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Editorial

It's another year and another Sammad, the most awaited event of the year, at least for all of us at Sarathi. We wait for these few days of fun and frolic. Like all the years this year too we've tried to bring to you a platter of events in all the five days of the Durga Puja starting from 1st October (Panchami).

Sammad 2011 will be formally inaugurated on 2nd October by Ashok Soota, one of the fathers of the Indian IT movement and of course among the most celebrated residents of Koramangala. It's our privilege to have him grace the occasion. On the same day we'll have Kavita Krishnamoorthy, who needs no introduction for Bollywood lovers, enchanting us with her memorable songs.

On 3rd October we have a fusion music rendered by Indian Blue and on the finale, 5th Oct, we have the young and talented singer Iman. We hope we would be able to entertain you in all possible ways through good music, food and of course the blessings of Ma Durga.

On the literary side we have short stories in both English and Bengali, apart from poems. A very unique thing this time is a fairy tale written by our own Pinky. There are some serious stuff too, apart from item numbers like what guys do in bachelor parties. Well, if you really want to find more please go through our souvenir.

Wishing you all the best,

Sudipto Das

(Souvenir Committee)

Sarathi

Socio-Cultural Trust (Regd.)

Regd. No.: BNG (U)-BLR(S)/36/2006-07

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RAJ BHAVAN
BANGALORE

No. GS 145 MSG 201
September, 12, 2011

I am happy to know the **Sarathi Socio Cultural Trust** is celebrating **Durga Puja-Dasara Festival** from 1st Oct. to 6th Oct. at Koramangal, Bangalore.

Durga Puja - Dasara Festival is widely celebrated in all over India. Durgadevi is acclaimed as the Goddesses of prosperity and righteous power. This is an occasion of festival of joy and gaiety of harmony and goodwill and of the victory of the good over evil and also this festival is to bring the people of different communities together in order to develop fellowship and friendship. Without doubt this kind of coming together further cements human relations and promotes peace and amity in society.

Let Goddess's Durga's blessings abide by us to remove darkness and shed the light of knowledge within us in order to bring out the better side of human behaviour.

On this day may the festival bring progress, prosperity and peace. My best wishes on this occasion.


(H.R. BHARDWAJ)



Sammad 2011 is inaugurated by Ashok Soota.

Ashok Soota is widely recognized as one of the pioneering leaders of the Indian IT industry. Prior to founding Happiest Minds, Ashok co-founded MindTree in August 1999. Under Ashok's leadership, in a span of 11 years, MindTree became a global entity with revenue run rate of US 350 million, over 9000 people and offices in multiple cities in the US, Europe and Asia.

Prior to co-founding MindTree, Ashok was President of Wipro Infotech from 1984 to 1999. Under his leadership, Wipro's IT business grew from US \$ 2 million in 1984 to US \$ 500 million run-rate in 1999.

Ashok began his career in 1965 with the Shriram Group of Industries in India. In 1978, he became CEO of Shriram Refrigeration, a company which was unprofitable for four straight years. Ashok facilitated a complete turnaround, making it profitable in his very first year and taking it to a position of leadership in each of its product lines.

Ashok is an industry leader. He was President of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), India's largest Industry association and also President of Manufacturers' Association of Information Technology. He has served on Prime Minister's Task Force for IT and on the Advisory Council for the World Intellectual Property Organization, Geneva.

For his contribution to India's IT Industry, he was recognized as 'IT Man of the Year' twice and as 'Electronics Man of the Year'. He is the recipient of the Prof S N Mitra Award from Indian National Academy of Engineering and the Golden Peacock Award for Technology Leadership. He has been a member of the Global Board of Trustees of TiE. He has served on the Board of Governors of IIM, Kozhikode and was the founding Chief Patron of Samarthanam Trust for the Disabled.

Ashok holds a Bachelor of Engineering degree from Roorkee University (now IIT, Roorkee) and an MBA from the Asian Institute of Management, Philippines.

THE MAGIC WILLOW TREE

- Pinky



Ramaswamy was a little boy of four walking quietly along the road with a grim face. He had broken his mother's precious china crockery while playing football with his little friends in the garden, as his sister sat with her friends having a tea party. His sister had been warned not to touch amma's favourite expensive dishes, but she wanted the best plates and cups for the tea party with her friends in the garden, so she had laid them out beautifully on a blue and white mat on which she sat with her friends smiling proudly as she was the hostess. But suddenly, a ball came flying at them. " Look out, " cried one of her friends with pink flowers on her hair, but the ball had swept

passed them, leaving the china broken into pieces.

" Oh what shall I do now? It was amma's favorite crockery. She will give me a beating, " she said with a worried face. Ramaswamy approached her with a guilty look, and stood as still as a pole when he saw the fire in her eyes.

" Oh Rama! See, what you have done! Amma will scold me for this. Could you not have played football today and ruin everything? "

" You could have had your party in the house. I can't play any place else, " he retorted smugly.

" You are a very naughty boy, and you have become disrespectful of late. Go find means of replacing this china or I swear never to speak to you again, " she said, collecting the tiny pieces of broken china in her hands along with her friends.

Now it had been hours Rama was walking through the coconut plantations. He didn't know how to reach the town from his small village, but he hoped he could reach there by the next day at least. He was a small boy, and he didn't know much about the world. The sky was getting darker, and the birds chirped noisily and flew away in flocks to their nests. Rama was missing his home too. He wondered if he would be pardoned if he went home with a few of the fallen coconuts on the ground, and begged for forgiveness. But he remembered his sister's promise and kept walking. The stars were shining in the night sky and the fireflies were glowing in the dark.

Suddenly, Rama spotted a glowing light in the distance. He hurried in the pitch darkness to the source of light, and found a willow tree, with radiating trunk and branches, and leaves made of

gold that shone in the dark. As soon as he touched one of the leaves to pluck, a witch with crooked teeth appeared in front of him. Rama shivered in fright due to the strangeness of the situation, and since he only believed witches and fairies never really existed.

" A little boy do I see! Oh what fat cheeks and red lips bloomy, "she said in a nasal tone, as she pinched his cheeks.

" I see you have done mischief!

Now, listen to me little boy, and I will turn your leaf.

Climb the wise willow tree, and jump into the trunk.

Have no fear and you will see a talking chipmunk.

He will guide you through the willow city,

Search and devour the golden cherry.

The golden cherry is the key to the magic dust,

Yet to me, you cannot be unjust.

Bring it to me, and let me have my first three wishes,

Take it home, buy gold, pearls, dresses and china dishes!

" and saying this, the witch started disappearing. But Rama had not understood her clearly being only a little boy, and he pleaded to repeat the poem before she disappeared into thin air. The witch repeated the poem for him once again, and Rama memorized it every bit, so that he doesn't fail to bring the magic dust at all. After all, it could have all his wishes come true!

Now, Rama looked at the giant willow tree with golden leaves, and so tall was it that he didn't know how to reach up to its branches. He stacked a few big rocks, and placed coconut leaves

on them and made steps out of it. As he looked into the hollow trunk, he couldn't see anything as it was very dark. He questioned himself if he should do such a thing at all, but he gained courage and jumped into the trunk of the hollow tree. His head started spinning and he called out for the chipmunk, but none was there. A tear dropped down his eye, and as it hit the ground, a tunnel was opened to him. It was filled with colourful lights and singing mosquitoes, and perfumed herbs which brushed against him as he walked.

" Hello,I wasn't expecting any visitors, " a squeaky voice said. Rama turned to see a brown chipmunk wearing a red shirt. His eyes were shiny, and his smile made him seem friendly to Rama.

" Hello. My name is Ramaswamy. I am on my way to find the magic dust. Can you help me? "

There was a look of hesitation combined with displeasure on the chipmunk's face. " Do not tell me that the old wretched witch sent you here! I will burn her alive in the stove, just as Gretel did. Did she give you any chocolates too?" Rama nodded in disagreement, and chipmunk calmed down by seeing how tiny and innocent little Rama was. He planned on guiding Rama through the willow city so that no danger comes upon him.



" So what and where is the willow city? " Rama asked curiously.

" You will see for your own when the tunnel ends, " the chipmunk said smiling. " My name is Munniswamy. You can call me Munni. I'm the Regional Security of the Giant Willow City of this area. I hope you like the visit in Willow City. Its the most beautiful place you can ever imagine! " he smiled proudly, his buck teeth exposed. Rama noticed a light at the rear corner of the tunnel. He started running excitedly, and the chipmunk sat on his shoulder, asking him to run a little slower so that he doesn't fly off! When Rama reached the end of the tunnel, he was bewildered with awe and amazement. He pinched himself to check if he was dreaming, but indeed he wasn't !



