଗଲା ସୁନୟାଙ୍କ ଅନୁପସ୍ଥିତିରେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କର କର୍ମମୟ ଜୀବନ । ସୁନୟା ଥିଲାବେଳେ ଘର କେମିତି ଚାଲୁଥିଲା ସେ ବିଷୟରେ ତାଙ୍କର କିଛି ବି ଧାରଣା ନଥିଲା । ଏପରିକି ସେ କେଉଁ ପ୍ୟାଣ୍ଟ ସାର୍ଟ ଟାଇ ପିନ୍ଧି ଅଫିସକୁ ଯିବେ ତାକୁ ବି ସୁନୟା ସବୁଦିନେ ସକାଳେ ଆଣି ରଖି ଦେଉଥିଲେ । ତେଣୁ ପ୍ରଥମେ ପ୍ରଥମେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ବେଶ କଷ୍ଟ ହେଲା । ପିଲାଙ୍କ କଥା ବୁଝିବା, ଘରକାମ କରିବା ତା ଉପରେ ପୁଣି ଚାକିରି । ଆସ୍ତେ ଆସ୍ତେ ସବୁ ଗତାନୁଗତିକ ହୋଇଗଲା । ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ସ୍କୁଲକୁ ନବା ଆଣିବା କରିବା, ତାଙ୍କ ପାଠ ପଢ଼ା କଥା ବୁଝିବା, ଏ ସବୁଥିରେ ସେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ରହିଲେ । ତଥାପି ସମୟ ସମୟରେ ସୁନୟାଙ୍କ କଥା ତାଙ୍କର ମନେପଡ଼ିଲେ ଆଖିରେ ଲୁହ ଜଳେଇ ଆସେ । ଭଗବାନଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ଅଭିଯୋଗ କରି କୁହନ୍ତି କାହିଁକି ମୋ ପ୍ରତି ଏମିତି ଅନ୍ୟାୟ କଲ । ଅସମୟରେ ସୁନୟାଙ୍କୁ ମୋ ପାଖରୁ ଛଡ଼େଇ ନେଲ ।

ଏମିତି ପ୍ରାୟ କିଛିବର୍ଷ ବିତିଗଲା । ଏହାଭିତରେ ଦିନେ ଆମେରିକୀୟ ଅର୍ଥନୀତିର ଉତ୍ଥାନ-ପତନ ଓ ଏବଂ କର୍ପୋରେଟ ଆମେରିକାର ଅର୍ଥନୀତି (moving and shaking) ଭିତରେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ପୁରୁଣା ଚାକିରି ହରେଇବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିଲା ଏବଂ ନୂଆ ଚାକିରି ପାଇ ଅନ୍ୟ ଏକ ସହରକୁ ଆସିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିଲା । ସେତେବେଳକୁ ଦୀପକ ହାଇସ୍କୁଲ ପାଶ କରିଥାଏ ଓ ନିଜି ମିଡିଲସ୍କୁଲ ଛାଡ଼ି ହାଇସ୍କୁଲରେ ପଢ଼ିବାକଥା । ତେଣୁ ପୁରୁଣା ସହରରେ ଥିବା ବହୁତବର୍ଷର ଏକ୍ସପିରିଏନ୍ସକୁ ଭାଙ୍ଗି ନୂଆ ସହରକୁ ଆସିଲେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ । ଦୀପକ କଲେଜକୁ ପାଠ ପଢ଼ିବାକୁ ଚାଲିଯିବାରୁ ନୂଆ ସହରରେ କେବଳ ରହିଲେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ ଓ ନିଜି । ପୁରୁଣା ଯାଗା ଓ ପୁରୁଣା ସାଙ୍ଗମାନଙ୍କୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ନୂଆଯାଗାକୁ ଯିବାକୁ ନିଜିର ମୋଟେ ଜଛ୍ଛା ନଥିଲା । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ସେ ପୁରୁଣା ଯାଗା ଛାଡ଼ି ଯିବାର ପ୍ରବଳ ବିରୋଧ କରୁଥିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ନୂଆଯାଗାରେ ନୂଆ ସାଙ୍ଗମାନଙ୍କୁ ପାଇଲାପରେ ପୁରୁଣା କଥା ସବୁ ଭୁଲିଗଲା ନିଜି ।

ନୂଆ ସହରରେ ପୁଣି ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇଗଲା ଗତାନୁଗତିକ ଜୀବନଧାରା । ନିଜିର ପିଆନୋ ଲେସନ, ସକର ପ୍ରାକଟିସ, ନିଜ

ଚାକିରୀ ଏସବୁ ନେଇ ପୁଣି ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ରହିଲେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ । ଏଇମିତି ବ୍ୟସ୍ତତାଭିତରେ ଦିନେ ସକର ପଢ଼ିଆରୁ ନିଜିକୁ ଘରକୁ ନେବାକୁ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରିଥିଲାବେଳେ ପରିଚୟ ହେଲା ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କ ସହିତ । ଜେନିଫର ହେଉଛନ୍ତି ନିଜିର ସାଙ୍ଗ ଆମାଣ୍ଟାର ମା । ଜେନିଫର ନିଜେ ତାଙ୍କ ଆଡୁ ଆସି ପରିଚୟ ଦେଇ ଗପ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଥିଲେ । ଜେନିଫର ବେଶି ଗପୁଡ଼ି । ପରିଚୟ ହେବାର ପାଞ୍ଚ ମିନିଟ ଭିତରେ ତାଙ୍କ ବିଷୟରେ ସବୁ କିଛି ଜାଣି ଯାଇଥିଲେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ । ଏକା କ୍ଲସରେ ପଢୁଥିବା ହେତୁ ନିଜି ଓ ଆମାଣ୍ଟାଙ୍କର ବନ୍ଧୁତା ବଢ଼ିଲା ଓ ସେହି ଅବସରରେ ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କ ସହ ପରିଚୟ ବି ବଢ଼ିଲା । ବେଳେବେଳେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ଥିଲେ ଆମାଣ୍ଟାକୁ ନେଇ ତାଙ୍କ ଘରେ ଛାଡ଼ି ଦେବାକୁ ଅନୁରୋଧ କରୁଥିଲେ ଜେନିଫର । ତା ଛଡ଼ା ଦୁଇ ବାନ୍ଧବୀ ସାଙ୍ଗ ହୋଇ ସିନେମା ଗଲେ ବା ସ୍ନିପ୍ ଓଭର କଲେ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ନବା ଆଣିବା କରିବାକୁ ପଡୁଥିଲା ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କୁ । ଜେନିଫର ଥିଲେ ସିଙ୍ଗଲ ମଦର । ଦୁଇ ଝିଅଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ ଏକା ରହୁଥିଲେ । ବହୁତ ସମୟରେ ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ନେବାକୁ ଓ ଛାଡ଼ିବାକୁ ଯାଇଥିଲାବେଳେ ରୋକଫାଷ୍ଟ ବା ଡିନର ଖାଇବାକୁ ଅନୁରୋଧ କରୁଥିଲେ ଜେନିଫର ଓ ତାଙ୍କ ଅନୁରୋଧକୁ ବେଳେବେଳେ ଏତାଇପାରୁନଥିଲେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ । ଏମିତି ପରିଚୟ ବଢ଼ିଲାପରେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ ଜାଣିଲେ ଯେ ଜେନିଫର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ପ୍ରକାରର ଖାଦ୍ୟ ତିଆରି କରିବାକୁ ଭଲ ପାଆନ୍ତି ଓ ଭାରତୀୟ ଖାଦ୍ୟ ଖାଇବା ପାଇଁ ବେଶ ଆଗ୍ରହୀ । ସୁନୟା ଚାଲିଗଲା ପରେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ଘରର ରୋଷେଇଭାର ପଡ଼ିଥିଲା । ଆଗରୁ ବେଶି କିଛି ରୋଷେଇବାସ ଜାଣିନଥିବା ଦେବକାନ୍ତ ରୋଷେଇରେ ଧୂରନ୍ଧର ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ରୋଷେଇ କରିବା ତାଙ୍କର ଗୋଟିଏ ସଉକରେ ପରିଣତ ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲା । ନିଜ ଆଗ୍ରହରେ ସେ ଅନେକ ପ୍ରକାର ଭାରତୀୟ ଖାଦ୍ୟ ତିଆରି କରିବା ଶିଖି ଯାଇଥିଲେ । ତେଣୁ ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କର ଭାରତୀୟ ଖାଦ୍ୟରେ ଆଗ୍ରହ ଥିବା ଶୁଣି ସେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଘରକୁ ଖାଇବା ପାଇଁ ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ କରି ଭାରତୀୟ ଖାଦ୍ୟ ଖୁଆଇ ଥିଲେ । ଏମିତି ଭାବରେ ଦୁହେଁଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ଘନିଷ୍ଠତା ବଢ଼ିଯାଇଥିଲା ଓ ଦୁହେଁ ଦୁହେଁଙ୍କ ସଂପର୍କରେ ଅଧିକା ଜାଣିବାକୁ ପାଇଥିଲେ ।

ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କ ଜୀବନ କାହାଣୀ ମଧ୍ୟ ବେଶ ମର୍ମସ୍ପର୍ଶୀ । ନିଜର ହାଇସ୍କୁଲ ସ୍କୁଲଟ୍ରାନ୍ସ ଡ୍ୟାନିଙ୍କୁ ବିବାହ କରିଥିଲେ ଜେନିଫର । ସ୍କୁଲର ବିଖ୍ୟାତ ଫୁଟବଲ ଖେଳାଳୀ ଡ୍ୟାନି ଥିଲେ ତାଙ୍କ କୈଶୋରର ପ୍ରଥମ ପ୍ରେମ । ସ୍କୁଲର ପ୍ରଥମ ହୋମକମିଙ୍ଗ ଡାନ୍ସ ପାଇଁ ଅନ୍ୟ ଝିଅମାନଙ୍କୁ ବାଦ ଦେଇ ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କୁ ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ କରିଥିବାରୁ ତାଙ୍କମନ କୁଣ୍ଠେ

ମୋଟ ହେଇଯାଇଥିଲା । ତା ପରେ ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲା ପ୍ରେମ । ହାଇସ୍କୁଲରୁ ପାଶ କରିବାପରେ ତ୍ୟାନିଙ୍କୁ ସେଇ ସହରରେ ଥିବା ଗୋଟାଏ ଚାୟାର ତିଆରି କାରଖାନାରେ ଚାକିରି ମିଳିଯାଇଥିଲା । ଜେନିଫର ବି ଗୋଟାଏ ଗ୍ରୋସେରି ଷ୍ଟୋରରେ ଚାକିରି ପାଇଥିଲେ । ହାଇସ୍କୁଲ ପାଶ କରିବାର ବର୍ଷକ ଭିତରେ ଦୁହେଁ ବାହାହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଥିଲେ ।

ବାହାଘରର ପ୍ରଥମ କିଛିଦିନ ବେଶ ଭଲରେ କଟିଗଲା । ତାପରେ ଜଣାପଡ଼ିଲା ତ୍ୟାନିଙ୍କର ଅସଲ ରୂପ । କଥାକଥାକେ ରାଗ, ସବୁବେଳେ ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କ ଦୋଷ ବାଛିବା ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଦେଲେ । ଜେନିଫର ଯାହାକଲେ ବି ତାଙ୍କର ପସନ୍ଦ ହେଲାନାହିଁ । ସେ ଠିକ୍‌ଭାବରେ ରନ୍ଧା ଜାଣି ନାହାନ୍ତି, ଘର ଠିକ୍ ଭାବରେ ସଫା ରହୁନାହିଁ ଏମିତି ସବୁ ଅଭିଯୋଗ କରି ସବୁବେଳେ ସମାଲୋଚନା କରିବା ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଦେଲେ । ସେତେବେଳକୁ ତାଙ୍କ ବଡ଼ଝିଅ ସାରା ଜନ୍ମହୋଇଥାଏ । ଏହା ଭିତରେ ତ୍ୟାନିଙ୍କର ଚାକିରୀ ଚାଲିଗଲା । ଚାୟାର କଂପାନୀ ବହୁ ଦିନର ପୁରୁଣା କାରଖାନାକୁ ବନ୍ଦ କରି ଆମେରିକା ବାହାରେ କାରଖାନା ବସେଇବାରୁ ତ୍ୟାନିଙ୍କ ପରି ଅନେକ ଲୋକଙ୍କର ଚାକିରି ଚାଲିଗଲା । ବେକାର ହୋଇଘରେ ବସିଲାପରେ ତ୍ୟାନି ଅନବରତ ମଦ ପିଇବା ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଦେଲେ । ତା'ପରେ ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ଅତ୍ୟାଚାରର ମାତ୍ରା ବଢ଼ିଗଲା । ଆଗରୁ ଖାଲି ମାନସିକ ଅତ୍ୟାଚାର କରୁଥିଲେ ଏବେ କଥା କଥାକେ ହାତ ଉଠେଇବା ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଦେଲେ । ତ୍ୟାନିଙ୍କର ଚାକିରି ନଥିବାରୁ ଘର ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କ ଦରମାରେ ଚଳୁଥିଲା । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଦୁଇ ଦୁଇଟା ଚାକିରି କରିବାକୁ ପଡୁଥିଲା । ତା ଉପରେ ପୁଣି ପିଲା ଓ ଘରକାମର ବୋଧ । ତ୍ୟାନିଙ୍କ ପାଖରୁ ଘର କାମରେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ମିଳିବା ତ ଦୂରର କଥା, ବରଂ ସବୁବେଳେ ଗାଳି ଶୁଣିବାକୁ ପଡୁଥିଲା । ଏସବୁ ନେଇ ଜେନିଫର ଅତିଷ୍ଟ ହୋଇଯାଉଥିଲେ । ତଥାପି ସେ ମାଡ଼ିଯାକି ପଡ଼ିରହିଥିଲେ । ସେ ଆଶାକରୁଥିଲେ ଯେ ତ୍ୟାନି ଆଉ ଗୋଟାଏ ଚାକିରି ପାଇଗଲେ ତାଙ୍କର ବ୍ୟବହାର ବୋଧହୁଏ ବଦଳିଯିବ । କିଛିଦିନ ଘରେ ବସିଲାପରେ ତ୍ୟାନିଙ୍କୁ ଆଉ ଗୋଟାଏ ଚାକିରି ମିଳିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ତାଙ୍କର ସ୍ୱଭାବ ଆଉ ବଦଳିଲା ନାହିଁ ବରଂ ଅତ୍ୟାଚାର ଅଧିକ ବଢ଼ି ଚାଲିଲା । ଏହା ଭିତରେ ତାଙ୍କ ସଂସାରକୁ ଆସିଲା ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ଝିଅ, ଆମାଣ୍ଡା । ଦୁଇ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ଜଂଜାଳ ଓ ସ୍ୱାମୀଙ୍କ ଅତ୍ୟାଚାର ଓ ଚାକିରି ଏସବୁ ଭିତରେ ପେଣି ହୋଇଯାଉଥିଲେ ଜେନିଫର । କ'ଣ କରିବେ କିଛି ବୁଦ୍ଧି ଦିଶୁନଥିଲା ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ଯେଉଁଦିନ ରାତିଅଧରେ ତ୍ୟାନି ଭୀଷଣ ମଦ ପିଇ ବିନା କାରଣରେ ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କୁ ପିଟିବା ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଦେଲେ ସେଦିନ ତାଙ୍କର ଯୈର୍ଯ୍ୟର ବନ୍ଧ ତୁଟିଗଲା । ତିନିବର୍ଷର ସାରା ଓ ବର୍ଷକର ଆମାଣ୍ଡାକୁ ଧରି ଘରୁ ବାହାରି ଆସିଲେ ଜେନିଫର । ଆଉ ତ୍ୟାନିଙ୍କର ମୁହଁ ଚାହିଁ ନାହାନ୍ତି । ତା ପରେ ତିନି ତିନିଟା ଯାଗାରେ ଚାକିରି କରି ବହୁତ କଷ୍ଟରେ ପିଲା ଦିଲଟାଙ୍କୁ ମଣିଷ କରିଛନ୍ତି ଜେନିଫର । ତା' ଭିତରେ ପାର୍ଟି ଚାଲି କୋର୍ସ କରି ସେ ଏବେ ଏକ ସଫଟ୍‌ଓୟାର କଂପାନୀରେ ସେକ୍ରେଟାରୀ ଭାବରେ କାମ କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ପ୍ରଥମ ବିବାହର ତିଳ ଅନୁଭୂତି ପରେ ଆଉ କାହା ଉପରେ ଭରସା କରିପାରି ନଥିଲେ ଜେନିଫର । ତେଣୁ ପରେ ଅନେକ ପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ସହଯୋଗ ଓ ସହକର୍ମୀଙ୍କଠାରୁ ବିବାହ ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ପାଇଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେ ସବୁକୁ ଏତାଇ ଦେଇଥିଲେ ।

ସୁନ୍ଦରୀଙ୍କ ପରଲୋକ ହୋଇଗଲାପରେ ଚାକିରି, ଘରକାମ ଓ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ଜଞ୍ଜାଳ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ ଏତେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ରହିଥିଲେ ଯେ ଅନ୍ୟ କଥା ଭାବିବାକୁ ଆଉ ବେଳ ନଥିଲା । ତାଛଡ଼ା ପିଲାଏ ଛୋଟ ଥିଲାବେଳେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କର ବହୁତ ସମୟ କରୁଥିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ପିଲା ବଡ଼ ହୋଇଗଲାପରେ ପାଠପଢ଼ା, ନିଜର ସାଙ୍ଗ ଓ ଅନ୍ୟ ଧନ୍ଦାରେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ରହିବାରୁ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ସମୟ କାଟିବାକୁ ଆଉ ବେଶି ସୁଯୋଗ ମିଳିଲା ନାହିଁ । ପିଲାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ବି ଆଉ ଆଗଭଳି ସମୟ ଦେବାକୁ ପଡୁନଥିଲା । ତେଣୁ ହଠାତ୍ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ ଅନୁଭବ କଲେ ଏକ ନିସଙ୍ଗତା । ତାଙ୍କର ମନ ଖୋଜୁଥିଲା ଅନ୍ୟ ଜଣକର ସାନ୍ନ୍ଦ୍ୟ ଯାହା ସହିତ ସେ କିଛି ସମୟ କଟେଇ ପାରିବେ, ମନ ଖୋଲି ଗପ କରିପାରିବେ, ନିଜ ସୁଖ ଦୁଃଖ ବାଣ୍ଟି ପାରିବେ । ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କ ସହ ଘନିଷ୍ଟତା ହେଲାପରେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କର ମନେ ହେଲା ଯେ ତାଙ୍କ ନିସଙ୍ଗତା କିଛି ପରିମାଣରେ ଦୂର ହୋଇଯାଇଛି । ତାଙ୍କର ସାହାଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ବେଶ ଭଲ ଲାଗୁଥିଲା । ଭିନ୍ନ ପରିବେଶ ଓ ପରିସ୍ଥିତିରୁ ଆସିଥିଲେ ବି ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କର ଜୀବନକାହାଣୀରେ କିଛି ସାମଞ୍ଜସ୍ୟତା ଥିଲା । ଦୁହେଁ ଥିଲେ ଏକା ଓ ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କର ଜୀବନସାଥୀ ନଥିଲେ ଓ ଏକା ଏକା ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ବଢ଼େଇଥିଲେ ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ପ୍ରାୟ ସମାନତା ଥିବାରୁ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ଅଜାଣତରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଅଦୃଶ୍ୟ ବନ୍ଧନ ତିଆରି ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲା । ଦୁହେଁ ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କର ମନବେଦନାକୁ ବେଶ ଭଲଭାବରେ ହୃଦୟଙ୍ଗମ କରିପାରି ଥିଲେ । ଆସ୍ତେ ଆସ୍ତେ ଦୁହେଁ ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କ ଗହଣରେ ଅଧିକ ସମୟ କଟେଇବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲେ । ଏହାଛଡ଼ା ବି ସେ ଅନୁଭବ କଲେ ଯେ ସେ ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କ ଆଡ଼କୁ ବେଶି ଆକର୍ଷିତ ହୋଇଯାଉଛନ୍ତି ।

ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କ ସହିତ ସାକ୍ଷାତ କରିବାକୁ ବେଶ ବ୍ୟଗ୍ର ହୋଇ ପଡୁଥିଲେ ଓ ଯଦି କେଉଁଦିନ ଦେଖା ନ ହୋଇପାରିଲା ସେ ଦିନ ବହୁତ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ହୋଇଯାଉଥିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କର ବ୍ୟବହାର ଗୋଟାଏ ଅଧୈର୍ଯ୍ୟ କିଶୋର ପରି ହୋଇ ଯାଇଥିଲା । ନିଜ କୈଶୋର ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ବହି ପଢ଼ି ଛଡ଼ା ଅନ୍ୟ କୌଣସି ଆଡେ ନଜର ନ ଥିଲା ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କର । ଜୀବନରେ କେବେ କୌଣସି ଝିଅକୁ ପ୍ରେମ କରିବା ତ ଦୂରର କଥା, ସେ କାହାରିକୁ ମୁହଁ ଉଠେଇ ଚାହିଁ ନାହାନ୍ତି । ତେଣୁ ଏ ସବୁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ବଡ଼ ଅଭୁଆ ଲାଗୁଥିଲେ ବି ତାଙ୍କ ମନ ଭିତରେ ଗୋଟାଏ ଅଭୁତପୂର୍ବ ଶିହରଣ ଖେଳିଯାଉଥିଲା ।

ଆସ୍ତେ ଆସ୍ତେ ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ଘନିଷ୍ଟତା ବଢ଼ିଲା । ରୋଷେଇ ଛଡ଼ା ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କର ଆଉ ଗୋଟାଏ ସଉକ ଥିଲା । ନିଜର ବଳକା ସମୟରେ ବଗିଚାକାମ କରିବାକୁ ସେ ବହୁତ ଭଲ ପାଉଥିଲେ । ସୁନୟା ଚାଲିଗଲାପରେ ନିଃସଂଗତାକୁ ଲାଘବ କରିବାକୁ ସେ କିଛି ସମୟ ବଗିଚାରେ କାମ କରିବାକୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଥିଲେ । ତାପରେ ଆସ୍ତେ ଆସ୍ତେ ଗୋଟାଏ ସଉକରେ ପାଲଟି ଯାଇଥିଲା । ଖରାଦିନରେ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ପରିବାଚାଷରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭହୋଇ ଥିବା ସଉକ ପରବର୍ତ୍ତି ସମୟରେ ଏକଜୋଡ଼ିକ୍ ଗଛ କଲେକ୍ସନରେ ପରିଣତ ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲା । ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଯାଗାରୁ ଗ୍ରୋପିକାଲ ଚାରା ସବୁ ସଂଗ୍ରହ କରିବା ତାଙ୍କର ଗୋଟିଏ ନିଶାରେ ପରିଣତ ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲା । ଦେବକାନ୍ତ ଯେତେବେଳେ ପୁରୁଣାଯାଗା ଛାଡ଼ି ଆସିଲେ ବହୁତ ଯତ୍ନ କରି ସଂଗ୍ରହ କରିଥିବା ଗଛ ଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ନୂଆ ଯାଗାକୁ ଧରି ଆସିଥିଲେ । ତଥାପି କେତେଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ଗଛ ରହିଯାଇଥିଲା । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ତାଙ୍କ ମନରେ ବେଶ କଷ୍ଟ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କର ମଧ୍ୟ ବଗିଚା କାମରେ ବେଶ ଆଗ୍ରହ ଥିଲା । ତେଣୁ ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କର ଗଛ ସିଲେକ୍ସନ ଦେଖି ସେ ବେଶ ମୁଗ୍ଧ ହୋଇ ଯାଇଥିଲେ ଓ ତାଙ୍କର ଜଣେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲେ ।

ଘନିଷ୍ଟତା ବଢ଼ିବା ସଂଗେ ସଂଗେ ଦୁହିଁ ଅନେକ ସମୟ ଏକାସଙ୍ଗରେ କଟାଇବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲେ ଏବଂ ଯେତିକି ଘନିଷ୍ଟତା ବଢ଼ିଲା ସେମାନେ ପରସ୍ପରର ସେତିକି ନିକଟତର ହୋଇଗଲେ । ସିନେମା ଦେଖା, ରେଷ୍ଟୋରାଁରେ ଖିଆପିଆ ଏସବୁରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ସମୟ କଟିଗଲା । ଦେବକାନ୍ତ ଅନୁଭବ କଲେ ଯେ ସେ ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କ ପ୍ରେମରେ ପଡ଼ି ଯାଇଛନ୍ତି ।

ଏମିତି କିଛିଦିନ ଏକାଠି କଟିଲାପରେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ ସ୍ଥିର କଲେ ଯେ ସେ ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କୁ ବିବାହ କରିବେ । ତେଣୁ ଦିନେ ସେ ଏକାନ୍ତରେ

ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କ ସାମନାରେ ବିବାହ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଦେଲେ ଓ ଜେନିଫର ମଧ୍ୟ ସେଥିରେ ରାଜି ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲେ । ତ୍ୟାନିଙ୍କୁ ଛାଡ଼ିବା ପରେ ବହୁ ପୁରୁଣା ସହପାଠୀ ଓ ସହକର୍ମିଙ୍କଠାରୁ ବିବାହ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ପାଇଥିଲେ ଜେନିଫର । କିନ୍ତୁ ପ୍ରଥମ ବିବାହର ତିକ୍ତ ଅନୁଭୂତି ପରେ ସେ ଆଉ କୌଣସି ପୁରୁଷ ଉପରେ ଭରସା କରିପାରୁନଥିଲେ । ତେଣୁ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ସେ ରୋକଠୋକ ମନାକରିଦେଇଥିଲେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ସେ ଦେଖିଥିଲେ ଅନ୍ୟ ଏକ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱ । ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କ ଶିଶୁ ସୁଲଭ ଆଖି ଭିତରେ ସେ ଦେଖିଥିଲେ ସାଗରର ପ୍ରଶାନ୍ତତା ତଥା ମନଭିତରେ ଥିଲା ଲୌହମାନବର ଦୃଢ଼ତା । ମାସକପରେ ଏକ ନିରାତମ୍ବର ସମାରୋହରେ ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କର ବିବାହ ସଂପନ୍ନ ହେଲା ।

ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କୁ ବିବାହ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଦେବା ଆଗରୁ ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ପରାମର୍ଶ କରିଥିଲେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ । ପିଲାମାନେ ଖୁସିରେ ରାଜି ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲେ । ସବୁଠୁ ବେଶୀ ଖୁସି ହେଇଥିଲା ନିକି । ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କ ସହ ଘନିଷ୍ଟତା ହେବାପରେ ବହୁତ ଦିନପରେ ବାପାଙ୍କ ମୁହଁରେ ପ୍ରଥମ ଥର ପାଇଁ ହସ ଦେଖିଥିଲା ନିକି । ତା ଛଡ଼ା ସେ ନିଜେ ବି ଗୋଟାଏ ମାଆର ଅଭାବ ଅନୁଭବ କରୁଥିଲା – ବିଶେଷକରି କୈଶୋରରେ ପାଦ ଦେଲା ପରେ । ନିଜର ଶାରିରୀକ ଓ ମାନସିକ ବିକାଶ ହେବା ସହିତ ତା ମନ ଭିତରେ ଉଙ୍କି ଉଠିଥିଲା ଅନେକ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ଓ ଆଶଙ୍କା କିନ୍ତୁ ତାର ପ୍ରଶ୍ନର ଉତ୍ତର ଦେବାକୁ ପାଖରେ କେହି ନଥିଲେ । ବାପାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ବହୁତ ଘନିଷ୍ଟତା ଥିଲେ ବି ସେ ତ ପୁଅପିଲା । ସେ କ’ଣ ଜାଣିଛନ୍ତି ? ନୂଆ ସହରକୁ ଆସିଲାପରେ ଜେନିଫର ତାର ଅନୌପଚାରିକ ଭାବେ ମା ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲେ । ଅନେକ ସମୟରେ ସେ ତାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ପରାମର୍ଶ କରୁଥିଲା । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ବନ୍ଧୁତା ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲା । ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱରେ ସେ ବି ଖୁବ୍ ପ୍ରଭାବିତ ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲା । ତା’ ଉପରେ ଆମାଷ୍ଟା ତାର ବେଷ୍ଟ ଫ୍ରେଣ୍ଡ ଓ ସେମାନେ ଏକା ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ରହିବେ । ତା ଠାରୁ ଅଧିକ ଖୁସିର କଥା ଆଉ କ’ଣ ହୋଇପାରେ ?

ବିବାହ ପରେ ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ ଭାରତକୁ ଯାଇଥିଲେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ । ସେଠି ତାଜମହଲ, କୋଣାର୍କ, ଅଜନ୍ତା-ଏଲୋରାର ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଦେଖି ଜେନିଫର ବେଶ ମୁଗ୍ଧ ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲେ । ସେଠାରୁ ଫେରିଲାପରେ ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କର ଜୀବନ ବେଶ ଆନନ୍ଦରେ କଟିଗଲା ।

ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ ଭାବନ୍ତି ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କୁ ବିବାହ କରି ସେ ସୁନୟାଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ଅନ୍ୟାୟ କରି ନାହାନ୍ତି ତ । କିନ୍ତୁ ତା’ ପରେ

ନିଜ ମନକୁ ବୁଝେଇବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରନ୍ତି ଯେ ସୁନୟା ବଞ୍ଚୁଥିଲେ ଜେନିଫର ତାଙ୍କ ଜୀବନକୁ କେବେ ଆସି ନଥାନ୍ତେ । ତେଣୁ ଅନ୍ୟାୟ କରିବାର ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ହିଁ ଉଠୁନାହିଁ । ଜୀବନର ଦୁଇ ଭିନ୍ନ ସମୟରେ ଏବଂ ଭିନ୍ନ ପରିସ୍ଥିତିରେ ସେ ଦୁଇ ନାରୀଙ୍କ ସଂପର୍କରେ ଆସିଥିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କ ଜୀବନରେ ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କର ଅବଦାନ ମଧ୍ୟ ଅଲଗା । ତେଣୁ ନିଜ ମନ ଭିତରେ ନିଜକୁ ଦୋଷୀ ମନେ କରିବାର କୌଣସି କାରଣ ନାହିଁ ।

ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କ ହୃଦୟରେ ସୁନୟା ଯେ ଏକ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ସ୍ଥାନ ଅଧିକାର କରିଛନ୍ତି ସେ ବିଷୟରେ ଜେନିଫର ସଚେତନ ଥିଲେ । ସେ ଜାଣିଥିଲେ ଯେ ସେ ଜାଗାକୁ ଅନ୍ୟ କେହି ଅଧିକାର କରିପାରିବେ ନାହିଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ସେଥିପାଇଁ ସେ ମୋଟେ ବିଚଳିତ ନଥିଲେ । ସେ ଜାଣିଥିଲେ ଯେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କ ବିଶାଳ ହୃଦୟରେ ତାଙ୍କପାଇଁ ମଧ୍ୟ ଜାଗା ଅଛି । ସେ ବୁଝିଥିଲେ ଯେ ସେ ସୁନୟାଙ୍କର ପ୍ରତିଦ୍ୱନ୍ଦୀ ନ ଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ସୁନୟାଙ୍କ ବିରୋଧରେ ତାଙ୍କ ହୃଦୟରେ ଯେଉଁ ଶୂନ୍ୟତା ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହୋଇଥିଲା ତାହା ଅପୂରଣୀୟ ।

ଦୁଇ ଜଣଙ୍କୁ ତୁଳନା କରିବାକୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରନ୍ତି ଦେବକାନ୍ତ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଦୁଇ ଭିନ୍ନ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଓ ପରଂପରାରେ ବଢ଼ିଥିବା ଦୁଇ ଜଣଙ୍କୁ ତୁଳନା କେମିତି କରିହବ ? ତେବେ ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କର ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱରେ ବେଶ ଫରକ ଥିଲା । ସୁନୟା ଥିଲେ ସ୍ୱଚ୍ଛତାପ୍ରିୟା । ଖୁବ୍ କମ୍ କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା କରୁଥିଲେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଜେନିଫର ଥିଲେ ବେଶ୍ ପ୍ରଗଳ୍ଭା, ଥରେ ପାଟି ଖୋଲିଲେ ଆଉ ବନ୍ଦ ହେଉନଥିଲା । ତା ଛଡ଼ା ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ କଥା ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ କରିଥିଲେ । ନୂଆ ନୂଆ ଚାକିରି ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଥିଲାବେଳେ ବହୁତ ସମୟରେ ଡେରିରେ ଘରକୁ ଫେରୁଥିଲେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ କିନ୍ତୁ ଦିନେ ହେଲେ ବି ସୁନୟା ଅଭିଯୋଗ କରିନଥିଲେ । ଏପରିକି ଯେତେବେଳେ ନୂଆକରି ଆମେରିକାକୁ ଆସିଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ନୂଆଯାଗା ସହିତ ପରିଚିତ ହୋଇନଥିଲେ ସେତେବେଳେ ବି ନୁହେଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଜେନିଫର ଥିଲେ

ଅଲଗା ପ୍ରକାରର । ଯଦି ତାଙ୍କର କାମରୁ ଆସିବାରେ ଟିକେ ଡେରି ହେଇଯାଉଥିଲା, ତାହେଲେ ସେ ବହୁତ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ହୋଇ ଯାଉଥିଲେ । ଯେମିତିକି ସେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ମୋଟେ ପାଖ ଛଡ଼ା କରିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁ ନଥିଲେ ।

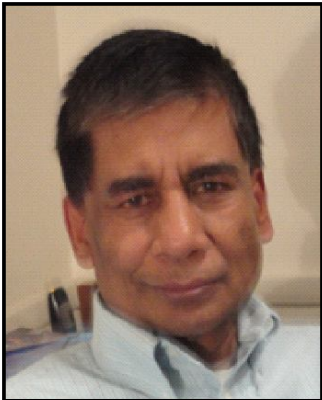
ଦିନେ ତାଙ୍କର ପାଖରେ ଚେକ୍‌ଅପ କଲାବେଳେ ଜଣା ପଡ଼ିଲା ଯେ ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କୁ ଓଭାରିଆନ କ୍ୟାନସର ହୋଇଯାଇଛି । ଜଣାପଡ଼ିଲାବେଳକୁ ଚ୍ୟୁମରଟା ବହୁତ ବ୍ୟାଧି ଯାଇଥିଲା । ସର୍ଜେରି, କେମୋଥେରାପି, ରେଡିଓଥେରାପି କିଛି କାମ ଦେଲାନ୍ତି । ଅନେକ କଷ୍ଟ ପାଇଲା ପରେ ଶେଷରେ ଜେନିଫର ଆଖି ବୁଜିଲେ । ଆଜି ସକାଳେ ଥିଲା ତାଙ୍କର ପୁନେରାଳ ।

କବାଟରେ ମୃତୁ ଆଘାତ ଶୁଣି ଫେରି ଚାହିଁଲେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ । ଦୁଆରମୁହଁରେ ଛିଡ଼ା ହୋଇଛି ସାରା, ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କ ବଡ଼ ଝିଅ । ମାଆର ଶେଷକ୍ରିୟାରେ ଯୋଗଦେବାକୁ ତା ସ୍ୱାମୀ ଜର୍ଷିନ ସହିତ ଆସିଥିଲା । ଏଠୁ ତା ଘର ପ୍ରାୟ ତିନିଘଣ୍ଟାର ବାଟ ।

ସାରା କହିଲା, “ଡେଭ, ଆମେ ଏଥର ବାହାରିବୁ, କାଲି ସକାଳୁ ଉଠି ଆମ ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କୁ କାମକୁ ଯିବାକୁ ହବ । ଘରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଲାବେଳକୁ ପ୍ରାୟ ନଅଟା ବାଜିଯିବ ।”

କାନ୍ତ ଘଡ଼ିକୁ ଚାହିଁଲେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ । ଛଅଟା ବାଜିଲାଣି । ଘରେ ବହୁତ କାମ ବାକି ପଡ଼ିଛି । ଗତ କିଛିଦିନ ହେଲା ଜେନିଫରଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତରହିଥିବାରୁ ଘରକଥା ବୁଝିବାକୁ ସମୟ ପାଇ ନଥିଲେ । କିତେନ ସିଙ୍କରେ ବାସନ ସବୁ ପଡ଼ି ରହିଛି । ତାକୁ ସଫାକରିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ ।

ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ବିଦାକରିବାକୁ ଉଠି ଛିଡ଼ାହେଲେ ଦେବକାନ୍ତ । ସୁନୟା ଓ ଜେନିଫର ପଛରେ ରହିଗଲେ । ଏବେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଏକା ଏକା ଆଗକୁ ବଢ଼ିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ ।



2007 Youll Street, Niles,
OH 44446

ରେସିପି

(ରମ୍ୟ ରଚନା, କପୋଳ କଳ୍ପିତ)

ଦେବରାଜ ସାହୁ

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ଆଁ ତୁଇଁ ଦି ପ୍ରାଣୀ । ସୁଖେ ଦୁଖେ ଚଳି ଆସୁଚନ୍ତି ।
ତୁଇଁର ରାନ୍ଧିବାରେ ଆଗ୍ରହ । ଭଲ ଜିନିଷ ଅନ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କୁ
ଖୁଆଇବାରେ ତାଠୁ ଅଧିକ ଆଗ୍ରହ । କୁଆଁ କୁଇଁ ହେଲା ପରେ ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କ
ପାଇଁ ବହୁତ ଜିନିଷ କରିବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା ।

କୁଇଁ : ବୋଉ ମୋ ପାଇଁ ପାଲକ ପନିର (ପାଳକ ସାଗ ଓ
ଛେନା) କରିବକି ? ବହୁତ ସୁଆଦ ଲାଗେ ସେଇଟା ।

ତୁଇଁ : ତୁ କେଉଁଠି ପାଳକ ପନିର ଖାଇଥିଲୁକି ?

କୁଇଁ : ବୋଉ ମୁଁ ମିନି ମାଉସିଙ୍କ ଘରେ ଖାଇଥିଲି ।

ତୁଇଁ : ମୁଁ ତା ହେଲେ ମିନି ମାଉସିଙ୍କୁ ରେସିପି ପଚାରିବି ।

ତୁଇଁ ମିନି ମାଉସିଙ୍କୁ ଫୋନ କଲା । ମିନି ମାଉସି, ଆପଣଙ୍କ
ପାଳକ ପନିର କୁଇଁକୁ ବହୁତ ପସନ୍ଦ ହୋଇଛି । ମୋତେ ତାର ରେସିପି
ଦେବେ କି ।

ହଇଲୋ ତୁଇଁ, ତୁ ତ ମୋଠୁ ଭଲ ରାନ୍ଧୁଛୁ । ମୁଁ ତୋତେ କ’ଣ
ରେସିପି କହିବି ?

ନାହିଁ ମାଉସି, ଆପଣଙ୍କ ରନ୍ଧାଟା କୁଇଁକୁ ଭାରି ଭଲ ଲାଗିଲା ।
ମତେ ଶିଖାଇ ଦିଅନ୍ତୁ ।

ଆଜ୍ଞା ଠିକ୍ ଅଛି । ମୁଁ ଗୋଟେ ବହିରୁ ସେଇ ରେସିପିଟା ପାଇ
ଥିଲି । ସେ ବହିଟା କେଉଁଠି ଅଛି ଖୋଜିକରି ପାଇଲେ ତତେ ଦେବି ।

କିଛି ଦିନ ପରେ ।

ମିନି ମାଉସି ରେସିପି ବହିଟା ପାଇଲେ କି ?

ହଇଲୋ କୁଇଁ ମୁଁ ସେ ବହିଟା କାହାକୁ ଦେଇଛି ମନେ ପଡୁନି ।

ମିନି ମାଉସି, ମତେ ସେ ବହିର ନାଁଟା କହି ଦିଅନ୍ତୁ । ମୁଁ
କିଣିକି ଆଣିବି ।

ହଇଲୋ ତୁଇଁ ଏଇ ଗୋଟିଏ ରେସିପି ପାଇଁ ତୁ କ’ଣ ବହିଟିଏ
କିଣିବୁ ।

ମାଉସି ବହିର ନାଁଟା କହନ୍ତୁ । ଦୟାକରି ।

ଠିକ୍ ଅଛି । ସେ ବହିଟା ଜଣେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଲେଖିଛନ୍ତି । ନାଁ
ତାଙ୍କର ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ ପରିଡ଼ା । ବହିର ନାଁ ହେଲା “ପୂର୍ବ” ।

ତୁଇଁ ବହିଟାକୁ ଡାକରେ ମଗାଇଲା । ବହିଟି ପାଇଲା ପରେ
ବହୁତ ଆଗାରେ ସୂଚିପତ୍ର ଖୋଜିଲା । ଖୋଜି ଖୋଜି ହାତ ଥକି ଗଲା ।
ବହିରେ ପାଳକ ପନିରର ନାଁ ଗନ୍ଧ ନାହିଁ ।

ଦୁଇ

ଶୁଣ୍ଠ : ଆଜି ସଂଧ୍ୟାରେ ଗୋଟେ ପାର୍ଟିକୁ ଯିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ ।

ଦେଖୁତ : କାହାର ପାର୍ଟିଟି କେତେଟା ବେଳେ ?

ଶୁଣ୍ଠ : ମିଠି ଅପାଙ୍କ ପାର୍ଟି, ସଂଧ୍ୟା ସାତଟା ବେଳେ ।

ଦେଖୁତ : ମିଠି ଅପାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ କ’ଣ ଉପହାର ଦେବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ ?

ଶୁଣ୍ଠ : ତାଙ୍କ ପୁଅର ଜନ୍ମ ଦିନ, ପୁଅ ପାଇଁ ଗୋଟିଏ ଜାମା
ନେଇ ଆସ ।

ଶୁଣ୍ଠ, ଦେଖୁତ ମିଠି ଅପାଙ୍କ ଘରେ ସାତଟା ବେଳେ ହାଜର ।

ମିଠି ଅପା କବାଟ ଖୋଲି କହିଲେ, ତୁମେ ଦି’ ଜଣ ଆମର ପ୍ରଥମ
ଅତିଥି । ତମେ ଜାଣ, ଆମର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପଠୁଆଲିଟି । ମୁଁ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେଥିରେ
ଜଡ଼ିତ । ତମେ ଦି ଜଣ ବସ । ମୁଁ ଗାଧୁଆ ସାରି ପୁଅକୁ ଧରି ଆସିବି ।

ଅପା ଏଇ ଉପହାରଟା ପୁଅ ପାଇଁ ଆଣିବୁ । କୁଠି ରଖିବୁ ?

ଅପା : ମୁଁ ତ ଗିଫଟ୍ ଆଣିବାକୁ ମନା କରିଥିଲି । ତମେ କାହିଁକି
ଆଣିବ ? ମୋର ନିୟମ, ସମସ୍ତେ ମାନିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ ।

ଶୁଣ୍ଠ : ଅପା ଛୋଟ ପିଲାଟି ଜାମାଟା ତାକୁ ବେଶ୍ ମାନିବ ।
ପିଲାଟା ପାଇଁ ଆଣିବୁ । ଦୟାକରି ରଖନ୍ତୁ ।

ଅପା : ମୁଁ ନିୟମ କରିଛି । ସମସ୍ତେ ସେଇ ନିୟମ ମାନିବେ ।

ତମେ ଗିଫଟା ଗାଡ଼ିରେ ରଖି ଆସ । ଆମ ଘରେ ରଖି
ପାରିବନି । କାନ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଆଉଁସି ଦେଖୁତ ଗାଡ଼ିରେ ଉପହାରଟା ରଖି
ଆସିଲେ । ତା’ପରେ ଚୌକିରେ ବସି ପବନ ସହିତ ଆଳାପ କଲେ ।

ସମୟାନୁକ୍ରମେ ଗୋଟି ଗୋଟି କରି ଅତିଥିମାନେ ଆସିଲେ ।
ନ’ଟା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଅତିଥି ଆସୁଚନ୍ତି ।

ମିଠି ଅପା : ତମର ଏତେ ଡେରି କାହିଁକି ?

ଶେଷ ଅତିଥି : ଆମେ ପରା ଅତିଥି, ଆମର ତିଥି, ବାର, ଆଉ ସମୟ କିଛି ନାହିଁ ।

ମିଠି ଅପା : ଠିକ୍ ଅଛି । ଆମେ ପ୍ରଥମେ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ କେକ୍ କାଟିବା ।

ମହମ୍ମଦ ବତୀ ଲଗା ହେଲା ଓ କେକ୍ କଟା ସରିଲା । ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ କେକ୍ ବାଣ୍ଟିଲେ ।

ଦେଖୁତ : ଅପା କେକ୍‌ଟା ବହୁତ ସ୍ୱାଦିଷ୍ଟ ହେଇଛି ।

ଶୁଣୁତ : ଅପା କେକ୍‌ଟା କେଉଁଠୁ ଆଣିଛନ୍ତି ?

ଅପା : ମୁଁ ପରା ନିଜେ ତିଆରି କରିଛି ।

ଶୁଣୁତ : ଅପା ଏଇଟା କିମିତି କରିଛ ?

ଅପା : (ସ୍ମୃତ ହସି) ମୁଁ ଇଣ୍ଡିଆନେସିଆରେ ରେସିପି ପାଇଛି ।

ଶୁଣୁତ : ମତେ ସେ ଲିଙ୍କଟା ପଠେଇବେକି ?

ଅପା : (ସ୍ମୃତ ହସି) ଗୁଗୁଲ୍ କରିଦେବୁ । ଆଉ ଲିଙ୍କ୍ କ’ଣ ପଠେଇବି ?

ଶୁଣୁତ : ନାହିଁ ଅପା, ମତେ ସେ ଲିଙ୍କଟା ପଠେଇବେ । ମୁଁ ଠିକ୍ ରେସିପି ସେଥିରୁ ପାଇପାରିବିନି ।

ଅପା : (ଅନିଚ୍ଛାର ସହ) ମତେ ସମୟ ହେଲେ ପଠେଇବି । ଏକ ସପ୍ତାହ ପରେ ।

ଶୁଣୁତ : ଅପା, ମତେ ସେ ଲିଙ୍କଟା ପଠେଇବେକି ?

ଅପା : ପଠେଇବି ।

ଦୁଇ ସପ୍ତାହ ପରେ ।

ଶୁଣୁତ : ଅପା, ମତେ ସେ ଲିଙ୍କଟା ପଠେଇବେକି ?

ଅପା : ପଠେଇବା ।

ପଠେଇବି, ପଠେଇବା, ପଠେଇବି, ପଠେଇବା । ...

ପଠେଇଲେ ପଚାର ।

ତିନି

ରୁଡ଼ାଣି : ଏପୁରୁ ପିକନିକ ?

ଚେପାଣି : ଆଦିବାସୀମାନୁ ପିକନିକ ।

ରୁଡ଼ାଣି : ଏକତା ପିକନିକ ?

ଚେପାଣି : ପାଠଶାଳା ସମିପାନୁ ।

ରୁଡ଼ାଣି, ଚେପାଣି ପିକନିକକୁ ଗଲେ । ବହୁତ ଲୋକ ଆସିଛନ୍ତି । ପାଗ ବି ବହୁତ ଭଲ ହୋଇଛି । ପ୍ରତି ପରିବାର ଗୋଟିଏ ଗୋଟିଏ ଜିନିଷ ରାନ୍ଧି ଆଣିଛନ୍ତି । ବହୁତ ମିଠା ଆସିଥିଲା । ରସଗୋଲା, ରସମଲା, ଖିରି, ଛେନାପୋଡ଼, ଗୁଲାବ ଜାମୁନ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଆସିଥିଲା ।

ଗୁଲାବ ଜାମୁନ ନରମ ହୋଇ ଭାରି ସୁଆଦ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ତାକୁ କରିଥିଲେ ଜାନକି ଅପା ।

ରୁଡ଼ାଣି : ଜାନକି ଅପା ! ଆପଣଙ୍କ ମିଠା ଦୋକାନଠୁ ବି, ବକିଗଲା । ମୋତେ ତା’ର ରେସିପି ଦିଅନ୍ତୁ ।

ଜାନକି ଅପା : ଏଇଟା କରିବା ଭାରି ସହଜ । ମୁଁ ତମକୁ ସବୁ କହିଦେବି ।

ଜାନକି ଅପା ରେସିପି କହିଲେ ଓ ରୁଡ଼ାଣି ତାକୁ କାଗଜରେ ମନ ଧ୍ୟାନ ଦେଇ ଲେଖିଲେ ।

କିଛି ଦିନପରେ

ରୁଡ଼ାଣି : ଅପା, ମୋର ଗୁଲାବ ଜାମୁନଟା ପଥର ପରି ଟାଣ କାହିଁକି ହେଲା ?

ଜାନକି ଅପା : ତୁ ମୋ ରେସିପି ଠିକ୍ ଭାବେ ଲେଖିଥିଲୁ ତ ?

ରୁଡ଼ାଣି : ଅପା ମୁଁ ଠିକ୍ ଲେଖି, ଠିକ୍ ରାନ୍ଧିଛି ମଧ୍ୟ ।

ଜାନକି ଅପା : ସେ ପାଉଁରଟା ଭଲ ହୋଇ ନଥିବ ।

ରୁଡ଼ାଣି : ଆପଣ କହିବା ଅନୁସାରେ ମୁଁ ସେଇଟା “ଲୋଟେ” ଦୋନାକରୁ କିଣି ଥିଲି ।

ଜାନକି ଅପା : ତିନି ଶିରା ଠିକ୍ କରିଛୁ ତ ?

ରୁଡ଼ାଣି : ହଁ ମୁଁ ଠିକ୍ କରିଛି । ଆପଣ ସେଥିରେ ମଇଦା ପକାନ୍ତିକି ?

ଜାନକି ଅପା : ନାହିଁ ।

ରୁଡ଼ାଣି : ଆପଣ ସେଥିରେ ଖାଇବା ସୋଡା ପକାନ୍ତି କି ?

ଜାନକି ଅପା : ନାହିଁ ।

ରୁଡ଼ାଣି : ତେବେ ମୋ ମିଠା କାହିଁକି ଟାଣ ହେଲା ?

ଜାନକି ଅପା : ରାନ୍ଧିବାରେ ହାତ ଗୁଣ ଥାଏ । ହାତର ବାସ୍ନା ବାଜିଲେ ରାନ୍ଧିବାଟା ଠିକ୍ ଭାବେ ହୁଏ !

ଚାରି

ଦିନି ଦାଦା ଘରେ ବିଶ୍ରାମ କରି ଶ୍ରମ ଲାଘବ କରୁଥିଲେ । ଶନି ଓ ରବି ଏଇ ଦୁଇ ଦିନ ଚିକେ ଆରାମ କରିବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ମିଳେ । ଦିନି, ଦାଦା ପିଜା ମଗାଇ ଘରେ ସେ ଖାଦ୍ୟକୁ ଉପଭୋଗ କରୁଥିଲେ । ତା ପରେ ସିନେମା ଦେଖିବାର ଇଚ୍ଛା ଥିଲା । ଫୋନ୍ ବାଜିଲା ।

ଦିନି, ମୁଁ ଚଗଲି କହୁଛି ।

ଦିନି : ଚଗଲି, କ’ଣ ଖବର ? ଏତେ ଦିନରେ କିମିତି ମନେ ପଡ଼ିଲା ?

ଚଗଲି : ଦିନି, ମୁଁ ବଡ଼ ଅସୁବିଧାରେ ପଡ଼ିଛି ।

ଦିନି : କ’ଣ ଅସୁବିଧା ?

ଚଗଲି : ମୁଁ ଆଜି କେତେ ଜଣଙ୍କୁ ଖାଇବାକୁ ଡାକିଛି ।

ଦିଦି : ଭଲ କଥା । ସେଥିରେ ଅସୁବିଧା କ’ଣ ?

ଚଗଲି : ତୁଲିରେ ହାଣ୍ଡି ବସିଛି । ଘାଣ୍ଟି ତରକାରି କରିବି ବୋଲି ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ କହିଛି ।

ଦିଦି : ଆହୁରି ଭଲ କଥା । ସେଥିରେ ପୁଣି ଅସୁବିଧା କ’ଣ ?

ଚଗଲି : ମୋତେ ଭାଗ ମାପ କିଛି ଜଣା ନାହିଁ । ଆପଣ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ନ କଲେ ଭାସିଯିବି ।

ଦିଦି : ମୋର ଖିଆ ପିଆ ସରିଲା । ଦାଦା ଓ ମୁଁ ଏବେ ସିନେମା ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଯିବୁ ।

ଚଗଲି : ଆପଣ ମୋତେ ରେସିପିଟା କହି ଦିଅନ୍ତୁ ।

ଦିଦି : ଠିକ୍ ଅଛି । ତୁ କାଗଜ କଲମ ଆଣେ ।

ଚଗଲି : ଦିଦି, କାଗଜ କଲମ କ’ଣ ଆଣିବି ? ତୁଲିରେ ହାଣ୍ଡି ବସିଛି । ଆପଣ ଯାହା କହିବେ ତାକୁ ହାଣ୍ଡିରେ ପକେଇବି । ଘାଣ୍ଟି ତରକାରି ହବ । ସମସ୍ତେ ଖୁସିରେ ଖାଇବେ ।

ଦିଦି : ହରେ ରାମ, ହରେ ରାମ ।

ପାଞ୍ଚ

ଦେଶୀ ବହୁତ ଦିନପରେ ସାଙ୍ଗ ବିଦେଶୀକୁ ଫୋନ କଲା ।

ବିଦେଶୀ : ତୁ କେଉଁଠି ଅଛୁ ?

ଦେଶୀ : ମୁଁ ପରା ଆମେରିକା ଆସିଛି ।

ବିଦେଶୀ : ତା ଦେଲେ ଆମ ଘରକୁ ଆସ ।

ଦେଶୀ : ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଆସିବି । ଗୋଟିଏ ସପ୍ତାହରେ ।

ବିଦେଶୀ : କ’ଣ ସତ ?

ଦେଶୀ : ମୋ ପାଇଁ ଭଲ ଜିନିଷ ରାନ୍ଧିବ ଓ ତାର ରେସିପି ଦେବ ।

ବିଦେଶୀ : କ’ଣ ଖାଇବାକୁ ଚାହଁ ?

ଦେଶୀ : ମୁଁ ଚାହେଁ ପାଲକ ପନିର, ଗୁଲାବ ଜାମୁନ ଓ କେକ୍ ।

ବିଦେଶୀ : ଠିକ୍ ଅଛି ।

ବିଦେଶୀ ଘରେ ଭାଲେଣି । ଏ ସବୁ ଜିନିଷ କିପରି ରନ୍ଧା ହେବ । କେଉଁଠାର ହେଲେ ରେସିପି ଜଣା ନାହିଁ ।

ବିଦେଶୀ : କିପରି ଦେଶୀକୁ ସବୁ କରାବ ?

ବିଦେଶୀଣୀ : ଯାହା ମୁଁ ପାରିବି ତାହା ରାନ୍ଧିବି ।

ଦେଶୀ ଠିକ୍ ସମୟରେ ଆସି ପହଞ୍ଚିଲେ । ଦୁଇ ସାଙ୍ଗ ପରସ୍ପରକୁ ଦେଖି ଅବାକ । ଦେଶୀ ଆସିଚକ୍ରି ସୁଟ ଓ ଟାଲ ପିନ୍ଧି । ବିଦେଶୀ ଧୋତି ପିନ୍ଧି ଓ ଗାମୁଛା ଧରି ଦେଶୀକୁ ସ୍ବାଗତ କଲେ । ପିଣ୍ଡା ପାଖରେ ପାଣି ଲୋଟା ବି ଥିଲା ।

ଦୁଇ ବନ୍ଧୁ ବହୁତ ସମୟ କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା କଲେ । ବିଦେଶୀ ଦୁଇଟି ପିଢ଼ା ପକାଇ ଖାଇବାକୁ ଡାକିଲେ ।

ଦେଶୀ : ମୁଁ ପିଢ଼ାରେ କିପରି ବସିବି ?

ବିଦେଶୀ : ଧୋତି ବଦଳେଇବକି ?

ଦେଶୀ : ନାହିଁ ! କଷ୍ଟମତେ ସୁଟ ପିନ୍ଧି ପିଢ଼ା ଉପରେ ବସିବି ।

ବିଦେଶୀଣୀ ଖାଇବା ଜିନିଷ ପରଷିଲେ । ଖାଇବା ଜିନିଷ ଭାରି ସରଳ ଭାତ, ଶାଗ ଓ ଖିରି ।

ଦେଶୀ : ମୋର ବରାଦ ଖାଇବା ଜିନିଷ କାହିଁ ?

ବିଦେଶୀ : ବରାଦଠୁ ଅଧିକ ଜିନିଷ ପରସା ହୋଇଛି ।

ଦେଶୀ : କିପରି ?

ବିଦେଶୀ ବୁଝାଇଲେ । ତୁମେ ବିଦେଶ ଆସିଛ । ବିଦେଶରେ ନିଜ ଘରପରି ପରିବେଶ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଅଛି । ସେଇ ସୁଯୋଗ କେତେଜଣଙ୍କୁ ମିଳେ ? ତୁମ ନାଁ ଦେଶୀ କିନ୍ତୁ ତୁମେ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ନିଜ ଦେଶରେ ଅଛ ବୋଲି ଭାବ । ପୁରାଣରୁ ଏଇ କଥାଟି ଶୁଣ ।

ଧର୍ମପୁତ୍ର ଯୁଧିଷ୍ଠିରଙ୍କୁ ଧର୍ମବକ ପଚାରିଥିଲେ: କୋ ମୋଦତେ ?

(କିଏ ସୁଖୀ ?)

ଯୁଧିଷ୍ଠିର ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଇଥିଲେ :

ପଞ୍ଚମେହନି ଷଷ୍ଠେବା ଶାକଂ ପଚତି ସ୍ଵେ ଗୁହେ ଅରୁଣାତ ଅପ୍ରବାସୀତ ସ ବାରିଚର ମୋଦତେ ।

ଅର୍ଥାତ୍ ଯେଉଁ ଘରେ ପୂର୍ବାହ୍ନରେ ଶାଗ ଭାତ ରନ୍ଧା ହୁଏ, ଯାର କିଛି ରଣ ନାହିଁ ଓ ଯିଏ ପ୍ରବାସୀ ନୁହେଁ, ସେ ହେଉଛି ସୁଖୀ । ଦେଶୀ ଏଇ ଉତ୍ତର ଶୁଣି ତୁପ୍ପିର ସହ ଭୋଜନ କଲେ ।



14216 Floral Park ,
North Potomac, MD
20878

ଛାଇ ଏକ ମନର

ସୁଲୋଚନା ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ

ସ ଚିନ୍ ଘରୁ ଚାଲିଗଲା ପରେ, ଘରେ ନୂଆ ଅତିଥିଟିଏ ଆସି ପହଞ୍ଚିଛି । ତାଙ୍କର ଖାଲି ମୋ' ସହ ଦେଖା, ମୋ' ସହ କଥା ଓ ମୋ' ସହ ଖିଆ । ଶୋଇଲା ବେଳକୁ ବି ଆସି ଦୁମ କରି ମୋ' ଖଟର ଆର କରକୁ ଶୋଇ ଯାଆନ୍ତି । ଯେତେ ନାହିଁ କଲେ ବି ଶୁଣିବାର ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ନାହିଁ । ଅଯଥା ଅଲୋଡ଼ା ଏ ଅତିଥିଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଦିପିକାର ଅନେକ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ । ଅନେକ ରାଗ ଓ ଅନେକ ଅଭିମାନ । କିନ୍ତୁ ସିଏ ଶୁଣିବାର ଜନ୍ତୁ ନୁହଁନ୍ତି । ସବୁ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନର ଉତ୍ତର ସେଇ ମୁରୁକି ହସରେ ଶେଷ । ରାଗରେ ବେଳେ ବେଳେ କଟାଡ଼ି ହେବାକୁ ମନ ହୁଏ ଦିପିକାର । ହେଲେ କାହାକୁ କହିବ ? ସିଏ ତ ସଚିନ୍‌ର ଛାଇ । ସିଏ ତ ତାର ଶୁନାପନ । ସିଏ ତ ତାର ହୃଦୟର ଅକ୍ଷୁଦ୍ରା କୋହ । କହିବ ବା କେତେ ବେଳେ ? ଯାହାକୁ ସକାଳେ କାମକୁ ଯିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ତରବରରେ ହେଉ ବା ସଂଧ୍ୟାରେ ମନ ଖୋଲି ଦୁଃଖରେ ହେଉ କଥା କହିବାକୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରେ, ସେତିକିବେଳେ ଛାଇ ଛାଇଆ କିଏ ଯେମିତି ତା' ଚାରିପାଖେ ଘୁରି ବୁଲୁଥାଏ ଏବଂ ହସି ହସି କହେ ଦିପିକା ଥୟ ଧର । ଦିପିକାର ମନ କେଉଁଥିରେ ବି ଲାଗେ ନାହିଁ । ଧୂପ ଦେବାକୁ ବି ବେଳେବେଳେ ସିଏ ଭୁଲିଯାଏ । ଛାଇଟିଏ ପୁଣି ଚାଲିଆସେ ତା ଆଗକୁ । ମନେହୁଏ ସେ ଛାଇ ଭିତରୁ ଚାଲି ଆସୁଛି ସଚିନ୍ ଦୁଇ ବର୍ଷର ବାଲୁତ ରୂପ – ଠୁକୁ ଠୁକୁ ଚାଲିରେ ଦଉଡ଼ି ଆସୁଛି ତା' କୋଳକୁ । ଦୁଃଖର, ଜଂଜାଳର ଜୁଆର କାହିଁ କୁଆଡ଼େ ଉଭେଇ ଯାଏ । ସେ ଦରୋଟି ହସରେ, ତା' ଚାଲିରେ... ଆଉ ମନେ ପଡ଼େନି କାହିଁକି ସେ ହୋଇଗଲା ଆନମନା । କ'ଣଟା ସେ ଛାଡ଼ି ଆସିଲା ରୋଷଘରେ, ବା' କ'ଣ ସେଠି ଲାଗି ଗଲାଣି କଡେଇରେ । ଜୀବନଟା ମନେ ହୁଏ ଭାରି ଏକ୍ସଟିଆ । ସ୍ଵାମୀ ପୁତ୍ରର ସଂସାର ଥାଇ ବି ଯେମିତି ଏକ ଅଭାବର ସଂସାର । ସବୁ ଥାଇ ବି ଏକ ନାହିଁ-ନାହିଁର ଭାବ । ସବୁ ସେମିତି ଆଗପରି ଅଛି । କେଉଁଥିରେ ବି କିଛି ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ହୋଇନି । କେବଳ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ହୋଇଛି ନିଜ ମନରେ । ସଚିନ୍ ବଡ଼ ହୋଇଛି,

ଆଉ ଘରେ ରହୁନି, ଏତିକି ମାତ୍ର କଥା । କିନ୍ତୁ ଦିପିକା ସେମିତି ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରେ ଫୋନଟିଏ ବା ଟେକ୍‌ସଟିଏ ପାଇବାକୁ ଆଗପରି । ରାତି ନଅଟାରୁ କେତେବେଳେ ଏଗାରଟା ବାଜିଯାଏ । ଅପେକ୍ଷା ଅପେକ୍ଷାରେ ରହିଯାଏ । ତାର ଉଚାଟ ମନ ଭାରି ହୋଇଯାଏ । ଆଖିରେ ଲୁହ ଦି ବୁନ୍ଦା ଜକେଇ ଯାଏ । ଥକା ମନ ଖୋଜି ବୁଲେ କାହାକୁ । ସେ ଦିନ ମାନଙ୍କରେ କିଏ ଯେମିତି ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଟିଏ ପକେଇ ଦେଇଛି । ବିନା କାରଣରେ ସେ ସଚିନ୍ ରୁମକୁ ଯାଏ, ଅନ୍ୟ ମନସ୍କ ଭାବରେ ତା ବିଛଣାରେ ହାତ ମାରି ଚାଲିଆସେ । ଦିନ କେତେବେଳେ ଚାଲିଯାଏ ଜାଣି ହୁଏନି ।

ଆଜି ଛାଇ ଛାଇଆ ମନେ ପଡ଼େ ଦିପିକାର, ପଟିଶ ବର୍ଷ ତଳର କଥା । ନୂଆ ହୋଇ ଆମେରିକା ଆସିଥାଏ । ପାଖ ପଡ଼ିଶା କାହା ସହ ପରିଚୟ ହୋଇ ନଥାଏ । ସେମାନେ ନିତୁଲି ପାର୍କକୁ ମୁଭ୍ କରିଥାନ୍ତି । ତିନି ବଖରିଆ ଛୋଟ ଟାଉନ୍ ହାଉସ୍‌ଟିଏ ଭଡାରେ ନେଇଥାନ୍ତି । ଘରର ପଛପଟେ ଗାଡ଼ି ପାର୍କ୍ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଦୁଇଟି ଅଲଗା ଅଲଗା ସ୍ଥାନ । ପଛକୁ ରହିଛି ଫାୟାର୍ ହାଉସ୍ ଆଉ ଏକ ବିରାଟ ପଡ଼ିଆ, ଘର ଆଉ ଫାୟାର୍ ହାଉସ୍ ମଝିରେ । ପିଲାମାନେ ଖରାଦିନେ ଆସି ବଲ୍ ଖେଳନ୍ତି ସେ ପଡ଼ିଆରେ । ଦିପିକା ବି ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ପୁଅକୁ ଷ୍ଟୋଲରରେ ବସାଇ ବୁଲାଇ ନିଏ ସେ ପଡ଼ିଆକୁ । ପୁଅର ଦରକାର ଥାଉ ନଥାଉ, ଦିପିକାର ଜରୁରୀ ଦରକାର ଥାଏ ଯେମିତି । ଘରେ ବସି ବସି ମନଟା ପିତୁଲିଆ ପଡ଼ିଯାଏ ଅନେକ ସମୟରେ । ପୁରୁଣା କଥା ସବୁ ମନେ ପଡ଼େ । ମନେ ପଡ଼େ ଛାଡ଼ି ଆସିଥିବା ଅତୀତ । ମନେ ପଡ଼େ ବାଣାବିହାର ହଠାତ୍‌ରେ କଟାକ୍ଷୟବା ଦୁଇ ତିନି ବର୍ଷ । ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ହସଟିଏ ଲାଖିଯାଏ ତା' ଶୁଖିଲା ଓଠରେ । ମନେ ପଡ଼ନ୍ତି ମଂଜୁ ରଥ ଆଉ ମଂଜୁ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ । ଦୁହେଁ ତା'ର ସାଙ୍ଗ । ଏକା ରୁମ୍ ଦୁଇଶଏକରେ ରହୁଥିଲେ । ଦୁହେଁ ପୁରୀ ଏସ.ସି.ଏସ୍ କଲେଜରୁ ଆସିଥାନ୍ତି । ପରସ୍ପର ସଂଗୀତ ଡକାଡକି ହୁଅନ୍ତି

ସେମାନେ । ମଂଜୁ ରଥ ଏବେ ରାଉରକେଲାରେ ତା' ପରିବାର ସହ ରହୁଛି । ସେଠା ସେଣ୍ଟ୍ରାଲ୍ ସ୍କୁଲରେ ପ୍ରଧାନ ଶିକ୍ଷିକା ହୋଇଛି । ମଂଜୁ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ ସହ ତାର ଏବେ ସଂପର୍କ ଅଛି କି ନାହିଁ ଜାଣେନା ଦିପିକା । କିନ୍ତୁ ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ମଂଜୁ ରଥ ବିଷୟରେ ଶୁଣେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଗଲାବେଳେ । ସ୍ନେହ, ପ୍ରାୟ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ସହ ସଂପର୍କ ରଖିଥାଏ ଏବଂ ବେଳେ ଅଧେ ଫେସ୍‌ବୁକ୍‌ରେ ମେସେଜ୍ ଦିଏ, କାହାର ଝିଅ କ'ଣ ପଢ଼ୁଛି, କାହା ପୁଅ କଲେଜ୍ ସାରି କଂପିଟେଟିଭ୍ ପରୀକ୍ଷା ପାଇଁ କେଉଁଠି ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ ହେଉଛି – ଏମିତି ଅନେକ ଅନାବନା କଥା ! ଦିପିକାକୁ ଭଲ ଲାଗେ ଏମିତି ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ ଖବର ପାଇଲେ । ଭଲ ଲାଗେ ସ୍ମୃତିକୁ ରୋମାନ୍ସ୍‌ନ କରିବାକୁ । ନିଜ ବିଷୟରେ ସିଏ କିନ୍ତୁ କାହା ଆଗରେ କହିପାରେନି କିଛି । କ'ଣ ବା କହିବ ? କହିବକି ଆମେରିକା ହେଉଛି ଦିଲ୍ଲିକା ଲଡ଼ୁ ଭଳି ? ଏଠି ତ ନିର୍ଜନତାର ବିଳାସ । ବାପା ବୋଉ, ଭାଇ ଭଉଣୀଙ୍କୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ଆସି ସିଏ କରିଛି ନିଜ ସଂସାର । କାମକୁ ଯିବା ଆସିବା କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଗାଡ଼ିଟିଏ ବି କିଣିଛି । ନିଜ କଥା ନିଜେ ନ ବୁଝିଲେ ଏଠି କିଛି ହୁଏନା । ସ୍ବାମୀ ତାର କାମକୁ ଯିବେ, ଫେରୁ ଫେରୁ ସଂଧ୍ୟା । ଆସିଲେ ହାଲିଆ ହୋଇ ଟି.ଭି. ସାମ୍ବାନୀରେ ବସି ଯାଆନ୍ତି । ଦିପିକା ତା କପେ ଧରାଇ ଦିଏ, ନ ହେଲେ ସିଏ ନିଜେ ମାଇକ୍ରୋଉଏଭ୍‌ରେ କପଟିଏ ଗରମ ପାଣି କରି ତା କରି ନିଅନ୍ତି । ସମସ୍ତେ ଯେମିତି ଯନ୍ତ୍ର ଚାଳିତ । ନ ହେଲେ ନ ଚଳେ । ସେଥିରେ ପାଠପଢ଼ା, ସୁଇମିଂ, ପିଆନୋ ଶିଖା, ଟେନିସ୍ ଖେଳା ବା ଛୋଟ ଦିନେ ସାହି ପିଲାଙ୍କ ସହ ବେସ୍‌ବଲ୍ ଲିଗ୍‌ରେ କୋଟିଂ – ଏମିତିରେ ସମୟ କେଉଁ ଆଡେ ପଳାଇଯାଏ ! ତା ସାଙ୍ଗକୁ ନିଜ ସାଙ୍ଗ ସାଥୀଙ୍କ ଘରେ ଉଚ୍ଚକ ଏଣ୍ଟରେ ଦେଖା ଚାହାଁ – ବା ଅନ୍ୟ କିଏ କହିବେ ଉଚ୍ଚକ୍ ଏଣ୍ଟ୍ ପାର୍ଟି । ପାର୍ଟି କହିଲେ ମନେ ହୁଏ ସମସ୍ତେ ଜୀବନଟାକୁ ଉପଭୋଗ କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ତେବେ ଇଚ୍ଛା ଥାଉ ନ ଥାଉ ଏ ସବୁ ପାର୍ଟିକୁ ନ ଗଲେ ନ ଚଳେ । କେତେ ବା ଘରେ ବସିବ ? ଘରକୁ ଫେରି ଆସିଲେ କିନ୍ତୁ ମନେ ହୁଏ କେତେ ବା ମିଛ ହସ ହସିବ ? କେତେ ବା ସାଜି ଗୁଜି ରକ୍ଷା ରକ୍ଷି କରି କେତେବେଳେ ମାମା ଘରକୁ ତ କେତେବେଳେ ସମିତା ଘରକୁ ଯିବ ? କେଉଁ ଦିନ ନିଜ ଘରକୁ ବି ଡାକିବାକୁ ପଡେ । ଏଠି ସମସ୍ତେ ରକ୍ଷା ରକ୍ଷିରେ ଢେର ପାରଙ୍ଗମ । ନିଜ ନିଜର ଘର ଦେଖେଇବା ଆଳରେ, ପିଲା କେତେ ଭଲ ପଢ଼ିଲେ, କିଏ କେଉଁଠି ସ୍କେଲିଙ୍ଗ୍-ବି ତ କିଏ ସ୍କେଟିଙ୍ଗ୍‌ରେ ନାସନାଲ୍ ସ୍ତରକୁ ଗଲା, ଏଇଆ

ହେଲା ଦେଖେଇ ହବାର ଏକ ବାହାନା, ଏଇଆ ହେଲା ଗପର ମୂଳ । ତା ସାଙ୍ଗକୁ ନୂଆ ଫେଶନର୍ ଶାଢ଼ୀ ଓ ଗହଣା ଦେଖେଇ ହବା ଏକ ସାଧାରଣ କଥା । ଦିପିକା ଯେ ଏ ସବୁ ଉପଭୋଗ କରେନି ତା ନୁହେଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ମନ ଖୋଲି ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ସହ କଥା ହେବା ତା ପାଇଁ ମୁସ୍କିଲ୍ । ଯେଉଁଠି ଗଲେ ବି ଢିକି ତ ଧାନ କୁଟିବା କଥା । ଆମେରିକା ହେଉ ବା ଅଷ୍ଟ୍ରେଲିଆ ହେଉ, ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଝିଅ ବୋହୂଙ୍କର ଗପ ଖଟୁଲି ଗସିପ୍‌ରେ ହିଁ ଶେଷ ହୁଏ ସବୁବେଳେ ।

ଏଇ ସବୁ କଥା ଭାବିଲେ ଦିପିକାର ଭଂଗା ମନ ଆହୁରି ଧରେ ଭାଙ୍ଗିଯାଏ । ମନ ହୁଏ ଫେରି ଯାଆନ୍ତା କି ? ସମୟ ଚକ ଘୁରି ଯାଆନ୍ତା କି !! ସଚିନ୍ ପୁଣି ପିଲାଟିଏ ହୋଇଯାଆନ୍ତା କି । ସଚିନ୍‌କୁ ନେଇ ଜୀବନଟା କଟି ଯିବାରେ ଆଦୌ ଅସୁବିଧା ହେଉ ନଥିଲା । ଯେତେ ଦୁଃଖ, ଯେତେ ଶୋକ, ଯେତେ ଭୋକ, ସବୁକୁ ପଛରେ ପକାଇ ଦିପିକା ଯେମିତି ବଂଚି ରହିଛି, ସେଇ ଏକମାତ୍ର ସଂପର୍କ ଦଉଡ଼ିର ଖିଅ ଧରି । ବଡ଼ି ପାଣି ଯେତେ ଆସିଲେ ବି ତାର ଦମ୍ଭ ଭାଙ୍ଗିନି । ସଂପର୍କର ଗଭୀରତାକୁ ନ ମାପି କେବଳ ଆତ୍ମା ସହ ଆତ୍ମାର ସଂଯୋଗକୁ ଯୋରକରି ସିଏ ଜାଗୁଡ଼ି ଧରିଛି ଜୀବନକୁ । ଏଠି ଅନେକ ସାଙ୍ଗ କରିଛି । କଂପ୍ୟୁଟର୍ ଚାକିରିରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରୁ ଏ ଭିତରେ ଅନେକ ବନ୍ଧୁ ବାନ୍ଧବଙ୍କ ପିଲାମାନେ ଆସି ଏଠି ରହିଲେଣି । ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସହ ଫୋନ୍‌ରେ କଥା ବା ଟେକ୍‌ସ୍‌ରେ ଅବା ସ୍କାଇପ୍‌ରେ ଜରୁରୀ କଥାର ଆଦାନ ପ୍ରଦାନ ବି ଚାଲିଛି । ତା' ଛଡ଼ା କାହା ପିଲାଟି ଜନ୍ମ ଦିନ ବା ଗ୍ରାଜୁଏସନ୍‌କୁ ନ ଗଲେ ନ ଚଳେ । ସ୍ବାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ବି ଆଜିକାଲି ଭଲ ରହୁନି । ସେଥିରେ ବି ସଂସାର ଚାଲିଛି । ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଉଦୟ ଅସ୍ତ ହୋଇ ଦିନପରେ ଦିନ, ବର୍ଷ ପରେ ବର୍ଷ ହୋଇ ପଟିଶ ବର୍ଷ କଟିଗଲାଣି । ସଚିନ୍ କଲେଜ୍ ଶେଷ କରିବାର ଦୁଇ ବର୍ଷ ହେଲାଣି । କାଲି ପରି ଲାଗୁଛି । ବହିର ପୃଷ୍ଠା କେମିତି ହାଲୁକା ପବନରେ କିଛି ପଛକୁ ଓଲଟି ଯାଇଛି । ମନେ ପଡ଼ୁଛି ହିନ୍ଦୁ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ସଚିନ୍‌ର ଷୋଳ ବର୍ଷର ଜନ୍ମ ଦିନ ମନାଇଥିଲା । ଝିଅଟିଏ ହୋଇଥିଲେ ସୁଇଚ୍ ସିକ୍ସ୍‌ଟିନ୍ ତ ଆଡ଼ମ୍ବରରେ କରିଥାନ୍ତେ । ପୁଅ ବୋଲି ତାକୁ ସେମାନେ ହେଲା କରି ନାହାଁନ୍ତି । ଅଳ୍ପ ଦିନ ହୋଇଥାଏ ତେଲାଓଆର୍କୁ ଆସିବା । ଦଶ, ପନ୍ଦର ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପରିବାରକୁ ଡାକିଥାଏ ଦିପିକା । ସଚିନ୍ ବୟସର ତିନୋଟି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପୁଅ ବି ଥାନ୍ତି ସେ ପରିବାର ଭିତରେ । ସମସ୍ତେ ଆସି ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ସହଯୋଗ କରି କାମ ଉଠାଇ ଦେଉଥାଆନ୍ତି । ସଚିନ୍ କିନ୍ତୁ ନୂଆ ଯାଗାକୁ ଆଦରି ନ ଥାଏ ସେ

ଯାଏ । ଅନେକ ସମୟ ସିନା ସିଏ ଗୋଟେ ଯାଗାରେ ବସି ପାରେନା, କାହା ସହ କଥା ହେବାକୁ ହେଲେ ତାକୁ ବେଶୀ ସମୟ ଲାଗିଯାଏ । ଏବେ ନିରୋଳାରେ ବସିଗଲେ ଦିପିକା କାରଣ ଖୋଜେ । ସଚିନ୍ ଏମିତି ହେଲା କାହିଁକି ? ତା’ ବୟସର ପିଲାଙ୍କର କଥାରେ ବାଗୁଳି ବାଜେନା, ତାର କ’ଣ ହେଲା, କେଉଁଥିରେ ତାର ଉଣା ପଡ଼ିଲା କି ? କାହିଁକି ତା’ର ଅତି ପ୍ରିୟ ସାଙ୍ଗ କେହି ନାହାନ୍ତି ? ସବୁବେଳେ ସେଇ ଫୋନ୍‌ଧରି ବା ଲାପଟପ୍ ଧରି ଖେଳରେ ମଜ୍ଜି ରହି, ସାମାଜିକତା ସେ ପିଲାଟା ଶିଖି ପାରିଲାନି । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବି ଭଲ ଭାବେ କହି ପାରେନି । ସବୁର କାରଣ ହେଉଛି ଏକୂଟିଆ ପିଲା । ଘରେ ବାପ ମାଆଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ କଥା ହେବାକୁ ବୋଧେ ଭଲ ଲାଗେନା । ବାପାଙ୍କର ଖୁବ କଢ଼ା ନଜର ତା’ ଉପରେ । କୁଆଡ଼େ ଟିକିଏ ଗଲେ ଚାହିଁ ବସିଥିବେ । ଥରକୁ ପାଞ୍ଚ ଥର କବାଟ ପାଖକୁ ଯାଇ ଦେଖି ଆସିବେ । କାହିଁକି ସମୟରେ ଫୋନ୍ କଲାଣି ବୋଲି ହଜାର ତାରିଦା କରିବେ ତାକୁ । ସ୍ଵାମୀଙ୍କର ବ୍ୟସ୍ତତା ଦେଖି ଦିପିକା କଥା ଲାଘବ କରିବାକୁ ଇଆଡୁ ସିଆଡୁ ଗପ ଯୋଡ଼େ । ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ହେଲେ ବା କ’ଣ କରି ହେବ ? ଦୁନିଆ ଯେଉଁ ଆଡ଼କୁ ଗତି କଲାଣି, ପୁଅ ଝିଅ କ’ଣ କରିବେ ତା ବି କିଏ କହି ପାରିବ ? ଦୁଇ ମାସ ତଳେ ଦିପିକା ଶୁଣିଥିଲା ଯେ ଚିକାଗୋରେ କେଉଁ ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କର ଏଗାର ବର୍ଷର ପୁଅ ସୁଇସାଇଡ୍ କରି ଦେଲା, ସ୍କୁଲ ସାଙ୍ଗ ମାନେ ଫେସ୍‌ବୁକ୍‌ରେ ଯୋଡ଼ି ଯାଡ଼ି ତାର ଫଟୋ ପକାଇଲେ ବୋଲି । ଆଜିକାଲି ଏ ଘଟଣା କିଛି ନୂଆ ନୁହେଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଦମ୍ଭ ଧରି ସବୁକୁ ସାହସର ସହିତ ସାମନା କରି ପାରିଲେ ତ ! ସେଥିପାଇଁ ସଚିନ୍‌ର ରୂପଚାପ୍ ପ୍ରକୃତିକୁ ବଦଳାଇବାକୁ ବହୁତ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରିଛି ସିଏ । କିନ୍ତୁ କଥାରେ ତ ଅଛି, ‘ମତେ ଯେତେ ମାଠିରୁ ମାଠ, ମୁଁ ସେଇ ଦରପୋଡ଼ା କାଠ’ ।

ସମୟତ ଏକ, ଏକ-ମୁହାଁ ନଦୀ । ତାକୁ ଫେରାଇ ଆଣି ହେବନି । ସଚିନ୍ ଟେକ୍ସ୍‌ସ୍‌ରେ ଚାକିରୀ ପାଇ ଘରୁ ଯିବାର ଛ’ ମାସ ହେଲାଣି । ଏବେ କହୁଛି ତାର ସେଠି ବହୁତ ସାଙ୍ଗ । ଭାରତରୁ ବି କିଛି ପିଲା ଆସି ତା’ ସହ କାମ କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ଛ’ ଜଣ ଝିଅ ପୁଅ । ପାଖା ପାଖି ଆପାର୍ଟମେଣ୍ଟରେ ରହନ୍ତି । ରାଉରକେଲାର ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଝିଅଟିଏ ବି ଅଛି ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ । ଦିପିକା ଭାବୁଛି, ଯଦି ତା’ ଭାଗ୍ୟ ଭଲ ଥାଆନ୍ତା ସଚିନ୍ ସେଇମିତି ଝିଅଟିଏ ବି ତା’ ପାଇଁ ଖୋଜନ୍ତା । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଝିଅ, ଓଡ଼ିଶାରୁ ଆସିଛି, ଭଲ ବୋହୁଟିଏ ହୁଅନ୍ତା । ଘରେ ତ ଛ ଟା ବା ନ’ଟା ପିଲା ନାହାନ୍ତି, ଅବସର ପରେ ସେମାନେ ବି ଯାଇ ବାକି ସମୟ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପାଖେ କଟାନ୍ତେ । କିନ୍ତୁ କାହା ଭାଗ୍ୟରେ କ’ଣ ଅଛି କିଏ ଜାଣେ ? ଦିପିକା ଭାଗ୍ୟରେ ତ ଅନେକ କଷ୍ଟ ଲେଖା । ସିଏ ଯାହା କରେ, ଯାହା ପାଏ, ଯାହା ଅନ୍ୟ ମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ସାଧାରଣ, ତା ପାଇଁ କେତେ ସେଣାରେ ପାଣି ଉଠିଲେ ଯାଇ ତାହା ହୁଏ । ତେଣୁ ଦିପିକା ପାଇଁ ଭଲ ବୋହୁଟିଏ ଯେ ସହଜରେ ମିଳିଯିବ ତା କିଏ କହିବ ?

ଜୀବନର ଗତି ବଡ଼ ବିଚିତ୍ର । ବିଚିତ୍ର ଏ ମଣିଷର ମନ । ମନକୁ ଯଦି ରୁଝି ହୁଅନ୍ତା ତାହେଲେ ସଂପର୍କ ଗଢ଼ିବା ବା ସଂପର୍କକୁ ପରସ୍ପର ଭିତରେ ଗଭୀର କରିବା କେତେ ସହଜ ହୋଇ ଯାଆନ୍ତା ! ଦିପିକା ମଜ୍ଜିଗଲା ଚିନ୍ତାରେ । ସେ ଚିନ୍ତାର ପରିସର କେବଳ ନିଜ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସୀମାବଦ୍ଧ । କେବଳ ନିଜର ସ୍ଵାର୍ଥ । ସେଇ ଛୋଟ ବିକଳ ସ୍ଵାର୍ଥପରତା ଏକ ମା’ର ସ୍ଵାର୍ଥ — ଚିନ୍ତା ଖାଲି ପୁଅ ପାଇଁ । ପୁଅ କେମିତି ମଣିଷଟିଏ ହୋଇ ତା ନିଜର ସଂସାର କରିବ ଆଉ ସାକାର କରିବ ସ୍ନେହ କାଙ୍ଗାଳ ମା’ର ସ୍ଵପ୍ନ । ‘ସ୍ଵପ୍ନ ଯେ ଏକ ବିଳାସ’ ଦିପିକା ଭୁଲିଗଲା । ପୁଣି ଛାଇ-ଛାଇଆ ଶୁନାପନ ନିକଟେଇ ଆସିଲା । ମନଟିଏ ଛାଇ ହୋଇ ଛପିଗଲା ଦୂର ଦିଗ୍‌ବଳୟ ତଳେ ।



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Elkridge, MD 20175

ଅନୁପମାର ବର

ସ୍ୱପ୍ନଳତା ମିଶ୍ର (ରଥ)

କା ଉତ୍ସର ପାଖରେ ଯେ କରିବାକୁ ଯାଇ ପ୍ରୀତି ଦେଖେତ ଲମ୍ବା ଲାଲନ୍ । ଆଜି କି ସେସିଆଲ୍ ତେ ଯେ ଏତେ ଭିତ ଲାଗିଛି ଦିଆଲି କି ହୋଲି ସେଲ୍ ତ ଏବେ ନାହିଁ । ଝିଅର ଜିନ୍ଦ୍ ଥିଲା ଅଫିସ୍‌ରୁ ଫେରିବାବେଳେ ସମୋସା ଆଣି ଆସିବାକୁ । ଘରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିବାକୁ ଡେରିହେଇ ଯିବ.... ବେବିସିଟର ମୁହଁ ଫୁଲେଇକି ବସିଥିବ... କିନ୍ତୁ ଲାଲନ୍ ବେଶ୍ ଲମ୍ବା ଅଛି । ସାମ୍ନାରେ ଠିଆହେଇଥିବା ଭଦ୍ର ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି କିନ୍ତୁ ଶାନ୍ତ ଭାବରେ ଇଣ୍ଡିଆ ଗୁଡେର ପୃଷ୍ଠା ଓଲଟାଇଛନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କୁ ଶୁଣାଗଲା ପରି ପ୍ରୀତି କହିଲା, ହ୍ୱାଟସ୍ ଗୋଇଙ୍ଗ୍ ଓନ.... ହ୍ୱାଇ ସୋ କ୍ରାଉଡେଡ୍ ଗୁଡେ... ଇଟସ୍ ଏ ଉଇକ୍‌ଡେ । ଭଦ୍ରଲୋକ ମୁହଁ ଉଠେଇ ଅଳ୍ପ ହସି କହିଲେ ଭିଡ୍ ସାୟଦ୍ ରାକ୍ଷୀ କେ ଲିୟେ । ପ୍ରୀତି ପତ୍ନୀଭାବରେ କହିଲା ... ରାକ୍ଷୀ ! ହେନ୍, କର୍ ! ଭଦ୍ରଲୋକ ହସି ହସି ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଲେ “ଓନ୍‌ଲି ଗୁ ଉଇକ୍... ନିଡ୍ ଗୁ ବି ମେଲ୍‌ଡ ବାଇ ଗୁମୋରୋ । ଉଇ ହାଭ୍ ଏ ନିଡ୍ ବର୍ନ ବେବି ଗାର୍ଲ । ସୋ ଆଇ ଆମ୍ ହିଅର୍ ଗୁ ହେଲପ୍ ମାଇ ଡ୍ୱାଇଫ୍ ଗୁ ଗେଟ୍ ଇଟ୍... ଇଟ୍ ଇଜ୍ ଆଡ୍ୱାର ତଟର’ସ୍ ଫାଷ୍ଟ ରାକ୍ଷୀ ୠ, ସୋ ଉଇ ଡ୍ୱାଷ୍ଟ ଗୁ ସେଷ୍ଟ ଇଟ୍ ଗୁ ହର୍ ଏବ୍ରୁ କଜିନ୍ ୠ ।” ପ୍ରୀତିର ଆଖି ଭଦ୍ରଲୋକଙ୍କ ବାସ୍‌କେଟ୍‌ରେ ବୁଲି ଆସିଲା । ହେ ଭଗବାନ୍ ଏତେ ଗୁଡାଏ ରାକ୍ଷୀ ! ଲୋକଟା ଦୋକାନ୍ ଖୋଲିବନା କ’ଣ ! ତା ଭାବନାରେ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣହେଦ ପକାଇ ଭଦ୍ରଲୋକ ପଚାରିଲେ ... ତୁ ଇଉ ହାଭ୍ ବ୍ରଦର୍ସ ? ତୁ ଇଉ ସେଷ୍ଟ ରାକ୍ଷୀ ୠ ! ଆଇ ହାଭ୍ ଗୁ ସିଷ୍ଟର୍ସ ଆଣ୍ଡ୍ ଫାଇଭ୍ କଜିନ୍‌ସ୍ ଆଣ୍ଡ୍ ସମ୍ ଅଦର୍ ଫ୍ରେଣ୍ଡ୍‌ସ୍ ହୁ ଅଲସୋ ସେଷ୍ଟ ମି ରାକ୍ଷି ଏବ୍ରୁ ଇଅର୍” । “ଓଃ ଦାଟ’ସ୍ ଗ୍ରେଟ୍”.... ‘ନୋ ଆଇ ଡୋଷ୍ଟ ସେଷ୍ଟ ଇଟ୍ ଗୁ ଏନିବଡି.... ନଟ୍ ଯେଟ୍ ଏ ଫେବରାଇଟ୍ ଗ୍ରାଡିସନ୍ ଇନ ଆଡ୍ୱାର ଫାମିଲି.... ଦ୍ୟାଟ୍ ଗୁ ଆଇ ଆମ୍ ଓନ୍‌ଲି ତଟର.... ଆଇ ଜଷ୍ଟ ହାଭ୍ ଡ୍ୱାନ୍ ତଟର ୠ... ସି ହାଜ୍ ନୋ ଆଇଡିଆ ଏବାଉଟ୍ ରାକ୍ଷୀ ଯେଟ୍ ।” ଭଦ୍ର ଲୋକ ପଚାରିଲେ... ଆମ୍ କହାଁସେ ହେ ?, ‘ଓଡ଼ିଶା’ ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଲା ପ୍ରୀତି.... “ଓଃ ଓଡ଼ିଶା, ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଧାମ୍, ଭାଇ ବହନ୍ କି ଅପନି ଗାଓଁ” ହସି ହସି

କହିଲେ ଭଦ୍ରଲୋକ, “ଆଇ ମିନ୍ ଲର୍ଡ୍ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ, ବଲଭଦ୍ର, ସୁଭଦ୍ରା”..... ଏମିତି କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା ର ସୁଅ ଭିତରେ ସେମାନେ କେତେବେଳେ କାଉତୁକ ପାଖରେ ପହଞ୍ଚି ସାରିଥିଲେ । ଭଦ୍ରଲୋକ ଡ୍ୱାଇଭିଂ କାର୍ଡିଂ ବାହାର କରି ପ୍ରୀତି ହାତକୁ ବଢେଇଦେଇ କହିଲେ ... ପ୍ଲିଜ୍ ତ୍ରପ୍ ବାଇ ସମ୍ ଚାଇମ୍... ଉଇ ଆର୍ ଇସକନ୍ ମେମ୍‌ବରସ୍, ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଡିଭୋଟିଜ୍, ମାଇ ଡ୍ୱାଇଫ୍ ଉଇଲ୍ ବି ହାପି ଗୁ ମିଟ୍ ଇଉ, ସିନ୍‌ସ୍ ଇଉ ଆର୍ ଫୁମ୍ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଆଣ୍ଡ୍ ସି ଲଭ୍‌ସ୍ ଓଡ଼ିଶା । ଉଇ ଗୋ ଗୁ ପୁରୀ ଇନ୍ ଏଭରି ଇଣ୍ଡିଆ ଟ୍ରିପ୍ । ହର୍ ନେମ୍ ଇଜ୍ ଅନୁପମା ।” ସିଓର୍ କହି କାର୍ଡିଂ ଆଣି ପର୍ସରେ ରଖିଲା ପ୍ରୀତି ।”

କାଉତୁକରେ ଯେ କରିସାରି ସବୁ ଜିନିଷ ଗାଡ଼ିରେ ରଖି ଗାଡ଼ି ଷ୍ଟାର୍ଟ୍ କଲା, ଘରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିବାକୁ ଆହୁରି କୋଡ଼ିଏ ମିନିଟ୍ ଲାଗିବ ।

ଅନୁପମା ନାଁ ଚିରେ ଯେମିତି ଏକ ଯାଦୁକରୀ ସ୍ୱର୍ଣ୍ଣ ରହିଥିଲା । ଏକ ନାଁ ସହିତ ଜଡ଼ିତ ଗୋଟିଏ ମୁହଁ ବହୁଦିନ ପରେ ଆଖି ସାମ୍ନାରେ ନାଟିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଥିଲା । ଅନୁପମା ଏକ ବିଗତ ଅତୀତର ନାଁ ଯାହା ବିଗତ ସମୟ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ନିରୁଦ୍ଧିଷ୍ଟ ଅନେକ ଦିନରୁ, କେଉଁଠିଥିବ ସିଏ, କ’ଣ କରୁଥିବ, କିଛି ଖବର ରଖିନଥିଲା ପ୍ରୀତି । ଯଦିଓ ଅନୁପମାକୁ ବାଦ୍‌ଦେଇ ଶୈଶବ, ଆଦ୍ୟ ଯୌବନ ଏବଂ ପ୍ରାକ୍ ବୈବାହିକ ସମୟର ସ୍ମୃତି ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ନୁହେଁ ତା ପାଇଁ । ସାତ ଭାଇ ଭଉଣୀଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ସେ ସବା ସାନ ଥିଲା । ଛଅ ଭାଇଙ୍କର ଗେହ୍ଲୁ ଭଉଣୀ ଥିଲା ଅନୁପମା । କେତେ ଗେହ୍ଲୁ ଥିଲା ସେ ନିଜେ ଜାଣିଥିଲା, କିନ୍ତୁ ଅନବରତ ଭାଇ ମାନଙ୍କର ସେବା କରିବା ଯେମିତି ତା ଜୀବନର ଧର୍ମ ଥିଲା । ସବୁ ଭାଇମାନେ ବେଶ୍ ଭଲ ଛାତ୍ର ଥିଲେ, କିନ୍ତୁ ଅନୁପମା ଗୁଣରେ ଯେତିକି ଭଲ ଥିଲା ପାଠରେ ସେତିକି ଖରାପ କରୁଥିଲା । ଅନୁପମାର ବାପା ଥିଲେ ଜଣେ ଆଦର୍ଶ ଶିକ୍ଷକ । ଅନୁପମାର ମା’ ଥିଲେ ଖୁବ୍ ସ୍ନେହମୟୀ, ମାତ୍ର ରୋଗ କେମିତି ତାଙ୍କ ଦେହକୁ ଘର କରି ନେଇଥିଲା । ତେଣୁ ଅଳ୍ପ ବୟସରୁ ଅନୁପମା ଘରର ସବୁ ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ନେଇଥିଲା, ସତେ ଯେମିତି ସାରା ପରିବାରର ସେ ମାଆ । ତା ମୁହଁର ସ୍ମିତ ହସ କଲା ମୁହଁରେ

ସବୁଠାରୁ ଆକର୍ଷଣୀୟ, ଏବେ ବି ଆଖି ବନ୍ଦ କଲେ ସେ ଅନୁପମାର ହସର ଝଲକ ଦେଖିପାରେ । ଏକ ଚମତ୍କାର ଔଜ୍ଜ୍ୱଳ୍ୟତା ଭରି ରହିଥାଏ ସେହି ହସରେ । କଳାରଙ୍ଗର ମୁହଁରେ ଚଣା ଚଣା ଦୁଇଟି ନିରୀହ ଆଖିରେ ସବୁବେଳେ ଯେମିତି ଏକ ପରିପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଅନୁଭବ ଢଳ ଢଳ ହେଉଥାଏ । ପ୍ରୀତି ଏମେ.ଏସ୍.ସି ପଢ଼ିବା ପାଇଁ ବାଣୀବିହାର ନ ଯିବା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଏମିତି ଗୋଟିଏ ଦିନ ନଥାଏ ଯେଉଁଦିନ ଅନୁପମା ଆଉ ପ୍ରୀତି ପରସ୍ପରକୁ ଦେଖିନଥାନ୍ତି । ଯଦିଓ ପ୍ରୀତି କୃତୀ ଛାତ୍ରୀଥିଲା ଏବଂ ଗୋଟିଏ ଝିଅ ହେଇ ଖୁବ୍ ଗେହ୍ଲୁରେ ବଢୁଥିଲା, ଅନୁପମା ଇ ଥିଲା ତା’ର ପ୍ରିୟ ସଖୀ । ପ୍ରୀତିର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଥିଲା ଜଣେ ଅଧ୍ୟାପିକା ହେବା ଆଉ ଅନୁପମାର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଥିଲା ବାହାହେଇ ଘର ସଂସାର କରିବ । ବାପାଙ୍କ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ ପୂରଣ କରିବାକୁ ଅନୁପମା ବି.ଏ କଷ୍ଟେ ମଷ୍ଟେ ପାସ୍ କରିଗଲା ପରେ ପ୍ରୀତିକୁ କହିଥିଲା “ଯା ତୁ ପଢୁଥା ମୋର ଗୋଟେ କାମ ସରିଗଲା ... ଯେତେ ପଢ଼ିଲେ ସେଇ ତ ବାହାହେଇ ତୁଲ୍ଲୀ ମୂଳରେ ପଶିବି ତେଣୁ କାହିଁକି ଅଯଥା କଷ୍ଟ କରିବି ମୁଁ ମୋର ଅସଲ ଜୀବନ ପାଇଁ ମୋ ବୋଉ ପାଖରୁ ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ ଚେନିଙ୍ଗ ପାଇଛି, ଏବେ ମୁଁ ଖାଲି ଚାକିରୀକୁ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରିବି । ମୋ ବାହାଘରକୁ ଯୋଉଠିଥିଲେ ବି ତୁ ଆସିବୁ, ପରୀକ୍ଷା ବାହାନା କରି ରହିଯିବୁନି ।” ପ୍ରୀତି ଉତ୍ତରରେ କହିଥିଲା, “କୋଉଠି କାହାକୁ ଠିକ୍ କରିବି ରଖିଛୁ କିଲୋ ! ହେଉ ତେବ୍ ଚା ମୋତେ ପଚାରିବି ଠିକ୍ କରିବୁ ।” ଦୁଇସାଙ୍ଗ ହସି ହସି ଗତିଯାଇଥିଲେ ।

ବାଣୀବିହାରରେ ପ୍ରୀତିର ଭେଟ ହୋଇଥିଲା ପ୍ରଣବଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ, ରିସର୍ଚ୍ଚ କରୁଥିଲେ ସେ । ବାହା ହେବାକୁ ଆଦୌ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଦେଖୁନଥିବା ପ୍ରୀତି ପ୍ରଣବଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ... କେମିତି ... କେତେବେଳେ ସଂସାର ବାନ୍ଧିବାର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ରଚି ବସିଲା ସେ ନିଜେ ବି ଜାଣି ପାରିଲାନି । ସବୁ ଯେମିତି ପୂର୍ବ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଧାରିତ ହୋଇ ରହିଥିଲା, ଖାଲି ସମୟର ଅପେକ୍ଷାରେ ଥିଲେ ଘଟଣାମାନ ଘଟିଯିବାକୁ ... ସୌମ୍ୟଦର୍ଶନ ଅଧ୍ୟାପକ ପ୍ରଣବଙ୍କ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବରେ ବାପା, ମା’ଙ୍କର ଅରାଜି ହେବାର କାରଣ ନଥିଲା, ଏମ୍.ଏସ୍.ସି ପାସ୍ କରୁ କରୁ ସେ ପ୍ରଣବଙ୍କୁ ବାହା ହେଇଗଲା, ବାହାଘର ପାଞ୍ଚବର୍ଷ ଭିତରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ପିଲାଟା ମା ହେଇ ସାରିଥିଲା ଆଉ ଏମ୍.ଫିଲ୍ ସାରି ଅଧ୍ୟାପିକା ଭାବେ ଚାକିରୀ ବି ଆରମ୍ଭ କରି ସାରିଥିଲା । ମାତ୍ର ଅନୁପମା ଜୀବନରେ ସେମିତି କିଛି ବିଶେଷ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଆସିନଥିଲା ଆଉ, କେବଳ ବଡ଼ ଭାଇ ମାନଙ୍କର ପରିବାର ବୃଦ୍ଧି ଆଉ ବାପାଙ୍କର ଅକାଳ ବିୟୋଗ ବ୍ୟତୀତ । ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ପରେ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଭାଙ୍ଗୁଥିଲା, କାରଣ ଥିଲା ତା ଦେହର ରଙ୍ଗ ଆଉ ଯୌତୁକ, ପ୍ରୀତି ଥର ଅନୁପମାକୁ ଦେଖିଲେ ଦୁଃଖ ଲାଗେ ପ୍ରୀତିକୁ, କିନ୍ତୁ ସେ