Here he was in the land of fairytales and cartoons! Noddy drove past him asking if he wants a ride as Mr. Plod waved, the tin soldier marched with his army, thumbelina was sleeping on a sunflower, and he stared out , his eyes wide with wonder as a flying horse landed near his feet. Munni asked him to get on the chariot attached to the horse, and as he shifted uncomfortably in his seat, the horse flapped his huge wings and took off in the air. Rama clutched the reins of the horse as tightly as he could so that he didn't fall off his seat, as the flying horse soared in the air amidst

the clouds, in a land which looked like heaven. The chipmunk was in Rama's pocket, his head popping out as he looked astonished at the wonderful beauty once again.

" This is beautiful, Munni. I've never seen anything more beautiful than this! , " he screamed his eyes shining with delight " Oh please, oh please tell me there is Aladdin, Harry Potter and Hogwarts, Malgudi in here too! Then I would stay here forever! " he exclaimed.

" Oh yes master, and we could go and pay a visit to all of them, but as you see, we have to go and inform the King of Willow City about your arrival and your length of stay. "

" Munni, will he allow me to stay here forever? " he asked innocently.

" Willow City constitution states that only dumans can live here, and humans can be attended to as guests only for a limited period of time, so I'm afraid that you would have to leave someday Rama." Munni's eyes had a kind sympathetic look when he looked up at him from his pocket.

As the flying horse inclined at a sharp angle to take a turn, a stick darted towards Rama.

" Harry Potter, " he exclaimed loudly, excitement exploding in his voice! Harry halted at lightening speed just inches away from his racing chariot in his Firebolt XP, and murmured a quick yet charming apology.

" Extremely sorry, Kiddo. Hope you have a nice time in Willow City. Gotta go, Quidditch! " and he winked at Rama with a grin before he dived in his broomstick again. Rama sat dazed with wonder as he saw his favorite surreal person in the world. " Was that really Harry Potter? Harry Potter who fought You-Know-Who, Harry Potter who studied in Hogwarts, Harry Potter who married Ginny? He looks like he's still in fourth year! "

Munni laughed, " We stop aging Willow City after a certain time. The age is uncertain and varying for every one, but we maintain our beauty without any hassles, " Munni grinned brightly.

When Rama was yet into his deep thoughts about how he met with Harry Potter on his broomstick, the flying horse started diving down at haste making Rama feel like he was on a roller coaster ride.

" We're going to dieee, " yelled Rama.

" Oh just hold tight, little boy, " and Rama closed his eyes tightly, and bent over to hold onto the neck of the horse as it plunged down with great speed. When Rama opened his eyes after he couldn't feel the chilly wind swirling around him any longer, he found himself on the land. He uttered something about how relieved he was that he was still breathing and looked for Munni in his pocket. But Munni was already walking towards the large rusted iron gates behind which was a stone castle with large golden domes on every tower. Aladdin Land? Rama thought and shook his head because it didn't look much like that in his story books.

" Hey, " he called out to Munni and trailed behind him, running fast to catch up with him as fast as he could.

When Rama was beside Munni, he opened his mouth to ask him the many many questions bubbling in his head, but Munni silenced him with a quick hush. Rama walked beside Munni in silence, as the gates opened and closed, and he passed by steel armoured knights, soldiers, lawyers with curly grey long braided hair, and arrived at an old fashioned wood chamber which was named as the reception.

" You have a human with you, " shrieked the receptionist, who looked pretty to Rama

even with her twitched eye brows and flaring nostrils.

" I want to address my case to the Court of Aliens in Willow City, " Rama said politely, as Rama wondered how he could not be dazzled by the receptionist's beauty.

" 3rd Floor, second right, last chamber, 321 .Court is in session now, will be free after another hour, the judge for your case will be St. Nicholas, " she said eye the boy with a nasty look. Rama's eyes fixed on her ocean blue eyes, and he blushed as a red tomato. The receptionist whiffed in complete disgust and got back to her work.

" Stop getting your face red because of that woman, Rama. Dumans don't like Humans. You might get permission to stay in here, but that doesn't make it easy as they can be very unpleasant to you. "

" Why? " Rama asked squealing.

" Hmm, " Munni thought. " Well, for one reason that the ugly witch is always upto something and sending human beings, transforming them, putting goblin spells on Dumans too only to end our world. "

" Why does she want to end your world? Isn't she a part of it? "

" No, No. She is the meanest creatures of the willow tales, fairy tales for you children. She has existed since the times of Cinderella, Snow White, Hansel and Gretel and many other legends you have listened to. Good Lord, she was there battling with our dear Harry a few years ago. Oh, how it flared up in our Willow City that Rowling, the Human Journalist came and wrote six- seven books on it. It's a pity she calls it her own imagination! "

" But why does she want to end your world, Munni? " Rama repeated curiously.

" Oh right, I forgot to tell you about that " he said as they walked by the alley and sat on

the bench next to the room 321.

" Due to all the mischief she had been upto, the Law of Willow City had detained her of performing any magic. But when she had broken the rules again, she was taken into Slimy Land. It's a prison which has no bars, but spells to guard the person, distract them and confine them into lifelong imprisonment. It was stated in her judgement, that if she ever broke a rule again, she would be sent to the human world, " Munni glanced at Rama to check if he was still listening.

" She had broken a rule, because of which I saw her in the human world! " Rama said feeling intelligent.

" Yes, little boy. But she had broken many rules. She had come to know the essence of the magic world, the very substance that makes us survive. Pardon me, but I can't reveal what it is to you. Policies, you know, " he smiled as his nose wrinkled.

" Is it food? Or like water? " chipped in Rama.

" No, its nothing of that sort. She wanted to destroy our world in that manner, and reside with the humans and take over their world with all the horrible spells and tricks she knows. " Munni grew thoughtful and his face turned pale.

A loud bell ringed calling the end of the previous session and the beginning of the new. Rama saw a fat white man with red hair and huge spectacles coming out of the room, being assisted by another chipmunk who looked alike Munni. The white man snorted at Rama and he twitched backwards, feeling scared. Rama entered the huge room, and saw a huge man with long white beard, wearing a cane hat, and reed coat seated on the Judge's chair. After an hour long session in which Munni, Rama's explainer explained Rama's situation to St. Nicholas- how he

arrived at the Willow City, how the witch had met him when he was thrown away from home after he broke his mother's dishes, how he's a small little boy who is completely innocent, the Judge granted him permission to stay in the Willow City for two more days, during which he would be shown the entire City, and all the characters that he adores.

" Thank you, " beamed Munni delightedly.

" You know my weakness, Munni. How unfair it is of you to bring a child of four in my courtroom and imagine of me giving him punishment. Here boy, come here, " he said with a sweet smile. Rama approached him with quiet steps, as the judge bent down from his seat and rummaged noisily through a few wrapped parcels.

" Here, this is for you. I know its not Christmas, but I'm not allowed to go out of this magic land and give presents to you dear lads and lasses anymore, " he said apologetically.

" Thank you, " muttered Rama, unsure of why he'd been gifted with a parcel covered in shiny blue paper, and he strode out of the chamber with the gift in his hands along with Munni in his pocket.



As he came out of the chamber, he whispered to Munni asking him who that was.

" Santa Claus, oh dear God! Why did you think he said all that about Christmas and gifts, and gave you one himself? Santa Claus , hello, Saint Nicholas! " Munni said with his hands swinging in the air as he actioned every word with exaggeration. Rama's eyes popped and fell down motionless on the floor.

" Are you okay? "

" I'd been a bad boy the whole year and he yet gave me the gift. I was so shocked by everything, that I didn't even thank Santa Claus. On the other hand, I didn't even *know* he was Santa Claus. I'm stupid! My sister is right, I'm a fool! " he said, as tears rolled down his eyes. Munni crawled out of his shirt's pocket, and perched himself on his collar to reach up to his face. He wiped his tears with a generous look in his eyes.

" Little Rama, you're not stupid. You're a very very nice lad. Don't be harsh on yourself by losing faith in you. You are what you are, but you will be what you believe to be, " he said kindly. Rama looked down on him and looked at his kind eyes. He kissed Munni on his cheek and thanked him, and off the set on their Willow City trip. As the exit the gates of the huge castle, they saw a beautiful fountain with sparkling water which was named as the magic fountain, and Rama came to know that whosoever drinks from it will be instantly caught while telling a lie. Most of the court procedures were begun only after the culprit and the others involved drank the water in front of the jury. Each single lie caused them an elongated nose, Munni explained to him in good humour. Rama now realized, why his mother kept telling him that his nose will grow bigger and bigger if he lied.