ଦୁଃଖର ଚିହ୍ନ କୋଉଠି ନଥାଏ ଅନୁପମାର ମୁହଁରେ, କିଛିବି ବଦଳି ନଥିଲା ସେ, ଭାଉଜମାନଙ୍କ ଉପସ୍ଥିତି ସତ୍ତ୍ୱେ ସେ ସେମିତି ଘରର ସବୁ ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ନେଇ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ଖୁବ୍ ହସଖୁସିରେ ଦିନ କାଟୁଥିଲା, ଦୁଃଖୀ ଥିଲେ କେବଳ ମାଉସୀ, ଯିଏ ଜାଣିଥିଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ଝିଅର ଢଳଢଳ ଆଖି ପତାତଳେ ଲୁଚିରହିଥିବା ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ, ନିଜର ଘର ସଂସାର କରିବାର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ । ଚାହିଁ କି ବି କିଛି କରିପାରୁ ନଥିଲା ପ୍ରୀତି । ଏ ଭିତରେ ପ୍ରଣବ ଆମେରିକା ଆସିବା ପାଇଁ ନିଷ୍ପତ୍ତି ନେଲେ । ଆମେରିକା ଆସିବା ପାଇଁ ଆୟୋଜନ ଚାଲିବା ଭିତରେ, ହଠାତ୍ ଅନୁପମାର ବାହାଘର ଖବର ପାଇ ପ୍ରୀତି ପ୍ରଣବଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ନ ଆସି ପଛରେ ଆସିବାକୁ ଠିକ୍ କଲା । ପ୍ରଣବ ଭାରତ ଛାଡ଼ିବା ପରେ ପ୍ରୀତି ଝିଅକୁ ନେଇ ବାପ ଘରକୁ ଚାଲିଯାଇଥିଲା । ଅନୁପମାର ଭାବି ବର ଜଣେ ବ୍ୟବସାୟୀ ଥିଲେ । ନିଜ ଗାଁରେ ଖୁବ୍ ପ୍ରତିପତ୍ତି ଥିଲା ତାଙ୍କର । ଘରର ବଡ଼ପୁଅ ଥିଲେ ସେ, ପରିବାରର ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ଥିଲା ଅନୁପମା ପରି ଗୁଣବତୀ ବୋହୂ, ଯିଏ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ଯତ୍ନ ନେବ । ଯୌତୁକରେ ସେମାନେ ଯାହା ଚାହୁଁଥିଲେ ଭାଇମାନେ ସବୁ ଦେବାପାଇଁ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ ଥିଲେ, ଅନୁପମାକୁ ସତେଜଶ ହେବାକୁ ଯାଉଥିଲା, ଏବେ ବୟସ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ଯୌତୁକ ଦାବି ବି ବଢ଼ିବ, ତେଣୁ ଭାଇମାନେ କିଛି ଜମି ବିକ୍ରି କରି ଗେହ୍ଲୁ ଭଉଣୀର ବାହାଘର କରିବାର ନିଷ୍ପତ୍ତି ନେଇଥିଲେ । ଯାହାକି ଅନୁପମାର ବାପାଙ୍କ ବଞ୍ଚୁଥିବା ବେଳେ ସମ୍ଭବ ହେଇନଥାନ୍ତା, ତାଙ୍କ ଆଦର୍ଶବାଦ କାରଣରୁ । ଯୌତୁକ ପ୍ରଥାର ଘୋର୍ ବିରୋଧ ଥିଲେ ସେ । ଯୌତୁକ ନେବିନି କି ଦେବିନି, ଏହାଥିଲା ତାଙ୍କର ଜିଦ୍ । ଭାଉଜମାନେ ଗରୀବ ଘର ଝିଅଥିଲେ, ଯେଉଁମାନଙ୍କୁ ମଉସା ଏକ ରକମର ଉଦ୍ଧାର କରିଥିଲେ ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟତାରୁ । ସୁଯୋଗ୍ୟ ଭାଇମାନେ ବି ବିନା ଆପତ୍ତିରେ ମଉସାଙ୍କ କଥା ମାନି ନେଇଥିଲେ କେବଳ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଜିଦ୍ ଥିଲା ଝିଅକୁ ନିଜେ ପସନ୍ଦ କରିବେ । ମାତ୍ର ଅନୁପମାର ଦେହର ରଙ୍ଗ ତାର ଶତ୍ରୁ ଥିଲା, ସବୁ ଭଲ ଗୁଣକୁ ଦେଖିବା ଆଗରୁ ବରପାତ୍ର ଏବଂ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଘର ଲୋକ ମାନଙ୍କର ନଜର ପଡୁଥିଲା ତା ଦେହର ରଙ୍ଗ ଉପରେ । ଏମିତିକା ତା ହସର ଯାଦୁକରୀ ସ୍ୱର୍ଣ୍ଣବି କାହାକୁ ଛୁଇଁ ପାରୁନଥିଲା । ଅନୁପମା ପାଇଁ, ଅନୁପମାର ପରିବାର ପାଇଁ ଓ ପ୍ରୀତି ପାଇଁ ବହୁ ପ୍ରତୀକ୍ଷିତ ଥିଲେ ଅନୁପମାର ବର ।

ଅନୁପମାର ବାହାଘର ଆୟୋଜନରେ ଅନୁପମାର ଭାଉଜମାନଙ୍କୁ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିବା ଭିତରେ ଅନୁପମା ଆନନ୍ଦକୁ ମନଭରି ଉପଭୋଗ କରିଥିଲା । କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା ଛଳରେ ଅନୁପମାଠାରୁ ପ୍ରୀତି ଜାଣିପାରିଥିଲା, ଅନୁପମାର ଭାବି ବର ଅମାୟିକ, ବେଶ୍ ଭଦ୍ର, ବି.ଏ

ପାଶ୍ କରିଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ରଙ୍ଗରେ ତା'ଠୁ କଳା, ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଆସିଲାବେଳେ ଇୟାତୁ ସିଆତୁ କଥା ପଚାରି ତାକୁ ହଇରାଣ କରିନଥିଲେ । ଅନୁପମା ଖୁସିଥିଲା, ବେଶ୍ ଖୁସି ଥିଲା । ସ୍ୱପ୍ନର ମଣିଷକୁ ପାଇଲା ବୋଲି ନା ତା ଜୀବନର ଏକମାତ୍ର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ସତ ହେଲା ବୋଲି, କାହିଁକି ସେ ନିଜେ ଜାଣିଥିବ । ପୁଣିଥରେ ଅନୁପମା ଆଉ ପ୍ରୀତିଙ୍କର ରାତି ଅନିଦ୍ରା ଗପ, ଥଙ୍ଗା ମଜା ଭିତରେ ଦୁଇ ମାସ କୁଆଡେ ଚାଲିଗଲା ଜଣା ପଡ଼ିଲାନି । ନିମନ୍ତଣ ପତ୍ର ବନ୍ଧା ସରିଥାଏ । ବନ୍ଧୁ ବାନ୍ଧବଙ୍କ ଭିତ ଆସ୍ତେ ଆସ୍ତେ ବହୁଥାଏ । ଚାରିଦିନ ପରେ ବାହାଘର । ହଠାତ୍ ଖବର ଆସିଲା ବର ପାତ୍ରର ବ୍ୟବସାୟରେ ବହୁତ ବଡ଼ ଧରଣର କ୍ଷତି ହେଇଯାଇଛି, ଦୁଇ ଲକ୍ଷ ଟଙ୍କା ନଗଦ ଦରକାର । ଯଦି ଦେଇପାରିବେ ବାହାଘର ହେବ, ନଚେତ୍ ବାହାଘର ଏବେ ବନ୍ଦ କରିବାକୁ ବାଧ୍ୟହେବେ ବରପକ୍ଷ । ସମସ୍ତେ ଭାବିଲେ ଯେମିତି ସେମିତି ବାହାଘର କରିଦେଇ ପରେ ଦୁଇ ଲକ୍ଷ ଟଙ୍କା କଥା ବୁଝିବେ । ଆଗରୁ ଛିଡ଼ିଥିବା କଥାକୁ ଯାହା କିଛି ଯୋଗାଡ଼ କରିବାକଥା ସବୁ ସରିଥିଲା, ଯୌତୁକର ଲମ୍ବା ଧାଡ଼ି ଥିଲା ତାସହିତ ଲକ୍ଷେ ଟଙ୍କା । ବାହାଘର ସରିବା ପରେ ପରେ ଦୁଇଲକ୍ଷ ଟଙ୍କା ଦେବାର ପ୍ରତିଶ୍ରୁତି ପରେ ବାହାଘର କାମ ଆଗକୁ ବଢ଼ିଥିଲା । ମାତ୍ର ବାହାଘର ଦିନ ଆଉଥରେ ଖବର ଆସିଲା ତିନି ଲକ୍ଷ ଟଙ୍କା ନେଇ ବରଧରାକୁ ଆସିବାକୁ ହେବ । ସବୁ ଭାଇମାନେ ଏତେ ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚ କରିସାରିଥିଲେଯେ ଆଉ କେହି ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚ କରିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁନଥିଲେ । ସାରା ପରିବାର ରଣରେ ବୁଡ଼ି ଯାଇଥିଲେ । ଅଗତ୍ୟା ଅନୁପମାର ବାହାଘର ଆୟୋଜନ ସେତିକିରେ ରହିଲା । ରାତି ପାହିଲେ ହେବାକୁ ଥିବା ବାହାଘର ଭାଙ୍ଗିଗଲା, ଜଣକ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ସାରା ଜୀବନ ସୁଖ ଦୁଃଖର ସାଥୀ ହୋଇ ରହିବାର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନକୁ ଲୁହରେ ଧୋଇ ଭସେଇ ଦେବାକୁ ହେଇଥିଲା ଅନୁପମାକୁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ପରଦିନ ଯେମିତି କିଛି ହେଇନି, କିଛି ହେବାର ନଥିଲା ସେମିତି ଅବିଚଳିତ ଥିଲା ଅନୁପମା । ସବୁଦିନ ପରି ସକାଳୁ ଉଠି ଘରକାମରେ ଲାଗି ପଡ଼ିଥିଲା । ଘରକୁ ଆସିଥିବା କୁଣିଆ ମାନଙ୍କର ଚର୍ଚ୍ଚା, ପରିବାରରେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ଦୈନନ୍ଦିନ ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ଅନୁସାରେ ଯାହା ଯେମିତି କରିବାକଥା କରି ଚାଲିଥିଲା । ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହେଇଥିଲା ପ୍ରୀତି ଅନୁପମାର ମନୋବଳ ଦେଖି । ଭାଇ, ବନ୍ଧୁବାନ୍ଧବ ମାନେ ଚିନ୍ତାରେ ବୁଡ଼ିଥିବାବେଳେ ହଠାତ୍ ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ଘଟଣା ଘଟିଲା । ମଉସାଙ୍କର ଜଣେ ଛାତ୍ର ଯିଏକି ଶିକ୍ଷକ ଭାବରେ କାମ କରୁଥିଲେ ଗୋଟିଏ ହାଇସ୍କୁଲରେ ଏବଂ ଅନୁପମାର ବାହାଘରରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେବାକୁ ବାହାଘର ପୂର୍ବ ଦିନ ଆସି ପହଞ୍ଚିଥିଲେ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଦେଲେ ଅନୁପମାକୁ ବାହା ହେବା ପାଇଁ, ବିନା ଯୌତୁକରେ । ଭଦ୍ରଲୋକଙ୍କ

ନା ଥିଲା ଅମୂଲ୍ୟ ମିଶ୍ର । ପରିବାର କହିଲେ ଥିଲେ ତାଙ୍କର ଜଣେ ବୁଢ଼ୀ ମା । ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଥିଲେ ସୌମ୍ୟ ଦର୍ଶନ, ବ୍ୟବହାର ଶାନ୍ତ ଶିଷ୍ଟ । ପ୍ରୀତିର ମନେ ହେଇଥିଲା ସେ ଜଣେ ଦେବଦୂତ, ଗୋଟିଏ ପରିବାରକୁ ଏତେ ବଡ଼ ଦୁଃଖଦ ପରିସ୍ଥିତିରୁ ଯେମିତି ଉଦ୍ଧାର କରିବାକୁ ଆସିଛନ୍ତି । ମାତ୍ର ଘରେ କେହି ଖୁସି ନଥିଲେ, ଏମିତି କି ଅନୁପମା ବି କାନ୍ଦିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲା । କାରଣ ସେ ଅମୂଲ୍ୟ ମିଶ୍ରକୁ ରାକ୍ଷୀ ବାନ୍ଧି ଭାଇ କରିଥିଲା, ମଉସାଙ୍କର ବହୁତ ଛାତ୍ର ଏବଂ ଭାଇ ମାନଙ୍କର ସାଙ୍ଗମାନଙ୍କୁ ଅନୁପମା ରାକ୍ଷୀ ବାନ୍ଧି ଭାଇ କରିଥିଲା । କେବେ ମଉସାଙ୍କ କଥାକୁ ଯାହା, କେବେ ଭଉଣୀ ନଥିବା ସାଙ୍ଗମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଭାଇ ମାନଙ୍କର ଅନୁରୋଧରେ । ପ୍ରୀତି ଚିତ୍ତହୁଣ୍ଡି ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ତ ଭାଇ କରୁଛି, ବାହା କାହାକୁ ହେବୁ ବ୍ରାହ୍ମଣମାନଙ୍କୁ ତ ଛାଡ଼ିଦେ, ତାହେଲେ କେହି ଜଣେ କୋଉଠି ରହିଯିବ ।” ଅନୁପମା ହସି ହସି କହେ “ମୋ ପାଇଁ ଯିଏ ଗଢ଼ା ହେଇଛି, ସେ ମୋର ହେବ, ମୁଁ ଏବେଠୁ କାହିଁକି ସତର୍କ ହେବି, ବରଂ ଭାଇ କରିଥିଲେ ପରିବାରର ବିପଦ ଆପଦରେ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ଠିଆହେବେ, ମୋ ଭାଇମାନଙ୍କୁ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିବେ ।” ପ୍ରୀତିଠାରୁ ଆଉ କେହି ଅଧିକ ଯାଣି ନଥିଲେ କେତେ ସୁଖଥିଲା ଅନୁପମାର ଚିନ୍ତାଧାରା । ଖାଲି ରାକ୍ଷୀ ବାନ୍ଧି ଦିଏନି, ରାକ୍ଷି ସଙ୍ଗରେ ଆନ୍ତରିକ ଭାବେ ମଙ୍ଗଳ କାମନା କରେ, ଘରକୁ ଆସିଲେ ନିଜ ଭାଇମାନଙ୍କ ପରି ଯତ୍ନିଏ, ଭରସା ବି କରେ । ପ୍ରୀତିକୁ ଦେବଦୂତ ପରି ମନେହେଉଥିବା ମଣିଷଟି କିନ୍ତୁ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ଆଖିରେ ଗର୍ବିତ ଅପରାଧ କରିପକେଇଥିବା ଦୋଷାଟିଏ ପରି ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ନିନ୍ଦାର ପାତ୍ର ହୋଇଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ଦୁଃଖରେ ବୁଡ଼ିରହିଥିବା ଅନୁପମାକୁ ମଧ୍ୟ କମ୍ ଅପନିନ୍ଦା ମିଳିନଥିଲା । କାରଣ ସେ ଭାଇ ଭାବୁଥିବା ଜଣେ ଶିକ୍ଷିତ ଯୁବକ ତାର ଏ ଅସହାୟ ପରିସ୍ଥିତିରେ ହଠାତ୍ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିବାକୁ ଆଗେଇ ଆସିଲେ, ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ଆଗରୁ କିଛି ଗୋପନ ସଂପର୍କ ଥିଲା, ଏମିତି ଅନେକ ଜଞ୍ଜନା ଜଞ୍ଜନା ଚାଲିଲା ଚିହ୍ନା ଜଣା ବନ୍ଧୁବାନ୍ଧବଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ । ମଉସାଙ୍କର ମନ ଥିଲେ ବି ଅନୁପମାର ଭାଇମାନେ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବରେ ରାଜି ହେଲେନି । ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଯୁକ୍ତିଥିଲା ଆଉ ମୁହଁ ଦେଖେଇ ହେବନି କାହାକୁ, ଲୋକେ ଭାବିବେ ବୋଧହୁଏ ଆଗରୁ କିଛି ସଂପର୍କ ଥିଲା, ଏଇ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଭାଙ୍ଗିବାଟା ଗୋଟେ ବାହାନା, କଥା ଉଠିପାରେ.... ସେଇଥିପାଇଁ ବାହାଘର ଭାଙ୍ଗିଗଲା । ବୁଝେଇବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରି ଅମୂଲ୍ୟ ମିଶ୍ର ଅପମାନ ପାଇ ଫେରିଲେ । ଭାଇମାନେ ଓ ବନ୍ଧୁବାନ୍ଧବ ମାନେ ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ସୁଯୋଗ୍ୟ ବରପାତ୍ର ଖୋଜିବାରେ ଲାଗିପଡ଼ିଲେ, ଏଥର ଆଉ କିଛି ଜମି ବିକ୍ରୀର ଯୋଜନା ବି ରହିଥିଲା । ବୋଝ ଉପରେ ନଳିତା ବିଡ଼ା ପରି ବୟସ୍କା ଅଭିଆଡ଼ି ଝିଅ ସହିତ

ବାହାଘର ଭାଙ୍ଗିଯାଇଥିବା ଭଳି ଦୁର୍ନୀମକୁ ନେଇ ଅନୁପମା ଜିଇଁବାକୁ ଶିଖୁଥିଲା ।

ଅନୁପମା ସହିତ ବାହାଘର ଭାଙ୍ଗିବାର ସପ୍ତାହେ ପରେ କିନ୍ତୁ ଅନୁପମାର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନର ମଣିଷଟର ବାହାଘର ଖୁବ୍ କାକଯମକରେ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠିତ ହେବାର ଖବର ଆସି ପହଞ୍ଚି ଯାଇଥିଲା । ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହେଲା ପ୍ରାତି... ଏତେ ଘୃଣ୍ୟ ବ୍ୟବସାୟିକ ମନୋବୃତ୍ତି ଲୋକଟାର ଗୋଟିଏ ଝିଅର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ, ଗୋଟିଏ ପରିବାରର ବିଶ୍ୱାସକୁ ଏମିତି କେମିତି ଭାଙ୍ଗିଦେଇପାରିଲା । ଅଥଚ ଅନୁପମାର ବାପାଙ୍କ ଆଦର୍ଶରେ ଅନୁପ୍ରାଣିତ ଅମୂଲ୍ୟ ମିଶ୍ର ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରି ବି ସେଇ ପରିବାରର ବିଶ୍ୱାସକୁ ଜିତିପାରିଲେନି, ହାରିଗଲେ ପରିବାରର ମିଥ୍ୟା ଅହଂ ଆଉ ସମାଜପ୍ରତି ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଥିବା ଭୟ ଆଗରେ । ଲୋକେ କେତେ ଦିନ କହିଥାନ୍ତେ, ପରେତ ରୂପ ହେଇଥାନ୍ତେ... ମାତ୍ର ଅନୁପମାକୁ ତ ଏମିତି ଅସହାୟତା ଭିତରେ ସମୟ କାଟିବାକୁ ହେଇନଥାନ୍ତା । ପ୍ରାତିକୁ ଅଣନିଃଶ୍ୱାସୀ ଲାଗୁଥିଲା ସେ ପରିବେଶରେ, ପ୍ରତି ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତରେ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା କରୁଥିଲା, କିଛି ଗୋଟେ ଚମତ୍କାରୀ ହୁଅନ୍ତାନି । କିନ୍ତୁ ନା କିଛି ବି ଚମତ୍କାରୀ ଘଟିନଥିଲା । ଦିନକୁ ଦିନ ଅନୁପମାର ଜୀବନ ଆହୁରି ଜଟିଳ ହେବାକୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲା । ମାଉସୀଙ୍କର ଦେହ ଦିନକୁ ଦିନ ଆହୁରି ଆହୁରି ଖରାପ ରହିଲା, ଘରେ ବାହାଘର ପାଇଁ ହେଇସାରିଥିବା ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚକୁ ନେଇ ଭାଇମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ମନୋମାଳିନ୍ୟ ଆଉ ସାହି ପଡ଼ିଶାଙ୍କ ଆଲୋଚନା ସମାଲୋଚନା ଭିତରେ ପରିବେଶ ଖୁବ୍ ବିରକ୍ତକର ହେବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲା । ମାସକ ଭିତରେ ପ୍ରାତିକୁ ଆମେରିକା ଆସିବାର ହେଲା । ଏମିତି ଗୋଟେ ପରିସ୍ଥିତି ଭିତରେ ଅନୁପମାକୁ ଛାଡ଼ିଆସିବା ବେଳେ କାନ୍ଦି ପକେଇଥିଲା ପ୍ରାତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଅନୁପମା ଯେମିତି ପଥର ପାଲଟି ଯାଇଥିଲା । ନା କାନ୍ଦୁଥିଲା ନା ହସୁଥିଲା, ଖାଲି ଯନ୍ତ୍ର ଭଳି କାମ କରି ଯାଉଥିଲା । ଛ' ମାସ ପରେ ପ୍ରାତି ମା' ଠାରୁ ଶୁଣିଥିଲା ଅନୁପମାର ବାହାଘର ଜଣେ ମଧ୍ୟ ବୟସ୍କଙ୍କ ସହ ସ୍ଥିର ହୋଇଯାଇଛି ବିନା ଯୌତୁକରେ, ଭଦ୍ରଲୋକଙ୍କର ପ୍ରଥମ ପତ୍ନୀ କିଛି ବର୍ଷତଳେ ମରିଯାଇଥିଲେ ଦୁଇଟି ଛୋଟ ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ଛାଡ଼ି । ଆଗରୁ ପିଲା ଅଛନ୍ତି, ବୟସରେ ଏତେ ବ୍ୟବଧାନ ଶୁଣି ଅନୁପମା ମନା କରୁଥିଲେ ବି ଭାଇମାନେ ବାହାଘର କରିବାର ନିଷ୍ପତ୍ତି ନେଇଥିଲେ । ସେ ଦିନ ପ୍ରାତିକୁ ମନେହେଇଥିଲା ଅନୁପମା ତା ନିଜ ପରିବାର ପାଇଁ ବୋଝ ହେଇଗଲା । ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଲାଗିଥିଲା ପ୍ରାତିକୁ ... ଝିଅଟିଏ ନିଜ ପରିବାରର ସ୍ନେହ ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧା ଭିତରେ ବଢ଼ି ନିଜର ବୋଲି ଯେଉଁ ଘର ପାଇଁ ସବୁ ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ବିନା ଆପଣିରେ ହସିହସି ମୁଣ୍ଡେଇ ଚାଲିଥାଏ, ଠିକଣା ସମୟରେ ବାହାଘର ନହେଇପାରିଲେ ନିଜ

ଅଜାଣତରେ କେତେବେଳେ ବୋଝ ପାଲଟିଯାଏ ସେ ନିଜେ ଜାଣି ନଥାଏ । ସେଦିନ ଅମୂଲ୍ୟ ମିଶ୍ର ଖୁବ୍ ମନେ ପଡ଼ିଥିଲେ ପ୍ରାତିର । ଆହା ସେଦିନ ହେଲେ ନିଜ ବିଚାରକୁ ବଦଳେଇଥାନ୍ତା ଅନୁପମା ଆଜି ଏ ପ୍ରକାର ପରିସ୍ଥିତି ତ ସାମ୍ନା କରିନଥାନ୍ତା । କିନ୍ତୁ ପ୍ରାତି ଜାଣିଥିଲା ଭଦ୍ରଲୋକଙ୍କ ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କୁ ନିଜର କରିବାକୁ ମମତାମୟୀ ଅନୁପମାକୁ ତେରି ଲାଗିବନି । ଅନୁପମାର ଭାଗ୍ୟ ଭାବି ନିଜକୁ ବୁଝେଇ ନେଇଥିଲା ସେ ।

ମାତ୍ର ଅଳ୍ପ ଦିନପରେ ମା ପାଖରୁ ଯାହା ଶୁଣିଥିଲା ସେ ନିଜକୁ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ କରିପାରିନଥିଲା । ବାହାଘରର ସପ୍ତାହକ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଖବର ମିଳିଲା ଅନୁପମାର ଭାବିବରଙ୍କ ପ୍ରଥମ ପତ୍ନୀଙ୍କ ମୃତ୍ୟୁର କାରଣ, ଆତ୍ମହତ୍ୟା କରିଥିଲେ ସେ, କାରଣ ଥିଲା ଭଦ୍ରଲୋକଙ୍କର ଅନ୍ୟ ଜଣେ ମହିଳାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଅନୈତିକ ସଂପର୍କ । ତଥାପି ଭାଇମାନେ ବାହାଘର ଭାଙ୍ଗିବାକୁ ଚାହଁନଥିଲେ, ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଯୁକ୍ତିଥିଲା ଲୋକସହି ପାରୁନାହାନ୍ତି, ଅଥଥାରେ ଗୁଡ଼ାଏ ଅପପ୍ରଚାର କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ଅନୁପମା ପଥର ପାଲଟି ଯାଇଥିଲା ଭାଇମାନଙ୍କର ନିଷ୍ପତ୍ତି ଜାଣିବା ପରେ । ହଠାତ୍ ଦିନେ ଦ୍ୱିପହରେ ଅମୂଲ୍ୟ ମିଶ୍ର ଆସିଲେ ଆଉ ଅନୁପମାର ବୋଉଙ୍କ ଆଗରେ ସିଧାସଳଖ ଅନୁପମାକୁ ବିବାହ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଦେଲେ, ପ୍ରତିଶ୍ରୁତିଦେଲେ ତାର ଯତ୍ନନେବେ, ତା ସୁଖ ଦୁଃଖରେ ସାଥୀହେବେ । ଉତ୍ତରରେ ମାଉସି ଖାଲି ଅନୁପମା ଆଉ ତା ଅମ୍ମ ଭାଇଙ୍କ ମୁଣ୍ଡକୁ ଆଉଁସି ଦେଇଥିଲେ । ଘରେ ଭାଇମାନେ କେହି ନଥିଲେ । ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟକରି ଅନୁପମା ତା ବୋଉଙ୍କୁ ମୁଣ୍ଡିଆ ମାରି ଭାଉଜମାନଙ୍କୁ ଅନୁରୋଧ କରିଥିଲା ତାକୁ ଅମ୍ମଭାଇଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ଯିବାକୁ ଦେବାପାଇଁ, କହିଥିଲା ସେ ଜିଇଁବାକୁ ଚାହେଁ, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଭଳି ନିଜର ସଂସାର କରିବାକୁ ଚାହେଁ । ଭାଉଜମାନେ ବାରଣ କରିପାରିଲେନି, ଅନୁପମା ଭାଇମାନଙ୍କ ଅନୁପସ୍ଥିତିରେ ଘରୁ ଗୋଡ଼ କାଢ଼ି ଚାଲିଯାଇଥିଲା । ଏ ଘଟଣା ଭାଇମାନଙ୍କର ଅହଂକୁ ଏମିତି ଆଘାତ ଦେଇଥିଲା ଯେ ସେମାନେ ଅନୁପମାର କୌଣସି ଖବର ରଖିବାକୁ ଚାହଁନଥିଲେ, ସେଦିନ ନିଜପାଇଁ ଜିଇଁବାର ଆଶା ଖୋଜିବାକୁ ଯାଇ ସେଇ ଦିନରୁ ସାରା ପରିବାର ପାଇଁ ମରିଯାଇଥିଲା ଅନୁପମା । କାହିଁ କେଉଁ ମୁଗର ବାହାଘର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଦେଖୁଥିବା ଅନୁପମା ଅମୂଲ୍ୟ ମିଶ୍ରଙ୍କୁ ବାହା ହେଲା ଅତି ନିରାଡ଼ମ୍ବର ଭାବରେ, କେଉଁ ଏକ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ । ଅଳ୍ପଦିନ ପରେ ଅନୁପମାର ବୋଉ ଚାଲିଗଲେ । ଅନୁପମା ଭାଇମାନଙ୍କୁ କ୍ଷମା ମାଗି ଚିଠି ଦେଇଥିଲା, ଶୁଣିକ୍ରିୟାରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେବାକୁ ଚାହଁଥିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ଘରେ ତା ନାଁ ବି ଉଠିବନି ବୋଲି ନିଷ୍ପତ୍ତି ନିଆ ହେଇଥିଲା । ଅମୂଲ୍ୟ ମିଶ୍ର ବାହାଘରର

ଅଳ୍ପ ଦିନ ପରେ ଅନୁପମାକୁ ନେଇ ଚାଲିଯାଇଥିଲେ ଅନ୍ୟ ଏକ ସହରକୁ, ଅନୁପମାର ଭାଇ, ବନ୍ଧୁବାନ୍ଧବ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଅନେକ ଦୂରକୁ । ପଛରେ ଯାହା ରହି ଯାଇଥିଲା ଅନୁପମା ଆଉ ଅମୂଲ୍ୟ ମିଶ୍ରଙ୍କ ନାଁରେ ଗୁଡ଼ାଏ ଗୁଜବ ଆଉ ଅପନିନ୍ଦା । ଆଉ କେହି ଜାଣନ୍ତୁ ନ ଜାଣନ୍ତୁ କିନ୍ତୁ ପ୍ରୀତି ଜାଣିଥିଲା ଅନୁପମା କେତେ ସ୍ୱଚ୍ଛ ଓ ନିର୍ମଳ ମନୋଭାବର ଝିଅ ଥିଲା । ତା ବିଷୟରେ ଜାଣିବାକୁ ଚାହଁଲେବି ମା ପାଖରୁ ବେଶୀ କିଛି ଖବର ପାଉନଥିଲା ସେ । ଖାଲି ତିନି ଚାରି ବର୍ଷ ତଳେ ଯାହାଥରେ ମା' ତାକୁ କେଉଁ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ଦେଖିଥିଲା.... ଛୋଟ ପୁଅଟିକୁ ଧରି ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରିଥିଲା ଭୋଗ କିଣିବାକୁ ଯାଇଥିବା ତା ସ୍ୱାମୀଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ । ପ୍ରୀତିର ମା'କୁ ଚିହ୍ନିପାରି କୁଣ୍ଠେଇ ପକେଇଥିଲା । ପ୍ରୀତିର ଭଲମନ୍ଦ ବୁଝିଥିଲା । ସେମାନେ ଯେ ସୁଖୀଥିବେ ଏଥିରେ ସହେହ ନଥିଲା ପ୍ରୀତିର, କେବଳ ଅବଶୋଷ ଦଶ ବର୍ଷ ପରେ ବି ସେ ଅନୁପମାର ବରକୁ ଦେଖିପାରିନି । କେବେ ଦେଖା ହେବକି ନାହିଁ ବି ଜଣା ନାହିଁ । ଯୋଉଠି ଅଛି ଭଲରେ ଥାଉ । କିଛି ସଂପର୍କ ଏମିତି ହଜିଯାଇବି ବନ୍ଧୁ ଥାଏ, କେବେ କେବେ ରତୁ ଆସିଲେ ଆଉଥରେ ସ୍ମୃତିର ଫୁଲ ସବୁ ଫୁଟିଯାନ୍ତି ଆପେ ଆପେ । ମନ ସତେଜ ହେଇଯାଏ । ଦୂରରେ ଥିଲେ ବି ଏଇ ପାଖରେ କୋଉଠି ଥିବା ପରି ମନେହୁଏ । କେବେ କେବେ ଆଉ କାହା ଜରିଆରେ ଜୀବନ ଭିତରକୁ ବାଟ ଭାଙ୍ଗି ଚାଲିଆସନ୍ତି ବିନା ନିମନ୍ତଣରେ । ଆଜି ଯେମିତି ଇଣ୍ଡିଆନ୍ ଷ୍ଟୋର ଅଜଣା ଭଦ୍ରବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଅନୁପମାର ସ୍ମୃତିକୁ ଆଉଥରେ ଜୀବନ୍ତ କରି ଦେଲେ ତା ପାଇଁ । ଯିଏକି ଆଉଜଣେ ଅନୁପମାର ବର ପରି ମନେହୁଏ ।

ଘରେ ପହଞ୍ଚି ପହଞ୍ଚି ଝିଅ ଧାଇଁ ଆସିଲା, ତା ହାତରୁ ଗ୍ରୋସରୀ ବ୍ୟାଗ୍ ଛଡେଇନେଲା ସମୋସା ଖାଇବ ବୋଲି ବେବି ସିଟର କୁ ବାନ୍ଧ କହି ପ୍ରୀତି ଭିତରକୁ ଆସି ଦେଖେତ ଝିଅ ରାକ୍ଷା ଦେଖେଇ ପଚାରୁଛି, “ହ୍ୱାଟ୍ ଆର୍ ଦିଜ୍ ଷ୍ଟର୍ ମମ୍, ବ୍ରେସ୍‌ଲେଟ୍ ?”, “ଡୋ'ଣ୍ଟ ଟର୍ ଭଟ୍, ସେଇଟା ଆମର ନୁହେଁ ଭଗବାନ୍ ଭଦ୍ରବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଭୁଲରେ ବ୍ୟାଗ୍ ବଦଳି କରିଦେଇଛନ୍ତି କାର୍ତ୍ତା ଦେଲା ବେଳେ । ବିଚରା କାଲି ପୋଷ୍ଟ

କରିବେ ବୋଲି କହୁଥିଲେ” । “କାହାର ମାମା ?” ପଚାରିଲା ଝିଅ । କିଛି ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଲାନ୍ତି ପ୍ରୀତି, ତାଙ୍କ ନାଁ ବି ପଚାରି ନଥିଲା ସେ, ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ନଥିଲା । ତାଙ୍କ ନାଁ ଯାହାବି ହେଉ, ଅନୁପମା ତାଙ୍କ ଝାଇଫ୍ । ବ୍ୟାଗ୍‌ରୁ କାର୍ତ୍ତା ବାହାର କରି ଫୋନ୍ ଲଗେଇଲା ପ୍ରୀତି ଆରପଟୁ ଉତ୍ତର ଆସିଲା ... ହେଲୋ.... ପ୍ରୀତି ପଚାରିଲେ “ଅନୁପମା” ? ଉତ୍ତର ଆସିଲା “ଆପ୍ କୌନ୍ ବୋଲ୍ ରହେ ହେ ।” ପ୍ରୀତି କହିଲା, “ହାଏ ...ଆଇ ଥିଙ୍ଗ୍ ଇଓର୍ ରାକ୍ଷାବ୍ୟାଗ୍ ହାଜ୍ ବିନ୍ ଏକ୍ସଚେଞ୍ଜିଡ୍ ଉଇଥ୍ ମାଇ ସମୋସା ବ୍ୟାଗ୍” ଆଉ କିଛି କହିବା ଆଗରୁ ଉତ୍ତର ଆସିଲା ... “ରିଅଲି ସରି ବହେନ୍ ଜୀ, ପତା ଦେ ଦିଯିୟେ, ମେ ଆପକି ସମୋସା ଡ୍ରପ୍ କର୍ ଦେତା ହୁଁ ଇନ୍ ହର୍ ଆନ୍ ଆଓର୍, ଥାଙ୍କ ଇଡ୍ ସୋ ମର୍ ଫର୍ କଲିଙ୍ଗ୍” । “ଠିକ୍ ହେ ଭାଇ ସାହେବ୍ ଲିଖିୟେ । ଲଗତା ହେ ଆପ୍ ଲୋକ୍ ପାସ୍ ମେ ହି ରହତେ ହେ” ଠିକଣା ଦେଇ ଫୋନ୍ ରଖିଲା ପ୍ରୀତି । ଏଥର ବି ନାଁ ପଚାରିବାକୁ ଭୁଲିଗଲା ସେ ।

“ହୋୟେଆର୍ ଇଜ୍ ସମୋସା ମାମା ?” ପଚାରୁଥିଲା ପ୍ରୀତିର ଝିଅ ।

“ମାମୁ ଆଣିବେ ରହ ।” ପ୍ରଶବଙ୍କ ଥକାଳିଆ ସ୍ୱର ଶୁଭିଲା । “ତୁମେ କେତେବେଳେ ଆସିଲ ?” ଚମକି ପଡ଼ି ପଚାରିଲା ପ୍ରୀତି ।

“ଜଷ୍ଟ ଗର୍ ଇନ, ତୁମ ପଛେ ପଛେ ... !”

“ହୁ ଇଜ୍ ମାମୁ ?” ପଚାରିଲା ଝିଅ ।

ମାମୁ ଶବ୍ଦଟା ଝିଅ ମୁହଁରେ ବହୁତ ଭଲ ଲାଗିଥିଲା ପ୍ରୀତିକୁ ।

“ୟେସ୍ ରିଅଲି ...ହୁ ଇଜ୍ ମାମୁ ?” ପ୍ରଶବ ପଚାରିଲେ । ପ୍ରୀତି ହସି ହସି ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଲା “ଅନୁପମାର ବର” ।



22546 Current Drive,
Macomb Township,
MI 48044

ଶୁକଳ

ସ୍ୱର୍ଣ୍ଣଲତା ପଟେଲ



ଢ଼ି ସକାଳୁ ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧ ରାତ୍ରିଯାଏ ଘଣ୍ଟା କଣ୍ଠା ଭଳିଆ ଅବିରାମ କିଛି ନା କିଛି କରି ମଧ୍ୟ ଜମା ହାଲିଆ ଜଣା ପଡ଼ୁନଥାଏ ଶୁକଳୁ । ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଚା କରି ଦେବାଠାରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭକରି, ଚାଉଳ ବାଟି ଦୋଶା କରିବା, ସବୁ ତାରି କାମ । ସକାଳେ ଝାଡୁ ମାରେ, ଚଟାଣ ପୋଛେ, ଗଛରେ ପାଣି ଦିଏ । ଦିନବେଳା ଭାତ, ତାଲି, ତରକାରୀ ରୋଷେଇ କରେ, ରାତିରେ ପ୍ରାୟତଃ ରୁଟି ଆଉ ଭଜା ।

ଆନିକାର ଆଖପାଖ ଦୁନିଆରେ ଶୁକଳୁର ଜାଗା ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର । ଛୁଞ୍ଚି ସୂତା ଠାରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରି ଫାଇଲ ପତ୍ର ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସବୁଥିରେ ସେ ଶୁକଳୁ ଉପରେ ନିର୍ଭରଶୀଳ । ଘରର କେଉଁ ଜାଗାରେ କ’ଣ ଅଛି, ସବୁ ତାକୁ ଭଲଭାବରେ ଜଣା । ଯେଉଁ ଜିନିଷ ଆନିକାକୁ ଖୋଜିବାକୁ ଅଧିକାଧିକ ଦିଏ, ଶୁକଳୁ ମାତ୍ର କେଇଟା ମିନିଟ୍‌ରେ ଖୋଜି ପାଇଯାଏ । ଏ ଘରକୁ ବୋଧେ ଶୁକଳୁ ବେଶୀ ଭଲଭାବରେ ଜାଣିଛି, ନିଜଠାରୁ ବି ।

କିଛିଦିନ ତଳେ ଗାଁଆରୁ ସାତଜଣ ଆସିଥାନ୍ତି ମେଡ଼ିକାଲ ଚେକଅପ୍ ପାଇଁ ବାଙ୍ଗାଲୋରକୁ । ଆନିକାର ଚିତ୍ରା ବଢ଼ିଗଲା । ଏତେ ଜଣଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ରୋଷେଇ ବାସ କରି ଜଳଖିଆ, ଦିନ ବେଳର ଖାଇବା କିନ୍ତିକକୁ ନେବା କ’ଣ କମ କଥା । ଶୁକଳୁ ଜାଣି ପାରିଲା ନା କ’ଣ, ତା’ର ଗାଁ ଭାଷାରେ କହିଲା, ମୁଇଁ କରିନେମି, ତୁମ୍ଭର ଭାବବାର ନିନ” । କେତେ ସୁରୁଖୁରୁରେ ଶୁକଳୁ ସବୁ ଚଳାଇନେଲା । ହଇରାଣଟା ଜମା ଜଣା ପଡ଼ିଲାନି । ବେଳେ ବେଳେ କାମର ଅଧିକ ଚାପ ଥିଲେ ବି ଅଭିମାନ, ଅଭିଯୋଗକୁ ସେ ଅନେକ ଦୂରରେ ରଖିଛି । ସକାଳେ, ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାରେ ସେଥିରେ ପାଣି ଦିଏ । ହଳଦୀ ରଙ୍ଗର କେଦାର ପାଖୁଡ଼ାରେ କିଏ ଯେମିତି ଫଗୁ ଚିକିଏ ଅୟନ୍‌ରେ ବିସ୍ତ୍ର ଦେଇଛି । ଗୋଲାପ ଚାରା ପାଖରେ ଲଙ୍କାଗଛଟିଏ ଲଗାଇଛି । ଖାଇବାବେଳେ ଗଛରୁ ଲଙ୍କାଟିଏ ତୋଳି ଥାଣେ ।

ବାବୁନର ଜନ୍ମପରେ ଆନିକା ଅଫିସରୁ ତିନିମାସ ପାଇଁ ଛୁଟି ନେଲା । ତାପରେ ମ୍ୟାନେଜରଙ୍କୁ ଅନୁରୋଧ କରି ଆଉ ଦୁଇମାସ

ଅଧିକା ଘରେ ରହିଲା । ତାର ମାଆ ଦି ମାସ ଗାଁରୁ ଆସି ବାଙ୍ଗାଲୋରରେ ରହିଲେ । ହେଲେ ଆଉ କେତେ ଦିନ ବା ରହିପାରିବେ ? ଗାଁ ସ୍କୁଲରେ ବାପା ଶିକ୍ଷକ । ଘରେ ବାପା ଏକା । ସେ ରୋଷେଇ ବାସ କରି ଖାଇବାରେ ଏତେ ଅଭ୍ୟସ୍ତ ନୁହନ୍ତି । ସେତେବେଳେ ଆନିକାର ମାଆ ଶୁକଳୁକୁ ନେଇ ବାଙ୍ଗାଲୋର ଆସିଥିଲେ ।

କଳା ମତମତ ଦେହ ଉପରେ କେବେଠୁ ତେଲ କି ପାନିଆ ବାଜି ନ ଥିବା ଅନାବନା ବୁଦ୍ଧା ଭଳିଆ କେଶ । ଅନେକ ଥର ଧୂଆଁ ହୋଇ ରଙ୍ଗ ଛାଡ଼ିଯାଇ ଥିବା ସାର୍ଟଟା ଯଥାସାଧ୍ୟ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରୁଥିଲା ପୁଙ୍ଗୁଳା ଚମଡ଼ାର ଦୁଃଖ ଲୁଚାଇବାକୁ ଯଦିଓ ସଫଳ ହୋଇନଥିଲା । ସାର୍ଟର ଉପର ବୋତାମଗୁଡ଼ା ଗୋଲ ହୋଇଥିବାବେଳେ ସବାସାନ ବୋତାମଟି ବର୍ଗାକାର ଥିଲା, ପୁଣି ବାରିହୋଇ ପଡୁଥିବା ସବୁଜ ରଙ୍ଗର । ନୁଖୁରା ଚମ ଉପରେ ତା ନଖ ଲାଗିଗଲେ ଲମ୍ବା ଗାରଟିଏ ଜଣା ପଡୁଥିଲା । କେତେ ବଦଳି ଗଲାଣି ତାର ରଙ୍ଗ, ବେଶଭୂଷା ଆଉ ବ୍ୟବହାର ଯା ଭିତରେ ।

ଛୁଟି ଦିନରେ ଦିନବେଳର ଖାଇବା ପ୍ଲେଟ୍ ତାଇନିଂ ଟେବୁଲ ଉପରୁ ଉଠାଇଲା ବେଳେ ଶୁକଳୁ ବେଳେବେଳେ ତା ନିଜ କଥା କୁହେ । ତା ଜେଜେବାପା ନଡ଼ିଆ ସଡ଼େଇରୁ ଖେଳଣା ତିଆରି କରୁଥିଲେ । ସଡ଼େଇ ଉପରେ କଣ୍ଠେଇର ପଲକ ପଡୁନଥିବା ଦୁଇଟି ଗୋଲ ଆଖି, ଚେପା ନାକ ପୁଣି ଧାରେ ହସୁଥିବା ଓଠ । ତା ବାପା ବି କିଛିଦିନ ସେ ପାରମ୍ପରିକ ଧନ୍ଦା କଲେ । ହେଲେ କଣ୍ଠେଇଙ୍କ ଚାହିଦା ଦିନକୁ ଦିନ କମିଲା ସିନା ଜମା ବଢ଼ିଲାନି । ଶେଷରେ ବାଧହୋଇ ସେଇ କାମ ବନ୍ଦ କରିଦେଲେ । ସରକାରଙ୍କ ରାସ୍ତା ତିଆରି ଯୋଜନାରେ କେତେବେଳେ କେମିତି ସୁଯୋଗ ମିଳେ । ପୁଣି ସବୁବେଳେ ନୁହେଁ । ଗାଁରେ ଧାନଚାଷ ସମୟରେ ଆଉ କାହାଘରେ ଗୋଡ଼ି ଭଳିଆ କାମଦାମ କରନ୍ତି, ନହେଲେ ବିଶେଷ କିଛି ରୋଜଗାର ନାହିଁ । ଘରେ ଚାରିଟା ଭଉଣୀ, ସେଥିରୁ ଦୁଇଟା ବାହାଘର ଯୋଗ୍ୟା । ଭଉଣୀଙ୍କର ମୁହଁଟା

ଭାରି ଫିକାରଙ୍ଗ । ଏମିତି ହିଁ କେହି ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଆସୁନାହାନ୍ତି । ଯଦିବା କେହି ଆସିଯାଏ, ତେବେ କାନକୁ ସୁନାଫୁଲ ସାଙ୍ଗେ ସାଇକେଲ, ରେଡ଼ିଓ ମାଗୁଛନ୍ତି । ଏତେ ପଇସା ବା କୋଉଠୁ ଆସିବ ? ଭଉଣୀମାନଙ୍କୁ ଯେ ସେ ଭଲପାଏନି, ସେମିତି ନୁହେଁ, ହେଲେ ତାର ବାପା ନାମକ ପ୍ରାଣୀ ଉପରେ ବହଳ ଅଭିମାନ । ଚାରିଟା ଝିଅ ଜନ୍ମ କରିବା କ’ଣ ଦରକାର ବୋଲି ଯୁକ୍ତି ବାଡ଼େ । ବାପାଙ୍କ ସାଧରେ ନୁହେଁ, ସବୁ ବାହାଘର ତାକୁ ହିଁ କରିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ । ନିଜ ଗୋଡ଼ ତ ଟଳମଳ, ତା ଉପରେ କାନ୍ଧରେ ଚାରିଟା ଭଉଣୀର ଭାର । ବେଳେବେଳେ ନିଜ ଭାଗ୍ୟକୁ ଖୁବ୍ ନିନ୍ଦେ ଶୁକଲୁ । ପିଲାଟି ଦିନରୁ ଖାଲି ଦୁଃଖ ଆଉ ବୋଝର ଜୀବନ । ପାଞ୍ଚବର୍ଷ ହେବା ଦିନଠୁ ସେ ଯେମିତି ବଡ଼ଟେ ହୋଇଯାଇଛି । ଶୈଶବର ସୋପାନ ସେ ଯେମିତି ଡେଇଁ ଯାଇଛି କିଛି କମ ସମୟରେ । ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ବିନା କ୍ଷୀରଦିଆ ଚା ପିଇ ପିଇ ସେ ଅନ୍ୟମନସ୍କ ହୋଇପଡ଼େ । ଦୂରରେ ଥିବା ବୁଢ଼ା ଗଛଟିକୁ ଭାବନାମୁକ୍ତ ମୁହଁରେ ରାହି ରହେ । ସେ ହଜିଯାଏ ଯେମିତି ଅନ୍ୟ ଏକ ରାଇଜରେ, ଯେଉଁଠି ସେ ଆଉ ସେ ହୋଇନଥାଏ, ଆକାଶ ଆଉ ଆକାଶ ଭଳିଆ ନଥାଏ । ଖାଲି ସେତିକି ସମୟ ସେ ଭାରି ଉଦାସ ଜଣାପଡ଼େ । ସ୍ୱପ୍ନଭଙ୍ଗ ହେଲାପରି ଝାଡ଼ିଝୁଡ଼ି ଉଠି ପୁଣି ଲାଗିଯାଏ ନିଜ କାମରେ ।

ଘଣ୍ଟା ସାଙ୍ଗେ ଅହରହ ତାର ସଂଘର୍ଷ । ଘଣ୍ଟାରେ ଛଅଟା ବାଜିବା ଆଗରୁ ଉଠିଯାଏ । ଫୁଟାପାଣିରେ ବାବୁନ ପାଇଁ କ୍ଷୀର ବୋତଲ ଗରମ କରିବାକୁ ପଡ଼େ, ତାର ଡ୍ରେସଗୁଡ଼ା ଡେକଲରେ ଧୋଇବାକୁ ପଡ଼େ, କେତେବେଳେ ପାଣିଟାଳି ସଫା କରିବାର ଥାଏ, ସବୁବେଳେ କିଛି ନା କିଛି କାମ । ଅନବରତ ତା ପାଦ ଦୁଇଟା ଚାଲୁଥାଏ । ନହେଲେ ହାତ ଦୁଇଟା, କିଛି ନହେଲେ ମୁଣ୍ଡଟା ।

ଯେତେ ଯାହା ହେଲେ ବି ଶୁକଲୁର ଭାରି ଇଚ୍ଛା ଟି.ଭି. ଦେଖିବା ଅଧଘଣ୍ଟାଏ ପାଇଲେ ଟି.ଭି. ସାମ୍ନାରେ ବସିଯାଏ । ଆନିକା ଭାରି ଖୁସିହୁଏ । ଯାହାହେଉ ଦିନର ଟିକିଏ ସମୟ ତ ସେ ନିଜପାଇଁ ଦେଇ ପାରୁଛି । ସେଇଟା ବି ଭାଗ୍ୟରେ ସବୁଦିନ କୋଉ ଜୁଟେ । ଆନିକା ଉଠିବା ଆଗରୁ ପେପରବାଲା ଇଂରାଜୀ ପେପର ଦେଇଯାଏ । କେବେ କେବେ ଶୁକଲୁ ପେପର ଏପଟ ସେପଟ କରୁଥାଏ । ଆନିକା ଭାବେ ଶୁକଲୁର ଫଟୋ ଦେଖିବା ଭାରି ସଉକ ।

ଆନିକାର ସିନା ଦିନକୁ ଆଠଘଣ୍ଟା ଚାକିରୀ, ସେଇଥିରେ ସପ୍ତାହକୁ ଦି ଦିନ ଛୁଟି, ଶୁକଲୁର ସେମିତି କିଛି ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦିଷ୍ଟ ରୁଟିନ ନାହିଁ । ଏଇ କିଛି ଦିନରେ ଶୁକଲୁ ଆନିକା ପରିବାରର ସଦସ୍ୟ ହୋଇ ଯାଇଥିଲା ।

ସାତପର ହୋଇ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେ ଖୁବ୍ ଆପଣାର । ସବୁ କଥାରେ ଶୁକଲୁ । ଯେମିତି ଆନିକାର ପୃଥିବୀର ମେରୁଦଣ୍ଡଟା ଶୁକଲୁ ଶୁକଲୁ ନଥିଲେ ପୃଥିବୀଟା ଚଳିବନି । ବେଳେବେଳେ ଆନିକା ଡରିଯାଏ, ଯଦି ଶୁକଲୁ ତାକୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ଚାଲିଯାଏ ତେବେ ତ ସେ ପୁରା ତ୍ରିଶଙ୍କୁ ପାଲଟିଯିବ, ନା ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧଂ ଠିକ୍ରେ ଯାଇପାରିବ ନା ଘରେ ବାବୁନକୁ ଠିକ୍ରେ ଦେଖିପାରିବ । ଆନିକା ନିଜକୁ ଭାବିବାକୁ ଆଉ ଅବସର ଦିଏନି, କାହିଁକି ନା, ତାପରେ ଖାଲି ଅନ୍ଧାର ଥାଏ ଯେଉଁଠି କିଛି ଦେଖାଯାଏନି । ସେ ଯେ ଦିନେ ଏମିତି କାହା ଉପରେ ଆଶ୍ରିତା ହୋଇଯିବ, ନିଜେ ବି ବିଶ୍ୱାସ କରିପାରୁ ନଥିଲା ।

ସେଦିନ ଏ.ଟି.ଏମ୍.ରୁ ଦଶହଜାର ଟଙ୍କା ବାହାର କଲା । ଆଲମାରୀ ଖୋଲି ରଖିବାକୁ ବେଳ ନଥିଲା । ଡରଡରରେ ପାଞ୍ଚଶହ ନୋଟଟିକୁ ବ୍ୟାଗରେ ପକାଇ ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧଂକୁ ଗଲା । ଶନିବାର ଦିନ ସପିଙ୍ଗ କରିବାକୁ ଗଲାବେଳେ ଆନିକାର ମନେପଡ଼ିଲା ସେଇ ଦଶହଜାର ଟଙ୍କା । ତ୍ରୟର ଖୋଲି ଦେଖେ ତ ଟଙ୍କା ନାହିଁ । ସେ ତ୍ରୟରର ସବୁ ଜିନିଷକୁ ଓଲଟ ପାଲଟ କଲା । କାଗଜପତ୍ର ବାହାରକୁ ଆଣି ଟିକିନିଖି ଦେଖିଲା । ଆଖପାଖ ଚାରିଆଡ଼େ ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ଆଖିରେ ରାହିଲା । ନା କେଉଁଠି ବି ନାହିଁ । ଆନିକାର ମନକୁ ପାପ ଛୁଇଁଲା । ଏତେ ଗୁଡ଼ାଏ ଟଙ୍କା ଏକା ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ଦେଖି ଶୁକଲୁ ହାତ ମାରି ଦେଇନି ତ ! ଏତେ ବିଶ୍ୱାସରେ କ’ଣ ପିଲାଟା ବିଷ ଦେଇଦେବ । ନା । ହଁ, ନା’ର ଦୋଛକିରେ ଠିଆହୋଇ ସେ ଭାବିଲା ଥରେ ତ ଦେଖିବା କଥା ।