Rama met the Wise Willow Wizard who enraptured him with several magic tricks. He asked him to teach him a few, and Rama successfully managed to learn the Pea trick in which he could turn any green pea to golden ones, and the Affinity Trick in which he could move things of little weight just by the motion of his palm, and the Mind Reading trick in which he could read a person's mind while he chanted the spell. He wasn't very good at any of it, as the Wise Willow Wizard could turn the smallest peas into gigantic golden ones, and could move an entire mountain with his Affinity Spell, and could read people's mind at ease for hours even when they were far away from their sight, while Rama was confused with his own words of the Mind Reading Spell and the person's thoughts as he stood near him.

Suddenly, the ugly witch's face with crooked yellow teeth appeared to Rama who was still busy in repeating the spells he had learnt as he sat on a unicorn to pay a visit to Alice In Wonderland and then Neverland. The unicorn sparkled in the sunlight, and its horn looked like it was made of crystal.

" Old New tiding do I bring,

Oh, how curses you your little sibling,

Before fetching the magic dust, returning to your family,

Search and devour the golden cherry.

The golden cherry is the key to the magic dust,

Yet to me, you cannot be unjust.

Bring it to me, and let me have my first three wishes,

Take it home, buy gold, pearls, dresses and china dishes! "

Beads of sweat appeared on Rama's temple as he the ugly witch brought visions of his mother

scolding his little sister, and his sister promising him never to speak again till he replaced the china. Rama wished he could find means of finding the magic dust and going back home to his darling amma, and hug her as tight as he could.

" Munni, " he said, his palms circling his stomach. " I'm so hungry, could I have some food to eat, please? " he asked with a plan in his mind.

" Oh yes, master! We could go to the Willow Diner where you can find the finest of foods you could have ever tasted! I'm so sorry, I completely forgot about how young you are and how hungry you must be by now." he smiled. Rama wondered how he could find the golden cherry. He didn't think it would be on a cherry tree, or even a golden cherry tree. It must be somewhere safe, like a museum or a vault where nobody could gain access to it.

" Can I have some cherries first? I love them! And yet, we get so little of them in Kerala, " he smiled sadly.

Munni spoke at once, " Then off we go to the Willow Orchard, to the majestic cherry tree, from which you can pluck your favourite cherries but one, and fill your stomach with glee.

Munni plucked a silver hair on the unicorn's neck which glimmered in the sunlight, and asked Rama to wish. As soon as Rama blew it from Munni's palm, a beautiful orchard fell before his eyes, as if it was lifted from the pre historic times of the Adam and Eve. Rama asked Munni if it was the Willow Orchard, hardly in a whisper, and they walked down the beautiful garden, as the spotted colourful fish in ponds, flowers of the most beautiful fragrance, fruits that had never looked any more delicious, singing birds and nightingale that sung and enthralled listeners with their magical voice. Rama plucked a few fruits hanging in the lowest branches of the

trees, and ate the delicious fruits hungrily, sharing a few with his new friend.

" Here little boy, is your favourite fruit tree, the cherry tree! " said Munni with little skip as they reached a massive cherry tree which looked splendid in sight. Rama's eyes wandered on each and every branch in search of the golden cherry, but he could not find it!

After eating a few cherries with disappointment and passing more than the number he ate to Munni, Rama sat down under an apple tree. Feeling heavy breathing and noises of snores in his pocket, he realized that Munni was asleep. He gently took him out of his pocket and rested him against a pile of pebbles without awakening him. Then, Rama began walking in the huge Willow Orchard in search of the golden cherry. He walked for hours and hours inspecting each and every tree, the ground for fallen fruits, the fish or birdies carrying something golden in their lips till all that was left to be re inspected was the cherry tree, which Rama had excluded as Munni was present there. Weary and exhausted, but having not given up, Little Rama walked towards the cherry tree.



Rama was relieved to find that at least, Munni was yet asleep. He looked closely at the cherry tree boughs, leaves, and every fruit from all angles, and couldn't find the golden cherry. Shattered, his thoughts resumed how his mother would be furious and spiteful with him, and how his sister would disown him forever. He remembered their poverty, their torn rags in winter which kept them shivering and coughing at night, his sister's friends talking about how they attain every little thing they ask for from their parents but how his Akka has to work hard to get them, and how he wished that the golden cherry would only drop from the clouds near his feet! But, though a cherry didn't drop from the sky, a miraculous idea flashed in Rama's head!

Rama remembered how the Old Wise Willow Wizard had taught him the spells to turn a petty pea to a golden one, and surely, if he changed the words in the right manner, it could possibly turn red juicy cherries to golden magical ones, he thought excitedly. Anxious, he jumped on his feet and mumbled the spell under his breath.

" Red cherries on the bough,
Hear my words and turn golden now,
Red cherries on the bough,
Hear my words and turn golden now,
Red cherries on the bough,
Hear my words and turn golden now. "

The cherries in the bough started shaking rampantly for a few seconds, but none of them turned to gold. Rama chose another bough and repeated his spell, then another and again another. But none of them turned to gold.

" It can't be that easy to find the magic golden cherry, I guess. Maybe I should quit

and go back home with my story of the Willow City. Amma will be pleasant, " but then when he marveled about it, he felt that nobody would believe him, not even Amma. It was her, who had assured him , that there's nothing called magical creatures and mystical beings.

He walked around carelessly, and suddenly something hit him hard on his foot.

" Ouch, " he whimpered in pain, and crouched down to massage his toe. And there it was, the cherry, the Golden Cherry lying on the bare ground, glinting in the rosy sunset rays. He took it on his palm and admired it for a few minutes, but as soon as he opened his mouth wide to devour it, Munni awoke and started hurrying towards him, yelling in full volume and forbidding him to eat the golden cherry. Rama dropped the cherry in his mouth before Munni could reach him, and he munched it as fast as he could. The sweet juice calmed him down and filled him with a sense of unexplainable happiness, and his vision blurred and he fell on the ground into a deep sleep. The last he saw was Munni only a few paces away from him, begging him to spit it out.

Rama woke up twitching, as he felt a tingling sensation on his cheek. A butterfly with yellow and blue wings was seated on his left cheek comfortably, and Rama shooed it away by the swish of his palm. He heard clanking noises of metals, and as he turned his head, he saw four knights in metal armours moving towards him with huge steps.

" Its a human! No wonder he ate the forbidden cherry, " the first knight said.

" Well, its good that Sir Nicholas likes him, otherwise he would've been sent to Slimy Iceland, where he would've frozen to death amidst all the happiness," he laughed devilishly.

" Where am I being sent to? " Rama asked as the knights reached him.

" You're in Slimy Land, the Willow City Prison. You will be sent to Slimy Flower Land

till Munni, Sir Nicholas and a few others arrive and get you, " the first knight replied.

" But.. " Rama paused. He must not let the knights know about his intention of eating the golden cherry, otherwise he would be guarded at every second and his chances of obtaining the magic dust will be null.

The four knights surrounded Rama on all four sides and fenced him with their swords as they walked. He had to walk in line with the second and third knight, such that he doesn't miss a step and the sword doesn't land on him. But, as Rama walked, the idea of Slimy Land being a prison seemed more and more unbelievable to him. It was as beautiful as the Orchard and there were plenty of colorful and sweet smelling flowers, sparkling rivers on the land he was walking on.

" In Slimy Land you are now,
The land confined with the strongest spells,
Hear my voice and heed my words,
And all will be well,
Do not smell the exalting flowers in Flower Land,
They make you lose track of precious time,
And if you do not heed my magic words,
You will return home without dishes or dime! " the

witches's voice echoed in Rama's ear as a buzzing bee. From then onwards, Rama walked breathing slowly through his mouth, such that it remains unnoticeable to the knights in silver armours.

" How is the boy not sneezing? All of them who come here can't stop sneezing! " the

third knight eyed him suspiciously.

" I guess they're allergic to pollen grains, I'm not, " Rama smiled brightly. The third knight nodded.

When they reached Flower Land, the knights ordered Rama to walk inside, as they removed some mud from the head of the sword in which it was safely kept, and lined it along the gate of the flowered fence. Rama continued walking, hoping to hear the witch's voice again for more direction that will lead him to the magic dust. Minutes past by and then he resolved to act on his own. But he had no clue what the magic dust resembled, and where it could have been secretly hidden.