ଆନିକା ଗୋଟେ ଲମ୍ବା ତାଲିକା ତିଆରି କଲା । ଶୁକଲୁକୁ ସାଇକେଲ ଦେଇ ସବୁ ଜିନିଷ ପାଖ ବଜାରରୁ ଆଣିବାକୁ ପଠାଇଲା । ଅତି କମ୍ରେ ଦୁଇ, ଅଡ଼େଇ ଘଣ୍ଟା ଲାଗିଯିବ ବଜାର ଯାଇ ସବୁ ସଉଦା ଆଣିବାକୁ । ଶୁକଲୁ ଗଲାପରେ ଆନିକା ଶୁକଲୁର ଟିଣ ବାକ୍ସ ଟେକିଲା । ତାଲା ବି ନଥିଲା ସେ ବାକ୍ସରେ । ଦୁଇ ତିନିଟା ସାର୍ଟପରେ ଗୋଟିଏ କମ୍ପଳ । ଲୋଚାକୋଚା ହୋଇ ପୁରୁଣା କଳାଧଳା ଛବିଟିଏ । ବେଶପଟାରୁ ତାର ପରିବାରର ଫଟୋ ପରି ଜଣା ପଡୁଥିଲା । ତା ତଳେ ମାଟିଆ ରଙ୍ଗର ଗୋଟିଏ ବଡ଼ ଲଫାପା । ଅତି ସନ୍ତର୍ପଣରେ ଆନିକା ସେଇ ଲଫାପାଟିକୁ ଆଣିଲା । ଭିତରେ କେତୋଟି ସାର୍ଟିଫିକେଟ୍ । ପିଲାଟା ସପ୍ତମରେ ଜାତୀୟ ଗ୍ରାମ୍ୟ ମେଧାବୀ ପରୀକ୍ଷାରେ କୃତକାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହୋଇଛି । ଆଖିରୁ ଅଜାଣତରେ ଲୁହ ଜକେଇ ଆସୁଥାଏ । ଶୁକଲୁ ଦଶମଟା ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ ଶ୍ରେଣୀରେ ପାସ କରିଛି । ଆନିକାର ଆଖି ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ହୋଇ ଡବ ଡବ ହୋଇ ଉଠିଲା । ତାର

ନାକପୁଡ଼ା ଫୁଲିଗଲା । ପରିସ୍ଥିତି ଖରାପ ବୋଲି ଶୁକଳୁକୁ ଏମିତି କାମ କରିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ୁଛି । କିଛି ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ପାଇଥିଲେ ଶୁକଳୁ ଯେ ତା ଭଳିଆ କମ୍ପ୍ୟୁଟର ଇଞ୍ଜିନିୟରଟାଏ ହୋଇ ନଥାଆନ୍ତା ସେଇଟା କିଏ ଜାଣେ ।

ଆନିକା ରୁପଚାପ୍ ବନ୍ଦ କରିଦେଲା ବିନା କୋଲପର ବାକ୍ସ ଆଉ ତା ସାଙ୍ଗେ ଶୁକଳୁର ଆଭିଜାତ୍ୟ ।

ଆନିକା ଟଙ୍କାଗୁଡ଼ା ରଖିଲା କେଉଁଠି ? ତକିଆ ତଳେ, ବହି ଥାକରେ, କପବୋର୍ଡ଼ରେ ସବୁଠି ଖୋଜିଲା । ତାର ଖୋଜିଲା ଖୋଜିଲା ଆଖି ଯୋଡ଼ିକ ଘରର ସବୁ କୋଣ ପ୍ରତିକୋଣରେ ତନ୍ତୁ ତନ୍ତୁ ଖୋଜିଲେ । ଶେଷରେ ଟେବୁଲ୍ ତଳେ ପେପରରେ ଢାଙ୍କି ହୋଇ ରହିଛି ସେଇ ନଅହଜାର ପାଞ୍ଚଶହ ଟଙ୍କା । ସେ ଭ୍ରମରେ ନ ରଖି ଟେବୁଲ୍ ଉପରେ ରଖି ଅର୍ପଣ ପଳାଇଥିଲା ।

ଲାଜରେ, ଅପମାନରେ, ଆତ୍ମଗ୍ଳାନିରେ ତାର ମୁହଁ ଯେମିତି କଳା ବାଦଲ ତଳେ ଲୁଚିଯାଉଛି । ନିଜ ଉପରେ ଭାରି ଘୃଣା ହେଲା ତାର । ସେ ଠିକ୍‌କଲା ଶୁକଳୁକୁ ପାଠ ପଢ଼ାଇବ । ତାର ଚାରି ଭଉଣୀର ବାହାଘର ବେଳେ ଯଥାସାଧ୍ୟ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିବ । ଶୁକଳୁକୁ ମଣିଷଟିଏ କରିବ । ଏଇଟା ହେବ ତା ପାଇଁ ଉପଯୁକ୍ତ ଶାସ୍ତି । ଥରଟିଏ ପାଇଁ ତା ମନକୁ ଆସିଲା, “ଶୁକଳୁକୁ କଲେଜ ପଠାଇଲେ, ଘର କେମିତି ଚଳିବ ? କିଏ ଏତେ କାମ କରିବ ?” ସେ ଠିକ୍ କଲା, ଶନିବାର, ରବିବାର ଦିନ ଖୋଲାଥିବା କଲେଜରେ ଶୁକଳୁ ପଢ଼ିବ । ଏଇ ଦୁଇଦିନ ଆନିକା ଘର ସମ୍ଭାଳିବ ।

ଆନିକାକୁ ଭାରି ହାଲୁକା ଲାଗୁଥିଲା ଯେମିତି ଛାତି ଉପରୁ ପଥରର ବୋଝ ଉଠିଯାଇଛି ।



Novoto, California

ବଉଳି ଗାଇ

ସବିତା ରାଣୀ ସାମଲ

ଗାଳ ଛପର ଗୁହାଳ ଘର । ଧପ ଧପ ଲଣ୍ଠନ ଆଉ ରାତି ପହର । ବଉଳି ତା ଛୁଆକୁ କୋଳରେ ଧରି ଶୋଇ କହୁଥିଲା “ଧନରେ କାଲିଠୁ ତୁ ଗୋଟେ ନୂଆ ଯାଗାକୁ ଯିବୁ । କେତେ ନୂଆ ସାଙ୍ଗ ସାଥୀ ଥିବେ । ଖେଳିବୁ ବୁଲିବୁ ଭାରି ମଜା ଲାଗିବ । ଜମାରୁ ଦୁଃଖ ହେବୁ ନାହିଁ । ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟା ହେଲେ ଯାଇ ମୁଁ ତୋତେ ନେଇ ଆସିବି” । ବଉଳିର କଥା ଶୁଣି ଛୁଆ ଖୁସିରେ ଖାଲି ଏପଟେ ସେପଟେ ଡିଆଁ ମାରିଲା ।

ରାତି ପାହି ସକାଳ ହେଲା । ବଉଳି ତା ଛୁଆକୁ ଭଲରେ ଗାଧେଇ ଖୁଆଇ ଦେଲା । ନୂଆ ଜାଗାକୁ ଯିବ, କାଳେ କିଏ ନଜର ଦେବ ସେଥିପାଇଁ ତୁଳସୀ ଚଉରାରୁ ମାଟି ତାଡ଼ି ତା ଛୁଆ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ଦେଲା । ଦୁହେଁ ଚାଲିଲେ, ପହଞ୍ଚିଲେ ନର୍ଦ୍ଦେରୀ ଆଗରେ । ବଉଳି ଭାରି ନେହୁରା ହେଲା ତା ଛୁଆକୁ ଭଲରେ ରଖିବା ପାଇଁ । ଗାଈଆଳ ଏସବୁ କିଛି ବୁଝେନି । ତା କାମ ସେ କରିବ । ଅବିଳମ୍ବେ ଛୁଆକୁ ଧରି ସେ ଭିତରକୁ ପ୍ରସ୍ଥାନ କଲା । ବଉଳି ବାହାରୁ ସେମିତି ବହୁ ସମୟ ଧରି ଚାହିଁ ରହିଥିଲା । ମନ ଗୁଡେଇ ତୁଡେଇ ହେଉଥିଲା କୁନି ଛୁଆଟା କ୍ଷୀର ବି ଛାଡ଼ିନି କ’ଣ କରିବ ।

ଏଣେ ବଉଳିଛୁଆର ନର୍ଦ୍ଦେରୀ ଦେଖି କୁଣ୍ଠେମୋଟ । “ଇଏ ମା’ଲୋ କେତେ ରକମର ଛେଳି ଛୁଆ, ମେଣ୍ଢା ଛୁଆ, କୁକୁଡ଼ା ଛୁଆ, ବିଲେଇ ଛୁଆ, କୁକୁର ଛୁଆ, ଗାଈ ଛୁଆ ସବୁ ମୋ ସାଙ୍ଗର” । ଗାଈଆଳ ତାକୁ ଗୋଟିଏ ଜାଗାରେ ନେଇ ଶେଷକୁ ପଘା ବାନ୍ଧିଲା । ବେକରେ ଗୋଟେ ନୟର ପଟା ଝୁଲେଇଦେଲା । ଇଂରେଜୀରେ ଆଇଡେଣ୍ଟିଫିକା କାର୍ଡ କୁହନ୍ତି । ଭାରି ଭଲ ଲାଗୁଥାଏ, ସବୁ କଥା ମା’ କୁ କହିବ । ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ଆଡ଼କୁ ଲାଞ୍ଜ ହଲେଇ ହଲେଇ ଚାହୁଁଥାଏ । କେମିତିକା ପିଲା ଗୁଡ଼ାକ କେଜାଣି କଥା ବି ହଉନାହାନ୍ତି ।

କିଛି ଅନ୍ତେ ଗାଈଆଳ ଖାଇବା ବାଡ଼ିଦେଇ ଗଲା ଗୋଟେ ସୁନ୍ଦରୀଆ ଜାଗାରେ । ବଉଳି ଛୁଆ ପାଟିକୁ ନେଇଛକି ନାହିଁ ଥୁ ଥୁ କରି

ପକେଇଲା । ଆଉ କ’ଣ ଚିକେ ଭଲ ଦିଅନ୍ତେ ନି ହେଲେ କିଏ ପଚାରେ । ସବୁ ଘଣ୍ଟି ବାଜିଲେ ହେଉଛି । କିଛି ଏପଟ ସେପଟ ନାହିଁ । ଏମିତି ଗୋଟେ ଘଣ୍ଟି ବାଜିବାରୁ ତାକୁ ନେଇକି ଗୋଟେ ବିରାଟ ନଳା ଉପରେ ଠିଆ କରେଇ ଦେଲେ । ଦିନ ସାରା ତା ଉପରେ ଠିଆ ହେଇ ବଉଳିଛୁଆର ଗୋଡ଼ କ’ଣ ହେଇଗଲାଣି । ବଉଳିଛୁଆ କାନ୍ଦି କାନ୍ଦି ନୟାନ୍ତ ହେଲେ କାହାର କିଛି ଫରକ ନାହିଁ । ଶେଷରେ ଯାଇ ତାକୁ ତା ଯାଗାକୁ ନେଲେ । ତା କାନ୍ଦୁରା ମୁହଁ ଦେଖି ପାଖ ଛୁଆଟା ମନ କଥା ବୁଝିଲା କି କ’ଣ, କହିଲା “କାନ୍ଦେନା, ମନ କୁ ଦୁଃଖ କରିନେ ସବୁ ଶିଖିବାକୁ ପଢ଼ିବ, ଏଇଟା ପରା ଟ୍ରେନିଂ ପିରିୟଡ଼, ଆମେ ସବୁ କରିଛୁ ନହେଲେ କେମିତି ସଭ୍ୟ ହେବୁ । ତୁ ଏଇନେ ଜୋଉ ଯାଇଥିଲୁ ସେଇଟା ହେଉଛି ପୋଟି ଟ୍ରେନିଂ । ଏମିତି ଆହୁରି ଅନେକ ଆଗକୁ ଥିବି ।”

ବଉଳିଛୁଆ ମନେ ମନେ ଭାବୁଥିଲା “କ’ଣ ଏଇ ସବୁ କହୁଛି, ମା’କୁ କହିଲେ ମା ଆଉ ଜମା ଛାଡ଼ିବ ନାହିଁ ।” ତାକୁ ଭାରି ଜୋରରେ କାନ୍ଦ ଲାଗୁଥାଏ ଇଆଡେ ଭୋକରେ ବି ଦିନ ସାରା ରହି ହୁଏ ଭଡ଼ିଗଲାଣି । ଯା ହେଉ ଖାଇବାକୁ ଆଣିକି ଦେଲେ । ଗନ୍ଧରେ ବାନ୍ଧି ମାଡୁଛି ହେଲେ ଉପାୟହୀନ । ଅଳପେ ବକଟେ ଖାଇଲା । ଆଉ ପାରିଲାନି । ଘରର କଅଁଳିଆ ଘାସ, ପେଜ ତୋରାଣି ବଉଳିଛୁଆ ଆଖିରେ ଜଳ ଜଳ ଦେଖାଯାଉଥିଲା । ଚାରିଆଡ଼େ ତାହା ଆଖିରେ ଅନେଇଲା । ସମସ୍ତେ ତାକୁ ଚାକୁ କରି ଗିଳିଯାଉଥିଲେ ।

ଅପେକ୍ଷାରେ ବଉଳିଛୁଆର ଦିନ ସତେ ଯେମିତି ସରୁନଥିଲା । ସଞ୍ଜ ଗଢ଼ିଲା । ଗୋଟି ଗୋଟି ଛୁଆକୁ ମା ମାନେ ଆସି ନେଇଯାଉଥିଲେ । ବଉଳି ଆସିଲା ବେଳକୁ ବଉଳି ଛୁଆର ମୁହଁ ସୁଖ ପଇସାଟାକର ହେଇଗଲାଣି । ବଉଳିର ମନ କ’ଣ ହେଇଯାଉଥିଲା । କୁଣ୍ଠେଇ ପକେଇଲା ତା ଛୁଆକୁ ।

ବଉଳି ଛୁଆର ଆଖୁରୁ ଧାର ଧାର ଲୁହ –“ତୁ ମିଛେଇ ! କିଛି ମଜାଫଜା ନାହିଁ । ମୁଁ ଏଠିକି ଆଉ କେବେ ଆସିବିନି ।”

ବଉଳି ଆଖୁ ଛଳ ଛଳ । ପେଟ ଭିତରଟା ଆଉଣ୍ଡେଇ ହେଇ ପଡୁଥିଲା । କ’ଣ କହିକି ବୁଝେଇବ “କାମକୁ ନ ଗଲେ ନ ତଳେ । ଖାଲି କ୍ଷୀର ବିକିଲେ କ’ଣ ଦି ପଇସା ଆସୁଛି । ଏ ମହଙ୍ଗା ଦୁନିଆରେ ସେତକ ଦୁଇ ଓଳିକୁ ବି ନିଅନ୍ତୁ । ଆଶରା ଖଣ୍ଡିକ ଭାଙ୍ଗିବାକୁ ବସିଲାଣି । ଛୁଆଟାର ଭବିଷ୍ୟତଟା ପଢ଼ିଛି । ଛୁଆଟା କ’ଣ ବୁଝିବ ଏ ଦୁନିଆର ନୀତି ।”

ବଉଳିଛୁଆ ଦିନ ସାରା ହାଲିଆ । ଶୀଘ୍ର ଶୋଇପଡିଲାଣି । ବଉଳିର ଗୋଡ ଉଠୁନଥିଲା , ତେହ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଛେଚିକୁଟି ହେଇ କ’ଣ ଲାଗୁଥିଲା କେଜାଣି । ହେଲେ ଜମା ଶୋଇପାରୁନଥିଲା । ମନ ଭିତରେ ଖାଲି ଛାଟିପିଟି ହେଉଥିଲା । ବଉଳିଛୁଆର ଆଖୁ ତଳକୁ ବାରମ୍ବାର ନିରେଖୁ ଦେଖୁଥିଲା । ସୁଖୁଯାଇ ଥିଲା ଲୁହ ଧାର କିନ୍ତୁ ସେଇଧାର ବଉଳି ମନ ଭିତରେ ନଦୀଟା ଯାକର ସ୍ରୋତ ଧାରଣ କରିସାରିଥିଲା । କୋହ ଉଠେଇ ହମାରତି ଛାଡୁଥିଲା କିନ୍ତୁ ଶବ୍ଦ ହାନ । ରାତି ପହରର ନିରବ ନିଶ୍ଚଳ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତ ଆହୁରି ଅଧିକରୁ ଅଧିକ ମା ମନଟାକୁ ଭୟଭିତ କରି ପକାଉଥିଲା । ଏଇମିତି କେତେବେଳେ ସକାଳ ପାଇଲାଣି ସେକଥା ବଉଳି ବି ଜାଣିପାରିନଥିଲା ।

ତୋ ପାଇଁ ଏଇଆ ଆଣିଦେବି ସେଇଆ ଆଣିଦେବି କହି ବଉଳି ସକାଳୁ କେତେ ବୁଝେଇଲା । ବଉଳିଛୁଆ ମାନିବାକୁ ଏକଦମ୍ ନାରାଜ୍ । ଏଇମିତି ଅନେକ ଦିନ ଯାଏଁ ବଉଳିଛୁଆ କାନ୍ଦି କାନ୍ଦି ଯାଏ ଆଉ ଆସେ ।

ଦିନକର କଥା ବଉଳିଛୁଆର ଦେହ ନିଆଁ ପରି ତାତି ଥାଏ । ବଉଳି କ’ଣ କରିବ କିଛି ଜାଣି ପାରୁନଥିଲା । ରାତି ସାରା ବିକଳ ହେଇ ଚାଟି ଲାଗିଥିଲା । ତିନି ଦିନ ପରେ ବଉଳିଛୁଆଟା ତ ଟିକେ ସତେଜ୍ ଦେଖା ଗଲା । ବଉଳି ଦେହରେ ପ୍ରାଣ ପଶିଲା । “ଧନ ମାଳି

ମୋର, କାହିଁ ମୋତେ ଏମିତି ହଇରାଣ କରୁଛୁ କହିଲୁ” କହି ବହେ କାନ୍ଦିଥିଲା ଛୁଆକୁ ଧରି ସେଦିନ । କିନ୍ତୁ କର୍ତ୍ତ୍ୟବ୍ୟ ତ କରିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ । ମନକୁ ବୁଝେଇ ସୁଝେଇ ପୁଣି କାମକୁ ଗଲା ।

ଥରେ ନୁହେଁ ବହୁଥର ବଉଳିଛୁଆଟାର ଦେହଟା ଖରାପ ହେଉଥିଲା । ପଶୁ ଡାକ୍ତର ପରୀକ୍ଷା ନିରେକ୍ଷା କରି କହିଲେ ଇନିଫେକ୍ସନ୍ ହେଇଯାଉଛି ସେଥିପାଇଁ ବାରମ୍ବାର ଦେହ ଖରାପ ହେଉଛି । କ’ଣ କରିବ ବଉଳିକୁ ବୁଝି ଦେଖାଯାଉନଥିଲା । ନିଜକୁ ସବୁଥୁ ପାଇଁ ଦୋଷି କରୁଥିଲା । ଦଇବ ଦଉଡ଼ି ବଉଳି ଗାଇ ଯେଣିକି ଟାଣଇ ସିଆଡ଼େ ଯାଇ । କ’ଣ ବଉଳିର ଦୁଃଖ ସତରେ ସରିବନି ।

ଧିରେ ଧିରେ ପରିସ୍ଥିତି ବଦଳିଲା । ବଉଳିଛୁଆ ଆଉ କାନ୍ଦୁ ନଥିଲା । ପରିବେଶ ସାଙ୍ଗେ ବେଶ୍ ଖାପଖୁଆଇ ନେଇଥିଲା । ତାର ଆତ୍ମ ନିର୍ଭରଶୀଳ ଦେଖି ବଉଳିକୁ ଖୁସି ଲାଗୁଥିଲା ସତ କିନ୍ତୁ ଗୋଟେ ଅଜଣା ଭୟ ଗ୍ରାସ କରିଚାଲିଥିଲା । ଅନୁଭବ ହେଉଥିଲା ଛୁଆଟା ଯେମିତି ତା ଠୁ ଦୂରେଇ ଦୂରେଇ ଚାଲିଛି ।

ବଉଳିଛୁଆ ଆଉ ଛୁଆ ହେଇନାହିଁ ବଡ଼ ହେଇଗଲାଣି । ଖାଲି ଯେ ବଡ଼ ହେଇନି ବାହାରେ ବେସ୍ ମୋଟା ପଇସାରେ କାମ କରୁଥିଲା । ସମୟ ନାହିଁ ତା ପାଖରେ । ଅକାଳେ ସକାଳେ ଆସିଲେ ଆସେ ନ ହେଲେ ନାହିଁ । ସମୟ କାହା ପାଇଁ ଅଟକିଛି ନା ଅଟକିବ । ବଉଳି ବି ବୁଢ଼ି ହେଇଗଲାଣି । ଦିନେ ବଉଳିର ସମୟ ନ ଥିଲା ତା ଛୁଆର ଛୁଆଳାମି ଦେଖିବାପାଇଁ ଆଉ ଏବେ ଦିନ ସରୁନି ।

ବଉଳିର ଚାରିଆଡ଼େ ନାମ ହେଇଥିଲା । କେତେ ଉନ୍ନତି ନ କଲା କହି ସମସ୍ତେ ତାରି ଉଦାହରଣ ଦେଉଥିଲେ । ଟିଣ ଛପର ଗୁହାଳ ଘର । ଦାଉ ଦାଉ ଆଲୋକର ବିଦ୍ୟୁତ୍ ବତୀ ଆଉ ରାତି ପହର । ବଉଳି ଗୋଟେ କୋଣରେ ଶୋଇ ରହି ଭାବୁଥିଲା “ଏ ବସ୍ତୁବାଦୀ ଦୁନିଆରେ ମୁଁ କ’ଣ ହରେଇଲି ଆଉ କ’ଣ ପାଇଲି ।”

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93 Robert Treat Dr, Apt C,
Milford, CT

ମାନସ ପତ୍ନୀର ହାତଧରି ହେମନ୍ତ ବାବୁ ମୁକ୍ତିର ପଥରେ



ଲିପିକା ମହାପାତ୍ର

ଘର ବାରିପଟଟା ହେମନ୍ତବାବୁଙ୍କୁ ଭଲ ଲାଗେ । ହତାଟାରେ ଛୋଟ ବଡ଼ ହେଇ ଅନେକ ଗଛ ଲଗେଇଥିଲେ ସେ । ବାରିପଟଟା ନିଛାଟିଆ ଘରଦ୍ୱାର ନାହିଁ, ହଁ ଅଦୂରରେ ବୃକ୍ଷାଶ୍ରମଟେ ଯାହା ଠିଆହେଇଛି ନିରବରେ । ଦି' ଧାରରେ ନୂଆକରି ଲଗାହୋଇଥିବା ଇଉକାଲିପତାସ ଗଛକୁ ନେଇ ନାଲି ମାଟିର ସରୁ ରାସ୍ତାଟେ ବୃକ୍ଷାଶ୍ରମକୁ ଲମ୍ବି ଯାଇଛି ଆଉ ସେଇଠି ସରି ବି ଯାଇଛି । ତା'ବାଦେ ଯୁଆଡ଼େ ଚାହିଁଲେ କେବଳ ଖାଲ ତିପ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଗୋଟର ସରକାରୀ ଭୂଇଁ, ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ ଛାଇ ଦଉଥିବା ଗଛ କେତେଟା ଠିଆହେଇଛନ୍ତି । ଖେଳ ଛୁଟିରେ ସ୍କୁଲପିଲେ ଅନିର୍ଦ୍ଦିଷ୍ଟ ଭାବେ ଘୁରି ବୁଲିଲାପରି ସକାଳେ ସଞ୍ଜରେ ବୃକ୍ଷାଶ୍ରମର ବାସିନ୍ଦାମାନେ ଯାହା ଘୁରିବୁଲନ୍ତି ଆଖପାଖରେ ସେଇ ଦୃଶ୍ୟଟା ହେମନ୍ତବାବୁଙ୍କୁ ଭଲ ଲାଗେ । ଚାକିରିରୁ ଅବସର ପରେ ଏଇ ବାରିପଟ ଆୟ ଗଛର ଛାଇରେ ଆରାମ ଚେୟାରରେ ଘଣ୍ଟା ଘଣ୍ଟା ବସିରହନ୍ତି ଆଉ ପାଖରେ ଗୋଟେ ଛୋଟ ଟେବୁଲରୁ ନ୍ୟୁଜ ପେପର୍ ନହେଲେ କେତେଟା ବହି ଏପଟ ସେପଟ ଓଲଟାନ୍ତି, ଗଛଗୁଡ଼ାକରେ ପାଣି ଦିଅନ୍ତି, ଟିଣ ଗେଟକୁ ମନେକରି ବନ୍ଦ କରନ୍ତି ନହେଲେ ଗାଈ ପଶିଆସିବ । ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ନିଜ ଦେହକୁ ଶୋଇଲା ଭଙ୍ଗିରେ ଆରାମ ଚେୟାରରେ ଏପରି ଗଡ଼େଇ ଦେଇଥାନ୍ତି ଦେଖିଲେ ଲାଗିବ ଯେମିତି ଗଭୀର ନିଦରେ ଶୋଇଛନ୍ତି ହେମନ୍ତବାବୁ, କିନ୍ତୁ ସେ ଚକ୍ଷମାତଳୁ ଚାହିଁଥାନ୍ତି, ଚାହିଁଥାନ୍ତି ବାରଣ୍ଡା କତକୁଲାଗି ଝଙ୍କା ଲେମ୍ବୁଗଛ, ବାତକଣରେ ସରୁ ତେଙ୍ଗା ଅମୃତଭଣ୍ଡା ଗଛ, ଖଡ଼ାଶାଗର ବୁଦାରେ ଗୁଣ୍ଡୁଚିମୂଷା କେତୋଟି ଦିନ ତମାମ ଖପର ଖାପର ହୁଅନ୍ତି ହେମନ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖିଲେ ତରକି ଯାଆନ୍ତିନି ଓଲଟା କୁରୁରୁ କୁରୁରୁ କରି ଦୁଇହାତରେ କଣ' ଗୋଟେ ଧରି ଖାଉଖାଉ ମିଟିମିଟି କରି ଚାହିଁରହନ୍ତି । ହେମନ୍ତବାବୁଙ୍କୁ ବାରିପଟ ହତାଟା ଭଲଲାଗିବାର ଆଉ ଏକ କାରଣହେଲା ପ୍ରାଣପ୍ରିୟା ସୁରଭିଙ୍କ ସହ ଏକାନ୍ତ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତ ସବୁ ବିତାଉଥିଲେ । ସୁରଭି ସ୍ନେହରେ ଗଛଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଉପରେ ହାତବୁଲେଇଆଣିଲା ବେଳେ ହେମନ୍ତ ଅପଲକ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରେ ଚାହିଁରହନ୍ତି । ସୁରଭି ଥଙ୍ଗା ମଜାରେ କେବେ କ'ଣ

କହିଦେଲେ ହେମନ୍ତ ଅଭିମାନ କରନ୍ତି, ମିଛ ନୁହଁ ସତ ସତକା ଅଭିମାନ । ସୁରଭିଙ୍କ ଓଠ ପାଟିଲା ଦାଢ଼ିର ଖଦଡିଆ ଗାଲ ନଛୁଇଁଲା ଯାଏ ଅଭିମାନ ଭାଙ୍ଗେନି ।

ଦିନର ଅନେକ ଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ସମୟ ବାରିପଟେ ବିତାଇଲା ପରେ ହେମନ୍ତବାବୁ ଘରଭିତରକୁ ଫେରନ୍ତି, ପୁଅ ଝିଅ, ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଚାକର ପୁଝାରୀଙ୍କ ଉପସ୍ଥିତି ସତ୍ତ୍ୱେବି କେମିତି ଗୋଟେ ଶୂନ୍ୟତାବୋଧ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଘେରି ଯାଏ । ଛାଟିପଟି ହେଇ ପୁଣି ବାରିପଟକୁ ପଳେଇଥାଏନ୍ତି ।

ବାରିପଟେ ମୁର୍ଦ୍ଦାମନ୍ତ ବସିଥିଲେ ହେମନ୍ତବାବୁ ଖରା ଆସି ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଉପରେ ହେଲାଣି । କୁମୁଦିନି ଘର ଭିତରୁ ପାଟି ଚିଲ୍ଲେଇଲେ, —କ'ଣ ବା ସେଇଠି ସେତେବେଳୁ ବଇଚ ? ଦିନ ଦି'ପହର ହେଲାଣି ଚାକିରି ସଇଲା ବୋଲି କ'ଣ ଘଣ୍ଟା ଦେଖିବନି । ରୁନି ଖାଇବାକୁ ଟେବୁଲରେ ରଖିଲାଣି । ଝଅଟ ଆସ ନହେଲେ ସେଇଠି ଏମିତି ଘଣ୍ଟା ଘଣ୍ଟା ବସା ଡିଜାଇନ ଛତେଇଦେବି । ଚଢ଼େଇଗୁଡ଼ା ହରିକି ବୁଡ଼ଇଛନ୍ତି । ପଡ଼ିଶାଘର ମାଲିକୁ କହିଲେ ଆୟଗଛଟା କାଟିଦବ । — ହେମନ୍ତଙ୍କ ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟରେ ତୋପ ମୁହଁରୁ ଗୁଲିପରି ଛତାହେଇଥିବା କଥାଗୁଡ଼ାକର ମାଲିକାଣୀ ଥିଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ କୁମୁଦିନି । ଖାଲି କଥାର ନୁହେଁ ହେମନ୍ତବାବୁଙ୍କ ସଂସାରରେ କ୍ରମ ହେଲେ ପାଟରାଣୀ ।

ଆଖିକୁ ଅଧା ଖୋଲାକରି ଆକାଶ ଆଡ଼କୁ ମୁହଁକରି ହେମନ୍ତଙ୍କର ବହୁତ ଦିନ ତଳର ବାହାଘର ପୂର୍ବ ସମୟର କଥାମାନ ମନରେ ଆସୁଥିଲା । କାଳ୍ପନିକ ପତ୍ନି ସଙ୍ଗେ ସ୍ନେହରେ କେତେ ଗପସପ; ତମେ ଆସିଲା ପରେ ମୁଁ ପାନ ଛାଡ଼ିଦେବି, ବାପାଙ୍କ ବୟସ ହେଲାଣି ତମେ ଆସିଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ନବ ଯେ ମୁଁ ଟିକେ ନିଶ୍ଚିନ୍ତ ହେବି... ।

ବାହାହେବା ପୂର୍ବ ଯାଏଁ ହେମନ୍ତବାବୁଙ୍କ କଳ୍ପନାରେ ପତ୍ନୀ ରୂପକ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଟି ସହିତ ସମ୍ପର୍କକୁ ଗୋଟେ ମନମୁଗ୍ଧକାରି ଅନୁଭବ ବୋଲି ମନେ କରୁଥିଲେ; ଯିଏ ସ୍ନେହର ତୋରରେ ବାନ୍ଧିରଖିବ ତାଙ୍କୁ । ଭଲ ପାଇବ ତାଙ୍କ ପରିବାରକୁ । ମନ ଭିତରେ କାଳ୍ପନିକ ପତ୍ନୀ' ଗଢୁଥିଲେ ଏବଂ ତା କୋଳରେ ମୁଣ୍ଡରଖି ମହାକାଶରେ ଭାଷିବୁଲୁଥିଲେ ହାଲକା ହେଇ ।

କେତେବେଳେ କେମିତି ସମୁଦ୍ର କୂଳରେ ସ୍ତର ନରମ ହାତକୁ ନିଜର ବଳିଷ୍ଠ ହାତମୁଠାରେ ସୁରକ୍ଷିତ କରି ସମୁଦ୍ର ଆଡ଼କୁ ଏକ ଲୟରେ ଚାହିଁରହୁଥିଲେ । ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣତାର ସ୍ୱାଦ ଚାଖୁଚାଖୁ ତାଙ୍କ ଭାବନାରେ ସମୁଦ୍ର ଲହଡ଼ିପରେ କେବଳ ଆନନ୍ଦ ସବୁ ଫୁଲର ମହକ ପରି ପଶିଆସୁଥିଲା । କେବଳ ଆନନ୍ଦ ।

କଲେଜରେ ପାଦ ଦବାର ଦୁଇ ବର୍ଷ ହଉହଉ ଘରର ଅବସ୍ଥା ସ୍ୱଚ୍ଛଳ ନଥିବାରୁ ଚାକିରି ପାଇଁ ଗୋଡ଼ କାଢ଼ିଲେ ହେମନ୍ତ । ବାପାଙ୍କ ଚିହ୍ନା ଜଣାରୁ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱରରେ କିରାଣୀ ଚାକିରିଟିଏ ହାତ ମୁଠାକୁ ଆସିପାରିଲା । ପରେ ପରେ ବଡ଼ ପୁଅ ହବାର ଗୁରୁ ଦାୟୀତ୍ୱ ସବୁ ତୁଲେଇଲେ - ଭଉଣୀ ବାହାଘର ଗଲେ, ସାନ ଦି ଭାଇଙ୍କୁ ନିଜ ପାଖରେ ରଖି ସ୍କୁଲ କଲେଜ ପଠେଇଲେ ।

ହେମନ୍ତଙ୍କ ନିତି ଦିନିଆ ଜଞ୍ଜାଳିଆ ଜୀବନର ଚକ ଗଢ଼ିଚାଲିଲା । ଜଞ୍ଜାଳିଆ ଜୀବନରେ ବି ଅନେକ ବାର ପଢ଼ାଟି ହେମନ୍ତବାବୁଙ୍କ କଳ୍ପନା ଜଗତରୁ ଓହ୍ଲାଇଆସି ତାଙ୍କ ଦୁଇ ବର୍ଗରିଆ ଭଡ଼ାଘରେ ଏପଟ ସେପଟ ହୁଏ । ଘର କାମକରି ତା କପାଳରେ ବିନ୍ଦୁ ବିନ୍ଦୁ ଝାଳ ଚକ୍ ମକ୍ କରେ । ତରତରରେ ଶାଢ଼ି କାନିରେ ଝାଳ ପୋଛିଲା ବେଳକୁ ସିନ୍ଦୂର ଲେସିହେଇଯାଏ । ହେମନ୍ତ ଅଫିସରୁ ଫେରିଲାପରେ ତାଙ୍କ କଳ୍ପନା ଜଗତରୁ ପଢ଼ା ବାହାରିଆସି ହସ ହସ ମୁହଁରେ ତାଙ୍କପାଇଁ ରୁଚି ଆଉ ସକ୍ରୁଳା ବାଡ଼େ । ହେମନ୍ତ ନିଜର ସିମିତ ଦରମାରୁ ଘରଭଡ଼ା ଠିକ୍ ସମୟରେ ପଇଠ କରିବା, ଚାକିରି ଝାମେଲା, ବାପାଙ୍କ ଓଷଧ କିଣା ସବୁଥିରୁ ନିଜକୁ ଓହରାଇ ଆଣି ମୁଗୁହେଇ ତା' ମୁହଁକୁ ଚାହିଁରହନ୍ତି । ପୁଣି ମେଞ୍ଚେ ମେଞ୍ଚେ ଆନନ୍ଦ ମନକୁ ମହକେଇ ଦିଏ । ପବନରେ ଫୁଲର ସୁରଭି ମହକେ । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ସୁରଭି ନା'ଟା ବାଛିଥିଲେ ହେମନ୍ତ ତା'ପାଇଁ । ହେମନ୍ତଙ୍କ ନିତି ଦିନିଆ ସଂସାର ଚକଟି ତାଙ୍କ କଳ୍ପନାରେ ରଚିଥିବା ପଢ଼ି ସୁରଭିକୁ ନେଇ ବେଶ ସୁରୁଖୁରୁରେ ଗଢ଼ୁଥିଲା ।

ହେମନ୍ତଙ୍କ ବିବାହ ସମୟ ଆସିଲା । ବାପାଙ୍କ ପସନ୍ଦର ଝିଅ କୁମୁଦିନିଙ୍କୁ ବାହାହେଇ ଘରକୁ ଆଣିଲେ ହେମନ୍ତ । କୁମୁଦିନି ଗାଁ ଝିଅ ଓ ପାଠ ଅତିବେଶରେ ତିନିଟା ଶ୍ରେଣୀ ଚପିଥିବେ । ବାପାଙ୍କ ମତରେ ଗାଁ ଝିଅ ସବୁ ସୁଧାର, ସହରି ଝିଅ ଗୁଡ଼ା ଘୋଡ଼ା । ହେମନ୍ତଙ୍କ ଅରାଜି ହବାର କାରଣ ନଥିଲା । ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଦେଖୁଥିଲେ ତାଙ୍କ କଳ୍ପନାରେ ସୃଷ୍ଟ ସୁରଭି କୁମୁଦିନିଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ଲିନ ହେଇଯିବ । ଦୁହେଁ ଏକାକାର ହେଇଯିବେ । ପକ୍ୱା ସଂସାରୀ ପାଲଟିଯିବେ ହେମନ୍ତ ତା'ପରେ ।

ସ୍ୱପ୍ନର ରଚିଥିବା ପଢ଼ିଙ୍କୁ ବାସ୍ତବରେ ପାଇବାକୁ ଅଧିକାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହେଇଉଠୁଥିଲେ ହେମନ୍ତ ସେଦିନ । ଚଉଠି ରାତି ହେମନ୍ତଙ୍କ ଧୀର ପ୍ରବେଶ ସେଇ କୋଠରୀକୁ ଯୋଉଠି ବୋହୂ ବେଶରେ ବସିଥିଲେ

କୁମୁଦିନି । ରାତି ଅନେକ ହବ... ଜହ୍ନର ଶୀତଳ କିରଣ ଝରଖାବାଟେ ଅବାଧ ପ୍ରବେଶ କରୁଥିଲା ଓ ସେଇ ଆଲୋକରେ କୁମୁଦିନି ଝଲ୍ ମଲ୍ କରୁଥିଲେ । କୋଉ ଅଜଣା ଜାଗାରେ ଫୁଟିଥିବା ମାଳତି ଫୁଲର ବାସ୍ତାରେ ପବନ ମଡୁଆଲା ହେଇଥିଲା । କୁମୁଦିନିଙ୍କ ହାତରେ ଶୋଭାବର୍ଦ୍ଧନ କରୁଥିବା ରୁଡ଼ିଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ଆଦରରେ ସ୍ୱର୍ଣ୍ଣ କଲେ ହେମନ୍ତ । ନିଜଭିତରେ ନିଜେ ହଜି ହଜି ଯାଉଥିଲେ ତା'ପରେ... ଆହୁରି ଅନେକକିଛି ହବାକୁଥିଲା...

ହଠାତ୍ ନାକ ସଁ ସଁ କାନ୍ଦରେ ପ୍ରକୃତିସ୍ଥ ହେଲେ ହେମନ୍ତ । ସ୍ନେହଭରା ଧୀର ସ୍ୱରରେ ପଚାରିଲେ - କଥାଣ ହେଲା ? କୁମୁଦିନି ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଓଡ଼ଣିକୁ ଏକରକମ କାନ୍ଦୁ ଆତକୁ ଛାଟିଦେଇ କହିଲେ-, 'ଉଠ ହୋ ! ସରାଗ ପଛେ କରିବ । ମୋ ବାପା ଏମିତି ଭିଖାରି ଘରେ ବାହାକଲେ ଛିଃଆ ଲୋ । ଗାଧୁଆ ଘରୁ ପାଣି ଠଅପ ଠଅପ ଗଳୁଚି । କାଠ ତୁଲି ଧୁଆଁ ସଲବଲ ଚାରିଆଡ଼େ ମାଟି ଗୋବର ଭଣଭଣ ।'

ହେମନ୍ତବାବୁ କହିଆସୁଥିଲେ - ତୁମେ ପରା ମୋର ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ । ଅଳ୍ପଦିନ ହେଲା ଭଉଣୀ ବାହାଘର ସରିଚି, ଦେଖୁବ ଦିନ କେତେଟାରେ ଏଘରକୁ କୋଠା କରିଦେବିନିକି । - କଥାଗୁଡ଼ା ତାଙ୍କ ଚର୍ଷିଯାଏ ଆସି ଲେଉଟିଗଲା । କୁମୁଦିନି ପୁଣି କୋଡ଼ିଲେ - 'ଏଠି ମୁଁ ଦଣ୍ଡେ ରହିପାରିବିନି । ମୋ ଗୋଡ଼ ଫାଟି ଥାଁ କଲାଣି । ସକାଳ ପାହିଲେ ମତେ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ନେଇ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱରରେ ଚାକିରି ଯାଗାକୁ ଯିବ । ନହେଲେ ମତେ ଚିହ୍ନିବ ବେଜିତ୍ କରିଦେବି ଦାଣ୍ଡରେ ! - ନା କ'ଣ ମୁ ଭୁଲ କହିଲି ?

ହତବାକ ହେମନ୍ତ ବାବୁ ଦାଦା ବଟି ମାଗୁଥିବା ସେଇ ପହିଲମାନ ଲୋକଟା ଆଗରେ ତିନା ବାଦାମ ବିକୁଥିବା ଗରିବ ଦୁସ୍ତ ପିଲାଟି ପରି ଶଙ୍କିଗଲେ । ମନକୁ ବୁଝେଇଲେ, ଏଇତ ପ୍ରଥମ ରାତି କୁମୁଦିନି ତାଙ୍କ ସ୍ନେହରେ ବାନ୍ଧିହେଇଯିବେନିକି ବଳେବଳେ ଦିନ ଗଢ଼ିଲେ । ଦିନ ଗଢ଼ିଲା...

ବରଂ ଦିନକୁ ଦିନ କୁମୁଦିନି କଠୋରତା ବଢ଼ିଲା ଯାହାକୁ ସହିବା ଅସହ୍ୟ ହେଲା ହେମନ୍ତଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ । ମାନସ ପଢ଼ି ସୁରଭିକୁ କୁମୁଦିନି ଭିତରେ ଦେଖିବାର ଆଶା ଛାଡ଼ିଦେଲେ ହେମନ୍ତ । ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଓ କଳ୍ପନା ବାସ୍ତବ ଜଗତରେ ଅନ୍ଧାର ପରି ଅଦୃଶ୍ୟ ? କଳ୍ପନାକୁ ରୂପଦେବା କ'ଣ ଗୋଟାପଣେ ଅସମ୍ଭବ ? ବାହାଘର ହବାର କିଛିଦିନ ଯାଏଁ କ'ଣ ଭାବିହଉଥିଲେ ଯେ ମନଟା ଉଦାସ ହେଇଯାଉଥିଲା ହେମନ୍ତଙ୍କର । ବେଶ୍ କିଛିଦିନ ନିଜ ସହ ନିଜେ ସଙ୍ଘର୍ଷ କଲାପରେ ହେମନ୍ତବାବୁଙ୍କୁ ଏହି ସତ୍ୟକୁ ସ୍ୱିକାର କରିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିଲା ଯେ ସୁରଭି ଓ କୁମୁଦିନି ଦୁଇଟି ବିପରୀତ ମୁହଁ ସରଳ ରେଖା । ଦୁନିଆର କୌଣସି ଶକ୍ତି ଅକ୍ଷୟ ହେବେ

ଦୁହଁକୁ ଏକାକାର କରିବାକୁ । ତେଣୁ ହେମନ୍ତକୁ କୁମୁଦିନିଙ୍କ ସ୍ୱଭାବସହ ତାଳ ମିଳେଇ ଚଳିବାକୁ ହବ କୁମୁଦିନି କଥାରେ ଚଢ଼େଇଥିବା ସିନ୍ଦୂରର ମର୍ଯ୍ୟାଦା ରକ୍ଷାପାଇଁ ।

ବାଧହେଇ ସୁରଭିକୁ ଫେରେଇନେଇ ସାଇତିଦେଲେ ନିଜ ମନଭିତରେ । ସୁରଭି ହାତଗୋଡ଼ ଛାଟିଲା, ବାହାରିବାକୁ ଆତୁରହେଲା ହେମନ୍ତବାବୁ ବୁଝେଇଲେ – ସମୟ ଆସିଲେ ତମକୁ ଆଣିବି – ‘ପ୍ରିୟତମା । ମୋର ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧାଙ୍ଗିନି ଥୟ ଧରିବ ବୋଲି ଆଶାକରୁଛି । ଛାଡ଼ି ଭିତରୁ ସୁରଭିଙ୍କ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ କାନ୍ଦ ଶୁଭୁଥିଲା ହେମନ୍ତକୁ ।

ହେମନ୍ତ କ୍ରମେ ନିଜକୁ ନିୟୋଜିତ କଲେ ସାଂସାରିକ ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ତୁଲାଇବାକୁ ଜୋଉଟା ତାଙ୍କ କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ ବୋଲି ସେ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ କରିବାକୁ ବାଧ୍ୟ ହଉଥିଲେ କେବଳ ସାମାଜିକ ଶୃଙ୍ଖଳାକୁ ନିଭେଇବାକୁ । କୁମୁଦିନିଙ୍କ ଟଙ୍କାପ୍ରତି ପ୍ରବଳ ଆକର୍ଷଣର ତୃଷ୍ଣାକୁ ମେଣ୍ଟେଇବାପାଇଁ ରାତିରେ ଚିତ୍ତସନ୍ଦେହ କଲେ, କ୍ରମେ ବାପାଙ୍କ ପାଖକୁ ଚଳି ପଠେଇବା ବନ୍ଦ ହେଲା । ଏସବୁ ଭିତରେ ହେମନ୍ତ ଚେଷ୍ଟାକରୁଥିଲେ କୁମୁଦିନିଙ୍କୁ ହୃଦୟ ଜିତିବାକୁ, ତାଙ୍କୁ ସ୍ୱାମୀର ସମ୍ମାନଟିକେ ଜିଣିବାପାଇଁ । କୁମୁଦିନିଙ୍କ ଫରମାଲସିରେ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱରରେ ପ୍ରଥମ କୋଠା କଲେ ହେମନ୍ତ ବାବୁ, ତା’ପରେ ଦ୍ୱାଦଶ ପୁଣି ଝିଅ ବାହାଘର ଏଇ ପଦରଦିନ ହେଲା ସରିଲା ।

ଆଜି ଦିନକୁ କୁମୁଦିନିଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ଟଙ୍କାର ଅଭାବ ନାହିଁ । ଘର ଭଡ଼ାରୁ ଯେତେ ଆଦାୟ ହଉଛି ହେମନ୍ତଙ୍କ ଦରମା ଓ ପେନ୍ସନ୍‌ଠାରୁ ତାହା ଅନେକ ଅଧିକ । ବାହାରକୁ ଦେଖିବାକୁ – ହେମନ୍ତବାବୁଙ୍କ ସଂସାର ପ୍ରାକୃତିକ ତତ୍ତ୍ୱ ତାତ୍ତ୍ୱ ସୁଖ ବୋଲି କୁମୁଦିନି ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ କହିବୁଲନ୍ତି । ସେଦିନ ପଡ଼ୋଶି ମିଶ୍ରବାବୁ ଯିଏ କୁମୁଦିନି ଭଉଣୀ କରିଛନ୍ତି ପ୍ରଶଂସା କରି କହିଲେ – ‘ଯାହା କୁହନ୍ତୁ ନାନୀ ଆମର ପ୍ରବଣ ମ୍ୟାଗାରିଆଲିଷ୍ଟିକ୍ ନହେଲେ ଆପଣ ଆଜି କୁଡ଼ିଆରେ କୋଉ ଗାଁରେ ରହୁଥାନ୍ତେ, ପୁଅକୁ ଭିଏମିଟି ବଢ଼େଇଛନ୍ତି ଯେ ଦରମା ଟଙ୍କା ମା’ ହାତରେ ଧରେଇ ଦଉଛି । କୁମୁଦିନି ମିସେସ ମିଶ୍ରଙ୍କ ପଢ଼ାକୁ ଚାହିଁ କହିଲେ, ବୁଝିଲୁ ଏ କ’ଣ କିଛି ବୁଝନ୍ତି । ବାପ ଯେମିତି ପୁଅ ସେମିତି ଭୋଲା ମୁଣ୍ଡା । ଯାହା ବୁଝିଥିବେ ସେଇଆ । ଚାଉନ ବଜାର ଯାଗାରେ ରହିଲେ ଆମକୁ କିଏ ଦଉଟିନା ବାସିପାଣିରେ ପଚାରୁଛି ବା । କାମ ପଡ଼ିଲେ ଦଳ ଆସି ଉଭାହେବେ ଏଇ ତୋ ଭାଇନାଙ୍କର ଭାଇ ଭଉଣୀ ବା । ପେଟକୁ ଦିହକୁ ମାରି ପଇସା ସଞ୍ଚୁଥିଲି ବୋଲିତ ଘର ଖଣ୍ଡେ ହେଲା । ତାପରକୁ ପର ବେଳେ ଲୋନରେ କାମ ଚଳିଲା । ମୁଁ ନକଲେ ନ ଭାବିଲେ କୋଉ ଯାଗା ନ ଘର ବା । ବାପ ପୁଅ ବଦଖର୍ଚ୍ଚି ଲୋ । ତା’ପରେ ହେମନ୍ତ ବାବୁଙ୍କୁ ଆଡ଼କୁ ଚାହିଁ ଭର୍ଷନା କଲେ – ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚ କଥା ପଢ଼ିଲାକୁ ମନେ ପଢ଼ିଲା ତମର କ’ଣ ବଅସ ଆସୁଛି କିଓ କାଲି ଫୋନ୍‌ରେ ସମୁଦିକୁ ଖାଇବାକୁ ଡାକି ପକେଇଚ... ପରିବା ପତର ଦଅର ଦାଆମ କିଛି ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ଅଛି ?

କୁମୁଦିନି କରୁଛି ହେମନ୍ତକୁ ଦେହସୁଆ ହେଇଗଲାଣି । ବସି ବସି ବୋର ହଉଥିଲେ – ଘଣ୍ଟା ଦେଖୁଥିଲେ ହେଲେ ମିଶ୍ରବାବୁ ଯିବା ନା ନଉନଥିଲେ । ହେମନ୍ତ ଏଆଡେ ସିଆଡେ ଅନେଇଲେ କାଳେ କୋଉଠି ସୁରଭିଙ୍କ ମୁହଁଟା ଦିଶିଯିବ । ଆଜି ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସୁରଭି ହେମନ୍ତବାବୁଙ୍କ ପାଖେପାଖେ ଅଛନ୍ତି । ହେମନ୍ତ ଦେଖିଲେ, ସୁରଭି ମନ୍ଦ ମନ୍ଦ ହସି ପରଦା ପଛପଟକୁ ବୁଲିପଡ଼ି କହିଲେ, ନାନି ଠିକ୍ କହୁଛନ୍ତି ତମେ ସତରେ ବଦଖର୍ଚ୍ଚି । ସେଦିନ ମାତ୍ର ଦିଜଣ କୁଣିଆଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ପାଞ୍ଚକେଜି ମାଛ ଆଣିନଥିଲ ?