Feeling fatigued from the long and strenuous journey, he decided on taking a dip in the river with sparkling and sweet water. He removed his clothes and slowly walked into the river, and dipped his head in the water. As he dipped his head, he could see many sparkling and colourful fish, rainbow coloured corals, sea horses, aquatic plants, big fish striped black and white as zebras, orange fish with netted fins, and a pink octopus guarding a big shell. Astounded by the sight, and curious he plunged into the water and swam under water till he reached the octopus shell. Curiously, he drew it out of the water, as the octopus clung to his fingers forcefully. Rama somehow managed to get on the shore, and he pulled the octopus out from his fingers and threw him back in the water. His fingers were bleeding with the poison from the tentacles, but Rama didn't bother much. He was excited to see the pearl in the Octopus shell, and as he pulled it closer to himself and opened the upper shell. A message appeared to him in the air in a beautiful handwriting.

" The magic of dust, the dust of magic,

Turns magic to dust and dust to magic."

Rama stared down at it with disbelief as he saw the magic dust in the shell. How easily had he found it! Now, his mother and sister will be proud of him, his mother can buy many china dishes, and his sister can buy beautiful dresses that she would wear to parties. His sister would love him and adore him, his mother would call him the best son she can ever have in her lifetime, and everyone will envy them as they would have everything they want, and a few things they couldn't ever imagine of possessing. Rama stroked the magic dust in his hand with joy, but his eyes lifted to the words which was fading in the air.

" The magic of dust, the dust of magic, " he re read once again slowly and coherently, so that he clearly understood its meaning, " Turns magic to dust and dust to magic." The magic of this dust will turn dust to magic, but it will turn magic to dust too, he ruminated. On understanding the message clearly, he said aloud,

" This is what Munni told me - the essence of the magic world, the very substance that makes them survive. If I bring the magic dust to the witch, all of these magical creatures would die, and there would be no magic existing in this world, other than the wicked spells of the Ugly Witch. She will kill all my friends, all the glorious and beautiful characters and stories that we only read about, and she would cast spells on the humans and create roguery all around. Every good thing will be put to an end. And worse still, there will no magic, simply no good magic at all in this world, " Rama pondered aloud, and threw the shell back into the sparkling waters of the rivers.

Rama smiled being pleased with himself, and a felt a hand on his shoulder. The Old Wise Willow Wizard, Nicholas, a few members of the jury, the four knights and Munni had been

watching it all along from the time Rama went into the waters. Rama lowered his eyes with guilt as he faced the Willow Wizard, as he felt he had been too selfish and greedy the whole time.

" You left your gift from Santa, little boy, " Munni said, as he extended his tiny hands carrying the blue shiny parcel.

" Oh, I don't even deserve to have a present from Santa. I have been so greedy all along. " Rama said with a sour face.

" Rama, I saw what you did with the magic dust. Any other boy would have taken it, destroyed our world to gain happiness in his, but you put forth other's happiness than you're own. Indeed you have been a little selfish and greedy, but you have been thoughtful and sensitive too. We owe you for our survival right now, " Santa smiled calmly at him.

Rama shook his head in disagreement as his conscience hurt him, and he apologised time and again.

" I was just so sorry for all that I had done, breaking my mother's dishes, hearing my sister's promise of never speaking to me again, that all I wanted to do was just go home with new dishes and be hugged by my amma and akka. I didn't know that my illogical thinking and impracticality would lead me to more troubles. I didn't mean to do any of this Munni, " Rama said sadly.

" When I was reading your mind, little boy, I read all your troubles and concerns, and I read the witch's rhymes to you and the effect it had on your thoughts everytime you heard her voice. It's not all your fault. You're a little innocent boy, who is the most suitable as her victim, " the Wise Willow Wizard said thoughtfully. " And you do not need to worry anymore, for I have erased her memories of the past two days and she remembers nothing of you and her orders to you

of bringing her the magic dust. " he smiled.

" Thank you, " Rama beamed and hugged the wizard.

Rama was falling homesick and he grew desperate to meet his family, so the wise old men decided that it was best for Rama to go home. The flying horse was waiting outside the gates of the Slimy Land and they climbed on the chariot together, and Rama was braver this time when the horse landed on the ground. He met Noddy once again, and this time, he went on a ride on his yellow and red taxi and gifted a few pink flowers to Tessy Bear to go with her dress. Harry was waiting for him with Peter Pan nearby, and they thanked Rama for saving their life from the ugly evil witch. Harry promised him that he would discuss with the Wise Willow Wizard on how they could punish her extremely for doing such terrible offences when Rama asked him with concern about her.

" It's good that Wise Willow Wizard erased her memory, otherwise she would have known where the magic dust is hidden. No one had ever found where it was placed. I was quite surprised to learn that you found it without any difficulty, " said Peter Pan as Tinkerbell giggled.



In a few moments, Rama was astonished to see hundreds of Dumans gathered together to see him. There was so much of rush, and cheerful noises, applause, congratulations, and dumans waiting to greet him that Rama began to feel like a hero. Many of his favourite characters personally came up to him and thanked, wished, congratulated him for what he had done. Finally, it was time for him to leave, and one of the Willow City Judges approached him with his grey braided hair with three passes of the willow city which could be valid for four more years. The crowd cheered as the Judge presented him with the passes, and the Receptionist whom Rama had admired before his court room procedure pecked him on his cheek. Rama felt like he would explode as he turned crimson.

Rama walked in the tunnel decorated with flowers and chandeliers as he walked back along the same path. He didn't speak a word till they almost reached the end of the tunnel. Rama looked dull and pale, and Munni attempts at cheering him failed disgracefully.

" Oh little boy, stop making that sad face. You can visit us for four more years, and if you remain just as good and lovely as this, they might even extend your time, " Munni smiled which couldn't hide the sadness in his eyes either.

" But I will miss you all so much. I wish I could stay with all of you, especially you, Munni. I had the best time of my life in Willow City."

" Stop talking like a grandfather. Best time of your life? Your life hasn't even begun yet! And everytime you plan to come here, I will be the first one to greet you! ," Munni said flashing a brilliant smile. Rama smiled too.

As they reached the other end of the tunnel, Munni asked Rama to extend his hand, and

placed something heavy in his palm. It wasn't dark but very dimly light with the sunlight falling through the leaves of the trees into the hollow trunk, Rama couldn't see what Munni handed him.

" What is it? " Rama asked curiously.

" You didn't get the magic dust and saved us all, so this is my gift to you, recognizing our friendship too. It's a wooden box with broken magic glass pieces. If you arrange it in the right order like a puzzle, you can see the Willow City through it in the animated version. We have the broken magic glass in all our houses, we use it as forms of communication at times, so if you need to see where we are or feel like talking to us, chatting with Mr. Potter, or learning a few more tricks from the Old Willow Wizard, you can concentrate on your thoughts and the images will appear on the glass!" Munni said excitedly.

" That's so stupefying, " Rama exclaimed, and his face fell when the branches shook, and the beam of sunlight shifted as they stood at the bottom of the trunk.

Munni created a magical ladder for Rama, and the leaves waved along with Rama's palm as he exit Willow City along with the wooden box, three passes and Santa's blue parcel. It had been two whole days for which Rama had been away from home. The sun was on top of his head, and he dragged his shadow along the dusty road bordered with coconut trees. He was tired and sweaty from the great magical adventure, and he was also a refined experienced little man. He knew now, how wrong it was to be selfish and greedy and how it takes over one's senses and mind, and makes one a victim of all the wrongs one can do or think of doing in this world. Rama was no longer the innocent little foolish boy who had left his home, he was now the wise little boy who was returning home with much more than precious presents from a mystical land.

A bullock cart was passing by the road, and Rama gestured it to stop. Rama climbed onto the cart and sat beside the driver, and they drank coconut water from the shells piled behind the cart. He felt like telling his wonderful adventure to everyone, but he had promised to keep it a secret to everyone other than his family, and he kept quiet. Rama had dozed off in a light sleep, when the cart halted in front of Rama's doorstep. he climbed out of the cart, thanked the man for the journey and the refreshing coconut water and bid him goodbye as he watched him going away to the feilds. Rama took a deep breath, and walked on tip toe into the courtyard after he unlatched the door. No one was seated in the garden, where he had broken his mother's favourite dishes.

Rama quietly entered the kitchen, where he expected his mother to be present. She was standing near the gas stove, cutting vegetables monotonously. Her face was sick and gloomy.

" Amma, " Rama called out to her from outside the kitchen door. " Amma, " he called out once gain, when he had been unheard. His mother turned slowly, and her eyes filled with tears as she saw her little son standing at the door.

" I'm sorry I broke your dishes, " Rama said apologetically.

" You should be sorry that you left your little mother all alone! Where did you go, my son? " she asked worried.

" Its a long long story, Amma. I have so much to tell you and you would not even dare to believe me. But its all true, " Rama chirped.