ହେମନ୍ତକୁ ମନହେଲା ସୁରଭିଙ୍କ ଗାଲରେ ସ୍ନେହରେ ଛୋଟ ଚାପୁଡ଼ାଟେ ଦେବେ ତେଣୁ ପରଦା ପାଖକୁ ଉଠିଗଲେ । ହଠାତ୍ କୁମୁଦିନି ଉଚ୍ଚ ସ୍ୱରରେ କହିଉଠିଲେ – ଦେଖ ଦେଖ ତମ ଭାଇନାଙ୍କ ପାଗଳାମି ହେଇଛି ଆଖୁଆଗରେ ଦେଖ କେମିତି କାହାକୁ ଦେଖିଲା ଭଳି ଆଉ କଥା ହବା ଭଳି ଉଠିଗଲେ ।

ହେମନ୍ତବାବୁ ଚମକିଲାପରି ଫେରିଆସି ବସିବା ଯାଗାରେ ବସିଗଲେ । ବସିବା ଯାଗାରୁ ସୁରଭିକୁ ଅସହାୟ ମୁହଁରେ ଚାହିଁଲେ ।

ସୁରଭି କହିଲେ— କୁହ ସଂଯାଲୁଆଟେ ଚାଲୁଥିଲା ପରଦାରେ ସେଥିପାଇଁ... । ସେଇଆ କହି ମିଶ୍ରବାବୁଙ୍କ ସନ୍ଦେହ ନଜରରୁ ସେଦିନ ମୁକୁଳି ଗଲେ ।

ଦେଖିଦେଖି ବୁଢ଼ା ହେଇଗଲେଣି ହେମନ୍ତବାବୁ ଜୀବନର ଶିତି ଚଢ଼ି ଚଢ଼ି କ୍ଳାନ୍ତ । ବାସ୍ତବ ଜଗତରେ ଅର୍ଜିଥିବା ଟଙ୍କା, ଘର, ପତ୍ନି, ସନ୍ତାନ ସବୁକିଛି ଅର୍ଥ ହିନ ମନେ ହଉଥିଲା ତାଙ୍କପାଇଁ । ଅସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ମନେକରୁଥିଲେ ନିଜକୁ । ଜୀବନଟା ସରି ସରି ଗଲାଣି କିନ୍ତୁ ସୁରଭିକୁ ସିନ୍ଦୂର ଟିକେ ପିନ୍ଧେଇ ପାରିଲେନି ବୋଲି ନିଜର ଭିରୁତା ଉପରେ ରାଗ ହଉଥିଲା ।

ଘର ଭିତରୁ କୁମୁଦିନି ପାଟି ପୁଣିଥରେ ଶୁଭିଲା – କେତେ ସମୟ ଲାଗୁଛି ବାରିପଟୁ ଘରକୁ ଆସିବାକୁ ? ଏଥର ନିଜ ବୁଢ଼ା ଗୋଡ଼ାକୁ ଘୋଷାରି ହେମନ୍ତବାବୁ ଘରେ ପଶିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କନିଂ ଟେବୁଲରେ ଖାଇବାକୁ ବଢ଼ା ହୋଇଥିଲା । କୁମୁଦିନି ବୋହୁ ରୁନିକୁ ଅନେକ କଥା ଦେଖେଇ ଶିଖେଇ କହୁଥାନ୍ତି । ବିଚାରି ତାଙ୍କ ପୁଅକୁ ବାହାହେଇଛି ବୋଲି ଏତେ ସବୁ ଶୁଣିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ୁଛି । ମାସଟେ ପରେ ପୁଅ ପାଖକୁ ଯିବ ବାଙ୍ଗାଲୋର ସେଇଠି ରୁନି ଭି ଚାକିରି କରେ । ବିଚାରୀକୁ ମୁକ୍ତି ମିଳିବ ରାହାବାଳି ଶାଶୁଠୁ ।

ଖାଇବା ପରେ ଶୋଇବାଘରେ ହେମନ୍ତ ଓଷଧ ବୋତଲର ଜାମ୍ ଠିପିଟା ଖୋଲିବାକୁ ନିଜ ଦୁର୍ବଳ ହାତରେ ଏକରକମ କସରତ କରୁଛନ୍ତି, ପଛଆଡୁ କୁମୁଦିନି ଉଭାହେଇପଡ଼ି, ରୁନି ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟରେ କହିଲେ,

— ବୁଝିଲ ତା ବୋପା ଭାବିଟି ଝିଅ ମାର୍ବୁଲୁ ଘରେ ରାଣି ହବ । ମୁଁ କୋଉ କରେଇ ଦଉଟି । ଗାଧୁଆଘରେ ମହାରାଣି ଗରମ ପାଣିରେ ଗାଧୋଇବେ ଆଉ ମୁଁ ବାହେଇକି ଆସିଲା ବେଳକୁ ତମ ଖପରା ଘରୁ ପାଣି ଗଳୁଥିଲା । ନାଇ ନାଇ ମୋର କ’ଣ ମନ ନଥେଲା ଗରମ ପାଣିରେ ଗାଧୋଇବାକୁ । ଗିଜରଟାକୁ ଖୋଲିଦେଇଟି । ଚାକରାଣିକୁ ବି ମନାକରଟି ଏଇ ମାସଟା ନଆସିବାକୁ । ବାସନ ମଜା ଘର ପୋଛା ସବୁ କରୁ । ପଇସା କିଛି ବଞ୍ଚୁଯିବ । ମୁଁ ତ ପୁଣି ଦିଅର ନଶୟକ କରିକରି ଥେଇଆ ନା ନାହିଁ । ଆର କୋଉ ନଟା ନା ଛଟା ବା ।

ହେମନ୍ତ ତୁମ୍ଭ ରହିଲେ ।

ହେମନ୍ତବାରୁ ବୁଝୁଥିଲେ କୁମୁଦିନିଙ୍କ ଏସବୁ କଥା ରୁନିପ୍ରତି ଭୟଙ୍କର ଇର୍ଷାରୁ ଯାତ । ରୁନି ଏକ୍ସକେଚେଡ୍ ଓ ଭଦ୍ର । ଗୋଟିଏ ଝିଅବୋଲି ବାପା ମାଙ୍କ ଗେହ୍ଲା ତା ଉପରେ ପୁଣି ଭଲ ସ୍ୱଭାବର ହେଇଥିବାରୁ ସାଇପଡ଼ିଶା ସାଙ୍ଗସାଥୁ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ପ୍ରିୟ । କୁମୁଦିନି ତାର ପୁରା ଓଲଟା । ପୁଅ ଓ ଝିଅ ବି ଜାଣନ୍ତି ବୋଉର ସ୍ୱଭାବ କିନ୍ତୁ ହିଁରେ ହିଁ ମିଳାନ୍ତି କେବଳ କୁମୁଙ୍କ କ୍ରୋଧ ଓ ଇର୍ଷା ବେମାରିକୁ ଚପେଇ ରଖିବାକୁ । ହେଲେ ବାହାର ଲୋକ ମୁହିଁ ଉପରେ ଶୁଣେଇଦିଅନ୍ତି । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଆଜିକାଲି କୁମୁଙ୍କର କାହାକୁ କଡ଼ାକଥା କହିବାର ହେଲେ ହେମନ୍ତବାରୁକୁ ପାଟିରେ କୁହାଉଛନ୍ତି ।

ଓଷଦ ଖାଇଦେଇ ହେମନ୍ତ ଧୀରେ ଧୀରେ ବାଡ଼ିପଟକୁ ମୁହାଁଇଲେ । କୁମୁଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖି ସୁରଭି ଲେମ୍ବୁଗଛ ଆରପଟେ ଲୁଚି ଯାଇଥିଲେ । କୁମୁଙ୍କ ଆଖି ପଡ଼ିଲେ ସର୍ବନାଶ ।

ସୁରଭି ସାଙ୍ଗେ ବାର୍ତ୍ତାଆଳାପରେ ମଗ୍ଧ ଥିଲାବେଳେ ଦିନେ ଅଧେ ହେମନ୍ତ ବାରୁ ଧରା ପଡ଼ିଯାଇଛନ୍ତି କୁମୁଙ୍କ ଶ୍ୱଶୁରାଳୟର ଚତୁର ଆଖିରେ । ବୁଢ଼ାବୟସରେ ବାଗାଳ ପରି ଗପୁଛନ୍ତି ହେମନ୍ତ ସେକଥା ପୁଅ ଝିଅଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ଅଭିଯୋଗ ହେଇସାରିଟି । ସାଇକାଲଟ୍ରିସଙ୍କ ଠାରୁ ସେଇ ପାଗଳା ବେମାରିଟାକୁ ଭଲ କରିବାକୁ ଓଷଦ ଭି ଖାଇଛନ୍ତି ହେମନ୍ତ । ସମସ୍ତେ କହିଲେ ହେମନ୍ତ ଏକ୍ସକୃଟିଆ ଫିଲ୍ କରୁଛନ୍ତି ବୟସ ବଢ଼ିଲାରୁ ମନ ଏକ୍ସକୃଟିଆ ହେଇଯାଉଟି ।

ହସିଲେ ହେମନ୍ତ । ହସଟା କ୍ରମେ ଓଠରୁ ସୃଷ୍ଟିହେଇ ଆଖିରେ ଲୁହ ପାଲଟିଗଲା ।

ହେମନ୍ତ ତାକିଲେ — ସୁରଭି ?

ହିଁ କ’ଣ କହୁଟ ?

ନା... କିଛି ନାହିଁ ?

ତମ ମୁହଁରେ ଚିନ୍ତାର ଛାପ ଯେ ? ସୁରଭି ପଚାରୁଥିଲେ ।

... ସେମାନେ ମତେ ପାଗଳ କହୁଛନ୍ତି ତମ ସଙ୍ଗେ କଥା ହବାବେଳେ କେତେଥର ଦେଖୁ ପକେଇଛନ୍ତି ତ ସେଥିପାଇଁ । ତମେ ତ ଅଦୃଶ୍ୟ ମୁଁ ହିଁ ଧରା ପଡ଼ୁଟି । କଥା ହୁଅନା ତାହେଲେ !

ତମେ ଭି ପାଗଳ ସୁରଭି ! ତମେ ଯାଣିତ ତୁମର ମୋର ସମ୍ପର୍କର ଗଭିରତା, ହେଲେବି ନଜାଣିଲାପରି ହଉଟ । ଅସ୍ତ୍ର ଉଚ୍ଚ ଅଭିମାନିଆ ସ୍ୱରରେ କହିଲେ ହେମନ୍ତବାରୁ ।

ନା ଗୋ... ମୋର ସେତେ ସାହାସ ନାହିଁ..., ତମ ବିହୁନେ ମୋର ଅସ୍ତ୍ର ନାହିଁ ! ମୋର ପ୍ରାଣ ହିଁ ତୁମେ ।

ଅଭିମାନରେ ଆଖିରୁ ଧାର ଧାର ଲୁହ ଗଡ଼ିଗଲା ସୁରଭିର ।

ପୋଛିଦେଲେ ସୁରଭିଙ୍କ ଲୁହ ହେମନ୍ତବାରୁ । କହିଲେ, କାନ୍ଦିନି ତମ ଆଖିରେ ଲୁହ ମୋ ଛାତିରେ ଲହୁ ହେଇ ଜମାଟ ବାନ୍ଧେ । ନିଜକୁ ଦୋଷି ଦୋଷି ଲାଗେ । ଆତ୍ମା ବିକଳ ହେଇଯାଏ । ତୁମକୁ ମୁଁ ଦୁଃଖ ବ୍ୟତୀତ ଆଉ କ’ଣ ବା ଦେଇଟି, ଦେଖ ତମ ଶାଢ଼ୀ କାନିପାଖେ ଫାଟିଗଲାଣି । ମୁଁ ତୁମପାଇଁ ନୂଆ ଶାଢ଼ୀଖଣ୍ଡେ କିଣି ଦେଇପାରିଟି କି ? ମୁଁ ତୁମର ହାତଧରି ସମାଜରେ ଠିଆ ହେଇପାରିଲିନି କିନ୍ତୁ ତୁମହାତଧରି ସମାଜରୁ ଓହରି ତ ଯାଇପାରିବି । ମୋ ସଙ୍ଗେ ଯିବ ? କୁଆଡ଼େ ପଚାରିଲେ ସୁରଭି ।

ସଞ୍ଜ ନଇଁ ଆସୁଥିଲା ପକ୍ଷୀଙ୍କ ଘରଫେରନ୍ତା କିଟିରି ମିଟିରିରେ ଆଖପାଖ କମ୍ପୁଥିଲା । ସେ ରାବରେ ଆନନ୍ଦ ଥିଲା, ପ୍ରାଣ ଥିଲା ସମ୍ମାନଥିଲା ପୃଥିବୀ ପାଇଁ । ଦିନକେତେଟାରେ ଏଇ ଗଛଟାକୁ କୁମୁଦିନି ହାଣିଦେବେ । ଚଢ଼େଇଗୁଡ଼ା ଆଉଗୋଟେ ଗଛ ଖୋଜିହେବେ ସୁଃଖର ସଂସାର ବସେଇବାକୁ । ମନଜାଣି ସାଥୁଟେ ଥିଲେ ଗଛଟେ ପାଇବାରେ ଅସୁବିଧା କୋଉଠି ।

ସୁରଭିଙ୍କ ହାତରେ ହାତଛନ୍ଦି ହେମନ୍ତ ଟିଣ ଗେଟ ଖୋଲି ଧୀରେ ଧୀରେ ମାଟି ରାସ୍ତାରେ ଆଗକୁ ଆଗକୁ ଚାଲିଲାବେଳେ କହିଲେ — ସୁରଭି ଏଇ ଆଗରେ ଯୋଉ ବୃଦ୍ଧ ନିବାସ ଦେଖୁଟ ସେଠି ତୁମ ସଙ୍ଗେ ମୁଁ ମୋର ବାକି ଜୀବନ ବିତେଇବାର ନିଷ୍ପତ୍ତି ନେଇ ସାରିଟି । ତମେ ରାଜି ହବ ମୋପରି ଗୋଟେ ବୁଢ଼ାସଙ୍ଗେ ରହିବାକୁ ? ?

ହେମନ୍ତ ଅନୁଭବ କଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ଅଣ୍ଟା ଚାରିପାଖେ ସୁରଭିଙ୍କ ହାତ ବେଢ଼େଇ ହେଇଗଲା । ସୁରଭି ପାଖକୁ ଲାଗି ଆସି କହିଲେ — ମୋର ସୃଷ୍ଟି ତମ କଳ୍ପନାରେ, ତୁମକୁ ଛାଡ଼ି ମୋର ବାସ କୋଉଠି ? ଜନ୍ମ ଜନ୍ମ ଧରି ମୁଁ ତୁମ କଳ୍ପନାରେ ଆସିବି ଯେତେଦିନଯାଏ ତମେ ମୋତେ ବାସ୍ତବରେ ନପାଇଟ । ସୁରଭି ଆହୁରି ପାଖକୁ ଲାଗି ଆସିଲେ ଏତେ ପାଖକୁ... ହେମନ୍ତବାରୁ ଅନୁଭବ କଲେ ଝଲକାଏ ସୁରଭିତ ମନ୍ଦ ମଲୟ ତାଙ୍କ ଦେହକୁ ଛୁଇଁଗଲା ।

ମୁଁ କିଏ ?

ଗିରିଜା ଶଙ୍କର ମିଶ୍ର

On a sluggish afternoon, got a sudden ping of my office communicator from Mr. Satya Pattanayak, Unknown name but familiar surname. Mixture of surprise and anxiousness created ripples on my forehead.

Then came biggest co-incidence fo my US stay. My affection towards Odia literature flourished due to "Pratishruti" Magazine, & Odia poem recitation program on the occasion of Odia new year & English New Year.

OSA visions, achievements created a position approach towards my root, culture, language. It gave a familiar feelings in the land of lonline.

This story is bisection of own confused state of mind at two different transition phase of my life and how knowing about "Pratishruti" Odia Kavita Patha, & OSA beautified my life".

..... Girija Sankar Mishra.

ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ରାଜ୍ୟର ମାଦକତାରୁ ନିଜକୁ ନିବୃତ୍ତ କରି, ଶରୀରର ସ୍ୱାୟତ୍ତ ସଂସ୍ଥାକୁ ଜାଗ୍ରତ କରି, ଆଖିମାଲି ସକାଳର ଦୂର ଦିଗ୍‌ବଳୟ ଯେତେବେଳେ ଦେଖେ— ମନରେ ଆସେ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ.... “ମୁଁ କିଏ” ? ଶରୀରର ଲୋମକୂପ ଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ଟାଙ୍କୁରିତ କରୁଥିବା ଏ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ମୋର ରମ୍ (Rum glass)ର ପ୍ରତିକ୍ରିୟା ସ୍ୱରୂପ, କେଉଁ ଗୋଟିଏ ସକାଳର (Hango)ର ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ନୁହେଁ ।

୮୦ ମାଇଲ ପ୍ରତିଘଣ୍ଟା ଗତିରତ - car ର Steering wheel ଉପରେ ହାତ ରଖି, କେଉଁ ଏକ କର୍କଶ ବିଦେଶୀ ସଂଗର ଛନ୍ଦରେ ଉନ୍ମାଦିତ ହୋଇ ଏକୁଟିଆ ଯାଉଥିଲା ସମୟରେ ହଟ ପୁଣି ମୁଁ ପଚାରି ଦିଏ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ନିଜକୁ ... “ମୁଁ କିଏ ?” କିଛି ସମୟ ପାଇଁ ମୁହଁରୁ ଲିଭିଯାଏ ଉନ୍ମାଦନାର ଲକ୍ଷଣ, ଆଉ ପରିପ୍ରକାଶିତ ହୁଏ ଗନ୍ଧାରତା ଓ ବିଚଳିତତାର ଅଦ୍‌ଭୁତ ମିଶ୍ରଣ ।

କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାଳୟର ସହକର୍ମୀଙ୍କ ଗହଣରେ କେଉଁ ଏକ ଦୂର ଦର୍ଶନୀୟ ସ୍ଥାନରେ ଆମୋଦ ପ୍ରମୋଦର ପରିବେଶଟି ହଠାତ୍ ପାଣ୍ଡୁର ଧୂଷର ହୋଇଯାଏ ମୋ ପାଇଁ । ସ୍ୱନିକ୍ଷେପିତ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନବାଣ ଭେଦକରେ ମୋର ହୃଦୟର ଗଭୀର କନ୍ଦର ... “ମୁଁ କିଏ ?” ।

ପୃଥିବୀର ସର୍ବଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ ରାଷ୍ଟ୍ର — ଏହି ସଂଯୁକ୍ତ ରାଷ୍ଟ୍ରରେ ତଥାକଥିତ ଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ ଜୀବନ ଶୈଳି ନିର୍ବାହ କରୁଥିବା ମୋ ଭଳିଆ ମଣିଷକୁ କାହିଁକି ଏହି “ମୁଁ କିଏ ?”, ପ୍ରଶ୍ନଟି ଭୂତ ପରି ଘାଉଛି ? ଏହି ପ୍ରଶ୍ନଭୂତ କାହିଁକି ମାନୁନି କୌଣସି ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦିଷ୍ଟ ସମୟ, ମୋର କ୍ଷୀପ୍ରଗତି କିମ୍ବା ମୋର ଆମୋଦ - ପ୍ରମୋଦର ସ୍ଥିତି ?

କାହିଁକି ? ମୁଁ କ’ଣ ହୋଇଯାଇଛି — ପରିଚୟ ଶୂନ୍ୟ ? ଜନ୍ମ ହୋଇଥିଲି ଯେତେବେଳେ, ମୋ ଗ୍ରାମବାସୀ ଖୁସିରେ ପରିଚୟ ଦେଇଥିଲେ — ‘ମିଶ୍ରବଂଶର ସୁପୁତ୍ର ବୋଲି । ଯେତେବେଳେ କଲା ହାପପ୍ୟାଣ୍ଟ ଓ ଧଳା ହାପସାର୍ଟ ପିନ୍ଧି ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଯାଇଥିଲି ମୋର ଚିରନମସ୍ୟ ଶିକ୍ଷକମାନେ ପରିଚୟ ଦେଇଥିଲେ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟର ଗୌରବ ବୋଲି । ବାପା, ମା, ବେଳେବେଳେ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ହାତରଖି କହିପକାନ୍ତି — ‘ମୋ ଗେହ୍ଲୁ ପୁଅ’ ବୋଲି । ଲାଗୁଥିଲା ସତେଯେପରି ମୁଁ ଏ ପୃଥିବୀର ମେରୁଦେଶରେ ଠିଆ ହୋଇଛି ଆଉ ମୋତେ ଘେରି ରହିଛନ୍ତି ସମଗ୍ର ପୃଥିବୀର ଅଗଣିତ ଲୋକ... ସବୁ ମୋର ନିଜ ଲୋକ ।

ପୁଣି ଧାବମାନ ସମୟ ସ୍ତ୍ରୋତ ଯେତେବେଳେ ମୋର ତୁରଣତାକୁ ରୂପାନ୍ତରିତ କରୁଥାଏ ଯୌବନକୁ, ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଛାଡ଼ି ଚାଲିଯାଉଥାଏ, ମୁଁ ମୋର ଚାକିରୀ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରକୁ । ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଶେଷ ଷ୍ଟେସନ୍‌କୁ ରୁମ୍‌ନ ଦେଇ ଯେତେବେଳେ ରେଳଗାଡ଼ି ଆଗକୁ ମାଡ଼ି ଚାଲିଲା, କାହିଁ କେଜାଣି ପ୍ରଥମଥର ପାଇଁ ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହେଲା ମୋ ହୃଦୟରେ ଶୂନ୍ୟତା । ଚକ୍ଷୁହେଲା ଅଶୁସିକ୍ତ । ମୋର ଚାରିପଟର ନିଜ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଗହଳି ଲାଗିଲା ସ୍ୱପ୍ନଘନ ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ନୂଆଯାଗାର ରହଣି ଥିଲା ଭଲ । ଧୀରେ ଧୀରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଦାରିଦ୍ର୍ୟତାର କଳା ଧଳା ଚିତ୍ର ଆଗରେ ଆଖି ଝଲସାଇ ଦେଉଥିଲା ନୂଆ ସହରର - ରଂଗାନ ଚିତ୍ର, ବେଶି ଭଲ ଲାଗିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲା । ନୂଆ ସହରରେ କିଛି ଅଚିହ୍ନା ମୁହଁ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଚିହ୍ନା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା, ପୁଣି ଅତିଶୀଘ୍ର ଚିହ୍ନା ହୋଇଯାଉଥିବା ଅଚିହ୍ନା ଭାଷାର ଲୋକ ମନରେ ଦୃଢ଼ ପୃଷ୍ଠଭୂମି ସ୍ଥାପନ କଲା - ନିଜର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଥିବା ସଂକ୍ରାନ୍ତିତ ମନୋଭାବକୁ ବିସ୍ତାର କରିବାର ଅଭିଳାଷ । ମନ ନିଜକୁ ନିଜେ ବୁଝାଇ ଦିଏ - ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକତା ପରି ନୀଚ ମନୋଭାବରୁ ନିଜକୁ ଉଦ୍ଧାର କରି, ଭାରତୀୟ ବୋଲି ପରିଚୟ ସେ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରୁଛି ବେଶି ।

ରାଷ୍ଟ୍ରଭାଷା, ଅନ୍ୟ ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକ ଭାଷା, ପୁଣି ଇଂରାଜୀ ଭାଷା ପୁଟ, ଏସବୁ ନୂଆ ନୂଆ ଭାଷା ମୋର ଜ୍ଞାନକୋଷ ଓ ଭାଷାକୋଷକୁ ଅଧିକ ରୁଚ୍ଛାମତ୍ତ କରୁଛି ବୋଲି ମୋର ମନ ମୋତେ କହିଚାଲେ । ଅନ୍ୟ ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକ ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ମଧୁରସକୁ - ଅନୁକରଣ କରୁଛି ତର୍ଜମାର ମିଥ୍ୟା ଘୋଡ଼ଣି ତଳେ । ଏହାତ ଦୋଷାବହ ନୁହେଁ ।

(ବିଶ୍ଳେଷଣ - ୧)

ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଓ ଭାଷା ବହୁ ପୁରାତନ; (ଖ୍ରୀ.ପୂ.-୨୦୦) ଖାରବେଳ ରାଜତ୍ଵ କାଳରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା, ଲିପି, ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ, ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂଗୀତର ସ୍ଥିତି ଅଛି । ଆଉ ଏହାର ପ୍ରମାଣଦେୟତକ ବହନ କରିଛି, ପ୍ରତ୍ନତତ୍ତ୍ଵବିତ୍ ମାନଙ୍କ ହସ୍ତଗତ ଶିଳାଲିପି ଅନ୍ୟ ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକ ଭାଷା ଓ ସଂସ୍କୃତିର - ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଓ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ପ୍ରତି ଦୌରାତ୍ମ୍ୟ, ଇତିହାସର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ସମୟରେ - ଏହି ମହାନ ଭାଷା ଓ ସଂସ୍କୃତିକୁ ଲୁପ୍ତ କରିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରିଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ, ଏହା ନିଜକୁ ବଞ୍ଚାଇ ରଖିପାରିଛି । କାରଣ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତି - ନମ୍ର, ସରଳ ଓ ଅନ୍ୟ ହିତାକାଂକ୍ଷୀ ହୋଇଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ନିଜ ଅସ୍ତିତ୍ଵ ଉପରେ ଆଞ୍ଚ ଆସିଲେ, ପ୍ରଭୁ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ଆଶୀର୍ବାଦ ନେଇ ଖଡ୍ଗହସ୍ତ ହୁଏ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏକ ମନସ୍ତାତ୍ତ୍ଵିକ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିକୋଣରୁ ଦେଖିଲେ, ଅନ୍ୟ କିଛି ବିଶ୍ଳେଷଣର ଭିତ୍ତିପ୍ରସ୍ତର ସ୍ଥାପନ ହୋଇପାରିବ । ନିଜର ଜୀବନ ଶୈଳୀକୁ ସମୃଦ୍ଧ କରିବାକୁ ହେଲେ - ଅର୍ଥ, ସମ୍ମାନ, ପ୍ରତିପତି, ସମାଜର ଦୃଢ଼ସ୍ଥିତି - ଏସବୁର ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ରହିଛି । କ୍ଷାପ୍ରବେଗରେ ଧାବମାନ ସମାଜରେ ଅର୍ଥସମ୍ପଦ ଥିବା ଲୋକ, ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀ, ଜାତି କିମ୍ବା ଦେଶ - ପାଲଟି ଯାଏ ଉଦାହରଣ ଓ ଆଦର୍ଶ - ଅନ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ସାଧାରଣ ମଣିଷର ତର୍ଜମା ମଧ୍ୟ ଖୁବ୍ ସାଧାରଣ । ସେ ଭାବେ ଯେଉଁ ପଦ୍ଧତି କିମ୍ବା ପ୍ରକ୍ରିୟା ଦେଇ ସେ ଗତିକରି, ନିଜ ଜୀବନକୁ ସୁଖସମୃଦ୍ଧିରେ ଆପ୍ୟାୟିତ କରିପାରୁନି, ସେ ପ୍ରକ୍ରିୟା, ପଦ୍ଧତି, ଭାଷା କିମ୍ବା ସଂସ୍କୃତିର

ତୁଳନାତ୍ମକ ମୂଲ୍ୟ କମ୍ ଓ ଅନ୍ୟଠାରୁ ନୀଚ । ଏହି ମୂଲ୍ୟାୟନ କରି ସେ ନିଜର ସଂସ୍କୃତି, ଭାଷା, ପରିବେଶ, ରାଜ୍ୟ ସହ ସହି କରି, ପରତାକୁ ସାଦରେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରେ । ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଅନଗ୍ରସରତାର ଖବର କାଗଜ ଓ ପୁସ୍ତକ ଲିଖିତ କିମ୍ବା ଯାନ୍ତ୍ରିକ ଗଣମାଧ୍ୟମ ଚର୍ଚ୍ଚିତ - ରାଜନୈତିକ କାରଣ ଯାହା ବି ହେଉନା କାହିଁକି, ଏପରି ଏକ ନୀଚ ମନୋଭାବତା ଏକ ମହାମାରୀ ସଦୃଶ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆଭାଷୀଙ୍କୁ ଗ୍ରାସ କରିଚାଲିଛି । “Knowledge has importance till it gives bread & butter”.

ତେଣୁ ନୁହେଁ ଯେ ଜନସାଧାରଣଙ୍କର କେବଳ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଓ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ପ୍ରତି ଉଦାସୀନ ଭାବ ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହେଉଛି, ବରଂ ଅତି ତିକ୍ତ ଭାବନା ମଧ୍ୟ ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହେଉଛି - ତେଲ, ଲୁଣର ଚିନ୍ତା ଯୋଗୁ ଲଜ୍ଜାବୋଧ କରୁଛି ସେ ଯେବେ ନିଜର ପରିଚୟ - ବାହାର ରାଜ୍ୟରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାବେ ଦେଲାପରେ, “Odisha is a state of flood & draught correct ??” ପ୍ରଶ୍ନର ସମ୍ମୁଖୀନ ହେଉଛି ।

ତେଣୁ ଶତାଧିକ ବୁଦ୍ଧିଜୀବି, ରାଜନୈତିକ ଦଳ, ଭାଷା ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ରକ୍ଷକ ମାନଙ୍କୁ, ରାତିର ନିଦହଜାଇ, ଏହି ମହାମାରୀର ପ୍ରତିକାର ଖୋଜିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ । ନୋହିଲେ କେବଳ - “Odia is in the elite group of classical languages of India” - ସମ୍ମାନ, ସରକାରୀ କାଗଜ ପତ୍ର ଓ wikipedia ରେ ରହିଯିବ । ଆଉ “Odia is a classical but second dead language after Sanskrit” ପ୍ରମାଣିତ ହେବ ।

ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଓ ଜୀବନଶୈଳୀ ବହୁତ୍ ସରଳ । “Simple living & high thinking” ଏହାହିଁ ଓଡ଼ିଆର ବେଶଭୂଷା ଖାଦ୍ୟ, ଚଳଣି ଓ ଆଧ୍ୟାତ୍ମିକ ଚିନ୍ତାଧାରାରୁ ଅତିସହଜରେ ପରିଲକ୍ଷିତ ହୋଇଥାଏ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଆଧୁନିକ ପ୍ରତିଯୋଗିତା ମୂଳକ ଯୁଗରେ ଏହି ପ୍ରକାର ଏକ ସ୍ଥିର, କଳାତ୍ମକ, ସରଳ ସଂସ୍କୃତି, ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତିକୁ ପଛରେ ପକାଇ ଦେଉଛି । ଆଉ ଧୈର୍ଯ୍ୟ ହୀନ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ନିଜର ଜୀବନ ଶୈଳୀ ଓ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଉପରେ ଅଧିକ ଗବେଷଣା କରି ତାକୁ ଅଧିକ ସମୃଦ୍ଧ କରିବା, ଆଉ ସେହି ନିଜସ୍ଵ ପଦ୍ଧତିରେ ଅନ୍ୟସହ ସମକକ୍ଷ ହେବା ଉପରେ ସମୟ ବିନିଯୋଗ କରିବାକୁ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ ନୁହେଁ ।

ଗବେଷଣା ଗୋଟିଏ ଅତି ଧୀର, ମନ୍ଦୁର ପ୍ରକ୍ରିୟା । କିନ୍ତୁ ଗୋଟିଏ ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ଭିତ୍ତିଭୂମି ଦୃଢ଼ଭୂତ କରି, ଆଗାମୀ ଅନେକ ବର୍ଷ ପାଇଁ ସ୍ଥାୟୀ ସମାଧାନ ଦେଇଥାଏ ଏହି ଗବେଷଣା ।

ଏମିତି ଅନେକ କିଛି ପ୍ରଯୁଜ୍ୟତା ଯୁକ୍ତ ସମସ୍ୟା ଉପରେ ଏକ ସ୍ଥିର ଯୈର୍ଯ୍ୟଯୁକ୍ତ ପଦକ୍ଷେପ ନେବା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ – ଆଗାମୀ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀକୁ ବର୍ଷ କଥାଭାବି ।

x x x x x x

ପୂର୍ବଦିଗରୁ ସିନ୍ଦୁରା ଫାଟି ଆସୁଛି । ମାର୍ଚ୍ଚ ମାସର Phoenix (Arizona) ର ଅତିସୁନ୍ଦର ଉଷ୍ଣ କିନ୍ତୁ ପୁଲକଭରା ସକାଳ ଭାବନାକୁ ମୁଁ ଅନୁଭବ କରିପାରୁଛି । Squak peak ପର୍ବତର trail ଶେଷ ଡିଃ ପାହାଚ ଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ଅତିକ୍ରମ କରିଚାଲିଛି, ମୋର କ୍ଲାନ୍ତ, ଅବଶ ଶରୀରକୁ ଠେଲିପେଲି, ମନରେ ଶେଷ ଦମ୍ଭ ସାଉଁଟି । ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ବେଞ୍ଚପରେ ଲୁହା ରେଲିଂ, ତାପରେ Squak peakର ଶିଖର । ଏହା Phoenixର ସର୍ବୋଚ୍ଚତମ ସ୍ଥାନ ଏବଂ ପ୍ରତି ସପ୍ତାହର ଶେଷ ଦୁଇଦିନରେ ମୁଁ ଏହି Squak Peakର ଉଚ୍ଚତାକୁ ପରାଜିତ କରି ଶିଖରରେ ପହଞ୍ଚେ । ସେଠାରେ ପୁଣି ମୁଁ କିଛି ମାସ ତଳେ ଆବିଷ୍କାର କରିଛି ଏକ ସମତଳ ଚଟାଣ ସଦୃଶ ପ୍ରସ୍ତର, ଏକ ଏକାନ୍ତ କୋଣରେ । ଏହି ପ୍ରସ୍ତର ଉପରେ ମୋର କ୍ଲାନ୍ତ, ଅବସ ଶରୀରକୁ – ଆଞ୍ଜୁଳାଏ ଚାଉଳ ପରି ଅଜାଡ଼ି ଦିଏ । ଆଖୁ ଖୋଲି, ଦୂର ଦିଗ୍‌ବଳୟ ପ୍ରତି ଦୃଷ୍ଟିନିବନ୍ଧ କରେ । ଆକାଶ, ସୁନାଳ କ୍ୟାନଭାସ୍, ପୁଣି ଲାଲ୍ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟାଲୋକର ଛିଟା । ତଳକୁ ଚାହେଁ – ପୁଣି ଦୁଇଟି ପାହାଡ଼ର ପାଦଦେଶ ମିଶି ଯାଇଛି, ଏଇ ଗଭୀର ଛୋଟ ଉପତ୍ୟକା ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରି ।

ପ୍ରସ୍ତର ଉପରେ ବସି ନିଜ ସହ କିଛି ସମୟ ବିତାଇ ଚାଲିଛି ନୀରବତାର ଘନତ୍ୱ ମାପିମାପି, ଶାନ୍ତିର ଉତ୍ସ – ମନପୃଷ୍ଠଭୂମିରେ ଲେପିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରୁଛି । କିନ୍ତୁ ପୁଣି ଅବିଚଳିତ ମାନସ ପଟରେ ତରଙ୍ଗ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରୁକରୁ ଆଲୋଚନର ରୂପନେଲା, ମୋର ସେହି ପୁରୁଣା ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ....ମୁଁ କିଏ ?”

ଭାରତୀୟତାର ମାନଦଣ୍ଡ ଧରି ଏ ବିଦେଶ ଭୂମିରେ କେତେ ବର୍ଷ କାଟି ସାରିଲିଣି । ଅନେକ ବିଦେଶୀ ସହକର୍ମୀ ଓ ଭାରତୀୟ ସହକର୍ମୀଙ୍କ ସହ ବାକ୍ୟାଳାପ, ଆମୋଦପ୍ରମୋଦରେ କିଛି ସମୟ ଅତିବାହିତ ଏବଂ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ କିଛି ଭାବନାର ଆଦାନ ପ୍ରଦାନ ମଧ୍ୟ ସରିଲାଣି କିନ୍ତୁ ଏବେବି ଏ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନର ନାଗଫଣା ମୋ ଆଡ଼କୁ କାହିଁକି ଏ ଫୁର୍କାକାର ଛାଡ଼ୁଛି ?

ମୋର ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ଛାଡ଼ି, ଯେତେବେଳେ ଭାରତର ଅନ୍ୟବଡ଼ ସହରସ୍ଥିତ ମୋର କର୍ମକ୍ଷେତ୍ରକୁ ଯାଇଥିଲି, ସେଠାରେ ମୋତେ ସବୁକିଛି ମିଳିଗଲା ପରି ଲାଗିଥିଲା । ମୋ ନିଜ ରାଜ୍ୟର ସବୁକିଛି ଭାଷା,

ଲୋକ, ଚାଲିଚଳନ, ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଚେହେରା, ବେଶଭୂଷା, ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଅତି ନୀଚ ମାନର ଓ ନଗଣ୍ୟ ଲାଗିଥିଲା । ନିଜକୁ ନିଜେ – ସଂକୀର୍ଣ୍ଣତା ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକତାରୁ ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ୱରେ ଥିବା ବୁଦ୍ଧିଜୀବିକ ପରିସର ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଅନ୍ତର୍ଭୁକ୍ତ କରିଦେଇଥିଲି – ମୋ କଳ୍ପନା ଜଗତରେ ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ଆଜି ଏ କ’ଣ ? ଆନ୍ତର୍ଜାତିକ ସ୍ତରକୁ ଲମ୍ଫ ପ୍ରଦାନ କରି ଆସିଲି, ଗର୍ବରେ ଭାରତୀୟର ପରିଚୟ ନେଇ । ସମସ୍ତ ଭାଷା ସମ୍ଭାଷଣରେ, ଅନ୍ୟ ଭାରତୀୟ ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀଙ୍କ ଆଗରେ ଭାରତୀୟର ପରିଚୟ ଦେଲି । ମୋର ଚିନ୍ତାଧାରା, ସଂକୀର୍ଣ୍ଣତାର ସବୁ ଆବରଣକୁ ଛିନ୍ନ କରି, ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକ ସ୍ତର, ଜାତୀୟ ସ୍ତରକୁ ପଛରେ ପକାଇ, ଆନ୍ତର୍ଜାତିକ ସ୍ତରରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଲାଣି । ତଥାପି କାହିଁକି Squak Peak ର ଶିଖରରେ ବସି ମୋ ଓଡ଼ିଶା, ମୋ ଗାଁ, ସେହି ଧୂଳିମାଟି ଓ କର୍ବମାଳ୍ ରାସ୍ତା କଥା ଭାବିବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା ହେଉଛି ? ମୋର Squak Peak ର ଉଚ୍ଚତା ଉପରେ ବିଜୟର ଉଲ୍ଲାସ ଏକ ଗୋବରପୋକ ସଦୃଶ ମୋ ଆଗରେ ଗୁରୁଣ୍ଡି ଗୁରୁଣ୍ଡି ଚାଲୁଛି ? ? କାହିଁକି ପୁଣି ଏ ତାତ୍ପର୍ଯ୍ୟ “ମୁଁ କିଏ ?” ଆଉ କାହିଁକି ଏକ ପରାଜିତ ସିପାହୀ ସଦୃଶ ନତମସ୍ତକ ଏ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ସମ୍ମୁଖରେ ।

(ବିଶ୍ଳେଷଣ - ୨)

ନିଜ ରାଜ୍ୟର ଶତ ସହସ୍ର ରାଜ୍ୟବାସୀଙ୍କ ଜୀବନ ସ୍ତରରୁ ଅଳ୍ପକିଛି ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ୱକୁ ଉଠିଗଲା ପରେ, ଏକ ଅଭୂତ ଆନନ୍ଦ ଓ ସାହସ ଆସିଯାଏ ମଣିଷ ମନରେ । ନିଜର ପୂର୍ବ ଜୀବନଶୈଳୀ, ଚାଲିଚଳନ, ଭାଷା, ସଂସ୍କୃତି ମୂଲ୍ୟହୀନ ଲାଗେ ଏବଂ ସେ ନିଜର ବୁଦ୍ଧି ଓ ଚିନ୍ତାଶକ୍ତିର ଦୃଢ଼ି ଦେଇ, ନିଜର ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକ ମନୋଭାବରୁ ନିବୃତ୍ତ, ବିଶାଳ ହୃଦୟବାନ୍ ଓ ଚିନ୍ତାଶୀଳ ମଣିଷର ପରିଚୟ ଦିଏ । ଅନ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଦେଶଙ୍କ ନିବିଡ଼ତା ଓ ନିଜ ସଂସ୍କୃତିକୁ ବଞ୍ଚାଇ ରଖିବାର ଆତୁରତା ଦେଖି ସେ ଉପହାସ କରେ ଓ ତାକୁ ସଂକୀର୍ଣ୍ଣତାର ନାମ ଦେଇ ନିଜ ମନରେ ସନ୍ତୋଷ ଭାବ ପୋଷଣ କରେ । ପୁଣି ତା ମନରେ ଭୟ ମଧ୍ୟ ଥାଏ ନିଜ ରାଜ୍ୟର ଲୋକ କେହି ଯଦି ରାଜ୍ୟ, ଭାଷାର ସମତାର କାରଣ ଦର୍ଶାଇ ତାହାଠାରୁ କିଛି ସୁବିଧା ଉଠାଇବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରୁଛି ? ତେଣୁ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ଭୀରୁତା ଯୋଗୁଁ ଓ ଅନ୍ୟର ଫାଇଦା ଉଠାଇ ପ୍ରବୃତ୍ତିର ଶୀକାର ନହେବା ପାଇଁ, ସେ ଅନ୍ୟ ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ସହ ସଂପର୍କ ରକ୍ଷା କରିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରିଥାଏ । ନିଜ ଦେଶ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଅନେକ ଲୋକ, ଅନେକ ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀ । ତେଣୁ କେଉଁଠି ନା କେଉଁଠି କିଛି ବନ୍ଧୁ ଓ ହାତୀକାଂକ୍ଷୀ ମିଳିଯାଆନ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ସେହି ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଯେତେବେଳେ ଭାରତ ଭୂମି ତ୍ୟାଗ କରି ଏହି

ବିଦେଶ ଭୂମିରେ ପାଦଥାପେ, ପ୍ରଥମ କିଛି ଦିନ, କିଛିମାସ କିମ୍ବା କିଛି ବର୍ଷ ଅତିବାହିତ କରିଦିଏ, ନିଜର ଚିରାଚରିତ ଦୃନ୍ଦମୟ, ମିଥ୍ୟା ଆଭିଜାତ୍ୟ ଆବରଣ ବେଷିତ ମନୋଭାବରେ । ସେ କିନ୍ତୁ ଧୀରେ ଧୀରେ ଉପଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ କରିପାରେ – ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଜାତିରୁ ବହୁ ଆଗରେ ଚାଲିଥିବା ଅନ୍ୟ ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକ ଜାତିମାନେ ନିଜର ଏକତା, ସଂସ୍କୃତି, ପରମ୍ପରାକୁ ବଜାୟ ରଖିଛନ୍ତି । ସମସ୍ତ ଆଭିଜାତ୍ୟ ଓ ଉନ୍ନତର ପରିସୀମା ମଧ୍ୟରେ ।

ଏବଂ ଏହି ଅନ୍ୟ ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକ ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଭାରତୀୟ ପରିଚୟ ନେଇ ବିଚରା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଇ ଆମର ଯେତେବେଳେ ସାମିଲ ହେବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରନ୍ତି, ବନ୍ଧୁତା, ସହୃଦୟତା, ସାହାଯ୍ୟ-ସବୁକିଛି ପାଇଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ, ସବୁଥିରେ ଚିକିଏ କୃତ୍ରିମତାର black ମିଲେ । ପୁଣି ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହୁଏ – ଆମ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଇ ମନରେ ଶୂନ୍ୟତା । ସେ ଖୋଜେ ପୁଣି ନିଜର ସେହି ପୁରୁଣା, ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକ ଓ ଗ୍ରାମ୍ୟ ପରିଚୟ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଉପାୟର ପଥ ବହୁ ସୀମିତ । ବିଦେଶ ମାଟିରେ କ୍ରମଶଃ ହୋଇଛି, ସେ ନିଃସ୍ୱ । ତଥାକଥିତ ବୁଦ୍ଧିଜୀବୀରୁ ସେ ରୂପାନ୍ତରିତ ହୁଏ ଏକ ଅନୁସନ୍ଧେଷୁକ – ନିଜ ପରିଚୟ ଖୋଜି ଖୋଜି । ସକାଳର ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟୋଦୟ ; ସମାବେଶ ହେଉ ଅବା, ୮୦ ମାଇଲ ପ୍ରତିଘଣ୍ଟାରେ car joureny ହେଉ କିମ୍ବା ସହକର୍ମୀଙ୍କ ଗହଣରେ, ଦର୍ଶନୀୟ ସ୍ଥାନରେ ସମାବେଶ ହେଉ, – ଆହତ ହୁଏ ସେ ସେହି ପ୍ରଶ୍ନରେ “ମୁଁ କିଏ ?” ତାକୁ ଏବେ ଲାଗେ ସତେଯେପରି, ଅନ୍ଧକାରମୟ ପୃଥିବୀର ମେରୁଦେଶରେ ଠିଆ ହୋଇଛି, ଚାରିଆଡ଼କୁ ଦେଖୁଛି କିନ୍ତୁ ସେ ଏକୁଟିଆ । କେହି ହେଲେ ଜଣେ ନାହିଁ ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ପ୍ରଭୁ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ରାଜ୍ୟର ରାଜ୍ୟବାସୀ ହୋଇ ଓ ତାଙ୍କ ଆଶୀର୍ବାଦର ଛତ୍ରଛାୟାତଳେ ଠିଆ ହୋଇ, ସେ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ପରିଚୟହୀନ, ନିଃସ୍ୱ ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ହୋଇ ରସାତଳ ଗାମୀ ହେବ କେମିତି ? ସଂଯୋଗ ବସତଃ ସେ ପୁଣି ଭେଟେ ନିଜ ପୂର୍ବପିଢ଼ି କିଛି ନିଜ ରାଜ୍ୟର ବୁଦ୍ଧିଜୀବୀଙ୍କୁ, ଯେ କି ନିଜର ପରିଚୟ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିପାରିଛନ୍ତି, ଏ ବିଦେଶ ଭୂମିରେ । ଏହା ତାକୁ ପ୍ରେରିତ କରେ, ନିଜ ପ୍ରଦେଶର ସଂସ୍କୃତି, ଭାଷା, ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଓ ସବୁକିଛିକୁ ଧରିରଖି ମଧ୍ୟ ନିଜର ସରଳ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପରିଚୟ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିହେବ ବୋଲି । ପୁଣି ତା ମନରେ ଜାଗ୍ରତ ହୁଏ ନିଜ

ରାଜ୍ୟବାସୀ, ନିଜ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ କିଛି କରିବାର ଅଭିଳାଷ । ଯଦି ଗୋଟିଏ ପ୍ରଦେଶର ସନ୍ତାନ ହୋଇ ଏବଂ ନିଜ ରାଜ୍ୟ ସହୋଦର ମାନ ଉପରକୁ ଗଲାପରେ, ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ କିଛି କରିପାରିବନି, ତେବେ ସ୍ୱାର୍ଥପରତାର ମଥା ମଣି ଧାରଣ କରିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ ଜୀବନର ଶେଷ ସମୟରେ । କ୍ରମଶଃ ଏହି ଭାବନା, ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ଜୀବନ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟାୟରେ ଏକ ନୂଆ ଦିଗନ୍ତ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରେ । ଗୋଟିଏ ପ୍ରକୃଷ୍ଟ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଧାରଣ କରି ଜୀବନର ଗତିପଥରେ ଚାଲିଲା ବେଳେ, କେବେ ଆଉ.... “ମୁଁ କିଏ ?” ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ବାଣରେ ହେବାକୁ ପଡେନି – କ୍ଷତବିକ୍ଷତ । “ମୁଁ ଜଣେ ସ୍ୱାଭିମାନୀ ଓଡ଼ିଆ”, ପରିଚୟଟି ବିନାଦ୍ୱିଧାରେ ଉପସ୍ଥାପନ କରିପାରେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ଆଗରେ ।

ମୁଁ Apartment ର balcony ରେ ଠିଆ ହୋଇ ଅନୁଧ୍ୟାନ କରୁଛି ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟାସ୍ତର ଅତି ମନୋହର ଦୃଶ୍ୟକୁ । କିଛି ଘଟିକା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଅଗ୍ନିପେଣ୍ଡୁଳା ପରି ଝୁଲି ରହିଥିବା ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଶାନ୍ତ ହୋଇପଡ଼ିଛି । ଆଉ ବର୍ଷୁଛି Phoenix (Arizona) ଉପରେ ବୌଦ୍ୱତା । ଠିକ୍ ସେହିପରି ମୋର ମନ ପୃଷ୍ଠଭୂମିରେ ନାହିଁ ଆଲୋଚନ । ଅନୁଭବ କରିପାରୁଛି ମୋ ଚତୁଃପାର୍ଶ୍ୱର ନିଜଲୋକଙ୍କ ଘନତ୍ୱ । ନାହିଁ ପୁଣି “ମୁଁ କିଏ ?” ପ୍ରଶ୍ନର ଅଗ୍ନିବର୍ଷା । ପ୍ରଶ୍ନଟି ମଧ୍ୟ ଅସ୍ତମିତ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ସଦୃଶ ଶାନ୍ତ । ବାମ ହାତର Coffee mugରୁ ଦଳକାଏ ବାଷ୍ପ ଯାଇ ମିଶିଯାଉଛି ପବନ ସହ । ଆକାଶ ମଧ୍ୟ ଲୋହିତ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣରୁ ଅନ୍ଧକାରର ସ୍ୱର୍ଣ୍ଣ ପାଇସାରିଲାଣି ।

“OSA is a great initiative by many visionaries from Odisha who always see a hope of island for a path lost ship in the middle of the ocean, they see a ray of light in a complete dark night and see a hope of changing the negative mindset of millions of odia towards own culture, language & state. This organization has grace of Lord Jagannath & the vision will be steered to success in due course of time.”



2220 West Mission Lane,
Phoenix, AZ 85021

କେମିତି ଭୁଲିବି ତାକୁ ...

ଶୁଭଶ୍ରୀ ଦାସ

ରା

ତି ଅଧର ସେଇ ଗାଡ଼ ନିଦରା ଫୋନ୍‌ର ରିଙ୍ଗରେ ଚାଉଁ କରି ଭାଙ୍ଗିଯାଇଥିଲା ସେଦିନ । ନିଦୁଆ ଆଖିରେ ରିସିଭରଟିକୁ ଉଠାଇନେଇଥିଲି କାନପାଖକୁ । ସେପାଖରୁ ଭାସିଆସୁଥିଲା ଏକ ସ୍ଵଷ୍ଟ ଅଧର ଗମ୍ଭୀର ସ୍ଵର “ମୁଁ ଭାରତରୁ କହୁଛି” । ଧଡ଼ପଡ଼ ହୋଇ ଉଠି ଛିଡ଼ା ହୋଇପଡ଼ିଥିଲି ମୁଁ ନିଜ ଅଜଣାତରେ । ସମୟର ଗତି ଯେମିତି ସ୍ଥିର ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲା କିଛି ସମୟପାଇଁ । ସ୍ଵାସ୍ଥ ପାଲଟି ଯାଇଥିଲି ମୁଁ । କଣ୍ଠରେ ବୟସର ଛାପ ସ୍ଵଷ୍ଟ ଥିଲେ ବି ଆପଣାର ଭାବ ସେମିତି ସତେଜ ଥିଲା ସେଦିନ ଭଳି । ଗାଁରେ ବଡ଼ଭାଇ ବୋଲି ମାନନ୍ତି ତାଙ୍କୁ ସମସ୍ତେ । ଭକ୍ତି ସହ ଭୟ ବି ଗୁଡ଼ାଇ ହୋଇଥାଏ ତାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ । ଗଣିତ ପଢ଼ାନ୍ତି ସେ । ଶୁଣୁଥିଲି ମୁଁ “ମୁଁ ପଢ଼ୁଥିବା ପ୍ରାଥମିକ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟର ଶତବାର୍ଷିକ ସମାରୋହର ଆୟୋଜନ × × × ଏକ ଅତ୍ୟୁତ ଶିହରଣ ଖେଳିଯାଇଥିଲା ମନଭିତରେ । ଦୁଃଖ ଆଉ ଆନନ୍ଦର ଏକ ମିଶ୍ର ଅନୁଭୂତି । ମନର କେଉଁ ଏକ ପରିଚିତ କୋଣରେ ଲୁହ ଆଉ କୋହର ଲୁଚକାଳି ଖେଳ । “ଆସିବୁ ତୁ ?” ପ୍ରଶ୍ନର ଶେଷରେ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନବାଚୀ ଚିହ୍ନଟି ଅବିଶ୍ଵାସର ସ୍ଵାକ୍ଷର ନେଇ ସତେଯେମିତି ଦାନ୍ତଟିପି ମୁରୁକି ମୁରୁକି ହସୁଥିଲା । ଛେପ ଢୋକିଲି ମୁଁ । ମୁହଁ ଖୋଲି ମିଥ୍ୟା ପ୍ରତିଶ୍ରୁତି ଦେବାର ସାହସ କରିପାରି ନଥିଲି ବିଶ୍ଵାସର ପ୍ରତିମୁର୍ତ୍ତୀ ସାମ୍ନାରେ । ଫୋନ୍ କଟିସାରିଥିଲା କେତେବେଳୁ × × × ରାତିର ଗାଡ଼ ଅନ୍ଧାର ଭିତରେ ଝରକା ଦେଇ ବାହାରକୁ ଚାଲିଥିଲି ମୁଁ । ସ୍ଵଷ୍ଟ ଦିଶୁଥିଲା ସବୁକିଛି × × × ମୋ ସ୍କୁଲ । ମନ୍ଦାର, କନିଅର ଗଛର ପାଚିରୀ । କାଠର ଭଙ୍ଗାଗେଟ୍ । ଗେଟ୍‌ରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ବଡ଼ ଲୁହା ତାଲା । ଚାରି କାନ୍ଥ ନଥିବା ଗୋଟିଏ ଚାଳଘର । ଦୁଇଟି ଚାଲି ଛପର ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ଆଜବେଷ୍ଟ ଘର । ପ୍ରଥମରୁ ସପ୍ତମ ଶ୍ରେଣୀ ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କର ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ । ଯେଉଁ ମନ୍ଦିର ଭିତରେ କଥାକୁହା ଠାକୁର ମାନଙ୍କ ସହ ପରିଚୟ ହୁଏ ଜୀବନର ପ୍ରଥମ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟାୟରେ ।

ହଠାତ୍ କେମିତି ଝାପସା ହୋଇ ଉଠିଲା ସବୁକିଛି । ଚମକି ପଡ଼ିଲି ଆଖି ପୋଛିଲି ମୁଁ । ଭାବନାର ଖୁଅସବୁ ଗୁଡ଼େଇ ତୁଡ଼େଇ ହୋଇ ଖେଳାଇ ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ୁଥିଲେ ସାମ୍ନାରେ । ଅନ୍ୟମନସ୍କ ହୋଇ ଗୋଟିଏ ଖୁଅକୁ ସଜାଡ଼ିବାର ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରୁଥିଲି ମୁଁ × × ×

“ଉଠ୍ ଉଠ୍” । ଅଜାଙ୍କର ଡାକରେ ଧଡ଼ପଡ଼ ହୋଇ ଉଠୁ ଉଠୁ ଚମକି ପଡ଼ିଲି ମୁଁ । କେମିତି ଏକ ବ୍ୟତିକ୍ରମ ଥିଲା ସେ ଡାକରେ । ରଜ, କୁମାର ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣାମା ଏମିତିକି ତଙ୍ଗାଭସା ଦିନ ବି ଅଜାଙ୍କ ଡାକରେ ଅଳସ ଭାଙ୍ଗୁ ଭାଙ୍ଗୁ ଦୁଆର ମଝିରେ ଖରା ପଡ଼ିସାରିଥାଏ । ଆଇ, ବୁଢ଼ିମା ମୁହଁମୋଡ଼ି ମୁରୁକି ହସମାରନ୍ତି । ହେଲେ ଆଜି ଏକ ବ୍ୟତିକ୍ରମର ପ୍ରଶ୍ନବାଚୀ । ଅଗଣାରେ ଛିଡ଼ାହେଲି ମୁଁ ପାଣିଗୁଣ୍ଠ ଧରି ମୁହଁ ଧୋଇବା ଲାଗି । ସକାଳର ଖରାକୁ ବି ଚପିଯାଇଥିଲି ମୁଁ । ଅଗଣା ଉପରକୁ ଖରା ଆସିନଥିଲା ସେ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ । ଚଉତା ହୋଇ ବାକସରେ ଥିବା ଫୁଲପକା ଫୁଲଟିଏ ମୋ ହାତକୁ ବଡ଼ାଇ ଦେଇଥିଲେ ଅଜା । ଅବାକ୍ ହୋଇ ଯାଇଥିଲି ମୁଁ । ସେ ବି ଯା ଭିତରେ ଗାଧୋଇ ସାରି ଚଉଭାଙ୍ଗ ହୋଇଥିବା ଖଦଡ଼ ପଞ୍ଜାବି ଆଉ ଧୋତି ପିନ୍ଧି ସାରିଥିଲେ । ଆଗକୁ ଭାବିବା ପାଇଁ ସମୟନଥିଲା । ତେଇଁ ତେଇଁ ସ୍କୁଲ ଆଡ଼କୁ ଧାଇଁ ଥିଲି ମୁଁ । × × ×

ଗେଟ୍ ଖୋଲାଥିଲା । ଚାରିଆଡ଼େ ପ୍ରଚ୍ଛନ୍ନ ନୀରବତା ସ୍କୁଲ ପଡ଼ିଆର ଠିକ୍ ମଝିରେ ବସିଥିଲେ ସେ । ଧଳା ରଙ୍ଗର ଧୋତି ଆଉ ଦେହରେ ଧଳା ଚାଦର । ମଥାରେ ମୋଟା ଚନ୍ଦନର ଗାର । ସକାଳର ଅରୁଣିମାଠାରୁ ବି ଅଧିକ ଶାନ୍ତ ଆଉ ସ୍ଥିର ଦିଶୁଥିଲା ତାଙ୍କର ମୁହଁ । ସାମ୍ନାରେ ତାଙ୍କର ଚାଙ୍ଗୁଡ଼ି ଭରା ରଙ୍ଗ ବେରଙ୍ଗର ଫୁଲ । ବଛା ବଛା ଫୁଲ ଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ନେଇ ସୁନ୍ଦର ମାଳାଟିଏ ଗୁନ୍ଥୁଥିଲେ ସେ । ‘ମଧୁସାର’ । ହାତଠାରି ପାଖକୁ ଡାକିଲେ ମତେ । ତାଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ବସି ଅଧା ଗୁନ୍ଥା ମାଳାଟିକୁ ଶେଷ କରିଥିଲି ମୁଁ । ସକାଳର ପବିତ୍ରତା ସହ ଦିନଟିର ମାହାତ୍ମ୍ୟକୁ ପ୍ରତିଟି ସ୍ଵନ୍ଦନରେ ଅନୁଭବ କରୁଥିଲି । ସ୍ଵାଧୀନତା ଦିବସ ଅଗଷ୍ଟ ମାସ ୧୫ ତାରିଖ ।

ଧୂରେ ଧୂରେ କୋଳାହଳମୟ ହୋଇ ଉଠିଥିଲା ସ୍କୁଲର ପରିସର । ପଡ଼ିଆ ମଝିରେ ପୋତା ହୋଇଥିବା ଲମ୍ବା ବାଉଁଶର ଚାରିପଟେ ବୃତ୍ତାକାରରେ ଠିଆ ହୋଇଥିଲୁ ସମସ୍ତେ । ଚଉତା ହୋଇ ଅଫିସ ଘରର ଦକ୍ଷା ବାକ୍ସରେ ରହିଥିବା ତ୍ରିରଙ୍ଗା ପତାକା ଭିତରେ ଫୁଲହାର ସହ ଝୁରାଫୁଲ ଗୁଡ଼ିକୁ ଯନ୍ତ୍ରେ ରଖୁଥିଲେ ମଧୁସାର । ବାଉଁଶରେ ଲାଗିରହିଥିବା ଦଉଡ଼ି ସହ ବନ୍ଧାହୋଇଥିଲା ତ୍ରିରଙ୍ଗା ଏକ ଅଭିନବ ଉପାୟରେ । ନିରେଖୁ ଚାହିଁଥିଲି ମୁଁ । ପ୍ରଧାନ ଶିକ୍ଷୟତ୍ରୀ ଆଗେଇ ଆସିଥିଲେ ପଡ଼ିଆ ମଝିକୁ ଧୂରେ ଧୂରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଦଉଡ଼ିକୁ ତଳକୁ ଟାଣିଲେ ସେ, ଆଉ ଦଉଡ଼ି ସହ ଉପରକୁ ଉଠିଥିଲା ତ୍ରିରଙ୍ଗା । ସଭିଙ୍କ ଆଖି ଲାଖି ରହିଥିଲା ଉପରକୁ ଉଠୁଥିବା ତ୍ରିରଙ୍ଗା ଉପରେ । ପ୍ରଧାନ ଶିକ୍ଷୟତ୍ରୀ ଟିକିଏ ଜୋରରେ ଚାଣିଦେଲେ ଦଉଡ଼ିଟିକୁ... “ଜୟହିନ୍ଦ୍” ଆଉ କରତାଳି ଭିତରେ ବିଛାଡ଼ି ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଥିଲା ଝୁରାଫୁଲଗୁଡ଼ିକ । ମାଳାଟି ଅଟକି ଯାଇଥିଲା ଉପରେ । ଫରଫର ହୋଇ ଉଡୁଥିଲା ତ୍ରିରଙ୍ଗା । ଏକ ଅତ୍ୟୁତ ଶିହରଣ ମନଭିତରେ । ଜାତୀୟ ସଂଗୀତର ସ୍ଵର ଏକା ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ଭାସି ଆସୁଥିଲା ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ କଣ୍ଠରୁ । ସକାଳର ନୀରବତା ଦୂରେଇ ଯାଇଥିଲା । ମଧୁସାରଙ୍କର ମନ ମାନିନଥିଲା ଏତିକିରେ । ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କୁ ଚାହିଁ ଗୋଟିଏ ଦେଶାତ୍ମବୋଧ ଗୀତଟିଏ ଗାଇବାପାଇଁ କହିଥିଲେ ସେ । ନୀରବ ରହିଥିଲେ ସମସ୍ତେ । କଳା ବାଦଲଟିଏ ସତେ ଯେମିତି ଭାସି ଆସିଲା ତାଙ୍କ ମୁହଁ ଉପରେ । ମୁହଁରୁ ତାଙ୍କର ଲିଭିଆସୁଥିଲା ସକାଳର ଅରୁଣିମା । ଫରଫର ହୋଇ ଉଡୁଥିବା ତ୍ରିରଙ୍ଗା ତଳେ ଏକ ଅତ୍ୟୁତ ନୀରବତା ।

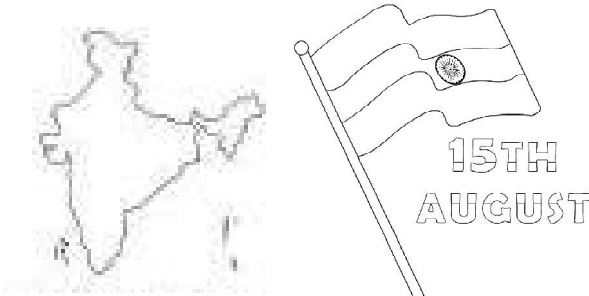
ଅଜାଙ୍କ କୋଳରେ ବସି ସ୍ଵାଧୀନତା ସଂଗ୍ରାମର କାହାଣୀ ଶୁଣିବା ବେଳେ ଅନେକ ଦେଶାତ୍ମବୋଧକ ଗୀତ କଣ୍ଠସ୍ଥ କରିଥିଲି ମୁଁ ନିଜ ଅଜଣାତରେ । ହାତ ଉପରକୁ ଉଠାଇଥିଲି । ମଧୁସାରଙ୍କ ମୁହଁ ସାମନାରୁ

ଗୁଞ୍ଚି ଯାଇଥିଲା ଭସା ବାଦଲ ଖଣ୍ଡିକ । ଟିକ୍ ଟିକ୍ ହୋଇଉଠିଥିଲା ତାଙ୍କର ମୁହଁ । କୋଳେଇ ନେଇଥିଲେ ସେ ମତେ । ହାତଧରି ତ୍ରିରଙ୍ଗା ତଳକୁ ନେଇଯାଇଥିଲେ । ଆମେ ସମସ୍ତେ ମିଶି ଗାଇଥିଲୁ “ତୁହିମା ଜନମ ଭୂମି, ପବିତ୍ର ଭାରତ ଭୂମି, ତୋହରି ସନ୍ତାନ ଆମେ ଅଗୁ ସରବେ । × × × ସ୍ଵତନ୍ତ୍ରତା ଦିବସର ସେଇ ପବିତ୍ର ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତରେ ଏକ ସ୍ଵତନ୍ତ୍ର ସ୍ଥାନଟିଏ ନିରୂପଣ ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲା ମୋର ସ୍କୁଲରେ, ଶିକ୍ଷକ, ଶିକ୍ଷୟତ୍ରୀ ଆଉ ସହପାଠୀମାନଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ । × × ×

ରାତିର ରଂଗ ଫିକାହୋଇ ସାରିଥିଲା ଯା ଭିତରେ । ଦୀର୍ଘଶ୍ଵାସ ନେଇ ଠିଆ ହେଲି ମୁଁ । ମୁଣ୍ଡ ନଇଁ ଆସୁଥିଲା ଆପଣାଛାଏଁ । ହୃଦୟ ପ୍ରତିଟି ତନ୍ତା ଭିତରୁ ଶୁଭୁଥିଲା ଗୁରୁ ବ୍ରହ୍ମା ଗୁରୁ ବିଷ୍ଣୁ, ଗୁରୁଦେବ ମହେଶ୍ଵର ର ପବିତ୍ର ଝଙ୍କାର । × × ×

ସମୟକୁ ସାମନା କରିଥିଲି । ଏଥର ଯାତ୍ରାର ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟଥିଲା ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଭିନ୍ନ । ଅନେକ ପ୍ରଥମେ ହସିଥିଲେ ବି ସହମତ ହୋଇଥିଲେ ପରମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତରେ । ଗାଁ ପ୍ରାଥମିକ ସ୍କୁଲର ଶତବାର୍ଷିକରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେବାର ଲକ୍ଷନେଇ ଯୁନାଇଚେତ ଏୟାରଲାଇନସ୍ଵର ଫ୍ଲାଇଟ୍ରେ ବସିଥିଲି ମୁଁ । ବାଦଲର ଉଚ୍ଚତାକୁ ଉପହାସ କରି ଉପରକୁ ଉଠିଚାଲିଥିଲା ବିମାନ । ଆଖି ବୁଜିଲି ମୁଁ । ମନେ ପଡୁଥିଲେ ସମସ୍ତେ । ଶିକ୍ଷକ, ଶିକ୍ଷୟତ୍ରୀ ଆଉ ପ୍ରତିଟି ସହପାଠୀ । ମନେପଡୁଥିଲେ ଚଣାଚୁର, ଆଇସକ୍ରିମ୍, ତାଳସକ, କାକୁଡ଼ି, ତରଭୁଜ ଧରି ସ୍କୁଲ ଗେଟ ବାହାରେ ବସିଥିବା ମୋ ପ୍ରିୟ ମଣିଷ ମାନେ । ମନେ ପଡୁଥିଲା ସାତ ଦରିଆ ତେର ନଈ ସେ ପାରିର ସେଇ ଛୋଟିଆ ଗାଁଟିର ଅଜ୍ଞାବଜ୍ଞା ରାସ୍ତା କଡ଼ରେ ଛିଡ଼ା ହୋଇ ବାଟ ଚାଲିଥିବା ମୋ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ – ଯେଉଁଠୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇଥିଲା ଶିକ୍ଷାର ପରିଭାଷା × × × ସର୍ଭିସିହିନ ଭଲପାଇବା ତାର, କେମିତି ଭୁଲିବି ତାକୁ ??

New Jersey



ହେ ନିଷ୍ଠୁର ନାରାୟଣ

କଞ୍ଚନାମୟୀ ଦାଶ

ସୁ ଗେ ଯୁଗେ ତୁମେ ବୋଲାଇ ଆସୁଛୁ ଭକତର ଭଗବାନ
 କେତେ କାଳ ଆଉ ଚାଲିବ ଏପରି-ହେ ନିଷ୍ଠୁର ନାରାୟଣ । ୧ ।

ମଣିଷ ନାମରେ ଜୀବ କେତେଗୋଟି ନରକେ କରନ୍ତି ବାସ
 ତୁମ ନାମ ଧରି ଦିନ କାଟୁଛନ୍ତି ସହି ସହି କେତେ ଦୁଃଖ । ୨ ।

ଦିନ ଥିଲା ଯେବେ ଘନ ଜଙ୍ଗଲେ ପୁରିଥିଲା ଏହି ମହୀ
 ଡାହାଣୀ ଚିରୁଣୀ ଭୂତପ୍ରେତ ଘେନି ରାତି ଯାଉଥିଲା ପାହି । ୩ ।

ଯାତାୟତ କିଏ ସେ ପଟାରେ ଘରେ ପଶି ନିଶାବର
 ବିଷଧର ସର୍ପ ପ୍ରାଣ ନେଉଥିଲା କେତେ ପୁରବାସୀଙ୍କର । ୪ ।

ପ୍ରସବ ବେଦନା ସହି ନ ପାରିଣ ଜୀବନ ହରାଏ ନାରୀ
 ତୁମ ପୃଥ୍ବୀରେ ବଞ୍ଚୁଛନ୍ତିବା ମହଙ୍ଗା ପଡ଼ିଲା ଭାରୀ । ୫ ।

ଗାଁ ଗହଳରେ ରାଜା ଜମିଦାର କରୁଥିଲେ କେତେ ଗୋଳ
 ପ୍ରଜାଙ୍କ ସମ୍ପତ୍ତି-ପ୍ରଜାଙ୍କର ନାରୀ କରନ୍ତି ହରଣଚାଳ । ୬ ।

ଅଶିକ୍ଷା, ଅଜ୍ଞାନ, ଅନ୍ଧରାଜୁତି-ବେଠି ଖଟିବାର ଦିନ
 ସମାପ୍ତ ହୋଇନି ଅନ୍ୟବଧୁ ହେ ନିଷ୍ଠୁର ନାରାୟଣ । ୭ ।

ବିଜ୍ଞାନ ଆଜି ଜଳାଇଛି କାହିଁ ଜ୍ଞାନ ଉଜ୍ଜ୍ୱଳ ଦୀପ
 ପବାର-ପାବକ-ଗଗନ-ପବନ ମାନବର କରାୟତ । ୮ ।

ତେବେ ବି ହଟିନି ମାନବଭାଗୁଁ ଦୁର୍ଭାଗ୍ୟର ସାମାରେଖା
 କେଉଁପରି ତୁମେ ବୋଲାଇ ଆସୁଛୁ ଭକ୍ତ ଦାନଜନ ସଖା । ୯ ।

ନିରୁପାୟଜନ ଏବେ ବି କେଉଁଠି ଦାଦନ ଖଟୁଛି ଯାଇ
 ଦିନ ଦି ପହରେ ଚୋରି ଡକାୟତି ଚାଲିଛି କିଲା ପୋଡେଇ । ୧୦ ।

ପଇସା ବାଲାଙ୍କ ଗୁଣ୍ଡା ଚରୁଛନ୍ତି ବନର ପଶୁ ପରାୟେ
 ନୀରିହ ଜନକୁ ନିଃଶେଷ କରି ଉଡୁଛନ୍ତି ବାଏଁ ବାଏଁ । ୧୧ ।

ବାଲୁତ କନ୍ୟା ପେଷଣ ହୁଅନ୍ତି ପାଶବିକତାର ବଳେ
 ଜାୟା ଜନନୀଙ୍କ ଇଚ୍ଛତ ଲୁଚେ ମୁକ୍ତ ଆକାଶ ତଳେ । ୧୨ ।

କେତେ କୁସୂତ କର୍ମ ଘଟୁଛି ଚକ ଉହାଡ଼େ ତୁମ
 ଜଗତକୁ ଦିଅ ମୁକ୍ତି ତହିଁରୁ ହେ ନିଷ୍ଠୁର ନାରାୟଣ । ୧୩ ।

4925 Interlachen Ct.,
 Edina, MD 55436

ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରମା କହେ ମୁଁ କିଏ ?

ବାସବଦତ୍ତା ମିଶ୍ର

ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରମା ନୀଳ ଗଗନେ, ମେଘ ବନ୍ଧନେ ଲୁଚି ଜାଅନା,
 ଆଗୋ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରମା

ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରମା କହେ ମୁଁ କିଏ ? ମୋର ସତ୍ତା କ'ଣ ?
 ସହସ୍ର ବର୍ଷ ଧରି,
 ମୁଁ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟଙ୍କର ହୃଦୟ ଖୋଲା ରଶ୍ମୀରେ ଆଲୋକିତ
 ସିଏ ହେଉଛନ୍ତି ମୋର ବିଶ୍ୱସ୍ତ ପ୍ରେମିକ

ମୁଁ ଜେବେ ମୋ ନିଜକୁ ତାଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ସମର୍ପଣ କରେ,
 ସେ ତାଙ୍କ କିରଣରେ ମୋର ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟକୁ ପ୍ରଜ୍ୱଳିତ କରନ୍ତି
 ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରମା କହେ ମୁଁ କିଏ ?

ମୋର ସମର୍ପଣ ଭାବହିଁ ମୋର ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟର କାରଣ
 ମୋର ବିନମ୍ରତା ହିଁ ମୋର ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟର କାରଣ
 ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରମା ନୀଳ ଗଗନେ, ମେଘ ବନ୍ଧନେ ଲୁଚି ଜାଅନା,
 ଆଗୋ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରମା

1475 Radcliff Lane,
 Aurora, IL 60502

ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ

ବରୁଣ ପାଣି

ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ,
ଅନନ୍ତ କାଳରୁ ଏଇ ରୀତି ଚାଲିଥାଏ ।
ମୁଁ ତ ଏକ କେନ୍ଦରା ବାଦକ, ଖାଲି ଖୋଜି ଖୋଜି
ହାଲିଆ ହେଲିଣି ଏବେ, ସେଇ ସୁର, ସେଇ ରାଗ ଅପେକ୍ଷାରେ ଆଜି
ବସିଛି ମୁଁ ଏଇ ବରଗଛ ତଳେ, ହୁଏତ ବା ଶୁଣିବି ମୋ, ବାଗେଶ୍ୱରୀ ରାଗ
ଦେଖୁଛି ଆଗରେ ମୋର ନାଲି ନାଲି ପଲ୍ଲୀର ବାଗ
ସେଇ ନଦୀ କୂଳେ ଦିନେ ଭେଟିଥିଲି ମୋରି ତିଲୋଭମା,
ଆଉ, ଦେଇଥିଲି କେନ୍ଦରା ଭିତରୁ ମୋର ତାଜା ତାଜା ହୃଦୟିଷ୍ଟ କାଜି ଆଜିର ଦିନରେ,
ମୋର ଏକାକୀ ପ୍ରଥମା ।
ସେ ତ ନେଇଥିଲା ଦୁଇ ଆଞ୍ଜୁଳିରେ, ଲାଲ୍ ଲାଲ୍ ହୃଦୟଟିରେ, ଧରି, ହସି, କହିଥିଲା,
ମୁଁ ତ ତୁମ ଚିର ସହଚରୀ ।
ଆଜି ଏଇ ଦିନଟିରେ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଉଇଁ ଥିଲା, ମଧୁର କିରଣ ଦେଇ, ସେ ତ କହିଥିଲା,
ଭୁବିଯାଅ, ଭାସିଯାଅ,
କପୋତ କପୋତୀ ପରି,
ତେଣା ମେଲି, ଉଡି ଯାଅ, ଲବଙ୍ଗ ଦ୍ୱୀପକୁ ପାରି, ଦୂର ସେ ରାଇଜେ ଅଛି,
ପ୍ରେମର ଝରଣା ଅଛି, ଏକ
ଅମୃତର ସ୍ରୋତ ସରି,
ଚାଲି ଯାଅ, ଅମୃତ ସନ୍ତାନ ତୁମେ, ଲଭିବ ହେ ଚିର ଶାନ୍ତି, ସେ ଝରଣା ତୀରେ
ଅଛି ଫୁଲ, ଅଛି ମହୁମାଛି,
ଅଛି ଅବିରତ ବାରି ।
ଆସିଥିଲି ଅନେକ ସପନ ନେଇ, ଅନେକ ବା ଆଶା ନେଇ,
ଖାଲି କେନ୍ଦରାଟି ନେଇ, ମିଠା ମିଠା ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ ନେଇ ।
କିନ୍ତୁ ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି କାଲି ହେଇ ଯାଏ ।
ମରୁତର, ଶୁଖିଲା ନଦୀର ଧାରେ, ବାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।
କେନ୍ଦରାଟି ବାଜୁଛି ମୋହରି, ଏକ ଅନାଦୃତ ବାଉଳା ସୁରରେ
ଶୀତ ଯାଇ ଆସୁଛି ପରା ହେ ଆଜି ବସନ୍ତର ଗହଳି ଭିତରେ
ମନ ମୋର ବୃଷ୍ଟ ହେଇ, କଳ୍ପାଳର ନାଦ ଧ୍ୱନୀ କରେ

ଚଉତାଳ ସାଥେ, ଏକ ବିରହ ବିଷାଦ ରାଗେ, କେନ୍ଦରାଟି ସ୍ଵର ଧରେ ।
 ଶୁଖିଲା ପତର ସବୁ ଜାବୁଡ଼ି ଧରି ମୁଁ ଆଜି, ଦୀପକ ରାଗରେ,
 ଭରିଯାଏ ମୋର ଆଜି, ଏକ ଚିରନ୍ତନ ବିରହ ଗୀତର ଲହରେ
 ଜାଳିଛି ମୋହର ଚିତା, ପାଉଁଶର ହେଇ ମୁଠାଟିଏ,
 ଆବାହନ କରିବି ମୁଁ ନୂଆ ବସନ୍ତକୁ, ଲେଖିଦେବି ଚିତାଟିଏ
 ଆଉ କହିଦେବି, ଏଇ ଚିରନ୍ତନ ଅଶ୍ରୁର କାହାଣୀ
 ଶୀତ ପରେ, ନୂଆ ବସନ୍ତରେ ଆସେ ଏକ ଅକ୍ସୁଆ କୋହର ବାଣୀ,
 ସୀମିତର ଅନନ୍ତ ସେ ବିବରଣୀ ।
 ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ, କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ,
 ଗୋଲାପର ସୁନ୍ଦର ସେ, ରୋମାଂଚକର ଯେ ସବୁ ନାଲି ନାଲି ପାଖୁଡ଼ା
 ଗୋ ଶେଷେ ଶୁଖି ଶୁଖି ଯାଏ
 ପ୍ରେମର କାହାଣୀ ଏକ ବିନାଶର ବିରହର ଇତିହାସ ହୁଏ ।
 ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ, କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।

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ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ,
 ଜୀବନର ସବୁକିଛି କେମିତି କେଜାଣି ଲୁଚକାଳି ହେଇଯାଏ,
 କଳାକଳା ଭଅଁର କେଶ ସବୁ ଧଳା ଧଳା ଝୋଟ ପରି ବଳି ହେଇଯାଏ
 ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।
 ଆସୁଛି ଉଆଁସ ଏବେ, ହେବ ପରା ବହଳ ଅନ୍ଧାର
 ଆସୁଛି ସେ ବିକଟାଳ ଶୀତ କାଲି, ଜୀବନଟା ହେବ ଯେ ଅସାର
 ବାଜୁଛି ମୋ କେନ୍ଦରାଟା, କେଜାଣି କାହିଁକି ଏକ ଭୈରବୀର ସୁରେ
 ଫୁଲ ସବୁ ଝରି ପଡ଼େ, ଲୁହ ସବୁ ଆଖିରେ ହିଁ ମରେ
 ପାଦ ମୋର ଥରି ଥରି, ଆଗକୁ ଯେ ବଢ଼ିଗାଲେ,
 ଥିରି ଥିରି, ବାଆ ବହି ମୋ କଙ୍କାଲେ, ବିନାଶର ନାଚ ଡାଲେ,
 ନ ଜାଣେ ମୁଁ ଆଗର ସେ ବନଟାରେ, ଅଛି ଅବା କିଏ
 ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।
 କଥା ସବୁ, ବାଆ ଖାଲି, କାହିଁକି ବା ମନେ ମୁଁ ରଖିବି
 ଥର ଥର ଶୀତଟାରେ, ଅଜାଣତେ, କାହିଁକି ବା, ସେ ନିଆଁ ଜାଳିବି
 ମନଟାତ ମାନେ ନାହିଁ, ରହି ରହି ଆଜିଟାରେ ରହିଯାଏ
 ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।

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ଆଜି ଆସେ ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ
 କଳାପାହାଡ଼ର ଦେହେ ମୃତ ଏକ ବ୍ରାହ୍ମଣର ଶବ,

ସମଲଶ୍ୱେରୀ ପାହାଚେ ଧୂଳି ହେଇଯାଏ
 ଆତ୍ମିକାର ମରୁ ଦେଶେ ବୀର ସିକନ୍ଦର ପତି, ସଡ଼ି ଗଳି ଯାଏ
 ପୌରୁଷର ପୁରୁଷତା, ପଞ୍ଜାବ ନଦୀରେ ଏକ କିମ୍ବଦନ୍ତୀ ହେଇ ଖାଲି, ଖାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ
 ଆଜି ଆସେ ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।
 କେନ୍ଦରାଟା ବାଜୁଛି ତ ଚିର କାଳ, ଖାଲି ତାର ସ୍ୱରକୁ ବଦଳି,
 କେତେ ବେଳେ କଲ୍ୟାଣରେ, କେତେବେଳେ ଭୈରବୀରେ, ସଜାଉଛି ଦୁନିଆର ମାଲି
 ସରସ୍ୱତୀ କୁଳଟାରେ, ସିନ୍ଧୁର ସଭ୍ୟତା ସବୁ ବାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ
 ଆଜି ଆସେ ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।
 ଚିରକାଳ ଏଇ ଶବ୍ଦଟାରେ ରହି ମୁଁ ଯେ ଯୁବକରୁ ବୃଦ୍ଧ ହେଇଯାଏ
 ସମୟର ଚାକୁକରେ, ସରି ସରି ଶେଷେ ମୁଁ ତ, ଅଶୁଦ୍ଧରୁ ଶୁଦ୍ଧ ହେଇଯାଏ
 ସତ୍ୟରୁ ତ୍ରେତୟା ଆଉ ଦ୍ୱାପରରୁ ସମୟ ଯେ କଳି ହେଇଯାଏ
 ଆଜି ଆସେ ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।
 ଏଇ ନାଟକରେ ମୁଁ ଯେ କରି ତ ଚାଲିଛି ଏକ ଅଭିନୟ ପରା
 ଏଇ ପର୍ବ ପରେ ହେବ, ନୂଆ ଏକ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଖାଲି, ଝରିବ ଗୋ ପ୍ରଣୟର ଧାରା
 ସେଇ ମଧୁ ବିଷ ପିଇ, ହେବି ମୁଁ ତ ମାତାଳ ପ୍ରେମିକ
 ଝରାଇବି ମଞ୍ଚ ସାରା କେତେ କେତେ ଲୁହ ଆଉ ଲହୁର କୁହୁକ
 କେତେ କେତେ ନବଜାତ ଶିଶୁର ଯେ ପଡ଼ିବ ହେ ବଳି
 କେତେ କେତେ ହାହାକାର ଧ୍ୱନୀ ଦେଇ ଏ ଉତ୍ସବେ ହେବ ହୁଲହୁଲି
 ସରଗର ରାସ୍ତାଟି ତାଜା ତାଜା ଲାଲ୍ ରକ୍ତେ ନାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ
 ଆଜି ଆସେ ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।

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ଅତୀତର ସୁରଟାତ କେତେବେଳେ ବାଜି ବାଜି କରୁଛି ଆହ୍ୱାନ
 ଲହ ଲହ ଦୀପ ଶିଖା ବସିଛି ସେ ସମାଧିରେ ଆଜି ଚିରନ୍ତନ
 ବଳି ପାଇଁ ଲାଲ୍ ଟିକା ମାଥେ ନେଇ, ଶିଶୁ କବି ବନ୍ଧକ ପଡ଼ିଛି
 ଆହୁତି ଓ ହୁଲହୁଲି ଶବ୍ଦରେ ଉତ୍ସବଟା ବହୁତ ମାଡ଼ିଛି
 ଚାରି ଆଡ଼େ ଆନନ୍ଦର ବନ୍ୟା ଖାଲି, କିଏ ଅବା ଦେଖେ ସେ କବିକୁ
 ନୟନର ଧାରା ସବୁ ବହିଯାଏ ପଞ୍ଚାମୃତ ପରି ଆଜି, ହୁଏ ଆକୁ ପାକୁ
 ଏ ଜଗତେ କେତେବେଳେ ଆସିନି ଗୋ ଶୀତଳ ସେ ଅମୃତର ଧାରା
 ଆସିନି କେବେ ବି ସେଇ ଶୁଙ୍ଘପରୁ ଦଧାଟି ହେ, ମିଛ କଥା ସାରା
 କେତେ ବା ନିଠୁର ଗନ୍ଧ କହିଚାଲେ, ରଢ଼ିକ ହେ ମୂର୍ଖ ସଭା ପାଶେ
 ରହି ରହି ଆନନ୍ଦର କୋଳାହଳ କେତେ ସବୁ ଦୂର ଗ୍ରାମଟିରୁ ଭାସି ଆସେ
 ଶିଶୁ କବି ଗଣୁଥାଏ ଶେଷ ତା ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତ ସବୁ, ନାହିଁ କେହି ସାହା
 ଜଲ୍ଲାଦ ବସିଛି ପାଶେ, ଟକ ଟକ ଚାହାଣୀରେ କରି ସେ ମୋହିତ ଆଉ
 ଟକ ଟକ ଖଣ୍ଡା ଧରି ଆହା

ଆଉ କେତେ ଅମୂଲ୍ୟ ସେ କ୍ଷଣ ଖାଲି, ଶିଶୁ କବି ହେବ ତ ନିହତ
 ତା ପରେ ଏ ଉତ୍ସବର ହେବ ସମାପନ, ଏଇ ପଟଭୂମି ହେବ ତା ରକ୍ତେ ଲୋହିତ
 କାଳ କାଳ ଧରି ଏଇ ଚାଲି ତ ଆସିଛି ବନ୍ଧୁ ଜୀବନର ମେଳା
 ଅକଳନ ଦୁଃଖ ସବୁ ଭରି ସେ ହୃଦୟେ, ଆଜି, ବସି ଏକା ଏକା କବି ଜପୁଛି ତ ଭଗବାନ ମାଳା
 ଜୀବନଟା ଆସେ ଆଉ ଏଇମିତି ମିଛଟାରେ, ହଠାତ୍ ବା କାହିଁକି ସେ ସଢ଼ି ଗଲି ଯାଏ,
 ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।

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ସଉଁଦ୍ୟ ତ ବସିଛନ୍ତି ଗୋଟେ ଗୋଟେ ଦଉଡ଼ିକୁ ଧରି
 ବାନ୍ଧି ହେଇ ଛାଟି ପିଟି କରୁଛନ୍ତି କେତେ ସେ ବା ରତି
 କେମିତି କହିବି ସବୁ ଛାଡ଼ିଦିଅ ହେଇଯା ମୁକତ
 କେମିତି କହିବି କାଲି ଥିଲା ବନ୍ଧୁ, ଆଉ ସେ ତ ଧରିଛି ଶକତ
 ମୋର କେତେ କେତେ ବା ପ୍ରେମିକା ସବୁ ଧିରେ ଧିରେ ଝାପସା ଯେ ହେଲେ
 ଆଉ ସେଇ କାଲିର ବାଦଲ ତଳେ କଳା କଳା ଦଉଡ଼ିର ଛଳେ
 ତରେଇ ତ ଚାଲିଛନ୍ତି ସୁରୁଯତା ଖାଲି ଲୁଚିଯାଏ
 ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।
 କାଲିର ସଙ୍ଗୀତ ସବୁ, କରାଳ କାହାଣୀ କେତେ ବୋଲି ଚାଲିଛନ୍ତି
 କେତେ କେତେ କେଦାର ଗୌରୀ ଅବା ଲୁହ ସବୁ ଜାଲି ଚାଲିଛନ୍ତି
 ଆଜି ପରା ନୂଆ ହେ ପରବ, ତୁମେ ସବୁ, ଆଜି ଏକ ନୂଆ ଲୁଗା ପିନ୍ଧ ।
 ନୂଆ ସବୁ ରାତି ଆଉ ନୂଆ ଏକ ଫୁଲର ଶିକୁଳି ନେଇ ଜୀବନଟା ବାନ୍ଧ
 ପୁଣି କାଲି, ଫୁଲ ସବୁ ମଉଲିବେ, କଟା ଘାଆଟାରୁ ପୁଣି ବହିବ ରୁଧାର
 ପୁଣି କାଲି, ଖାଁ ଖାଁ ହେବ ତ ଜୀବନ, କିଛି ଶୁଣିବେନି, ସବୁ ହେବେ ଗୋ ବଧାର ।
 ପୁଣି ଆଜି ସ୍ମୃତି ହେବ, ବଞ୍ଚିଯିବ ତୁମେ ପରା ପାଉଁଶ ପରାୟେ
 ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।
 ଅଳିଶାର ଭିତରେ ଅନ୍ଧାର ଖାଲି, ଶୁଖିଥିବା ଫୁଲ ମାଳ ଯାକ
 ଥରେ ଥରେ ଅଥୟ କରନ୍ତି ମୋତେ, କରନ୍ତି ଗୋ ମୋତେ ଯେ ବେବାକ
 କି କହିବି ଆଉ ମୋର, ସବୁ କଥା ସରି ତ ସାରିଛି
 ଜୀବନଟା ହରେଇ ମୁଁ ପାଉଁଶର ବିଭୂତିରେ ଦେହଟାକୁ ବୋଲି ମୁଁ ଦେଇଛି
 ଆଗରେ ମୋ କାଲି ଆଉ ପଛରେ ମୋ କାଲି ଭୂତ ହେଇ ଗୋ ଡରାଏ
 ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।

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ଇନ୍ଦ୍ରିୟ ପ୍ରିୟା ମୋର ଛୁରୀ ନେଇ ହୀରା ଧାର ଆଜି ତ ବସିଛି
 କେତେ କେତେ ହୃତ୍ପିଣ୍ଡ, ସମୟକୁ ଦେଇ ପିଣ୍ଡ, କାଟି ତ ଚାଲିଛି
 ଅର୍ପିତ ଫୁଲର ସେଇ ମାଦକତା ଗନ୍ଧେ ଆଜି କବି ଭଳି ଯାଏ

ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।
 ଚିର କାଳ ଧରି ଏଇ କରୁଣ କାହାଣୀ ସବୁ ଲେଖା ତ ଚାଲିଛି
 ଚିର କାଳ ଧରି ଏଇ ଆଜି କାଲି ବୈଷମ୍ୟର କଥା ତ ଚାଲିଛି
 ହେଲେ କାହିଁ ଶିଶୁ କବି, କେବେ କିଛି ଶିଖେ ନାହିଁ, ଆଲୋକକୁ ପୂଜା କରି ଚାଲେ
 ହେଲେ କାହିଁ ସେ ତ କେବେ, ଭୁଲେନା ମଦୀର, ଆଉ ବସିଥାଏ,
 ନୃଶଂସ ପ୍ରିୟାର ସେ କୋଳେ
 ହେଲେ କାହିଁ ଜୀବନଟା ସବୁବେଳେ ନଦୀଟି ନ ହୋଇ ମରୁବାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ
 ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।
 ପାଗଳା ଫକୀର ଦିନେ କହିଥିଲା ମୋତେ ବାବୁ ହୁଅ ନା ତୁ ବାଈ
 ଉପର ସେ ପାଲା ବାଲା, ଫୁଲର ଶିକୁଳା ସବୁ ଦେଇଛି ବିଛେଇ
 ମାକଡ଼ସା ଜାଲ ପରି ବାନ୍ଧି ଦେବ ତୋତେ ଆଉ ଶୋଷିନେବ ପ୍ରାଣ
 ହୁଅ ନା ତୁ ମତୁଆଲା, ସେ ବନ୍ଧନୁ ରହ ଖୋଲା, ନାହିଁ ଆଉ ଆନ
 ସେ ତ ବସିଥାଏ, ଦେଖୁଥାଏ ଜଳ ଜଳ, ବୁଢ଼ିଆଣୀ ଚିଏ
 ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।

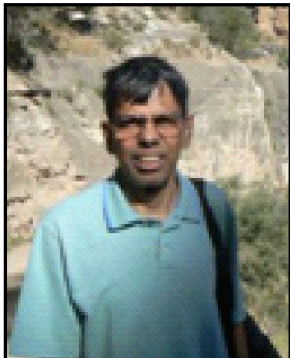
୭

କେତେ କେତେ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ଗୋ କେତେ ବା ଶଠତା ଦେଇ ଏ ଦୁନିଆ ଗଢ଼ା
 କେତେ ସବୁ ଆଲୁଅ ସେ ଦେଇ ମିଛ ଜଉଘର ଜଳିଯାଏ ପରା
 ଏମିତି ସବୁ ଯେ ଧନ ସାଇତି ସାଇତି ମୁଁ ତ ହାଲିଆ ହେଲିଣି
 ବିଷମହୁ ସବୁ ଚୋପା ଚୋପା ପିଇ କହେ ଆଜି ଆହତ କାହାଣୀ
 ସବୁ ଆସେ ହାତଟାରେ ଫେରନ୍ତା ଜୁଆର ପରି ପୁଣି ଚାଲିଯାଏ
 ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।
 ଚାଲିଛି ଉତ୍ସବ ପରା ହୁଲହୁଲି ପତେ ଆଉ ଧୂଆଁ ଭରିଯାଏ
 ହେବ ସେ କୁହୁକ ନାଚ, ଧୁଣା ଧରି ରାତ୍ରିକ ଠିଆ ହେଇଥାଏ
 ଖୁଣ୍ଟ ବନ୍ଧା ଶିଶୁ କବି ଖାଲି ଖାଲି ଦୁନିଆରେ ଶେଷ କ୍ଷଣ ଗଣେ
 ମତୁଆଲା ସହରଟା, ମାଡିଥାଏ ଆଜି ଖାଲି ଦେବୀର ଗହଣେ
 ତାପରେ କେଜାଣି କାହିଁ ଚକ୍ ଚକ୍ ଧାରେ ସେ ଅନ୍ଧାର ଆସିଯାଏ
 ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।
 କିଛି ସେତ ନ କହି ବି କେତେ କେତେ କଥା ସଖୀ ଆଜି କହି ଦେଇଗଲା
 ଲବଙ୍ଗ ଦ୍ୱୀପରେ ସେ ତ କାଳିଜାଲ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ଏକା ମୋତେ ଛାଡ଼ି ଦେଇଗଲା
 ଦି ଚୋପା ସେ ଲୁହ ଦେଖି, ମୁଁ ବା କାଲି ମୋତେ ଆଗୋ, ଭୁଲିଯାଇଥିଲି
 ନିଶବଦ ରାତିଟାରେ, କଳା କଳା ଅନ୍ଧାର ସେ କେତେ ଆଗୋ ଭରି ଦେଇ ଗଲା
 ରହି ରହି କରାଳ ସେ ପେଟାଟାଟ ପ୍ରେତ ବାଣୀ ଖାଲି ବୋଲୁଥାଏ
 ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।

ବସିଛି ସମାଧିଗାରେ, ନିଜର ମୁଁ ଗଢୁଥିବି କବର ସୁନ୍ଦର
 କେତେ ଅବା ଆସିବେ ଯେ ଯାତ୍ରୀ ଆଉ ବାହୁନିବେ କାହିଁ ଚିତ୍ରକାର
 ମୁଁ ତ ଲୁଚି ଯାଇଥିବି, ତାର ସେଇ ଛଳଭରା ଅନ୍ଧାର ଭିତରେ
 କଳା ଅଙ୍ଗାରରେ ସେଇ କେଦାର ଗଉରୀ କଥା ଲେଖୁଥିବେ ମୋହରି କାନ୍ଥରେ
 ଏଇମିତି ଜୀବନଟା ସରିଯାଏ, ଏଇମିତି ରକ୍ତ ସବୁ ଝରିଯାଏ,
 ଏଇମିତି ଫୁଲ ତ ମଉଳି ଯାଏ
 ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।



ଦିନ ଆଉ ରାତିଟାର ଆଲୁଅ ଅନ୍ଧାର ପାଇଁ ଆଖି ମୁଁ ବୁଜିଛି
 ଏତେ ଏତେ ସତ ମିଛ, ଏତେ ଛଳ ହସ ଲୁହ ଦେଖି ମୁଁ ସାରିଛି
 ଏବେ ଆଉ ଫୁଲ ଦେଖି, ଆତୁର ହୁଏ ନା ପ୍ରାଣ, ଏବେ ମୁଁ ତ ଶିବ ପାଲଟିଛି
 ଏବେ ଆଉ ବସନ୍ତ ବାହାର ରାଗେ ଗାଏନା ଏ ମନ, ମୁଁ ତ ଦୀପକ ସାଜିଛି
 ଏବେ ଯେବେ, ମଳୟଟା ବହେ ଆଉ କୁହୁକ ତା ମନ୍ତ୍ର କହିଯାଏ
 ବିବସ ଏ ବୃଦ୍ଧ ମନ ହସି ହସି ତାକୁ କହି ଦିଏ,
 ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।
 ରାସ୍ତା ଧାରେ ପୁଣି ସେଇ ଚିହ୍ନା ବୁଡି ଦିଶି ଯାଏ, ଛଳ ଛଳ ହେଇଯାଏ ଆଖି
 ସପନ ସବୁ ତ ଆଜି ଜଳ ଜଳ ଦିଶି ଯାଏ, ଉଡିଯାଏ ମନର ଏ ପକ୍ଷୀ
 ସାଧନାର ବିବଶ ଓପାସ ସବୁ ପଞ୍ଜୁ କରେ, କରିଦିଏ ଶିଥିଳ ଏ ଦେହ
 ଦୂରନ୍ତ ସେ ବନ ମଧୁ୍ୟ ରହି ରହି ଭାସି ଆସେ,
 ଆଗାମୀ କାଲିର ସେଇ ଅହରହ କୋହ
 କେମିତି କେଜାଣି ଥରେ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତକ ପାଇଁ ଏ ନିଶ୍ୱାସ ରହିଯାଏ
 ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।
 ସଖୀମାନେ ଖେଳୁଛନ୍ତି ତାଙ୍କର ସେ ଚିରନ୍ତନ, କଉଡ଼ିର ଖେଳ
 ବଜାର ବସିଛି ଦେଖ କେତେ କେତେ ସୁଗନ୍ଧିତ ଅଛି ଫୁଲମାଳ
 ମୁଁ ତ ମୋର ତୁଳସୀ ଚଉରା ତଳେ, ଦେଇ ଚାଲିଅଛି ଆଜି ଆରତୀର ବେଳ
 ଦୁନିଆଟା ଘେରିଛି ଯେ କେତେ ସବୁ ନିଆଁ ଧୁଆଁ ଘେରିଛି ବହଳ
 ତରିଯିବି, ସରିଯିବି, ଏଇ ଆଶା କରି ମୁଁ ତ ଥରେ ଶୋଇଯାଏ
 ଆଜି ଆସେ, ପୁଣି ସେ କାଲି ହେଇଯାଏ ।



314 Semoia Lane,
 Ridgeland, MS 39157

ଭକ୍ତର ଭଗବାନ

କାହିଁଲତା ସାହୁ

ଭାବନାରୁ ଶୁଣ...

ମନୋଜ ପଣ୍ଡା

ଭ କ୍ଷର ଅଧୁନ ତୁହି ଭଗବାନ
 ବିଚିତ୍ର ତୋର ଏ ସୃଷ୍ଟି,
 ଭକତର ବନ୍ଧୁ ଆହେ କୃପାସିନ୍ଧୁ
 ଚତୁର୍ଦ୍ଦିଗେ ତୋର ଦୃଷ୍ଟି । ୧୧ ।

ଭକତ ନିମନ୍ତେ ଗଧ ପାଦ କାନ୍ଧେ
 ଟେକିବାକୁ ନାହିଁ କେଶି,
 ଭକତର ହିତେ ସଦା ଥାଉ ତୁହି
 ସନ୍ଦେହ ନାହିଁଟି ଲେଶି । ୧୨ ।

ଭକତର ସାଥେ କେତେ ଖେଳଖେଳୁ
 କରି ପରୀକ୍ଷା ନାରିକ୍ଷା,
 ଭକତର ପାଇଁ ତୁହି ନାରୀୟଣ
 ଦେଇଯାଉ ତାକୁ ଶିକ୍ଷା । ୧୩ ।

ଭକତ ତୋ ପାଇଁ ଗଣ୍ଡିଧନ ସତେ
 ଦିବାନିଶି ଚାହିଁଥାଉ,
 ଭକତ ଦୁଃଖରେ ହୁଅ ତୁହି ଦୁଃଖି
 ସୁଖରେ ସୁଖି ତୁ ହେଉ । ୧୪ ।

ଭକତ ତୋ ପାଇଁ ସବୁଠାରୁ ବଡ଼
 ତୁହି ତା ପଛରେ ଥାଉ,
 ଭକତ ଜୀବନ ତୋତେ କରି ଧ୍ୟାନ
 ତୋ ସହିତ ମିଶିଯାଉ । ୧୫ ।

ସ ମୟର ମାନଦଣ୍ଡରେ ବ୍ୟତିକ୍ରମର ବିବର୍ତ୍ତନ
 ଏକ ଅଲେଖା, ଅକ୍ରୁହା ସମ୍ବେଦନର ନିଚ୍ଛକ ଅନ୍ତର୍ନାଦ
 କେବେ ହୁଏ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନିଳ
 ଥାଉ କେବେ ଲାଭାର ଗରଳ
 ନିମିଷକ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତରେ କରେ ପଟ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ

ଛାଡ଼ି ଯାଏ ଅସୁମାରୀ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନବାଚୀ
 ବିଗ୍ୟାନର ସାହାନିଏ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନୋତ୍ତରୀର ଇନ୍ଦୁଜାଲରେ
 ଆହା... ଉତ୍ତର ପୁଣି ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରେ ଅନେକ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନର ସମ୍ଭାର
 ମାୟାବର୍ତ୍ତର କେନ୍ଦ୍ର ବିନ୍ଦୁ ହୋଇଯାଏ ଆହୁରି ଗଭୀର

କିଏ ସେ ଏ ଇନ୍ଦୁଜାଲର ଐନ୍ଦୁଜାଲିକ
 କିଏ ସେ ଏ ସମୟ ପ୍ରବାହର ଭିତ୍ତିଭୂମି
 କିଏ ସେ ଏ ଗାଣିତିକ ସମୀକରଣର ଅନ୍ତବାହକ
 କିଏ ସେ ଏ ସୀମା ଓ ପରିସୀମାର ମୌଳିକ ନିର୍ଣ୍ଣାୟକ

ଯେତେବେଳେ ଅନ୍ତଦୃଷ୍ଟି ନିର୍ଲିପ୍ତ ସ୍ତରକୁ ଚାଲିଯାଏ
 ତେବେ ଏ ସବୁ ଅଗ୍ୟାନର ବୁଡ଼ିଆଣି ଜାଲ ଖୋଲିଯାଏ
 ସତ୍ୟ ହୁଏ ସତତ ପ୍ରତୀୟମାନ
 ଆଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଟ ବିକଶିତ ହୁଏ ନିର୍ବିକଳ ନିରାଲମ୍ବରେ
 ଜୀବନ ସର୍ବୋକୃଷ୍ଟ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟର ହୁଏ ପରିସମାପ୍ତି
 ଏକ ଅନିର୍ବଚନୀୟ ଆନନ୍ଦ ସତ୍ୟ-ଶିବ-ସୁନ୍ଦରତାରେ
 ହୁଏ ଆଲହାଦିଉ, ଅବିରତ ଭାବେ...
 ଯାହାର ନଥାଏ ଆଦି କିମ୍ପା ଅନ୍ତ ।



7655 Berland Ct.,
 Cupertino, CA 95014

20504 Addenbrook
 Way, Gaitherssburg,
 MD 20879

ସମ୍ଭାସନାବଦର ଦାନବ

ସୌଭାଷୀ

ବିଜୟଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ ରଣା

ସୁବ୍ରତ ମହାନ୍ତି

ଆ ଶା ଆସେ ମରି ମରି ଉଦ୍ୟାନରେ
 ପାହି ପାହି ଆସେ ରାତି
 ଶୁଖି ଶୁଖି ଯାଏ ଭାବନା ଆକାଶେ
 କମି କମି ଆସେ ତାତି ।
 କିଏ କେଉଁଠାରେ କାହାସାଥୁ ଛାଡ଼ି
 ଚାଲିଯିବ ଏ ସଂସାରୁ
 କିଏ କାହାଠାରୁ କଥଣ ବା ନେଇ
 ପାରିହେବ ଏ ରାତିରୁ ।
 ସାଜି ଦୁନିଆଁର କ୍ରୀତଦାସ ଚିଏ
 ଦୁନିଆଁ ବିକ୍ରେତା ହେଲୁ
 ସଂକୀର୍ତ୍ତନୀର ଦୁଃଖିତା ମୁଣ୍ଡେଇ
 କୁକର୍ମରେ ମନ ଦେଲୁ ।
 ଦୁଃସ୍ଥ ସେବା ଛାଡ଼ି ଦୁଃଖକୁ ସେବିଲୁ
 ଭାବିଲୁ ମହତ ସେହି
 ତୋ ମହତ ମନ ହତ କରିଦେଲୁ
 ନିଶା ଗଞ୍ଜୋତରେ ରହି ।
 ମାତୁ ହୃଦୟର ବେଦନାକୁ ଭୁଲି
 ହୋଇଗଲୁ ଆତ୍ମଗାତୀ
 ଦୁନିଆଁ ବୁକୁରେ ସାଜିଲୁ ଦାନବ
 ନିଜେ ଚିରି ନିଜ ଛାଡ଼ି ।
 ମାତୁ ପ୍ରେମ ଡାକ ତୋତେ ନ ଶୁଭିଲା
 ତୁ ପରା ସମ୍ଭାସ ବାଦୀ
 ନିଜର ରକ୍ତରେ ନିଜେ ହୋଲି ଖେଳି
 ଭାବିଲୁ ହେବୁ ସହିଦୀ ।
 ତୋ ଜୀବନଦୀପ ଥରେ ଲିଭିଗଲେ
 ବୁଡ଼ିଯିବ ତୋର ନାଆ
 ତୋ ବିପଦ ପଥେ ତୁ ଏକା ସାରଥୀ
 ସେହି ଭଗବାନ ଏକା ସାହା ।

ବର୍ଷା...