His sister came out of her room after hearing the racket of noise, and apologized to Rama for being so cold and unjust to him. She explained to him how frenzied she was after thinking how she would be scolded, and she had uttered words which she hadn't meant at all. Rama hugged his

sister lovingly, and his mother carried him in her arms. He was the happiest little boy in the world. After lunch, Amma asked Rama to narrate all of his stories to her and Rama told him and his sister of the witch, willow city, Munni the chipmunk, the cartoon and fictional characters he had only read about till now, the flying horse, unicorn, Santa Claus, the golden cherry, Slimy Land and about his whole great unbelievable adventure. He showed them the passes to Willow City which he received from the judge, the box containing the broken magic glass, and Santa's blue parcel.



When his sister begged him to open Santa's parcel, Rama found a cardboard box in it. As he opened the box, he found the exact expensive china crockery which he had broken when he was playing football! It had an extra pair of cup, saucers, dishes, side dishes too. His sister was stupified to find the same pattern and his mother laughed out gaily at all the trouble his little son had been into just to replace his mother's broken dishes.

" Rama, look, there's something else in the parcel for you!" his sister chirped happily.

" It's a mouth organ," Rama exclaimed. He blew into it, and a magical sound floated

through the air bringing life long happiness in the family and the neighbourhood.

Rama visited the Willow City often with his amma and akka, and he introduced them to all of his friends who were enthralled to see him. Rama and Munni remained friends forever, and they spoke to each other everyday through the magic glass. Rama managed to learn a few more spells and tricks, and became popular for it in his village. Santa's mouth organ was the aid to many beautiful tunes Rama composed for which he received a lot of fame in the film industry. The Old Ugly Witch was fed with mushrooms, which was the strictest form of punishment in the Willow City, as humans are allergic to mushrooms and develop severe rash and itching on consuming them, which puts them in a state of coma in a few hours time.



Rama still remains as the only one in history to have found the Magic Dust. The Wise Willow Wizard cast a spell on Munni, Harry and even St. Nicholas for that matter so that nobody could track their thoughts on the Magic Dust to put an end to the Willow world. There's a public holiday in Willow City on the day Rama found the Magic Dust- every year, symbolizing the sacrifice of a human to the duman world for his belief in existance and continuity of pure and good magic.

Did Rama become a part of all the magic? We do not for sure, until someone writes about it, isn't it?

FEW THINGS YOU DON'T DO AFTER MARRIAGE (NORMALLY)

~ a story by *Disphum*

Chapter 1

Soham has at last settled to marry the girl for whom he took two sick leaves and went upto Pune spending a staggering 20K flight fare. Yes, you ask him, he would say it's a love marriage though they came to know each other through a popular matrimony site.

"So it calls for a bachelor's party, we can't let this big moment trickle away so silently" DK was thoughtful litting the 4th fag back to back. He has been back from Singapore last week, he will again fly to Singapore after a month as his project clients want him back there badly. I was sceptical hearing that his manager in Singapore is a divorcee lady who is beautiful and often arrives office with provocative dresses. DK says she is hot but not of his tune. I personally don't believe him seeing his fishy tendency to back his manager's wish to get on board there so soon. The only thing he is pondering about is the price of one pack of cigarette which costs him 20 dollars. His colleagues have returned with LCD TV, SLR cameras out of their extra per diem they earned for being abroad. Poor DK came with a fat ass and 4 key rings for we four, his fellow room mates.

"What is a bachelor's party? I am bachelor for last 27 years and no one considered me for a single bachelor's party" Sujay was still over phone with his girl friend but his ears are always apt to catch on to the correct topics.

"It's traditionally a party to celebrate the big occasion before the chicken is taken to the hatchery." Sanjoy immitates Amitabh Bachhan's voice as usual with his 5 feet hieght.

"So what's the plan? what all will we do?" I entered into the discussion. I was down a bit losing to DK in chess.

"We won't go to Lazeez this time, I had a big brawl with my digestive system last time I went there. This time we will go to some neat and clean restaurant to get some traditional bengali cousine" Sujay is still having his stomach upset. Doctors often say he is maniac about this, but he continues with multi coloured tablets and capsules and roughages.

"SUCKS" Sanjay interrupted "a bachelor's party with rice and raazma?"

"I guess we need to do something special. Guys, see once you are married, always you are married. So it's time to cherish our boyhood" I explained

"Like what?" DK has finished his 4th cigarette and searching for his lighter again.

"FIVE THINGS YOU DON'T DO AFTER MARRIAGE" I said. "Marriage is like eating the forbidden fruit, it's appealing, but once you have a bite of it, you will be stripped off all the pleasures of a bachelor's paradise and sent off to the world of bondage and sufferings. So a bachelor's party is literally the last chance to do whatever you want and which you really can't do post marriage"

"What are the five things for you Mr. Amitabh?" Sujay taunted Sanjay.

"I want to go to Vegas and spend a night on a sea beach lying naked" sanjay was prompt in answering. I don't know if he meant saying lying nude alone or what.

"I want to go to Ladakh from Bangalore on my 500 cc pulsar" DK is always a bike-freak.

"I want to date Deepika Padukone, she has got a damn good size" Sujay's eyes were closed

to favour his fantasy "but don't tell it to Sucheta please my dear friends, otherwise I have to keep on rubbing my ass on the floor seeking apology from her. She is a sweet girl, I don't want to hurt her but I want my Padu also for once oh God !!!" Sujay was ecstatic. I don't know why for the God's name he calls Deepika Padukone as "Padu". Anyway, his fantasy was with flying colours, might be because of the globe of foul air permanently residing inside his belly.

"And you Mr. Advocate?" Soham pinged me.

"I want to wash my teeth and ass with whisky. One whole day I won't touch anything else but whisky whisky and whisky." I was ready with my answer.

"So it's time to cherish our wishes this time. So guys fasten your seat belts and welcome to forbidden world" Sanjay thinks he has got enough resemblance to Amitabh Bachhan in respect of attitude also. Poor guy.

"Which means that, sanjay wants to strip before all, Sujay wants a blind date, Mr. Advocate wants a high doze of boozing and DK wants a long bike ride. Why don't we plan something to cover all these? Let's all go to Goa on a bike drive, we'll get to see enough of liquor, beaches and sexy models. Sujay, you OK with foreigners?" Soham put his proposal with a serious face.

"Yup, I have heard foreigners are far more agile than Indians. But you are our Mr. Bachelor boy, what special are you going to do in Goa?" Sujay answered.

Soham kept on thinking as the focus of discussion shifted to him. I have hardly seen him doing anything promptly. His each and every notion will give you the impression that world was there for last million years and will be there for million years in future. So there is ample time to do anything, be it in toilet, be it having lunch. Oneday he explained he wanted to be a fast bowler, but

he has turned to be a spinner only for his relaxed attitude towards life. "I will play beach volley ball with the bikini babes in Goa. I know Anjuna beach is famous for it. But this is only for your eyes. Make sure you are not spoiling my marriage before it happens!!" Soham answered slowly with a very serious face.

"You wanna play volley ball with girls at the age of 27??? What a loser !!" DK burst into laughter.

"I am no DK, you know...I am a good boy". Soham answered.

Well, here I need to give a small background of DK. DK's real name is Arindam. But once he reached 5th standard people started noticing him before girls' schools. In coaching classes, he was more keen to help other girls in taking notes rather than taking his own. So, someone someday called him D.K. which stands for "Dhanda-Kharap" or "ill intention". Since then his parents also started calling him DK.

"This weekend fine? but this is year end time, Goa will be full" I said.

"Yes, full of colours" Sanjoy is very eager to add to those colours lying nude on beach.

"OK then done....three cheers for Soham....hip hip hurray.....three cheers for Goa....hip hip hurray" after long days, any of our discussions ended without a dispute. **FORBIDDEN WORLD CALLING !!**

Chapter 2

We were just in time. Goa was just like what we dreamt for. I cursed God so many times for my hair loss, pimples and skinny figure, but could not help here thanking him for creating this loveliest creature called "GIRLS !!". I haven't seen so many sexy girls before in skimpy outfits which aroused thousands of my fantasies. We laid on the sea beach , uncapped the beers and started ogling the girls all around.

We met a Portuguese during our lunch in hotel who also joined us from no where. After finishing a brace of bottle, he suddenly opened up. As a result, we got to know his name is Airas, he came to India for studying his post graduate and never returned as he found his love in one of his class mates. Ultimately, he could not finish his study thinking of the girl who didn't give a damn to him. Now he is a real estate promoter and still searching for his lost love. He continued his love story with misty eyes which easily had the potential to match Karan Johar's next flick. Soham was very much touched by his life story and was interrogating him further to our utmost annoyance. DK started gossiping with a couple of girls at ease. I envy him for this quality. Why on earth girls don't find any interest in me?? Sujay consoled Airas and asked him about strip club around. Airas finished couple of our beer bottles but paid us back with some invaluable information about the most famous strip club around. We understood this lover boy is not new to these world.