ତୁ ମ ରୁଣୁ ଝୁଣୁ ଶବ୍ଦରେ
 ନିଶାନ୍ତ ଭି ଜାଗୁତ
 ଭିଜା ମାଟି ର ବାସ୍ନାରେ
 ମତୁଆଲା ହୋଇ
 ହେଲେ ମୁଁ କିନ୍ତୁ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନାବୃତ୍ତ
 କମଳର ନିବୃତ୍ତ କୋଠାରେ
 ଶୀତ ସୌଭାଷୀର କୋମଳ ଆଲିଂଗନର
 ଉଷ୍ମତାକୁ ନେଇ...
 ଗଢ଼ିବା ପାଇଁ
 ଅନ୍ୟ ଏକ ପ୍ରାଚୀର
 ଆମ ଭାବପ୍ରବଣତାର
 ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣହେଦ ଗାଣି ।

ଶୀତ...

ତମ ଶୀତଳ ସ୍ପର୍ଶର ଉଷ୍ମତାରେ
 ନିବିଡ଼ ହୋଇଉଠେ
 ଆଲିଙ୍ଗନର ରୂପରେଖା
 ଶିଉଳିଲତାର ଭାବଭଙ୍ଗୀକୁ ନେଇ
 ହେଲେ ସମୟର ସମ୍ପେଗରେ
 ବରଫାବର କମନିଆ କବରୀ ତୁମ୍ଭ
 ଶକ୍ତ ହୋଇ ଶୀତଳ ହୋଇଉଠେ
 ମୋ ରକ୍ତ ମାଂସର ଶରୀରରେ
 ବୋଧେ...
 ଭୟ ପାଇ,
 ବିରହ ବ୍ୟଥୁତ ବର୍ଷାର
 ନିରବ ପ୍ରତିଧ୍ୱନିରେ ।

239 Winding Hill
 Drive, Hackettstown,
 NJ 07840



22192 Highbiscus Hill
 Dr, Woodland Hills,
 CA 91367

ବିସ୍କୋରଣ

ପରାଶର ମିଶ୍ର



ତର ମାତେ କିରେ ଆଜି, କାଲି
 ବିଛଣା ନରମ ହେଲେବି, ଘର ଆଗରେ
 ସଶସ୍ତ୍ର ପ୍ରହରୀ ଜଗିଲେ ବି
 ଏକା, ଏକା, ନିବୁଜ ଘର ଭିତରେ ନରମ
 ଶେଯରେ ଶୋଇ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ?
 ବାତାନୁକୂଳିତ ପରିବେଶରେ ସୁରକ୍ଷିତ ଥାଇ
 ଦେଶର ନେତା ହୋଇ ଦେଶ ଓ ବିଶ୍ୱ କଥା ଭାବିବାକୁ ?

ତର ମାତେ କିରେ ଆଜି, କାଲି
 ଖୋଲା ପଡ଼ିଆରେ ପୋଲିସ୍, ସେନା, ଦେହରକ୍ଷାକ
 ଘେରରେ ଲୁଚି ରହି ମଞ୍ଚ ଉପରେ ଠିଆ ହୋଇ
 ହାତ, ମୁଣ୍ଡ ହଲାଇ ମଞ୍ଚ ତଳ ଲୋକକୁ
 ଭାଷଣ ଦେବାକୁ, ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତା ଦିବସ ଓ
 ସାଧାରଣତନ୍ତ୍ର ଦିବସରେ ପତାକା ଉତ୍ତୋଳନ କରିବାକୁ ?

ତର ମାତେ କିରେ ଆଜି, କାଲି
 ଦଳିତ, ନିଷ୍ପେକ୍ଷିତ, ଦରିଦ୍ର ଓ ନିରନ୍ତ ଜନତାଙ୍କ
 ଡ୍ରାଣକର୍ତ୍ତା ବୋଲି ଦାବି କରି
 ଜାତି, ଭାଷା ଓ ଆଞ୍ଚଳିକତାର ଆଳରେ
 ରାଜନୀତିକୁ ବ୍ୟବସାୟ କରି,
 ଗୁଳିଗୋଳାରେ ରକ୍ତର ହୋରି ଖେଳିବାକୁ
 ଧର୍ମ ନାମରେ ଧର୍ମର ସଉଦା କରି ନରହତ୍ୟା,
 ନର ସଂହାର, ସଂହାରଲାଳାକୁ ?

ବହୁ ଦିନ ନୀରବରେ ଦେଖି ଦେଖି,
 ନୀରବରେ ଶୁଣି ଶୁଣି କିଛି ମଣିଷ ତ
 ନିଜ ସତ୍ ସାହସ ଓ ଶକ୍ତିରେ ଏକାଠି ହେଲେ ଓ
 ପୂଣି ଥରେ ପଥର ଦେହରେ ପଥର ବାଡେଇ
 ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲେ
 ବିସ୍କୋରଣର ଏକ ନୂତନ ଅଧ୍ୟାୟ ।

ବିସ୍କୋରଣର ଏ ନୂଆ କୋଳାହଳ,
 ଏ ନୂଆ ଧ୍ୱନି ଓ ପ୍ରତିଧ୍ୱନି ନିଆଁ ହୋଇ ମାତି ଚାଲିଛି
 ପତ୍ରରୁ ଫୁଲକୁ, ଖରାରୁ ବର୍ଷାକୁ, ସମୁଦ୍ରରୁ ଆକାଶକୁ
 ଜାତି, ସାଥୀ, ମାତା ବସୁନ୍ଧରାର ପ୍ରତିଟି ଦେଶକୁ ।

ଏ ବିସ୍କୋରଣ ନୁହେଁ ଭୀରୁ ଆତଙ୍କବାଦୀଙ୍କ
 ଆତଙ୍କ କି ଆତଙ୍କବାଦୀଙ୍କ ବୋମା ବିସ୍କୋରଣ,
 ଏ ନୁହେଁ ରକ୍ତମୁଖା ସଶସ୍ତ୍ର ଉଗ୍ରପଦ୍ମୀଙ୍କ
 ହିଂସା ଓ ଆତଙ୍କର ବିସ୍କୋରଣ,
 ଏ ବିସ୍କୋରଣ ଚାଷୀ, ମୂଲିଆ, ଶ୍ରମିକ,
 ମଧ୍ୟଜୀବୀ, ବୁଦ୍ଧିଜୀବୀ, ଯୁବଗୋଷ୍ଠୀଙ୍କ
 ଧର୍ଷଣ, ଲୁଣ୍ଠନ, ଅନ୍ୟାୟ, ଅନୀତି, ଦୁର୍ନୀତି,
 ଭ୍ରଷ୍ଟାଚାର ବିରୁଦ୍ଧରେ ବିସ୍କୋରଣ
 ଏ ବିସ୍କୋରଣ ବିକାଶ ଓ ପ୍ରଗତିର ଆଳରେ
 ଜମି ଜବରଦଖଲକାରୀଙ୍କ ବିରୋଧରେ
 ବିସ୍ମାପିତ ଆଦିବାସୀଙ୍କ କ୍ରୋଧ ଓ
 ଅସନ୍ତୋଷର ବିସ୍କୋରଣ ।

ମଣିଷର ଅଧିକାର ପାଇଁ ସ୍ୱର ଉଠାଇ
 ସମାଜ ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥାରେ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଆଣି
 ସାମାଜିକ ନ୍ୟାୟ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ହାସଲରେ
 ବିଶ୍ୱାସ କରୁଥିବା ପ୍ରଗତିବାଦୀ ମଣିଷର
 ଏ ସାମୂହିକ ବିସ୍କୋରଣ ।



537 Steeles Ave.
 West #16, Toronto,
 ON M2M 3Y1

ନେତାମାନେ ଦୁଅ ଦୁସ୍ତ୍ରୀଆର

ଶଶଧର ମହାପାତ୍ର

ଗାଁ ଗୋପି ପିନ୍ଧି ଗାନ୍ଧିର ଦେଶେ
ବୋଲାଉଛ ରାଜନେତା
ଭୋଟ୍ ମାଗିବାକୁ ଘରେ ଘରେ ବୁଲ
ହାତେଧରି ତୁମ ଛତା

ତୁମ ଛତା ଚିହ୍ନେ ଭୋଟ୍ ଦେବାକୁ
କେତେ ଖୋସାମଦ କର
ହାତ, ଗୋଡ଼ ଧରି ନେହୁରା ହେଇକି
କଥାରେ ପକାଅ ସର

ଭୋଟ୍ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ପ୍ରତିଶ୍ରୁତି ଦିଅ
ଜନତାଙ୍କୁ ବାରମ୍ବାର
ଭୋଟ୍ ମିଳିଗଲେ ଭେଟ ହୁଏନାହିଁ
କାଶିଆ, କପିଳାଙ୍କର

ପ୍ରଚାର ବେଳକୁ ପିନ୍ଧିଥାଅ ତୁମେ
ଖଦଡ଼, ଛିଣ୍ଡା ଯୋଡ଼ା
ଥରେ ଜିତିଗଲେ ମର୍ଦ୍ଦେତିସ୍ ରତି
ପିନ୍ଧ କୋଟ୍, ସିଲ୍‌କ କୁର୍ତ୍ତା

ତୁମ ମର୍ଦ୍ଦେତିସ୍ ଗାଡ଼ି ଗଡ଼ୁଥାଏ
ରାଜଧାନୀ ରାଷ୍ଟ୍ରାକଡ଼େ
ବାସ ଭବନକୁ ସକାଳୁ ସଞ୍ଜ
ଲମ୍ବା ଲାଜନ୍ ପଡ଼େ

ତୁମ ଦରଶନ ପାଇଁ ଦିନରାତି
ଏ ଜନତା ଖୋଜୁଥାଏ
ବିଳାସ ବ୍ୟସନ ହୋଟେଲରେ ରହି
ସେତେବେଳେ ରାତି ପାହେ

ଫିକର ଫନ୍ଦି ରଚିବାରେ ତୁମେ
ଅଟ ଦକ୍ଷ କାରିଗର
ମିଛ ପ୍ରତିଶ୍ରୁତି ଦେଇ ଜନତାଙ୍କୁ
ପିନ୍ଧୁଥାଅ ଫୁଲହାର

ତୁମେ ବହୁରୂପୀ ଦେଖା କରାମତି
ଗଣତନ୍ତ୍ର କଥା କହି
ତୁମ ପ୍ରତିଶ୍ରୁତି ରହିଯାଏ ପରା
ପ୍ରତିଶ୍ରୁତି ମାତ୍ର ହୋଇ

ଦିନ ଦ୍ଵିପ୍ରହରେ ଲୁଣ୍ଠନ କରୁଛ
ଜନତାଙ୍କ ରାଜକୋଷ
ଦେଶଟି ଯାଉଛି ତଳକୁ ତଳକୁ
କରିଲଣି ସର୍ବନାଶ

ବେକାରୀଙ୍କ ସ୍ଵାଖ୍ୟା ବଡ଼େ ପ୍ରତିଦିନ
କେବେ ନାହିଁ ତୁମ ଧ୍ୟାନ
କଳା ପଇସାକୁ ବିଦେଶ ବ୍ୟାଙ୍କରେ
ରଖିବାରେ ତୁମ ମନ

ସତ୍ୟପାଠ ତୁମେ କରିଥିଲ ପରା
ଦେଶସେବାର ପାଇଁ
ଅନ୍ୟାୟ, ଅନୀତି ବିରୁଦ୍ଧରେ ତୁମ
ଖଡ଼୍ଗ ଉଠିଲା ନାହିଁ

ରାଷ୍ଟ୍ରରେ ବୁଲି ଭିକ ମାଗେ କିଏ
ନାହିଁ ତା' ଥାଳରେ ଦାନା
ବିଶ୍ଵାସ ଯଦି ନହୁଏ ତୁମକୁ
ଟିକେ ପଛକୁ ଭାଇନା ଅନା

ଧନୀ ହୁଏ ବେଶୀ ଧନୀ ଏ ଦେଶରେ
ଗରିବ ଯାଏ ତଳକୁ
ଜନତା ଆଖିରେ ପକାଉଛ ଧୂଳି
କିଏ ଅଛି ରୋକିବାକୁ

ପ୍ରତାରିତ କରି ଚାଲିଛ ଜନଙ୍କୁ
ଅମୃତରେ ଭାଳି ବିଷ
ଜନତା ମାତିଲେ ଦିନେ ନା ଦିନେ
କରିଦେବେ ତୁମ ଶେଷ ।



537 Steeles Ave. West
#16, Toronto, ON
M2M 3Y1

ଜୀବନ ରହସ୍ୟ

ଝାନ୍ସୁ ଛୋଟରାୟ



ମତ୍କାର ଡବ	ସୃଷ୍ଟିରେ ପ୍ରଭୁ	କିଏ କୁହେ ସ୍ୱହା	ନାହିଁ ଏ ଜୀବନେ
ନିହିତ କଠୋର ସତ୍ୟ		ବାର୍ଦ୍ଧକ୍ୟ ଯେ ବଡ଼ କଷ୍ଟ	
ଏଇ ଥିଲା ଏବେ	ଆଉ ନାହିଁ ଭବେ	ଦିଶୁନି, ଶୁଭୁନି	ହେ-ଗୁରୁଦେବ
ଏ କି ଜୀବନ ରହସ୍ୟ ?		ନିଅ ତୁମରି ନିକଟ ।	
ଧନ, ଜନ, ଯଶ,	ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ଓ ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟ	କିଏ ପୁଣି କୁହେ	କରୁଣତା ସ୍ୱରେ
ତୁମରି କ୍ଷଣିକ ଦାନ		ଦାଦା ଚାଲିଗଲେ ଝିଅ	
ସର୍ବ କ୍ଷଣସ୍ଥାୟୀ	ଦେଖି ବି ଅସ୍ପଷ୍ଟ	ବୃଦ୍ଧା ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ	ଏକା କରିଗଲେ
ଚକ୍ଷୁରେ ପରଲ ଆମ ।		କେମିତି ରହିବି କୁହ ?	
ଦେଶରୁ ନିକଟେ	ଫେରିଲି ମୁଁ ନେଇ	କେଉଁଠାରେ ଶୁଭେ	ତଙ୍ଗା ଲେଉଟିଛି
ଅନୁଭୂତି ସେ ଯେ ଭିନ୍ନ		ମର୍ମହୃଦ ଦୁର୍ଦ୍ଦଶା	
ଆନନ୍ଦ, ଉଲ୍ଲାସ	ପୁଣି ଦୁଃଖ, ଶୋକ	ପିକନିକ୍ ପୁଣିହେଲା କା'ର କାଳ	
ଆର୍ଦ୍ଧ କରିଥିଲା ପ୍ରାଣ ।		ଭାଗ୍ୟର ବିତୟନା ।	
କା' ଘରେ ଭାସଇ	ଆନନ୍ଦ ଜୁଆର	ସ୍ୱନେତ୍ରେ ଦେଖିଲି	ମୃତପିଣ୍ଡ ଧାଡ଼ି
ଶୁଣି କୁଆଁ କୁଆଁ ରାବ		ବୁଝା ନେଇ	'ରାମନାମ'
ଶିଶୁପୁତ୍ର ସେ ଯେ	ଜନମ ଲଭିଛି	ହାତ, ମାଂସ, ରକ୍ତ	ଶରୀର, ସଂପର୍କ
ଭବିଷ୍ୟତର ଦାୟାଦ ।		ଏଇ ଶେଷ ପରିଣାମ ।	
କା' ଘରେ ବାଜଇ	ଶଙ୍ଖ, ସାହାନାଜ	ଜରା, ରୋଗ, ଶୋକ	ଦେଖି ଦିନେ ମାୟା
ବିବାହର ଆୟୋଜନ		ତେଜିଥିଲେ ଗଉଡ଼ମ	
ହସ, କୋଳାହଳ	ଆତସବାଜିରେ	ଭେଦେ ମୋ ଅନ୍ତର	ସୃଷ୍ଟି ବାସ୍ତବତା
ଅତଡ଼ା ପଡ଼ୁଛି କାନ ।		ବିବ୍ରତ କରଇ ମନ ।	
ଶୁଭଇ କା' ଘରେ	ବ୍ୟସ୍ତତା ପ୍ରଳାପ	ଜୀବନର ମାର୍ଗ	ଦର୍ଶାଅ ହେ ପ୍ରଭୁ
କର୍କଟ ରୋଗ ଯନ୍ତ୍ରଣା		ମାୟାର ପରଲ ଟେକି	
କିଏ ଲୋଟିଅଛି	ପକ୍ଷାଘାତ ରୋଗେ	ଷତରିପୁ ଧଂସି	ଶୁଦ୍ଧ କର ମତି
ଲୋଡ଼େ ବିଭୁଙ୍କ କରୁଣା ।		ଜୀବନ ଅଛି ଯା ବାକି ।	

6448 Muster Court,
Centerville, VA 20121

ଆମେରିକା ଜ୍ଞାଳ

ଗଗନ ବିହାରୀ ପାଣିଗ୍ରାହୀ

ବୋ

ଉ ଲୋ ! ମୋହର ଜାଣିବୁ ଜୁହାର
କାହିଁ କେତେ ଦିନୁ ମୋ ଭିତର କଥା,
ଲେଖିବି କି ନାହିଁ ଭାବି ଭାବି ଶେଷେ
ଲେଖି ବସିଲି ମୁଁ ହୃଦୟର ବ୍ୟଥା ।
ଯାଉନାହିଁ ହାତ ଲେଖିବି କେମନ୍ତ
କପାଳରେ ଭୋଗ ଥିଲା ଏ କଷଣ,
କେଉଁ ଅମଙ୍ଗଳେ ଦେଇଥିଲୁ ବାହା
ଲୁହ ପୋଛି ପୋଛି ଯାଉନାହିଁ ଦିନ ।
ଏତେ ଦିନ ଧରି ରଖିଲି ଗୋପନେ
ତୋ' ଠାରୁ ଲୁଚାଇ ଯେତକ ଖବର,
ସହି ସହି ଏବେ ଅସହ୍ୟ ହେବାରୁ
ଫେଡ଼ି କହୁଅଛି ଅନ୍ତର ମୋହର ।
ଯେଉଁ ଦିନ ଶେଷ ହେଲା ପାଠ ପଢ଼ା
ସେ ଦିନୁ ଖୋଜିଲୁ ମୋ ନିମନ୍ତେ ବର,
ଅନେକ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଆସି ଯାଉଥିଲା
କାହିଁ ନ ମାନିଲା ମନ ବାପାଙ୍କର ।
କିଏ ଲେକ୍ଚରର ବ୍ୟାଙ୍କ ଅଫିସର
କିଏ ବା ଆଇ.ଏ.ଏସ୍ ଅଫିସର,
ଶେଷେ କିନ୍ତୁ ଘରେ କାରୁ ହୋଇଗଲେ
ଯେମିତି ଦେଖିଲେ ଆମେରିକା ବର ।
ବିଦେଶର ମାୟା ଘାରିଲା ସଭିକୁ
ହେଲା ବାହାଘର ସେହିଠାରେ ସ୍ଥିର,
କପାଳ ଲିଖନ କେ କରିବ ଆନ
ସେ ପାଇଁ ଏବେ ମୁଁ ଶିରେ ମାରେ କର ।

ବାପାଙ୍କର ପାଦ ନ ପଢ଼ିଲା ତଳେ
ଦେଖନ୍ତେ ଯେମନ୍ତ ଆମେରିକା ଜ୍ଞାଳ,
ପୁଅର ଭିତରି ଚରିତ୍ର ନଜାଣି
ହମ ହମ ହେଲେ ଝିଅ ଦେବାପାଇଁ ।
ଯାକ ଯମକରେ ସାରିଲେ ବିବାହ
କନ୍ୟାଦାନ କରି ମାରିଲେ ନିଃଶ୍ୱାସ,
ପରହାତେ ସଂପି ଦେଲେ ଝିଅ ତାଙ୍କ
ମନେ ମନେ କରି ଜ୍ଞାଇଁକୁ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ।
ସାଙ୍ଗ ସାଥୀ ମେଲେ କହି ସେ ବୁଲିଲେ
ଝିଅର ବିଦେଶ ଗମନ ଖବର,
“ଆମେରିକା ଭଳି ଧନୀ ଦେଶ ସାଥେ
ତୁଲ୍ୟ ହେବ କେଉଁ ଦେଶ ପୃଥିବୀର ?”
କେତେ କଳପନା ମନର ଭାବନା
ହେଲା ଘନୀଭୂତ ହୃଦୟରେ ତାଙ୍କ,
ସପନ ରାଇଜେ ଦୁହିତା ତାଙ୍କର
କାଟିବ ସୁଖରେ ଜୀବନଟା ଯାକ ।
ମନେ ଅଛି ମୋର ମାନଚିତ୍ର ଧରି
ଦେଖୁଥାନ୍ତି ବାପା ଜ୍ଞାଇଁଙ୍କର ସ୍ଥାନ,
ନିୟୁର୍କ୍ ସହର, ନାଏଗ୍ରା ପ୍ରପାତ,
ଫିଲାଡେଲଫିଆ, ଷ୍ଟାମ୍ପଟନ ।
କହୁଥିଲେ ପୁଣି ସଭିକୁ ଦେଖାଇ
“ଏଇଠାକୁ ଯିବ ଝିଅ ମୋର ଆଜି”,

ଆମେରିକା କଥା ଯାହାକୁ ଦେଖିଲେ
 ଦିନରାତି ଖାଲି ହେଉଥିଲେ ଭଜି ।
 ବିଭାଘର ପରେ ଛାଡ଼ିଦେଇ ମୋତେ
 ପଳାଇ ଆସିଲେ ଆଗେ ଆଗେ କ୍ଲାଙ୍ଗ,
 କାଗଜ ପତର କାମ ସରିଲାକୁ
 ଆସି ଯୋଗ ଦେଲି ବର୍ଷକରେ ମୁହଁ ।
 ନୂଆ କେତେ ଦିନ କଟିଲା ସୁଖରେ
 ନୂଆ ଦେଶ ଦେଖି ହୋଇଲି ତାଟକା,
 ଯାଉଥିଲେ ସିଏ ଦିନରେ ଚାକିରୀ
 ଘରେ ରହୁଥିଲି ମୁହଁ ତେଣୁ ଏକା ।
 ଓଡ଼ିଶାର କଥା ପଢୁଥିଲା ମନେ
 ପଢିଲେ ପଢିଲେ ସଞ୍ଜ ଓ ସକାଳ,
 ଧୀରେ ଧୀରେ ପୁଣି ଭୁଲି ହୋଇଗଲା
 ନାହିଁ ମିଳିବାରୁ ମୋତେ ଚିକେ ବେଳ ।
 ରକ୍ଷାବଢ଼ା ଠାରୁ ଲୁଗା ସଫାଯାଏ
 କରୁଥିଲି ସଦା ସବୁ ମୋ ହାତରେ,
 ଇଏଦି ଏମିତି କରନ୍ତି ସାହାଯ୍ୟ
 ବେଶି କାମଥିଲେ ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ ।
 ତୁ' ତ ଜାଣିଛୁ ହୋଇଗଲି ମାଆ
 ଏକ ପରେ ଏକ ଦୁଇଟି କନ୍ୟାର,
 ତାଙ୍କ କଥା ବୁଝି ସାରିଲା ବେଳକୁ
 ନଥାଏ ଦେହରେ ଜୀବନ ମୋହର ।
 ପଢ଼ିଥିଲି ଯାହା ଗଲା ସେ ଚୁଲିକି
 ଚିନ୍ତିବାଗା ଥିଲା ବୃଥା ମୋ ଯୋଗ୍ୟତା,
 ତଥାପି କେବେ ବି ମୁହଁ ଖୋଲି ନାହିଁ,
 କିଏ ବୁଝିଥାନ୍ତା ମୋ ମନର କଥା ?
 କଲି ଅନୁଭବ ଭିତରେ ତାଙ୍କର
 ଜନମିଛି ଗ୍ଲାମି କେଉଁ ବା କାରଣୁ,

ଜାଣିବା କଠିନ ହୋଇଲା ମୋ ପକ୍ଷେ
 ଘଟଣା ବିଷମ ହେଲା ଦିନ ଦିନୁ ।
 ହଠାତ ଏମିତି ସଞ୍ଜବେଳେ ଦିନେ
 ଆଣିଲେ କାଗଜ ନିକଟକୁ ମୋର,
 କଅଁଳେଇ କରି କହିଲେ କାଗଜେ
 କରିଦେବା ପାଇଁ ମୋହର ସ୍ଵାକ୍ଷର ।
 ପଢିଲେ ପଢିଲେ ନପାରିଲି ବୁଝି
 କରୁଛନ୍ତି ଅବା ଟାପରା ମୋ ସାଥେ,
 ଏମିତି ସତରେ ଛାଡ଼ପତ୍ର ପାଇଁ
 କରିବାକୁ ହେବ ଦସ୍ତଖତ ମୋତେ ?
 ଲାଗିଲା ଯେମିତି ଦୁଇ ପାଦ ତଳୁ
 ଦବି ଯାଉଅଛି ବସୁଧା ତଳକୁ,
 ଦେଖୁଥିଲି ଯାହା ସିନେମା ଚିତ୍ରିରେ
 ଘଟୁଅଛି ତାହା ମୋହରି ଭାଗ୍ୟକୁ ।
 ପାଟିହେଲା ଖନି ହୋଇଗଲି ତୁନି
 ପଶିଗଲି ଘରେ କବାଟ ଲଗାଇ,
 ନ ଆସିଲା ନିଦ ତକିଆ ଉପରେ
 ଝର ଝର ହୋଇ ଲୁହ ଗଲା ବୋହି ।
 ଜଣ ଜଣ କରି ଘର ଲୋକମାନେ
 ଆସୁଥିଲେ ମନେ ଭସା ମେଘପରି,
 ରାତି ଗଲା ପାହି କାନ୍ଦି ଏକୁଟିଆ
 ହାନ କପାଳକୁ ନିନ୍ଦା କରି କରି ।
 ବଡ଼ି ସକାଳକୁ ପଡ଼ିଥିଲି ଶୋଇ
 ଉଠିଲି ବିଳମ୍ବେ ସିଏ ଗଲା ପରେ,
 ପିଲା ଦୁଇଟିକୁ ଖୁଆଇ ପିଆଇ
 ଛାଡ଼ି ଯାଇଛନ୍ତି ପଡୋଶୀଙ୍କ ଘରେ ।
 ଆଇନା ଆଗରେ ଛିଡ଼ା ହୋଇଲାରୁ
 ନ ପାରିଲି ଚିହ୍ନି ନିଜ ମୁହଁ ମୋର,

ଫୁଲା ଫୁଲା ଆଖି ଅସଜଡ଼ା କେଶ
 ଲେସି ଯାଇଥାଏ ମଥାରେ ସିନ୍ଦୂର ।
 ଭାବିଲି ମନରେ ପଚାରିବି ଥରେ
 କେଉଁ ଦୋଷ ଯୋଗୁଁ ମୋର ଏ ବିପତ୍ତି,
 ମନର କୋହକୁ ମନେ ମନେ ଚାପି
 କରିଲି ଅପେକ୍ଷା ଦମ୍ଭକରି ଛାଡ଼ି ।
 ମନେ କଲି ସ୍ଥିର ତାଙ୍କ ଖୁସି ପାଇଁ
 କରିବି ସ୍ଵାକ୍ଷର, କହୁଛନ୍ତି ଯାହା,
 ନିଜ ଆତ୍ମ ମୁହିଁ କରିବି ସମସ୍ତ
 ଏହା ଦେଖୁ ଯଦି ଥରେ ହୁଏ ଦୟା ।
 ହୋଇଲାରୁ ସଞ୍ଜ ପଚାରିଲି ତାଙ୍କୁ
 “କହୁଥିଲ କାଲି ଦସ୍ତଖତ ପାଇଁ,
 କରିଛି ମନସ୍ତ କରିବି ସ୍ଵାକ୍ଷର
 ଯାହା ଚାହଁ ତୁମେ ଦିଅ ତିଳେ ନାହିଁ ।
 ଦୟାକରି ହେଲେ କହିବକି ମୋତେ
 କେଉଁ ଅପରାଧେ ମୋର ଏଇ ଦଶା ?
 ନ ପାରଇ ବୁଝି ଗ୍ଳାନି ତୁମ ମନେ
 କାହିଁକି ଆସିଲା ଏମିତି ସହସା ?”
 ସେଉଠୁ କହିଲେ “ଆମ ଘରସାଥେ
 ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ନୁହେଁ ତୁମ ପରିବାର,
 ତୁମ ଚିନ୍ତାଧାରା ଭିନ୍ନ ଧରଣର
 କଠିନ ମିଳିବା ତା ସାଥେ ମୋହର ।”
 ତାପରେ କହିଲେ “ସବୁବେଳେ ଖାଲି
 ବସିଥାନ୍ତୁ ତୁମେ ନ କରି ଚାକିରା”,
 ନ ଭାବିଲେ କିନ୍ତୁ ପିଲା ଦୁଇଟାଙ୍କୁ
 କେଉଁଠାରେ ଛାଡ଼ି ଯାଆନ୍ତି କିପରି ?
 କରିଲି ସ୍ଵାକ୍ଷର ଥରୁଥିଲା ହାତ
 ଝରୁଥିଲା ଲୁହ ହୋଇ ଝର ଝର,

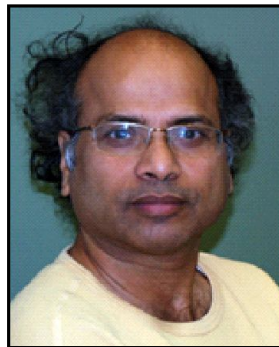
କେଇ ଚୋପା ଲୁହ ପଡ଼ି କାଗଜରେ
 ଲିଖିଯାଇଥିଲା କେତୋଟି ଅକ୍ଷର ।
 ଅଗ୍ନି ଦେବତାଙ୍କୁ ସାକ୍ଷୀ ରଖୁଦିନେ
 ସମାଜ ଆଗରେ ହୋଇଥିଲି ବାହା,
 ଏକାକିନୀ ଏଠି ଅଜଣା ଦେଶରେ
 ହୋଇଯିବି କାଳେ ମୁହିଁ ଅସହାୟା ।
 ସେଇ କଥା ଭାବି କରିଲି ସ୍ଵାକ୍ଷର
 ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଓଲଟା ହେଲା ଫଳ ତାର,
 ତହିଁ ପରଦିନ ସଫା ସଫା ମୋତେ
 କହିଦେଲେ ଛାଡ଼ି ଯିବା ପାଇଁ ଘର ।
 ହେଲା ବଜ୍ରପାତ ମଥା ପରେ ଆସି
 କୁଆଡ଼େ ଯିବି ମୁଁ ଲାଗିଲା ଅସ୍ଥିର,
 କିପରି ଛାଡ଼ନ୍ତି ପିଲା ଦୁଇ ମୋର
 କେଉଁ ଉପାୟରେ କରନ୍ତି ମୁଁ ପର ।
 ଭାବି ପାରିଲିନି ସ୍ଵପ୍ନ ଅବା ସତ୍ୟ
 ଘରୁଥିଲା ଯାହା ମୋହରି ଭାଗ୍ୟରେ,
 ଏଇମିତି ପୁଣି କଟିଲା ସପ୍ତାହେ
 ବିଳମ୍ବ ଘଟିଲା ଘର ଛାଡ଼ିବାରେ ।
 ପୁଣି ଥରେ ଦିନେ ପଚାରିଲେ ମୋତେ
 “ଖୋଜିଛ କି ନାହିଁ ରହିବାର ଘର” ?
 ବଲ ବଲ କରି ତାଙ୍କ ମୁହିଁ ଆଡ଼େ
 ଠିଆ ହୋଇଥିଲି ପକାଇ ନଜର ।
 ମୋର ନିରବତା କ୍ରମଶଃ ହୋଇଲା
 ତାଙ୍କ ପକ୍ଷେ ସହ୍ୟ କରିବା କଠିନ,
 ଦୁମ ଦୁମ ହୋଇ ଭିତରକୁ ଯାଇ
 କଲେ ଏକକ୍ରମେ ମୋର ଲୁଗାମାନ ।

ବହୁ ପରକାରେ ନାରୀ ନିର୍ଯ୍ୟାତନା
 ଏବେ ବି ରହିଛି ସଭ୍ୟ ସମାଜରେ ।
 ପଚାରି ପଚାରି କେତେ ଦିନ ଧରି
 ଶୁଣିଥିଲି ମୁହିଁ ସଭିଙ୍କ କାହାଣୀ,
 ସ୍ଵାଧୀନ ଭାବରେ ବଞ୍ଚିବା ପ୍ରେରଣା
 ଯୋଗାଇଲା ମୋତେ ସେ ସବୁ ଜୀବନୀ ।
 ହୋଇ ଉଜାଗର ଝରାଇଛି ଲୁହ
 ଜାଗିଅଛି ଘୃଣା ସେହି ପୁରୁଷରେ,
 ସମାଜ ଆଗରେ ଧାର୍ମିକ ଭାବରେ
 ଯିଏ କରେ ପୂଜା ଦିବସ ନିଶିରେ ।
 ଅଥଚ ହୃଦୟ ନୀଚ କଳୁଷିତ
 ବ୍ୟବହାର ଯା'ର ଅସୁର ସମାନ,
 ଧୂଳି ସେ ଜୀବନ ଧୂଳି ସେ ମଣିଷ
 ନ ଦିଅଇ ଯିଏ ନାରୀକୁ ସମ୍ମାନ ।
 ଲୋକ ଦେଖାଣିଆ ନାରୀମିଷ ସିଏ
 ମନେ ଭରପୁର ଶତ ହିଂସ୍ର ଭାବ,
 ରାଗ ଅହଙ୍କାର ଯା'ର ଅଳଙ୍କାର
 ଦୟାକ୍ଷମା କ'ଣ ତା ଠାରୁ ସମ୍ଭବ ?
 କେବେ କେବେ ପୁଣି ବୁଝାଇ ନିଜକୁ
 କିଛିକ୍ଷଣ ପାଇଁ ପାଇଛି ଶାନ୍ତନା,
 ସୀତା ଦ୍ରୁପଦୀ ପୁରୁଷ ହାତରେ
 ପାଇଛନ୍ତି କେତେ ଦୁଃଖ ଓ ଯାତନା ।
 ନ ରହିଲେ କେହି ବିଦେଶରେ ମୋର
 ପହଞ୍ଚିଲି ଶେଷେ ଆଶ୍ରୟ ସ୍ଥଳୀରେ,
 ବୋଉ ଲୋ ! ସ୍ଵପ୍ନରେ ଭାବିନି ଭୋଗିବି
 ଏପରି ଯାତନା ମୋର ଜୀବନରେ ।
 ଭାବି ପାରୁଛୁତ ? ରାୟ ଚଉଧୁରୀ
 ଜ୍ୟେଷ୍ଠ କନ୍ୟା ଆଜି ଦଳିତା ପତିତା,
 କଟାଉଛି କାଳ ଅନ୍ୟ ନାରୀ ସାଥେ
 ଯେଉଁମାନେ ନିର୍ଯ୍ୟାତିତା ନିଷ୍ଠିତା ।

କେତେ ଆଦରରେ କରିଥିଲୁ ବଡ଼
 ଘରକାମ ହାତେ ଦେଇନୁ କରାଇ,
 ସେଇ ଝିଅ ଆଜି ଭିଖାରୁଣୀ ସାଜି
 କାରୁଛି ଜୀବନ ପର ଆଶ୍ରା ନେଇ ।
 ଶୁଣିଲେ ଯେମିତି ସାଙ୍ଗ ସାଥୀ ମୋର
 ଆସିଥିଲେ ମୋତେ କରିବାକୁ ଦେଖା,
 ଦୟା ପରବଶେ ଅନ୍ତରୁ କେତେକ
 ଜାଳିଥିଲେ ସମବେଦନାର ଶିଖା ।
 ଉପଦେଶ କେହି ଜଣ ଦେଇଥିଲେ
 ଫେରିଯିବା ପାଇଁ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଭୁଇଁକୁ,
 ସେଥିରେ ଅରାଜି ହୋଇଥିଲି ମୁହିଁ
 ଭାବିଚିନ୍ତି କେତେ ବୁଝାଇ ନିଜକୁ ।
 ତୁହିତ ଜାଣିଛୁ ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କର
 ମତିଗତି ପୁଣି କେମିତି ପ୍ରକୃତି,
 “ବର କିଆଁ ତୋତେ ଛାଡ଼ିଦେଲା କିଲୋ ?”
 ପଚାରିବେ ମୋତେ ଆସି ଦିନରାତି ।
 ସେ କରୁ ମନ୍ତବ୍ୟ କଟା ଘାଆ ସାଥେ
 ତୁନ ଦେଲା ଭଳି ଲାଗିବ ଲୋ ମତେ,
 କେହି ଜଣେ ହେଲେ ନାରୀର ହୃଦୟ
 ବୁଝିପାରିବେନି ବୁଝାଇଲେ ଯେତେ ।
 ସେଥିପାଇଁ ମୁହିଁ କରିଅଛି ସ୍ଥିର
 ରହିବି ଏଠାରେ ଗଢ଼ିବି ସଂସାର,
 ତାଙ୍କ ଆଖି ଆଗେ ଦେଖାଇବି ମୁହିଁ
 ନୁହେଁ ଅନ୍ୟ ପରି ନାରୀ ମୁହିଁ ଛାର ।
 ଶୁଣିଲି କୁଆଡ଼େ କଉଶଳେ ମୋର
 ପ୍ରାପ୍ୟତକ ନେଇଛନ୍ତି ସିଏ ଲେଖୁ,
 ବିଶ୍ଵାସ ଭାଷ୍ଟରେ ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି ବିଷ
 ମୋହର ସରଳ ମନ ପ୍ରାଣ ଦେଖୁ ।
 କହୁଥିଲେ କେହି ଜଣ ପରେ ଜଣେ
 ଦୁଇ ଜଣ ମୋର ଝିଅ ହେଲେ ବୋଲି,

ଦରକାର ଥିଲା ପୁଅ ପିଲା ଏକ
 ତାଙ୍କ ମାଆଙ୍କର ଯାହା ମୁଁ ଶୁଣିଲି ।
 ସେଥିପାଇଁ ସିଏ ମୋତେ ଛାଡ଼ିଦେଇ
 ପୁଣି ବାହା ହେଲେ ହୋଇପାରେ ପୁଅ,
 ସେହି ଆଶାନେଇ ଦେଲେ ଛାଡ଼ପତ୍ର
 ପୁଅ ପରା ଘର କରିବ ଆଲୁଅ !
 ଆଧୁନିକ ଯୁଗେ ଏ ଅନ୍ଧ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ
 ଉଚ୍ଚ ଶିକ୍ଷିତଙ୍କ ମନ ଭରିଅଛି,
 ଯେତେ ପଢ଼ିଲେ ବି ସଂକୀର୍ଣ୍ଣତା ଭାବ
 ଝିଅ ପୁଅ ଭେଦ ଏବେବି ରହିଛି ।
 କହିଥିଲେ ସାଙ୍ଗ ସରକାର ଠାରେ
 ଅଭିଯୋଗ ପତ୍ର ଦାଖଲ, ନିମିତ୍ତ,
 ଏ କାନରେ ଶୁଣି ସେ କାନରେ ଛାଡ଼ି
 ଦେଇଥିଲି ମୁହିଁ ସେ କଥା ସମସ୍ତ ।
 କରିଥିଲି ଆଶା ପୁଣି ଯଦି କେବେ
 ଅନ୍ତର ଭିତରେ ଆସେ ଦୟା ଭାବ,
 ଭୁଲିଯିବେ କାଲେ, ଭଙ୍ଗା ନୀତ ପୁଣି
 ଗଢ଼ି ଉଠିବାରେ ହୋଇବ ସମ୍ଭବ ।
 ସେହି ଆଶାଟିକ ହେଲା ଧୂଳିସାତ
 ଯେଦିନ ଜାଣିଲି ମାଟ୍ରିମନିଆଲ,
 ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି ସିଏ ପୁଣି ବିଭାପାଇଁ
 ଦେଖୁଦେଇ ଦେହୁଁ ବହିଗଲା ଝାଳ ।
 ସେହିଦିନ ଠାରୁ କରୁଛି ନିଜକୁ
 ତିଆରି ଏଦେଶେ ବଞ୍ଚି ରହିବାକୁ,
 ଜିତିବି ନିଶ୍ଚିତ ହୋଇବି ସମ୍ପମ
 ନିଜ ଭାଗ୍ୟ ତୋରି ନିଜେ ବାନ୍ଧିବାକୁ ।

ବୋଉ ଲୋ ମୋହର ଦୋଷ ନ ଧରିବୁ
 ନ ଲେଖୁବି କହି ଲେଖୁଗଲି ଏତେ,
 କିପରି ରଖନ୍ତି ଏ ହୃଦୟ ଫଟା
 ଯାତନା ଯେତକ ଘଟିଛି ମୋ ସାଥେ ।
 ପଳ ପଳ ହୋଇ ଜଳିଅଛି ନିଜେ
 କେବଳ କରିନି ଆତ୍ମହତ୍ୟା ମୁହିଁ,
 ତାକୁ ବାଦ ଦେଇ ଆଉ ସବୁ କିଛି
 ମୁଣ୍ଡପାତି ଦେଇ ଯାଉଅଛି ସହି ।
 କରୁଅଛି ଆଶା କୁଣ୍ଡଳେ ରହିଛି
 ସାନ ଭଉଣୀଟି ଅତି ଆପଣାର,
 ବୋଉଲୋ କହୁଛି ନେହୁରା ହୋଇ ମୁଁ
 ଦେଖୁଶୁଣି ସବୁ ବାଛିବୁ ତା' ବର ।
 କଷଣ ମୋ ପରି ପାରିବନି ନେଇ
 ଅତି ସୁକୁମାରୀ ଅଲିଅଳି ଝିଅ,
 କରୁଛି ବିନତି ସାନ ଭଉଣୀକୁ
 ଠାକୁରେ ଯେମିତି ଯାତନା ନ ଦିଅ ।
 ଭାବି ମୁଁ ପାରୁନି ବାପାଙ୍କୁ ଖବର
 ଦେବୁକି ନଦେବୁ ? କେମିତି ବା ଦେବୁ ?
 ଜାଣିଅଛୁ ସିଏ କିପରି ଦୁର୍ବଳ
 ତୋର ବୁଦ୍ଧିମତେ ଯାହା ତୁ କରିବୁ ।
 ରହୁଛି ଲୋ ବୋଉ ଆଉ କି ଲେଖୁବି ?
 ଲୁହ ପୋଛି ପୋଛି ଦିନ ଯାଉ ନାହିଁ,
 ବଡ଼ ଝିଅ ତୋର କେତେ ଆଶା ନେଇ
 ବାହା ଦେଇଥିଲୁ ଆମେରିକା କ୍ୱାଲ୍ ।



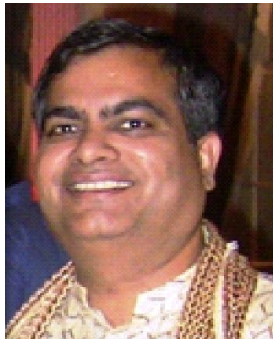
131 Goulding Ave,
 Toronto, ON M2M 1L5

ଇଶ୍ଵର ଭକ୍ତକର

ଶିଖଣ୍ଡ ଶତପଥୀ

୨

କ୍ଷିରେ ବସାଇ (ନିତି) ନିୟମରେ ବାନ୍ଧି	ଆରତି ଦେଖାଇ କର୍ପୂର ଶୁଙ୍ଘାଇ	ହୁଣ୍ଡିତଳ କଲେ କଣା କଲେଣି ତୁମକୁ ବଣା
ତମ ବାଣୀ-ବୋଲି କୁକୁଡ଼ା ଅଣ୍ଟାକୁ	ଉଦ୍‌ଭଟ ମାମୁଲି ଶାଳଗ୍ରାମ ଭାଲି	ଅଧ୍ୟାୟ କଲେଣି ଠୁଳ ରୋଷଘର ପରିମଳ
ଉଜନରେ ମଜ୍ଜି ନିଷ୍ଠର୍ମ ହେଲେଣି	ସ୍ଵର୍ଗ ବରଜି କର୍ମେ-ଠ ହୋଇଣ	ନିଷ୍ଠାମ ହେବାରେ କହି ଲାହିରେ ତଜଳ ବାହି
ମୁଦ୍ରିତ ନୟନେ ମଣିଷ ତମକୁ	ପୁଲକ ବଦନେ ତରିବ କାହିଁକି	ବିରାଡ଼ି ସ୍ଵଭାବ ଧର ତମେ ମଣିଷକୁ ଡର ।।
ଜନମ-ଧରମ କୁପ ମଣ୍ଡୁକର	ପାବନ ପରମ ସ୍ଵଭାବ ସଂକୀର୍ଣ୍ଣ	ଆକ୍ଷିରେ ପୁରୁଲି ବାନ୍ଧେ ମାଙ୍କଡ଼ ବସାଏ କାନ୍ଧେ
ହସ୍ତୀ-କାନ୍ୟା-ଜ୍ଞାନୀ ବେଶ ଭୃଷଣର	ଚାରିବନ୍ଧୁ ପରି ସରଞ୍ଜାମ ଧରି	ଅଜ୍ଞାନ ତିମିର ବନ୍ଧ ଦର୍ପଣ ଆଗରେ ଅନ୍ଧ
ପୋଥି ଖୋଲି ଦଣ୍ଡେ ଅଧର୍ମ ଅଫିମ	ପ୍ରଖର ପ୍ରଚଣ୍ଡେ ନିଶାଗ୍ରସ୍ତ ସବୁ,	ଦେବତା ବିଧାନ କହି ଧରାରେ ନରକ ଏହି
ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ବିଭିଷିକା ମଣିଷ ତମକୁ	ଧ୍ଵଂସର ତାଣ୍ଡବ ତରିବ କାହିଁକି	ଧର୍ମନାମେ ଅତ୍ୟାଚାର ତମେ ମଣିଷକୁ ଡର ।।



6466 Galway Dr,
Clarksville, MD 21029

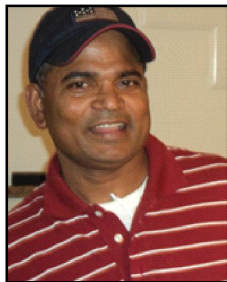
ମାଣବସା ଶେଷ ଗୁରୁବାର

ରଘୁନାଥ ଦାସ

ଆ

ଜି ମାଣବସା ଶେଷ ଗୁରୁବାର
 ମନେ ପଡ଼େ ମଣ୍ଡାପିଠା
 ଧାନକେରା, ଆଉ ଗେଣ୍ଡୁଫୁଲ
 ମା ମୋର କରୁଥିଲେ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀପୂଜା
 ବେଳେବେଳେ ପଢୁଥିଲି ମୁଁ କଥା,
 ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ, ବଳଭଦ୍ର ଦୁରଦଶା
 ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀଙ୍କ ଶାପରେ ଜଗତର ନାଥ,
 ହୋଇଥିଲେ ପଥଭ୍ରାନ୍ତ ଭୋକିଲା
 ବୁଲିବୁଲି ଭାଇସାଙ୍ଗେ ନିରାଶା
 ଆଜି ମାଣବସା ଶେଷ ଗୁରୁବାର,
 ମନେପଡ଼େ ମଣ୍ଡାପିଠା
 ଧାନକେରା ଆଉ ଗେଣ୍ଡୁଫୁଲ
 ବିଶ୍ୱାସୀଙ୍କୁ ସନ୍ଦେଶ,
 ଆଜିଭାରି ମନଲୋଭା,
 ମିଳିଯିବାର ହେବାକୁ ମୋ ମନ ।
 ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀଙ୍କୁ କରିବି ପୂଜା
 ଦେଇ ତନ, ମନ
 ନୈବେଦ୍ୟ ଦେବି ଧୂପ, ଦୀପ
 ସଭ୍ୟତାର ଘଡ଼ି ସନ୍ଧି ବେଳା
 ମା ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀଙ୍କୁ ମାଗିବା କ'ଣ
 ଜହାର, ସୁନା, ରୂପା, ହୀରା
 ଯାହା ମାଗିଥିଲେ ଧୂବ
 ପ୍ରହଲ୍ଲାଦ ଆଉ ସନ୍ତୁଜନ

ମିଳିଯିବାର ହେବାକୁ
 ମନ ମୋ ବ୍ୟାକୁଳ
 ମାଗିବାକୁ କିଛି
 ଦିଅ ମାଗୋ ଆଜି
 ସହଜ ଶକତି ।
 ଲୋଡ଼ା ନାହିଁ ମୋର
 ହୀରା, ଲୀଳା, ମୋତି
 ଦିଅ ମୋତେ ଆଜି
 ଭାବନା, ଭକତି
 ଜତ ଆଉ
 କାହିଁ ମୋର ଆଶା
 ଦିଅ ମୋତେ ଆଗୋ
 ସତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରେମର ଭରସା
 ଧନବୋଲି ମୋତେ
 ଦେଇନାହିଁ କିଛି
 ଭାବ ଲେଖିଗଲେ
 ପୁରଜିବ ଗୋଧୁ
 ଅଜବ ଖବର ଭାବର
 ପୂଜାରି ହେବାକୁ
 ଆଜି ମୋ ବ୍ରତ
 ତୁମକୁ ଗୁହାରୀ
 ଆଜି ମାଣବସା ଶେଷ ଗୁରୁବାର
 ମନେପଡ଼େ ମଣ୍ଡାପିଠା
 ଧାନକେରା ଆଉ ଗେଣ୍ଡୁଫୁଲ ।



8719 Copperbrook
 Drive, Houston,
 TX 77095

ପୋଡ଼ ପିଠା

ମଧୁସୂତା ନାୟକ

ଦରକାରୀ ସାମଗ୍ରୀ :

ବିରି	- ୫୦୦ ଗ୍ରାମ୍
ଚାଉଳ	- ୫୦୦ ଗ୍ରାମ୍
ନଡ଼ିଆ	- ୧ ଟା ଲୁଣ
- ୨ ଚାମଚ ଅଦା	- ୨
ଇଞ୍ଚ ଲମ୍ବା ଘିଅ	- ୨
ଚାମଚ ଗୁଡ଼	- ସ୍ୱା
ଦନୁସାରେ	



ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ :

ପ୍ରଥମେ ବିରିତାଳି ଏବଂ ଚାଉଳ ଛଅଘଣ୍ଟା ପାଣିରେ ଭେଜେଇ ଦିଅନ୍ତୁ । ତା'ପରେ ତାଳି ଏବଂ ଚାଉଳଧୋଇ ଚିକ୍କଣ କରି ବାଟି ଦିଅନ୍ତୁ । ସେଥିରେ ଲୁଣ ମିଶାଇ ୨-୩ ଘଣ୍ଟା ଫରମେଣ୍ଟ ପାଇଁ ରଖିଦିଅନ୍ତୁ । ନଡ଼ିଆକୁ କୋରି ଦିଅନ୍ତୁ, ଅଦା କାଟି ରଖନ୍ତୁ । ପିଠଉ ବଟାରେ ଅଦା, ନଡ଼ିଆ ଗୁଡ଼ ଏବଂ କଳାମରିଚ ଗୁଣ୍ଡ ମିଶାଇ ଦିଅନ୍ତୁ । ଓଭନକୁ ଆଗରୁ ଗରମ କରି ରଖନ୍ତୁ । ଗୋଟିଏ ବେକିଙ୍ଗ୍ ଟ୍ରେରେ ଘିଅ ଲଗେଇ ସେଥିରେ ପିଠଉ ତଳନ୍ତୁ । ଓଭନକୁ 450° F ରେ ସେଟ୍ କରି ପିଠଉକୁ ପ୍ରାୟ ୩୦ ମିନିଟ୍ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବେକ୍ କରନ୍ତୁ । ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ ଗୁଥୁପିକ୍ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଚେକ୍ କରନ୍ତୁ । ଯେତେବେଳେ ପିଠାର ଉପର ଭାଗ Brown colour ହୋଇଯିବ, ତାକୁ ଓଭନରୁ ବାହାର କରି ଥଣ୍ଡା କରି ଦିଅନ୍ତୁ । ତାପରେ ତାକୁ ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ ପିସ୍ କରି ନଡ଼ିଆ ଚଟଣୀ ସହିତ ପରଶନ୍ତୁ ।

ନଡ଼ିଆ ବରା ତରକାରୀ

ବରା ପାଇଁ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ସାମଗ୍ରୀ :

୧. କୋରା ନଡ଼ିଆ	- 1 cup
୨. ସିଝା ଆଳୁ	- ½ cup
୩. ଚାଉଳ ଚୁନା	- ½ cup
୪. ଜିରା	- 1 spoon
୫. କଟା ଧନିଆପତ୍ର	- 2 spoon
୬. ଲୁଣ - ସ୍ୱାଦନୁସାରେ	
୭. ତେଲ - ଛାଣିବା ପାଇଁ	

ତରକାରୀ (ଗ୍ରେଭି) ପାଇଁ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ସାମଗ୍ରୀ :

୧. ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ କଟା ହୋଇଥିବା ପିଆଜ	- 1 cup
୨. ରସୁଣ ଓ ଅଦା ବଟା	- 2 spoons
୩. ଲଙ୍କା ପାଉଡ଼ର	- 1 spoon
୪. ହଳଦୀ ପାଉଡ଼ର	- 1 spoon
୫. ଜିରା ପାଉଡ଼ର	- 1 spoon
୬. ଧନିଆ ପାଉଡ଼ର	- 1 spoon
୭. କଟା ଟମାଟୋ	- 1 cup
୮. କଟା ସିଜାଆଳୁ	- 1 cup
୯. କଟା ଧନିଆପତ୍ର	- 2-4 spoons
୧୦. ଗୋଟା ଗରମ ମସଲା	- 1 spoon

ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତି ପ୍ରଣାଳୀ :

ପ୍ରଥମେ କୋରା ନଡ଼ିଆକୁ ଟିକେ ପାଣି ଦେଇ ବାଟିଦେବେ । ସେଥିରେ ସିଝା ଆଳୁ, ଚାଉଳ ଚୁନା, ଜିରା, ଲୁଣ ଓ ଧନିଆପତ୍ର ମିଶାଇ ଚକଟି ଦେବେ । ତାପରେ ହାତରେ ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ ବରାକରି ତେଲରେ ଛାଣିଦେବେ ।

ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ କଡେଇ ଚୁଲୀ ON କରି ବସାନ୍ତୁ । ସେଥିରେ ତେଲ ପକାନ୍ତୁ । ତେଲ ଗରମ ହେଲେ ସେଥିରେ ଗୋଟା ଗରମ ମସଲା, ଜିରା ପକାନ୍ତୁ, ଜିରା ଫୁଟିଲା ପରେ ସେଥିରେ କଟା ପିଆଜ ପକାଇ କିଛି ସମୟ fry କରନ୍ତୁ । ତାପରେ ଅଦା ରସୁଣ ବଟା ଏବଂ ଶୁଖିଲା ମସଲା ପାଉଡ଼ର ସବୁ ପକାନ୍ତୁ, ତାପରେ ଟମାଟୋ ପକାଇ କିଛି ସମୟ କଷନ୍ତୁ । ଯେତେବେଳେ ମସଲା ତେଲରୁ ଅଲଗା ହୋଇଯିବ ସେତେବେଳେ ସିଝାଆଳୁ ପକାଇ କିଛି ସମୟ ରାନ୍ଧନ୍ତୁ । ତାପରେ ସେଥିରେ ପାଣି ଦେଇ ଫୁଟିବା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରନ୍ତୁ । ପାଣି କିଛି ସମୟ ଫୁଟିଲାପରେ ସେଥିରେ ବରାଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଗୋଟେ ପରେ ଗୋଟେ ପକାନ୍ତୁ । ଶେଷରେ ଧନିଆପତ୍ର ପକାନ୍ତୁ । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ନଡ଼ିଆ ବରା ତରକାରୀ ଗରମ ଗରମ ଭାତ କିମ୍ବା ରୋଟି ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ପରଶନ୍ତୁ ।



OSA Welcomes New Members (since July 2013)

New Life Members

Abani & Rashmi Pattanayak, ON
Akshaya Pradhan & Mamata Pradhan, OH
Amar & Shibani Senapati, NJ
Amaresh Misra & Ritanjali Misra, NJ
Amiya & Ranjita Das, MD
Anand & Debasmita Mohanty, CO
Anil & Dipali Patnaik, OH
Arabinda Mishra & Mamata Mishra, TN
Ashish Tripathy & Carol Tripathy, IL
Ashok & Sukanti Rath, TX
Ashok Mishra & Saswati Mahapatra, MN
Ashok Samal & Biswajita(Jitu) Samal, NE
Asima & Sudhira Mahapatra, MA
Ayasakanta & Mamata Rout, VA
Bhabani & Mamata Buxi, CO
Bhawani Tripathy & Sanghamitra Tripathy, MI
Bibhash Banerjee & Sili Banerjee, MN
Bichitra & Kshyama Dhal, ON
Bijay & Anupama Mohanty, NJ
Bikram Nayak & Vishali Nayak, NC
Bimal & Meenati Rath, TX
Birendra & Saswati Dash, CO
Bishwanath Sahoo & Nivedita Bal, NJ
Braja & Janice Das, NV
Chandan & Dipti Samantaray, VA
Debakanta Mishra & Bipasha Deb, IL
Debashis Rath & Anuradha Rath, FL
Debasis Rath & Prathiba Nagaraju, IL
Deepak & Mamuni Swain, OH
Digvijoy Mohapatra & Tanaya Patnaik, NJ
Diptiman & Mitali Mishra, CO
Durga Kar & Shreemayee Kar, WI
Gopal & Susmita Dey, MN
Guru (Ranjan) Choudhury & Babita Choudhury, OH
Jitendra Pradhan & Priyambada Pradhan, ON
Jyoti & Eswar Manjari, OH
Jyotirajan Pradhan & Sangita Pradhan, MI
Pradyumna Dikhit & Seema Dikhit, CA
Prahallad Senapati & Susmita Sahu, NJ
Prakash Samal & Praggyan Mohanty, IL
Pranab & Namrata Das, TX
Pranteek Patnaik & Cathy Patnaik, AL
Pratyush (Prat) Panda, CA
Pravas Parida & Sanjukta Parida, OH
Priyabrata Tripathy & Aradhana Das, NJ
Purna Das & Anupama Das, IN
Rabindra & Anjali Behera, IA
Raj Pati & Arati Pati, WI
Rajashree Kanungo & Pabitra Dalai, IL
Ram & Pritam Dash, CO
Ramakrishna Mishra & Chinmayee Mishra, IL
Ranjan & Swarupa Mishra, NJ
Rashmi Samal & Smita Samal, NJ
Sadhu & Sunanda Behera, CO
Sahadev & Manjula Pradhan, CO
Sahana Misra & Christopher Custer, OR
Sampurna Srabani & , NC
Sanjay & Ritu Tripathy, NC
Sanjay Patro & Lekhani Samant Sinhar, PA
Sanjeeb & Sanghamitra Das, CO
Sanjeev Sahoo, MI
Sasmita Cramer & Ryan Cramer, IL
Satish & Gayatri Sahoo, MA
Satish Mohapatra & Seemantini Das, PA
Satyabrata Nayak & Sunita Rout, CA
Satyajeeta Mishra, MN
Seshagiri & Sujata Kintali, NJ
Sibo Pani & Gayatri Rath, VA
Sidhartha Misra & Amber Renee Misra, CA
Smaran & Mitali Das, ON
Somnath & Nisha Roy, OH
Sonali & Arun Badi, TX
Sribatsa Das & Chaitali Roy, NJ
SriLakshmi Angara & Ravi Angara, NJ

Kalyan Dey & Sarmistha Dash, IL
Kalyani & Late Ambika Mishra, CO
Kamakshya & Babita Mohanty, TX
Kishore Panda & Jema Panda, CA
krishna Satpathy & Gayatri Mahapatra, NJ
Lokanath Patel & Basanti Patel, IA
Madhav & Vasantha Kundala, CO
Manas & Prachee Behera, TX
Manas & Rita Behera, CO
Manas Patnaik & Sikha Patnaik, WI
Manoj & Mahasweta Panda, NJ
Manoj Mahapatra & Manisha Mahapatra, IL
Manoj Mohanty & Pragyan Sheela Mohanty, IL
Mukta Mohapatra, CA
Nageswar & Sanjukta Prusty, NJ
Navaketan Mohanty & Sucharita Mahapatra, AZ
Nick Rath, TX
Niraj Rath, TX
Parmeshwar & Sai Jyothi Meegada, NJ
Parthasarathi & Nisha Panigrahi, CO

New 5-Year Members

Bidyut & Sangeeta Mohanty, SC
Prabhu & Kabita Sahoo, MA
Subhabrata Mohapatra, OH



Subhashish Tripathy & Deepa Bhandari, NJ
Subhendu Gantayet & Nandita Gantayet, ON
Subhendu Misra & Ekta Misra, NY
Subrat & Kadambari Mishra, CO
Subrat Mahapatra & Toya Mahapatra, PA
Suchit Dash & Anjali Dash, CA
Sudhi Das & Lita Das, PA
Sudhir Mishra & Bimala Mishra, MN
Sujatha Nayak, IL
Sujit & Prathama Pattanaik, CO
Sunanda & Tanmay Panda, Ontario
Sunayan & Debasmita Mohanty, TX
Supriya Misra & Snehanjali Misra, MI
Suranjan Panigrahi & Debjaya Misra, IN
Surit & Rashmita Maharana, OH
Surya Senapati & Trupti Pradhan, WA
Sushil Kumar & Sweta Jena, MN
Suvendu & Mitrabinda Mishra, CO
Suvendu & Rashmi Samal, CO
Swapnakant Mohanty & Vijayashree
Pydikondala, MN
Tusar & Loveleen Swami, TX
Utkal Nayak & Debarchana Singh, OH

New Annual Members

Akshaya Panda, MN
Anand Maharana, OH
Debabrata Das, MD
Pramit Rath, OH
Rupesh Jain, CO
Swasti Mishra, OH



Odisha Development: A Non-Resident Odia-American Perspective

Amiya Nayak

As an immigrant Odia (from Odisha, India) in the USA, it is quite natural to think about giving back to Odisha. But how? What are the development ideas, strategies, resources, execution processes, milestones and measurables? Thinking, planning, organizing and executing an Odisha Development initiative is a challenging task for any individual, organization, internal/external partners, local stakeholders (such as Government of Odisha, Government of India) and other international organizations. Development means different things to different people, organizations and communities. Odisha Development can be a very complex and difficult proposition for a non-resident Odia (NRO) living overseas or in India. This article is a case study review based on personal, professional and organizational experiences and reflections, including OSA-driven Odisha Development.

Odisha Development Strategies

1. Development Concept (Idea through strategic planning and executing, what type of development?)
2. Development Management (resource management, sectoral/sector-specific, how to manage?)
3. Development via Social Entrepreneurships (social development, social venture)
4. Development via Business Entrepreneurships (Commercial, Business, Products, Services, Jobs)
5. Development via Private-Government-Individual-Organizational Partnerships (Policy and Projects, NRO-RO Collaborations)

Top-5 Development Models for NROs (overseas-based or India-based)

1. Virtual Development (Information and Communication Technology/ICT-based, internet, web, social network, eGroup, Symposia, Policy Papers, Think Tank, virtual exchange of ideas, virtual community development)
2. Social Entrepreneurship Development (USA 501c3 non-profit, NGO, Voluntary, CSR partnering, field-based, needs local partnering)
3. Micro Entrepreneurship Development (Microfinance, nanofinance, small credits, soft loans, micro-business and related tiny businesses. Barriers to entry in the Americas. However, micro-entrepreneurship is a big opportunity in Odisha, because of under-development. Socio-Economic development through agriculture, fishery, foods, and handicraft/silk fabrics/heritage products exports from Odisha)
4. Education Entrepreneurship Development (Schools, Colleges, Libraries, Institutes, Affiliation with Universities, Academic Exchanges, Student/Faculty Exchanges, Scholarships/Fellowships)

5. Business Entrepreneurship Development (cross-border company, industry, job creation, product export/import, technology business entrepreneurship for product development/services, business venture)

Role of the Odisha Society of the Americas (OSA)

OSA, a socio-cultural, voluntary, non-profit, charity and developmental organization based within North America (USA and Canada) can be an organizational facilitator of some of the above development models in cooperation with its member volunteers, North American organizations and Odisha based stakeholders such the GoO and other institutions and organizations. International Development organizations have funded, researched and found out that social-cultural exchanges can contribute to regional socio-economic development. And thus, OSA can facilitate North America-Odisha exchanges through OSA organizational platforms such as the annual convention (North America) and co-organizing mini-symposia in Odisha. In recent years, OSA has developed new programs such as Odisha Development, Higher Education, Business Symposium (Invest Odisha), Social Entrepreneurship, Youth Entrepreneurship and cultural exchanges such as Odissi Dance, Heritage Symposia, Odisha Tourism and other items. However, commitment, continuity, follow-ups, funding and volunteer time are challenges for the OSA type of socio-cultural and voluntary organization.

NRO-driven Development Challenges and Opportunities for Odisha

The challenges are creating development culture, education, information, networks, systems, role models, mentoring, investments, teaming, volunteering, and NRO-RO partnerships, as well as accepting failures and converting concepts/ideas into development initiatives. Odisha Development requires a congruence among people, ideas, organizations and investments, volunteering, services and a long-term measurable plan. Through challenges and specific visions and missions, NROs can contribute to Odisha Development opportunities in specific expertise-based targeted sectors.

Amiya Nayak
St. Louis, MO,
USA

Amiya Nayak is a life member patron of OSA, a proud Odia American and has lived in America for over 22 years. Amiya was a committee member (OSA-Odisha Development) during 2011-2013 and has offered voluntary support for OSA-OD during 2013-2015 and beyond. Amiya has been involved in Odisha Development through personal and organizational channels.

State of OSA Regional Drama Festival in 2014: A Report

Sandip K. Dasverma

Epilogue:

During Dallas convention of 2011, Regional Drama Festival (RDF) coordination committee Chair Brajendra Panda prepared and presented a Power Point presentation on RDF at the seminar. It was a really good one. So to our amazement and elation, it was very very well received. Chief Guest for the Dallas Convention, Satyananda Mishra, the then Chief Information Commissioner of India, came up to me and told me and I paraphrase: We are unable to present Odia drama in Metropolitan cities of India, how come you have presented more than 30 Odia dramas all over America? Soon this number will cross sixty.

Saroj Behera, a past President of OSA and a good friend - came up to me told me: Sandip babu what you (RDF coordinators and OSA) have done an excellent job. Please keep it up. I will sincerely help to make it happen in California. Though he now lives in Phoenix, AZ, his support was very vital for RDF, at that time, for its expansion to California. He personally next morning, in my presence told Kuku Das (then OSA Vice President) in my presence of his support. In 2013 the 1st California RDF happened, where Kuku played a significant part.

History:

Genesis of RDF: In July 2007, after Detroit convention, we stayed at Dr. SriGopal Mohanty's home on our way to Nigra Falls. The RDF idea was then in my mind and I discussed it with him. He liked the idea. Subsequently, OSA's junior most office came my way - completely unexpectedly. I had a chance to give shape to my dream project. SriGopal babu after Toronto convention, agreed to coordinate it. The rest as they say, is history.

OSA RDF completed 5 years in 2013. RDF was introduced in 2008 when the author was elected to OSA National Executive, 2007-2009. The first RDF was staged in the year 2009 in Denton, TX on April 4th, 2009 by DFW Orissa Society, a part of OSA South West Chapter. It was titled Southern Regional Drama Festival. Initially as per an OSA national executive resolution, in 2008, SriGopal Mohanty was appointed as the sole Coordinator to organize RDF in different regions of North America.

(Dr. Mohanty's Photo: file:///C:/Users/dasverma/Downloads/DSC_3322%20(1).JPG)

In 2010 at Dr. Mohanty's initiative, a three member Coordination Committee was formed consisting of: Sri Gopal Mohanty, me (Sandip K. Dasverma) and Dr. Brajendra Panda, with Brjendra Panda as Chair. This was confirmed by a resolution of OSA General Body Meeting at Dallas Convention, 2011. At the end of 2011, Sri Gopal Mohanty withdrew from the Committee but remains an active advisor/promoter of RDF. In 2012, Brajendra Panda also retired from the team. In Seattle convention of 2012, Priyadarshi Dash and Priyaranjan Mohapatra were nominated to the drama Coordination Committee with myself (Sandip Dasverma), as Chair.

Over years, four flexible regions have been identified: Eastern, Northern/ North Eastern, Central/ Northern (Chicago) and South Western. There have always been attempts to cover other areas. In 2013 it expanded to Western USA, Pacific South Western RDF was held at Woodside, CA.

Concept:

The original concept of Regional Drama Festival was:

1. To revive the community contact via visiting families from outside the area and staying with host families of the visited area, like old OSA convention days.
2. To hold low cost regional mini-OSA convention gatherings, so as to enhance lasting camaraderie among members and friendship among kids in different neighboring states & chapters, in all the regions of USA.
3. To develop inherent and latent drama & language skills (acting, script writing, prop preparation, music etc.) in a region, among immigrant community of Odias.
4. To promote leadership growth via organizing a multi-chapter event.

Subsequently from experience we have added another two goals:

1. To encourage participation of kids so as to expose them to Odia language and culture. In 2013, it has finally taken off with three kid's drama presented in RDF.
2. To ensure that visiting teams are each offered program time, for visiting kids, as desired.

In summary, the objective of RDF is to develop a closer relation among communities of people from Odisha residing in a region, through a festival with a special focus on drama.

Highlights & status:

RDF has completed 5 years and in its sixth year. RDF is on the verge of a takeoff with 59 Odia dramas already staged in various regions of USA & Canada, up to the end of April 2014. Three RDFs totaling with eleven dramas were staged in 2013, at Woodside, CA, Austin, TX & Chemsford, MA respectively. The highlight were the three kids dramas staged, one in MA & two in Austin. The real miracle was participation of 29 kids from Dallas in the kids' drama "Mauna Sila", at the Austin Festival. This thanks to Tapas Sahu and his team of cohort's commendable efforts. Also deserve a special mention is Lily Behera who organized the Children Drama- "Mithai Sabha" for Austin kids. Last but not least I must mention Prativa Sahoo, Prabhu Sahoo & Namrata Mohanty who put together "Jai Jagannath", at Boston RDF, on the same day.

My special thanks to Sumitra Padhi & Gyan Patnaik the initiators of Children drama idea in 2009 by Toronto RDF & Chicago RDF, respectively. So far we have staged eight of kids dramas, as follows.

1. **Sakhi GopALa - 6th RDF, Toronto kids, Toronto, May 15, 2010**
2. **Ayee Dhoom Diwali - 7th RDF, Chicago kids, Naperville, Nov 6, 2010**
3. **Bhasmasura - 10th RDF, Chicago kids, Naperville, Nov 5, 2011**
4. **Bandhu Mohanty, 11th RDF, DFW kids, Denton, Tx, April 19th, 2012**

5. **Mauna Shila, 15 th RDF, Dallas kids, Austin, September 14, 2013**
6. **Mithai Sabha, 15th RDF, Austin kids, Austion, September 14, 2013**
7. **Jai Jagannath, 16th RDF, MA kids, Chemsford, MA, September 14, 2013**
8. **Satyara Jai, 17th RDF, Detroit kids, Flint, MI, April 12, 2014**
9. **Ame Sabu Kool, 18th RDF, WDC, May 17th, 2014**

We are indeed at take off stage, with the Detroit kids doing wonders under the direction of Swapnalata Rath at Detroit RDF this year.

In 2014 three RDFs are already finalized. The 1st one has happened in Flint MI, on 12th April. The 2nd one is due at Washington DC on 18th May. The third one at Houston, TX is scheduled on 11th October, 2014. OSA National has budgeted money for five festivals this year.

We are actively in contact with California and they are expected to declare the date very soon some time in Sept.

Another RDF in Chicago area is finalized, as informed Jhara Das, Chicago Chapter President.

We are also eagerly eyeing on Atlanta, GA & Florida and surroundings in South East Coast. It is hoped that a RDF will be held soon in the Atlantic South Eastern region at Charlotte, NC.

The overall experience indicates that RDF has become part of the host Chapter's activities, and is making it financially viable by attracting a larger audience. The initial reluctance to holding RDF is waning and community members in various regions are getting interested and enthused. Members newly initiated into drama seem to enjoy the freshness and novelty of the drama world. In due course families, at least in participating Chapters, are developing rapport among themselves. The expected interest, that RDF was expected to generate in OSA, are already surfacing.

Benefits accrued:

1. An Odiadrama Yahooogroup(odiadramagroup@yahoo.com) has been formed connecting the Odia drama enthusiasts all over North America. It is a discussion group to monitor, assess RDF and brings ideas for the future.
2. A few Odia drama playwrights have emerged in NA, often depicting the American experience. Sri Gagan Panigrahi of Toronto, Manoj Mohapatra and Salil Mishra of Chicago, Birendra Jena & Basanta Mohapatra of Cleveland, Mohapatra Swapnalata Rath (Mishra) of MI., to mention a few. Dr. Birendra Jena has already published a collection of his plays – “Dura Pahada O Anyanya Nataka”. Dr. Jena acknowledges in his Book's forward, that his difficulty in finding scripts to take part in RDF, led him to pen them.
3. OSA Conventions rotate from city to city of different areas, and held in Hotels and are expensive to attend. Thus many cannot attend the conventions, on a regular basis. RDF plays a complementary role to fill the vacuum and provides opportunity for interacting with other community members in a region and participating in cultural activities. As a positive consequence new community leaders are sprouting.
5. The contacts during RDF, between people living in the neighboring states/region is creating release of positive energy, initiatives and communications, leading to various other initiatives. e.g.

- a. Odia Poetry reading via conference calls.
- b. Odia Poetry reading in Radio program in NJ/NY via conference call or skype.
- c. Publication of an Odia magazine “Pratishruti” from North America, etc.

Lessons Learned:

1. It is very difficult to rehearse a drama when the participants live more than 30 min (driving time) apart. Some have found innovative paths like doing voicing remotely, during rehearsals via conference calls/skype – the rewards of reharsing while being present in the same physical space, is still far superior. So it seems, to have the drama team in one city or within half hour driving distance, is a relevant constraint. So some are thinking of area (city) based teams.
2. The experience when people stay overnight with local family homes are way better than, when they come and go back the same day. The bonds of even one overnight stay, is long lasting.
3. All festivals should have children participation, to keep the kids excited, involved and part of parent’s cultural life and milieu.
4. The drama festivals can’t be held in cities, where population of Odia families is 50 or less, because of shortage of audience. Most halls have a capacity of 200 or more. Costs are of course additional constraint, as of now. This experience has been countered and overcome in Austin, TX last year. This was possible when 29 kids (5 to 15) participated in a children drama and brought in with them, their parents. A bus was rented and the families and kids went to the drama in a festive mood. But so far this has been an exception, rather than a routine. To do that is our challenge.
5. The RDFs in North/North East should be held on or before October 15th. This helps avoid snow storms, which are now regular threats in winter. Two festivals scheduled in November already suffered for this reason. One visiting team each could not come to the 9th RDF, the Eastern RDF in 2011 (NJ) & again the 13th RDF due ‘Sandy’, in 2012 (Washington DC). By changing time based on these experiences, we can overcome weather related hazards & challenges.

A few issues:

Two issues are coming up which need to be addressed for by OSA BOG, for sustainability of RDF.

1. Cooperation and commitment of Chapter Presidents to RDF
2. Financial grant from OSA National to its Chapters for conducting RDF and their viability.

1. Cooperation and Commitment of Chapter Presidents for RDF

The core of RDF success is, in the hands of the OSA Chapter Presidents. But for their complete cooperation & support RDF would not have come this far.

They are the key figures in the OSA organization and should be credited overwhelmingly for the success of RDF, they have organized.

Realizing their importance and remembering the fact that they are elected, it is urged that they consider RDF to be PART of Chapter activities just like Kumar Purnima, Saraswati Puja etc. From our experience, as national coordinators we feel, for smooth operations and cost effectiveness the following steps are most helpful and should be taken for their eventual success:

- Each Chapter President should select a RDF coordinator early, who is enthusiastic and proactive.
- Before beginning of each year give calls to the other chapters Presidents in the region and decide a mutually convenient date, location & host (city and chapter).
- The reservation of a hall in time, preferably six months in advance so that it is easy to get a good but adequately priced (rents vary widely) hall and it gives enough time to out of town teams to organize. Hold it (i) between February - May for the Festival in Spring. (ii) For the fall season by the 15th October.
- To allow enough practice time and patience in order to encourage new participants to join, who are necessary for sustenance of RDF in future.
- Make sure a kid's team is organized and all 5 to 15 kids are given an opportunity, to participate.

2. Financial grant from OSA National to Chapters for RDF and viability:

- The finances are a matter of concern for some small chapters. So far the festivals are being organized by the Chapters along with one of their regular programs – thus the costs (\$2000 on average) are absorbed by the local Chapters, except \$800 grant from OSA National.
- Some solutions:
 - It will be a good idea if OSA raises these grants to \$1000 by raising special funds, in future.
 - Chapters can sell Ad spaces in their brochures & raise donations from the local enthusiasts for the balance funds.
 - To reduce costs attempts should be made to have a general insurance by OSA National – so each chapter does not have to buy a separate insurance coverage for the hall. OSA National President & RDF organizing Chapter President can co-ordinate and save significant costs.
- OSA grants are a way of encouraging events which will expose new immigrants/students to OSA activities, similar to conventions, so are an expected to be productive investment.
- OSA national executives have in the past indicated that they would like to have around five, new Life /Five year members for each festival, which is a fair expectation.
- A future goal of RDF is to make them self-sustaining via Ads, donations and sponsorship.

Relevant info/ recommendations:

1. If you are a small town resident, with only a few other Odia families around – you should visit nearest RDF first as a visitor/audience. Then you can form your own drama team from among Odia neighbors, in your town. RDF is open to all, even those who are not yet members of OSA.
2. When you and your few friends, want to stage a drama, help in getting a script (with number of female and male actors to fit enthusiasts available), dress (e.g. a Odisha constable's uniform) or sound (like a typical cycle rickshaw honking in a Cuttack street), are only a phone call or e-mail away. Info is available with the experienced group members, who eagerly share their expertise. Contact them via

odiadramagroup@yahoogroups.com, to access resources, seek help or share problems to be resolved based on past experience.

3. Most recent Drama in MI, RDF found, if the wireless mikes are good quality and numbers adequate (about eight), lots of problems just go away. So recommendation is to upgrade your mike quality & quantity for a smooth festival.

4. We have recently developed a FAQ about the RDF which is giving in Ref 3.

Ref:

1. OSA Regional Drama Festival - a Recap of 4 years By Sandip K. Dasverma
(<http://www.orissasociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/UtkarsaJune2013.pdf>) Page 41 & 46.

2. A List of Dramas presented in RDFs since 2009 - as updated till April 2014
https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AIB9aioOwP9idFFST2ZrRWM2TGszNXFpNVFNWVZFLXc&usp=drive_web#gid=0

3. RDF - FAQ:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1N9XJveOfNtntrSI38hZcFDCqUYF1WH38BtyAJ0y1mHw/edit>

OSA Treasurer's Report (2013 – 2015)

OSA Account Statement as of 05/31/2014

	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Income/ Expense Category</u>
Balances (as of 06/01/2013)		
Checking #1	\$61,421.15	
Checking #2	\$12,429.54	
CD # 1	\$103,479.08	
Convention Advance Receivable	\$10,000.00	
Total Balance (as of 06/01/2013)	\$187,329.77	
Receipts		
	\$9,764.86	2013 Convention Income for OSA National
	\$4,575.00	OSA Fee from 2013 Convention
	\$10,000.00	2013 Convention advance received
	\$2,000.00	LTA Awards donation received
	\$31,484.70	Membership fees collected
	\$5,678.40	Ambika Kar Fund
	\$50,539.85	Phailin Fund
	\$11,129.18	Jyoti Patnaik Fund
	\$15,789.79	Ashok Nayak Fund
	\$1,250.00	CCO Fund (CD sale)
	\$105.16	Interest Income from CD/FDs
	\$100.00	General Donation
	\$419.54	AmazonSmile income + Refund payment
Payments		
	\$309.40	Community outreach - YA Community Service
	\$1,500.00	2013 Convention Guest Travel
	\$1,701.35	2013 Awards
	\$1,225.00	2013 Membership Award
	\$2,143.25	CCO Awards and CD Vol II
	\$1,250.00	CCO Vol III production (2014)
	\$150.00	Odia Language Awards
	\$2,720.91	LTA award disbursed + HE seminar
	\$3,200.00	RDF (OSNE, Southwest, Michigan, OSA DC)
	\$12,329.54	Jiban Patra Fund disbursed

	\$5,678.40	Ambika Kar Fund disbursed
	\$10,929.18	Jyoti Patnaik Fund disbursed
	\$50,000.00	Phailin Relief fund disbursed to CMRF
	\$3,035.00	Ashok Nayak Fund disbursed 1st installment
	\$346.87	Website hosting & renewal
	\$2,723.83	Administrative (Election Expenses, Fees , Tax filing, Postage, Bouquet, Membership Card printing, Paypal Fee etc)
	\$10,000.00	Convention 2014 advance
Net Increase (Decrease)	\$33,593.75	

Accounts Payable

Phailin Relief	\$539.85
SB Award for Academic Excellence	\$1,000.00
Jyoti Patnaik	\$200.00
Ashok Nayak	\$12,754.79

Accounts Receivable

Convention 2014 Advance receivable	\$10,000.00
------------------------------------	-------------

Cash Balances as of 05/31/2014

Checking #1	\$210,913.52
Checking #2	\$10.00
PayPal	\$0.00
Total Cash Balance (as of 05/31/2014)	\$210,923.52
Convention 2014 advance receivable	\$10,000.00
Total Balance (as of 05/31/2014)	\$220,923.52

Balances under special funds

ODF	\$1,620.80
CCO Fund	\$417.99
Odia Language Dev Fund	\$3,234.50
Emergency Fund	\$7,000.00
Jyoti Patnaik Fund	\$200.00

Ashok Nayak Fund	\$12,754.79
Phailin Relief Fund	\$539.85

Total Balance (as of 05/31/2014)	\$220,923.52
Total Balance (as of 06/01/2013)	\$187,329.77
Net Increase	\$33,593.75

- *Prashanta Ranabijuli*
Treasurer, OSA
512-917-4715 (Mobile)
ranabijuli@gmail.com

OSA Account Statement as of 08/31/2013 for 2011-2013 Term

	Amount
Sushant Satpathy	
Volunteer/Treasurer, OSA (2011-2013)	
Balances as of 06/01/2013	
Checking #1	\$61,421.15
Checking #2	\$12,429.54
CD#1	\$103,479.08
Convention Advance Receivable	\$10,000.00
Total Balance (as of 6/01/2013)	\$187,329.77

Receipts

2013 Convention Income for OSA National*	\$9,764.86
Annual Membership *	\$1,280.00
OSA Fee*	\$4,575.00
Membership Upgrade *	\$2,800.00
OSA new Life and 5-year Membership **	\$23,840.00
Ambika Kar Fund ***	\$1,929.28
Interest Income from CD/FDs *	\$105.16
Awards *	\$2,000.00
CCO Fund (CD sale)***	\$1,250.00

Payments

Community outreach - YA Community Service	(\$309.40)
Convention Guest	(\$1,500.00)
Administrative (Election Expenses, Fees , Postage, Bouquet, Membership Card printing, Paypal Fee etc) *	(\$2,088.95)
Membership Award*	(\$8,025.00)
CCO Awards and CD Vol II***	(\$2,143.25)
Odia Language***	(\$50.00)
Awards *	(\$1,701.35)
Jiban Patra Fund ***	(\$12,329.54)
Net Increase (Decrease)	\$19,396.81

Remarks

- * Items marked are operational income or expense
- ** Items marked will be transferred to fixed deposit/ CD
- *** Designated special funds

Accounts Payable

LTA Award for Ms. Tulsi Munda	\$2,000.00
Expenses for 2011/2012 Tax Filing	\$500.00
Ambika Kar Fund	\$1,929.28
Total Accounts Payable	\$4,429.28

Balances as of 08/31/2013

Checking #1	\$204,797.30
Checking #2	\$1,929.28
Total Balance (as of 8/31/2013)	\$206,726.58
Total Balance(as of 06/01/2013)	\$187,329.77
Net Increase 6/01/13 - 8/31/13	\$19,396.81

Balances under special funds

ODF	\$1,620.80
CCO Fund	\$667.99
Odia Language Dev Fund	\$3,334.50
Emergency Fund	\$7,000.00
Jiban Patra Fund (All disbursed)	\$0.00
Ambika Kar Fund	\$1,929.28

Total Balance (as of 08/31/2013)	\$206,726.58
Total Balance(as of 09/01/2011)	\$105,686.55
Net Increase (2011 -2013)	\$101,040.03

The account was reviewed by Rajashree Kanungo, CPA.

OSA 2013 Convention Account Statement

August 31st, 2013

Prepared by Debashish Panda

Repurposed by Sushant Satpathy

Convention Income

51000 - 2013 Convention Income	
51100 - Registration and OSA Fee	\$33,665.00
51200 - Food Receipts	\$56,062.00
51300 - Sponsorship	\$39,755.00
51400 - Donation	\$34,369.00
51600 - DVD Sale	\$1,980.00
51700 - YA Cruise	\$4,400.00
51800 - Souvenir	\$145.00
TOTAL 51000 - 2013 Convention Income	\$170,376.00
52000 - OSA National Income	
52100 - OSA Membership Fee	\$14,560.00
TOTAL 52000 - OSA National Income	\$14,560.00
Total Income	\$184,936.00

Convention Expense

71000 - 2013 Convention Expenses	
71100 - Operational Expenses	
71110 - Bank Service	\$3,373.57
71120 - Softwares and Hardwares	\$110.84
71130 - Supplies and Mailing	\$2,432.34
71140 - Printing	\$13,265.34
TOTAL 71100 - Operational Expenses	\$19,182.09
71200 - Facilities and Equipments	
71210 - Event Insurance	\$724.00
71220 - Convention Center rental	\$8,565.00
71230 - Equipment purchase and Rental	\$3,505.54
71260 - Video and Photography	\$2,875.77
TOTAL 71200 - Facilities and Equipments	\$15,670.31
71300 - Cultural, Seminar and Youth	
71310 - Cultural	
71311 - Decoration	\$2,101.56
71314 - Light and Sound Rental	\$17,464.25
71315 - Showcase Event	\$4,606.91
71316 - Krishna Beura Program	\$6,427.77
71317 - Sniti Mishra's Program	\$3,822.00

71318 - Kuna Tripathy Program	\$1,000.00
71319 -Lighting and Sound Coordination	\$400.00
TOTAL 71310 - Cultural	\$35,822.49
71320 - Youth	
71321 - Youth Cruise	\$6,800.72
71322 - Youth Social & Community Event	\$377.12
71320 - Youth	\$7,177.84
TOTAL 71300 - Cultural, Seminar and Youth	\$43,000.33
71400 - Awards & Prizes	
71420 - Non-cultural awards	\$3,950.01
71430 - Cultural awards	\$1,950.00
TOTAL 71400 - Awards & Prizes	\$5,900.01
71500 - Food Expense	
71550 - Food Package	\$49,500.00
71560 - Food related other Expenses	\$2,960.42
TOTAL 71500 - Food Expense 71600 - Hospitality and Guest services	\$52,460.42
71610 - Welcome Packet	\$3,157.00
71620 - Flower & Decorations	\$495.60
71640 - Babysitting expenses	\$180.00
TOTAL 71600 - Hospitality and Guest services	\$3,832.60
71700 -Transportation & Accomodation	
71710 - Travel expense for guests	\$1,946.90
71720 - Hotel expenses for guests	\$2,123.79
TOTAL 71700 -Transportation & Accomodation	\$4,070.69
71800 - Reserve Fund	
71810 - Mailing and Sponsor Package	\$750.00
71820 - Volunteer Appriciation	\$1,000.00
TOTAL 71800 - Reserve Fund	\$1,750.00
71900 - Other Expenses	\$404.92
TOTAL 71000 - 2013 Convention Expenses	\$146,271.37
72000 - OSA National Liability & Refund	
72100 - OSA National life Membership	\$13,300.00
72200 - OSA National Annual Membership	\$1,260.00
72300 - OSA Convention Fee	\$4,575.00
TOTAL 72000 - OSA National Liability & Refund	\$19,135.00
TOTAL Expenses	\$165,406.37
Net Surplus	\$19,529.63
50% of Surplus Transferred to OSA National	\$9,764.81
50% of Surplus kept for Chapter	\$9,764.82

Convener: Gyana R Patnaik	Accepted by Sushant Satpathy, Past Treasurer (2011-2013), OSA
Chapter President: Jhara Das	Convention Treasurer: Debashish Panda
Co-conveners:	Sarj Khandai, Tarani Mohapatra, Kuku Das (VP, OSA 2011-2013)
PS: Account was reviewed by Rajashree Kanungo, CPA	



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Oh Lord, we resort to Thee for the supply of foodstuffs and vigor. May the Creator, the fountain of happiness and knowledge, inspire us for the performance of noblest deeds with our organs. – Sam Veda

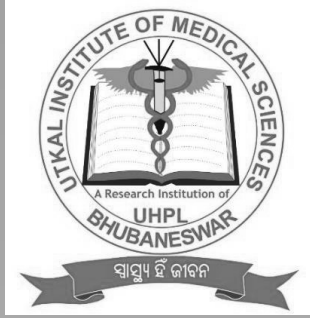
OM Namō Bhagavate Vasudevaya!

On behalf of International Jagannatha Society, Professor Hanekreshna Setapathy, President and person in charge of the India Branch (IJS, Bharat), and myself are inviting you to attend the second International Jagannatha Sammilami in Delhi, Delhi India in the last week of December 2014. IJS is encouraging you to attend this seminar, which will have the following attractions.

1. International scholars will discuss Jagannatha philosophy.
2. Hands on courses would be given about the basics of Jagannatha Viddhi rituals and festivals.
3. Free visit to different temples in and around Delhi and important visitor's sites.
4. Arrangements will be made for visit to see Tajmahal in Agra Jaipur and other places of importance.
5. Free seminars without any registration fees.
6. Snacks and meals will be provided for two days during the seminar.
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8. Dignitaries of federal government are expected to inaugurate the function.
9. The scholars, researchers, authors, and saints of high order are invited to give lectures on Jagannatha consciousness.
10. For contact information visit www.int-jagannatha-soc.org
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or Barada P Das BARADAIPR@gmail.com Tel-91 986 114 5687
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Visit www.int-jagannatha-soc.org for details of 2013 IJS seminar in BBSR, Odisha, India

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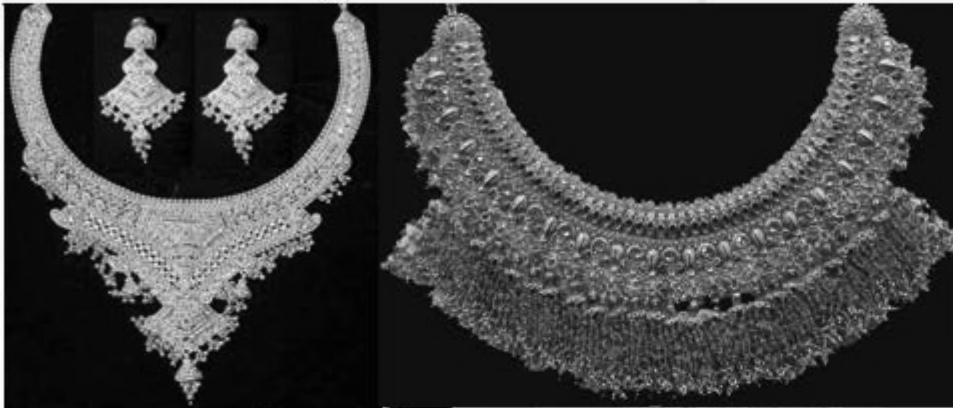
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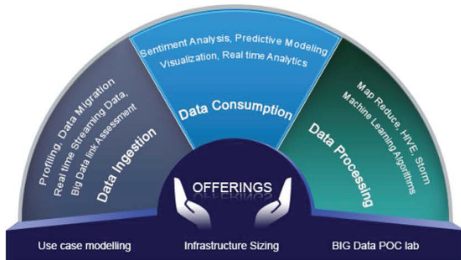
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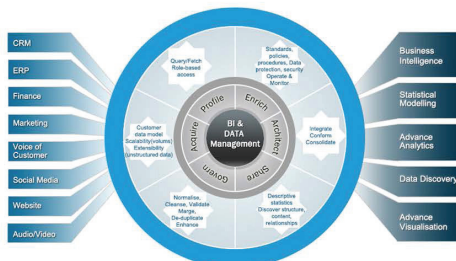
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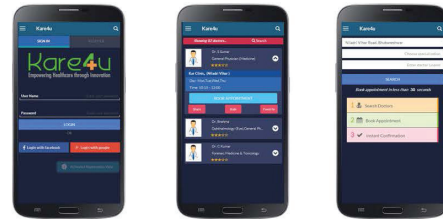


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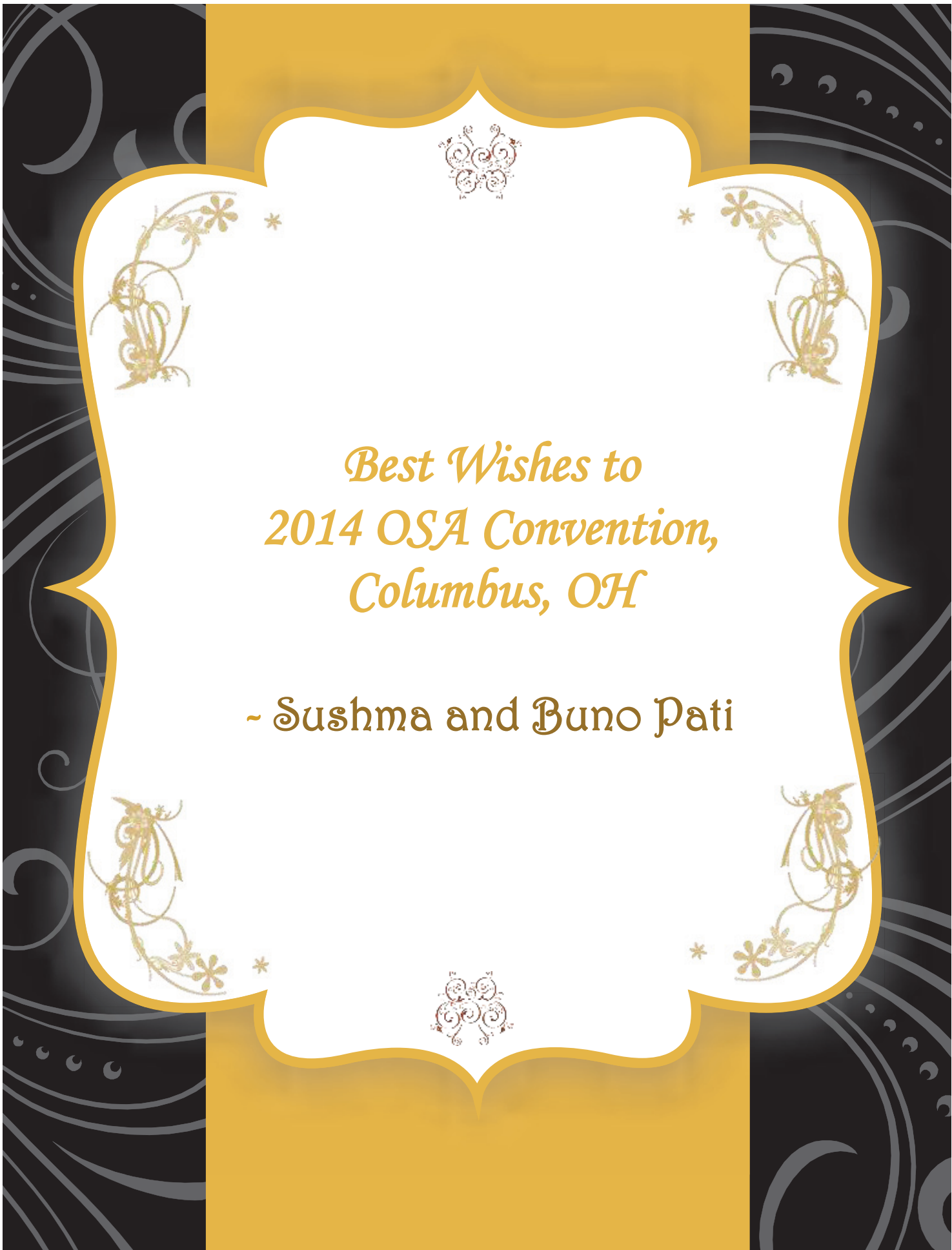
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- Sushma and Buno Pati

Akshay Kumar Parija



Noted Banker, Businessman and Philanthropist, Akshay Kumar Parija is an avid promoter of Performing Arts and Culture of Odisha like Odishi, Chau, Pala, Daskathia etc around the world. As a film maker, he gained international recognition for his Odia film “Jiaanta Bhoota” which won six awards in International Festival, a first for Odia Film Industry. He also won the prestigious National Award for the film from President of India Mrs Pratibha Patil for the Best Film on Protection of Environment. The sensitively portrayed the exploitation of nature and human beings in the name of development and industrialization. The film also won record seven State Awards.

His second film” Thukul” which dealt with an Odia girl’s strenuous journey into Odishi stardom has already won five Stae Awards, which is again highest this year. Besides, the film has

won four awards in Tarang Cine Award and four awards in Etv Cine Award. The film deals with the sad perception of the society for girls leaning dancing.

A banker for more than thirty years in the Middle East in top management positions, Mr Parija cofounded **Blue Lines Shipping Group** in 2010 in Dubai with operations in United States of America, Singapore, Oman and UAE. During a short span of time the company has grown into a large energy career with over half a million tonnage capacity.

COMPANY PROFILE

BIOTECHAYUR, Balasore Odisha, India • BEST NUTRITION, Hayward, California, USA



Company Profile : Biotechayur Pvt Ltd, Odisha, India

BIOTECHAYUR (LIFE SCIENCES) ,
Balasore Odisha, India

Biotechayur, a Non-Resident Odia (NRO) venture (located in Seragad, Balasore, Odisha, India) is the leading manufacturer of high-quality Ayurvedic Herbal Standardized molecular extracts and Ayurvedic raw material ingredients. The company is setting the standards of excellence for new products, quality, efficiency and service. State-of-the-art facilities, modern laboratory, superior manufacturing technology, rigorous quality control, and unparalleled production capacity enable Biotechayur to deliver the highest quality standardized Ayurvedic Herbal molecular extracts at highly competitive prices. Biotechayur manufactures products derived from Gymnema, Cucumin, Amla, Triphala, Neem, Moringa, Arjun, and Safed Musli etc. It is focusing on the manufacture of extracts related to biotechnology-based ayurvedics, herbals, plant medicines, nutraceuticals, food & nutritional supplements and related healthcare products. The company's name combines the words Biotech + Ayur, meaning the Science of Life. About 60% of drugs are derived from medicinal plants. The Science of Ayurveda, including Pancha Karma, Pranayama, Yoga and Herbal Ayurvedics are popular as a part of alternative healthcare and preventive medicines. Biotechayur has a R&D lab in Seragarh, located on the high way side near Balasore town, where several chromatographic lab testing equipment lines (HPLC, LCMS, GCMS, ICPMS) have been installed. Analytical chemists are engaged in making protocols before a final mass production of extracts. Large number of employees are engaged in processing molecular extracts from high value medicinal plants.



Company Profile: Best Nutrition Products Inc., California, USA

Best Nutrition manufacturers and markets a large number of vitamins, nutritional, & Chinese herbal supplements, amino acids, protein, natural hormones, and sports nutrition products. Best Nutrition supplements are sold across the globe in retail outlets as well as online stores. The company has recently introduced a special line of Ayurvedic products for Indian Grocery stores in the USA and several hundred Indian and Asian Grocery Stores selling single herb Ayurvedic Supplements, such as: Amla, Triphala, Ashwagandha, Bitter Melon, Fenugreek (Methi), Turmeric (Curcumin), Cinnamon, Garcinia, Moringa, Tulsi, Neem and many more. All ingredients are extracted pharmaceutical standardized molecular materials encapsulated into vegi-capsules.



Dr. Abhay Kumar Pati
FOUNDER, ENTREPRENEUR & CEO
Best Nutrition Products,
Biotechayur Pvt. Ltd.

Dr. Abhay Kumar Pati is the Founder, Entrepreneur and CEO of Biotechayur, and also the Founder, CEO and President of Best Nutrition Products Inc. (founded in 1995 in Hayward, California, USA). He was born in Raj-Nilgiri, Balasore District, Odisha, India. Dr. Pati was trained as a Physician in Kolkata at the J.B. Ray State Ayurvedic Medical College & Hospital (Asthang Ayurvedic College & Hospital, Kolkata University). Dr. Pati received his degree in Integrated medicine both in Ayurvedic, the traditional medicine of India and modern Western medicine with degrees of Bachelor Ayurvedic Medicine and Surgery (BAMS) and MASF (Member of Ayurvedic State Faculty). He is an author and co-author of six books on nutrition, herbs, medicinal plants, fruits, ayurvedic, and lifestyle. He has formulated and designed over 200 nutritional, herbal, sports nutritional, amino acid, enzymes and proteins from plants. Best Nutrition has over 80 + Websites. Dr. Pati also has designed and introduced a line of ayurvedic supplements for Indian Grocery Stores in USA. More information can be found on the internet by searching Dr. Abhay Kumar Pati or Dr. Kumar Pati. Please visit the group companies websites: <http://biotechayur.com/>, <http://www.bestnutrition.com/>, www.nutritionbest.com and www.ayurvedicsupplements.com and Email: dr.kumarpati@bestnutrition.com.

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