No point in wasting time. We started our bikes and headed towards the strip club.

"Hey guys !!" It was Airas. We turned back.

"You guys are prepared, right? " Airas winked.

"We are always prepared" I said.

"Best Of Luck" Airas showed his thumb up.

The name of the club seemed pretty interesting "Kiss the World". Sujay was fluently talking rubbish on all the possibilities in store for the night. I could easily feel the butterflies in his stomach.

It was altogether a different environment inside. Loud music with half conscious boys and girls shouting indifferently didn't give us a comfortable feel. Then we happened to see the big black bouncers roaming around which aroused our goose bumps.

"But where is the stripping happening?" Sanjoy shouted in excitement.

"Don't even try to do that. It's not a strip club. If somebody shows any intention of doing something special, we have 6 bouncers keeping eyes on everyone, they can throw anyone to mom's lap." One of the attendants pointed us to a table.

"I will screw that Airas once I get out of this junk place. Bustard!!" Sanjoy shouted again.

"No foul talk please gentlemen. This is your first official warning. Next time I come, will come with the bouncers to caress you. So please behave yourselves." The attendant uttered each word slowly but firmly. He has mastered his profession I must say.

We ordered for our pegs along with some chicken and prawn side dishes. There were around 20 bar girls who were dancing in front of all the tables. They looked to be from all parts of the world. Few of them were really attractive. Girls in front of our table happened to be the worst of the lot. Except one. She was different. She was wearing a black saree which gave her a graceful look. I looked into her eyes and kept one staring at her. As we kept on repeating pegs, world around us seemed more and more colourful. Girls couple of time approached our table to seduce us. Sujay was on his feet when one of those fat girls came and gave a peck on his cheek as a part of her dance gesture. DK and Soham had a hard time to make him quiet. Sanjoy was staring at a couple hugging and smooching in filmy style. His imagination must had placed him in place of the lucky boy.

I couldn't resist myself from staring at that girl. She was a world different than every other girl in this club. She was not dancing much but giving flashes of smiles at times which bowled me out completely. I felt, she also noticed me. I made my mind to talk to her. DK reminded me about the bouncers. I said "I am in love". I approached her quietly so that no one suspects of anything. I pretended as if I was going to the toilets.

"I want to talk to you. This is definitely not the right place for you, you dont look comfortable here. Don't know if I'll be able to help you, but want to meet you for once." I whispered near her ears and vanished into the toilets. After coming back to seat, I couldn't see her around.

We all became pretty sure that bouncers would approach us very shortly and throw us out for poking the dancers which is a violation of rule by their terms. The girl came out from the green room instead and joined the group for dancing. She was not noticing me at all. I felt humiliated and concentrated on other girls to show her my interest in other girls. What a mind game !! Suddenly I felt that girl just in front of me and throwing a piece of paper on my lap.

"Tomorrow morning 11'o clock in front of Regent Inn, Panjim. Come alone please"

"So you are going and that's final?" Sanjoy asked me.

"No second thought. I need to talk to her. I can't forget those eyes". I said.

"So what 's your plan? What are you going to do in a public place with her in broad daylight?" Sujay mocked.

"Shut up!! I am going to talk to her, I need to understand her problems, I can't believe girls like her are dancing in a bar for bread butter." I explained.

"Then why don't you call and meet everyone? They are also dancing for bread butter and I am pretty sure they also need your selfless help. Don't be a hypocrite. You confess you want to date

that girl. We are OK with that but for God's shake don't bring all those junk philosophies within."

DK was not convinced with my explanation.

"I don't want to date her, I want to be her friend" I said.

"Fuck you !!!" DK shouted.

"Fuck you all. I am going tomorrow and that's final." I asserted.

Chapter 3

I started from hotel at around 10. Everyone was still amidst deep sleep. DK and Sanjoy snores like pigs. Soham's big tummy follows a simple harmonic motion pattern with his each breathing. I couldn't sleep much even after last night's heavy boozing.

I reached Regent Inn just before 11 'o clock and saw her already waiting. I found her even more beautiful without any hint of makeup. She was simple, sober, sweet and yes, Bengali. I was completely taken aback knowing that she heard us talking in Bengali and deliberately came in front of our table. We went inside the restaurant and ordered for lunch. She was too shy to speak first. I asked her about various unimportant topics like Goa's weather, traffic, bus fare etc. to help her feeling at home.

"Do you enjoy working here?" I looked right into her eyes.

"How does that create any difference to you?" She answered.

"Of course it creates, otherwise I would have not come to meet you here."

"This is nothing new, so many people wanted to meet me before, listened to my stories, sympathized me, spent some nights with me, gave some money and never returned back."

"Then why have you come again to meet me?"

"Because, I have to take chances. I want to get back to my village in Bengal, I want to see my parents and my little sister again."

"They won't take you back" I said

"They have no idea about what I am doing or whether I am still alive or not. They will be happy to see me alive. Will you help me to get out of this hell?" Her voice was shaking and dropping.

"How did you come here?"

"That's a long story, I was kidnapped when I was just 12 and playing with my sister in our sugarcane field in our village. Eventually, they have sold me here. I have travelled 5 big cities in last 4 years. I am in Goa for last 8 months. Polices here are well aware of this racket. So you can't expect a help from them." She was precise in her answer.

"Then?"

"We need to flee"

"Flee?"

"Yes, and that too before this afternoon. We have shows starting from 6 in the evening, so by any means, we need to be out of Goa before that."

"Why are you believing me so much?" I asked.

"Because I have nothing to lose."

"But I have to call my friends, they are still sleeping."

"Call them quickly"

I called up Soham and told him to wrap up everything, check out from hotel and come to Panjim as soon as possible. We all met before Regent Inn around 12.30.

"What the hell is this? Are we the side characters of your melodramatic Romeo-Juliet novel? Why are you wasting our mood?" Sanjoy asked me. He was still looking like half asleep.

"It's something serious guys." I introduced her to my friends and narrated the whole story. We took little time to discuss and decided the shortest route to get out of Goa. We started driving as fast as possible. The girl explained us possibilities of all sorts of danger which can envelope us anytime, but all of us were very much upto doing some real life adventure for the first time. After three hours of drive, we were already out of Goa and had a sense of relief when a bike suddenly thumped my bike coming out of the jungle beside the road. I faltered along with the girl on my bike. We could easily make out the riders of that bike - two of the 6 bouncers we saw yesterday night in the club.

"That's Morrice and that's Steve. They won't let us go" The girl exclaimed recognizing them. I started to stand up when Morrice placed a fist on my face, I found myself again on the ground. There were no one around to help us as it was a desolate road and the sun was about to set. Steve started pulling the girl against her wish. Sujay came forward to prevent him when Morrice opened a dagger to hit him on his left hand. The road flooded with blood. We all ran towards Sujay as he was ailing in pain. Morrice winked us and the Steve took the girl and approached towards their bike. I stood helpless seeing the girl crying for her life, on the other side Sujay flooded with blood lying on the road.

All happened very quickly. Sanjoy brought out a beer bottle and smashed it on Steve's head. Steve fell on the ground. DK and Soham took two more bottles to break them on Morrice's head. We saw them lying on the ground in pain and moreover with surprise. I, by that time, gathered some of my courage and started hitting them on their heads. DK and Soham being the healthiest among us did most of it leaving the rest for me and Sanjoy. We hit them until they fell

completely unconscious. The girl , by that time, took Sujay on her lap and started washing his injury with raw whisky. Carrying liquor in side bag delivers always, in some way or other. We started again from there shortly fearing that our bouncer friends might get back to sense anytime. We reached Bangalore early morning and straightway went to a nursing home to treat Sujay's injury. The girl was clinical in nursing the injury and dressing it up, otherwise our thin Sujay might have ended up with a good amount of blood loss.

"I need to leave Bangalore by today; they must have noticed your bikes carrying Karnataka numbers." The girl was right in saying so.

Sanjoy, DK and me went to station to see her off. Sanjoy gave her the bundle of cash we were carrying during the trip. She waved us hands as the train disappeared.



PATRIARCHY AND THE SILENT WOMAN IN THE INDIAN SOCIETY

- Arundhati Chowdhury

You can tell the condition of a nation by looking at the status of its women.

- Jawaharlal Nehru

A norm that chases women throughout their life is to be silent. The value behind this norm is becoming an ideal woman in the society. In India an ideal woman is supposed to be silent in addition to the long hair, curvaceous body and wide eyes she is expected to have. Since childhood itself girls are asked to keep quiet by social agents including their parents and teachers. When she laughs loudly at home, her grandmother might turn up and scold her for doing that. When they talk to someone during free hours, teachers come around inquiring if talking would do any good for the student's future. In that case, being a silent girl is an easy way to gain a good image in front of the elders.

Being afraid of the informal and negative sanctions at school and home, girls keep as silent as they can, which eventually makes some of them a strong introvert. People thereafter start to see them as self-centered, arrogant and inept. In this fast developing world, where the gates of opportunities are open to extroverts, these girls ultimately find their dreams sinking within their silence. During a conflict, girls are often told to be quiet, saying that the more they argue, the more heated the conflict would become. However, it is hard to be in agreement with this norm which asks only the women to be silent.

The essence of this norm superficially keeps on changing from becoming a good daughter to a good housewife, hiding the patriarchy it actually is. When men in the society take decisions and women silently follow them, the society seems to be in peace. However, it is extremely

disappointing that people support this norm in this age of feminism. a norm that chases women throughout their life is to be silent.

During the Vedic age, more than 3,000 years ago, women were assigned a high place in society. They shared an equal standing with their men folk and enjoyed a kind of liberty that actually had societal sanctions. The ancient Hindu philosophical concept of '*shakti*', the feminine principle of energy, was also a product of this age. This took the form of worship of the female idols or goddesses. Why was it then that the female sex was labeled as “weaker” and males began to control societies? Why was such a big con perpetrated on earth and how? And the con lives on. For, you have to just look at the starving bodies of female models walking on stilts on Madison Avenue ramps to know that women are still manipulated by men.

But I can't stop wondering why and how matriarchy was almost entirely eradicated from our planet. Why patriarchy? Why did women in early societies agree to a system that was so clearly detrimental to their well-being? After all, they were the mothers of their sons. Why did they not teach their sons differently? Most sociologists reject predominantly biological explanations of patriarchy and contend that social and cultural conditioning is primarily responsible for establishing male and female gender roles.⁴ According to standard sociological theory, patriarchy is the result of sociological constructions that are passed down from generation to generation. These constructions are most pronounced in societies with traditional cultures and less economic development. However, even in modern developed societies, gender messages conveyed by family, mass media, and other institutions largely favor males having a dominant status.

Similarly, the patriarchal nature of ancient Indian society has led to very different expectations for the behavior of women than that of men. Even something as early as the epic

tale of Ramayana, echoes these notions of sex appropriate behaviors by presenting its female characters with attributes that are in stark contrast to the characteristics of their male counterparts. The virtuous women of the story possess exaggerated feminine qualities while the immoral women's actions more closely resemble the behavior of the men. In either case, the women are subordinate and are considered possessions rather than partners. A woman was valued mainly for her beauty and the pleasure she can provide to her husband. Thus, the Ramayana could be considered as the cementing pillar to the patriarchal structure of the ancient Indian society and the sex-appropriate ideals that are prominent throughout the Ramayana were a reflection of the patriarchal values that structured ancient Indian society.

In the deeply patriarchal Indian context where women are still viewed as “bodies” to be designed and patrolled as per a man’s wishes and convenience, a woman’s body has to fit into the “ideal” dimensions and complexion to become normal and respectable. In a context where even the completely “normal” women—fair, beautiful, educated and working—find themselves in a fix, be it the domestic sphere or the workplace, in various matters such as sexual harassment, dowry and inferior treatment, it is indeed strenuous for the physically different women to aspire for a life devoid of humiliations and hardship.

The Tamil context is more or less similar to the Afro-American situation where black or dusky skin is a social stigma. A dark girl is a burden and marrying her is viewed as a great sacrifice on the part of the groom. She is detested from birth, as her parents have to shell out a whopping dowry to hand her over to a magnanimous male. The embarrassment and the ensuing complications are best brought out in the works of prominent Tamil women writers like Sivasankari and Vaasanthi. Mass

media persistently construct stereotypes that reaffirm the traditional notion that to have a dark complexion is the consequence of the original sin or sins performed in earlier births.

Another threatening disability that haunts Indian women is childlessness or infertility. In a nation that is proudly called Bharat Mata (Mother India, so fertile that she keeps begetting crores and crores of valiant sons and chaste daughters), women's fertility is a crucial factor that determines their social status. Women who cannot bear children are not honourable and hence unfit to be called women. They have to tolerate the humiliation meted out to them by society and family. And finally they have to make the supreme sacrifice of letting their husbands have a second marriage. Most of them take great pains to find suitable wives for their husbands and become willing servants to take care of the husband's offspring through the second wife. Their sole ambition is to feel proud at the continuation of the family heirloom.

The situation is not any different for a woman who cannot give birth to a son. In many communities such incapable women are divorced or sidelined by their husbands who opt for a second wife to produce male offspring. This is one important reason for the population explosion in many states of India such as Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh etc. Until a boy is born the woman is made to carry as many children as possible, resulting in macro families with 7 or 8 children. Even today in many families such incapable women are driven away to their parental homes and replacements are hurriedly made in the mad quest for a male heir. Scared of the resultant social stigma that begins by branding her as Vaazhaavetti (one who has wasted her life) numerous women consent to female foeticide and infanticide.

Woman must not accept; she must challenge.

She must not be awed by that which has been built up around her; she must reverence that woman

in her which struggles for expression.

~ Margaret Sanger ~

A recent article that I read said that women can change the world. “We only need to ditch the niche – banish the notion that women are a peripheral audience and place them squarely in the centre, where they belong and engage women by speaking directly to their values and encouraging their active participation. With women on your side, you'll both build a community and catalyze the change you want to see in the world.” So I believe it's time women came out of their dark cozy shells, blinked to the sunlight blinding their eyes and stared back at it for seconds without fear, and walked fearlessly, without stopping at whatever they heard or saw. Just walked and walked, till their dreams came true.

Articles:

Times of India, May 5th 2011: Bride perform ghurchari, tumbles male domination in marriage rituals

🔥👥 **BHIWANI:** It was a historic moment for the fair sex in Haryana when a 23-year-old Monika Rani, a girl-next-door from Khaparwas village of Bhiwani district dared to turn a male specific marriage ritual on its head and rode a mare to perform [ghurchari](#) to make a round of the village in a procession on Wednesday.

As Monika took the unprecedented step of performing ghurchari, which was so far considered only a ritual for grooms, she did not face any resistance and in fact hailed by entire village. Around 400 persons including old and young who participated in the ghurchari procession described her as the icon of changing society.

She rode the mare at around 5 pm in the evening wearing the red and blue colour sherwari and a headgear just like a groom does. As her procession proceeded towards a temple in the village where she performed pooja, children danced to the dhol tunes in front of mare while a group of women and men followed her singing traditional Haryanavi songs blessing the soon-to-be wed girl. On way during her nearly two hour procession, villagers lined up on both sides of the streets

and even rushed atop their houses to have a glimpse of the bride's ghurchari with her elder sister continuously showering rice on her from behind.

While a few women offered her glassful of milk on the way which she took sitting firmly on the mare-back, others welcomed her by offering currency notes. Lakshmi Devi, a 55 year old woman remarked, "This is new generation. Things are set to be changed with the changing times and the time seems to have arrived now. These kinds of new initiatives will also usher in new thinking in people that will end the age old male domination in our society".

A confident looking Monika, who opted out of studies after completing her 10+2 due to financial constrains, remained seated on the mare for nearly two hours weaving to girlfriends who were looking at her with surprise. A young girl who had gotten married recently and a friend of Monika maintained, "It was a bold and big decision on part of Monika. She in fact has always be a confident girl. Perhaps we are not bold enough to follow her but hope that her initiative would herald a social change and we would be able to perform the ghurchari of our daughters in the years to come".

Monika while talking to the TOI during her march back to her home after offering pooja in the village temple said, "I agreed to take this symbolic step because I think that it would sent out a massage of women empowerment. I hope that my decision would encourage the women be confident in their actions as they are equal to their male counterparts." She added that there is a need to set such examples along with carrying out the campaign against the female foeticide and bias against girlchild in the society.

Monika's younger brother Chatek Varma, who referred to Monika as her elder brother said, "We are very happy that entire village joined us in this moment when Monika has created history. We are overwhelmed that entire village hailed our decision and blessed my sister". Her would-be husband Sandeep Kumar, a computer engineer too would perform ghurchari in his native village Bhariwas located in the same district on Thursday just before he would leave to her house to tie the nuptial knot on Thursday.

The Bhiwani SP Ashwin Sainvi and district red cross society secretary Shyam Sunder who had launched a save the girl child campaign by involving thousands of youngsters like Monika in his campaign also participated in the ghurchari. Monika would also take the eighth vow along with her groom while performing the wedding rituals on Thursday.

The Hindu, April 29th 2011: Sex ratio, patriarchy, and ethics

K.S. Jacob

Patriarchal societies are part of the problem of altered sex ratios, female infanticide and foeticide. This needs to be acknowledged and changed.

India's sex ratio, among children aged 0-6 years, is alarming. The ratio has declined from 976 females (for every 1000 males) in 1961 to 914 in 2011. Every national census has documented a

decline in the ratio, signalling a ubiquitous trend. Preliminary data from the 2011 census have recorded many districts with sex ratios of less than 850. The ratio in urban areas is significantly lower than those in rural parts of the country. Reports suggest evidence of violence and trafficking of poor women and forced polyandry in some regions with markedly skewed ratios. The overall steep and consistent decline in the ratio mandates serious review.

Sex selection and technology : Medical technology (like amniocentesis and ultrasonography), employed in the prenatal period to diagnose genetic abnormalities, are being misused in India for detecting the sex of the unborn child and subsequently for sex-selection. Female foetuses, thus identified, are aborted.

A large, nationally representative investigation of married women living in 1.1 million households documented markedly reduced sex ratios of 759 and 719 for second and third births when the preceding children were girls. By contrast, sex ratios for second or third births, if one or both of the previous children were boys, were 1102 and 1176 respectively. A systematic study in Haryana documented the inverse relationship between the number of ultrasound machines in an area and the decline in sex ratios. Studies have also documented correlations of low sex ratios at birth with higher education, social class and economic status. Many studies have concluded that prenatal sex determination, followed by abortion of female foetuses, is the most plausible explanation for the low sex ratio at birth in India.

The steady decline in the sex ratio suggests that marked improvements in the economy and literacy rates do not seem to have had any impact on this index. In fact, the availability of new technology and its easy access for the urban, wealthy and the educated have worsened the trend and harmed the status of women in Indian society.

Sex selection and statutes : A prolonged campaign by women's groups and civil society organisations all over the country, in the wake of the skewed child sex ratio in the 1991 census, led to the enactment of the Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques Act in 1994. However, this statute was not effectively implemented, leading to further skewing of the sex ratios as recorded in the 2001 census. Social and financial pressures for smaller families intensified the misuse of such technologies to ensure the birth of sons. Such misuse cut across barriers of caste, class, religion and geography. The Act was amended in 2003, to include the more recent pre-conception sex selection techniques within its ambit, with the aim of tightening regulation to provide more teeth to the law to prevent the practice. It mandated the regulation of sale of technology, the registration of diagnostic centres, the monitoring of medical personnel, procedures and protocols. It has procedures for complaints and appeals and regulation by local authorities.

And yet, the problems of implementation are ubiquitous. Violations go unpunished with very few cases being booked and a zero conviction rate. The collusion between people, the medical fraternity and the administration has resulted in the worsening of the sex ratio and failure of the Act to make a difference.

Patriarchy and prejudice: The social system of patriarchy, with males as the primary authority figures, is central to the organisation of much of Indian society. The system upholds the institutions of male rule and privilege and mandates female subordination. Patriarchy manifests

itself in social, religious, legal, political and economic organisation of society. It continues to strongly influence Indian society, despite the Constitution's attempt to bring about an egalitarian social order.

Patriarchal societies in most parts of India have translated their prejudice and bigotry into a compulsive preference for boys and discrimination against the girl child. They have also spawned practices such as female infanticide, dowry, bride-burning and sati. They have led to the neglect of nutrition, health care, education, and employment for girls. Women's work is also socially devalued with limited autonomy in decision-making. The intersections of caste, class and gender worsen the situation. Despite its social construction, patriarchal culture, reinforced by the major religions in the country, maintains its stranglehold on gender inequality. The prevalent patriarchal framework places an ideological bar on the discussion of alternative approaches to achieve gender justice.

Infosys woman employee attacked with blade

NDTV News: April 25, 2011 10:54 IST



Pune: A 24-year-old woman working with Infosys was attacked with a blade in Pune on Sunday, allegedly by an out-of-job IT engineer with whom the police said the victim might have refused to have a relationship. The police said the techie attempted suicide by slashing his wrist after the attack on the woman, a childhood friend of his. The incident took place around 6.30 pm outside the Sushila hostel in Sadashiv Peth where the victim, Niharika Prasad (24), lived. Her attacker was identified as Amitkumar Sharma (24), who was staying at a lodge on Karve Road.

The police said Prasad and Sharma, who both hailed from Patna, were admitted to hospital and out of danger. "Both are out of danger and their statements will be recorded soon," said Assistant Police Inspector Balasaheb Kale from Dattawadi police station. "Prasad has been living in Pune since 2005. She began working with Infosys in the accounts department after completing her ICWA course. Sharma had completed his engineering from Nagpur and had done an IT course from Seed Infotech."

The officer said Prasad had been living in the hostel for two years, and Sharma used to drop her there many times. "Sharma arrived in an autorickshaw outside the Sushila hostel on Sunday evening, around 6.15 pm. Prasad was about to leave for Hyderabad for a company training session when he called her outside," said Kale. "He offered to drop her to the station, but she refused. He might also have requested for a relationship, which was also turned down by Prasad, which angered him and he attacked her with a blade, the kind that is often used to cut thermocol."

Prasad was severely injured in the attack and received injuries on her hand and neck, while Sharma injured his hand. Prasad was admitted to the Bhave hospital near Neelayam theatre, while Sharma underwent an operation at the Poona Hospital on Lal Bahadur Shastri Road.

Sunil Pandey, the watchman deployed at the hostel gate, rushed to the crime spot when he heard screams of some girls who had seen Sharma attack Prasad. He said some nearby residents took Prasad to hospital in a car, while Sharma was taken to hospital on a motorbike.

SARATHI

THE TIEBREAKER

~a story by *Sandip Sar*

Chapter 1

"Where is my garland?"

"Oops! I completely forgot Aassera...I owe you one bigger and better tomorrow, I promise...one of kind you have never seen before...of all rare and foreign flowers with the charming fragrance like yours."

"Tomorrow is my birthday...you promise me a gift" the sweet little girl gave a peck on the cheek of David.

"OK, I promise my sweet little friend..you know, I love you..but I have to rush now for what I hate the most...I am getting late to my office" said David. David, an upright soldier from America who was sent to Rustamiya, a small district in Iraq eight months back along with 10,000 other soldiers to join the Guard and Reserve forces deployed in Iraq. Since then life has completely changed for David. To be honest David does not hate this dingy place as much as his colleagues do. Somehow, he can connect to this land. Yes, his mother was from Iraq which might be the reason..as if he is back to his motherland but all for wrong reasons. Sometimes, he feels sad to see his own countries in war...anyway, who cares...he is here for his duty and only for his duty...there are lots of other things he needs to take care than digging inside these political scums...he needs to get back home early...write his diary...complete the next Sidney Sheldon novel at earliest...and of course, he needs to get Aassera one grand garland and the gift he had promised for her..tomorrow is her birthday...he must not forget it.

Sometimes, David gets thoughtful inside himself...why does he like this little girl so much...does she remind him of his little sister he lost in his very childhood?...he knows nothing but her name...everyday he could see this cute little girl on the verandah of their road side apartment waving her hand to him with the innocent smile. Oneday, David stopped by the house and introduced himself to her...and since then they are friends...it's simple..then why does he feel so much connected to this little Iraqi girl...he is in Iraq to war against them and one little Iraqi baby girl is his best friend...this is really the grand game of destiny!!!

Next day morning, David, on the way to his office, met Aassera with a dandy garland and a cute barbie doll and wished her happy birthday. Aassera jumped with joy into his lap and said "I shall also give you my best birthday gift."

Chapter 2

Next day, newspaper headline read "Three young U.S military officers have been abducted when Iraqi insurgents attacked a military outpost in Rustamiya, Iraq killing four other US soldiers and an Iraqi aide".

David and two of his colleagues were gagged, blindfolded and made kneel down on the floor in a secret party office of a local rebel association with the leaders jeering at them all round. "So, do you feel you have done enough justification to your education and potentials bowing to your country's stupid decision of thwarting other country's peace ?" David heard one firm voice. Nothing to answer...they were gagged.

"Do you think you have solved all the problems of your own country? What the hell did your country ever contribute to history besides this furnished homicides?" another leader went sarcastic "Your president thinks himself as the saviour of the world...right? So gentlemen...please let's see him saving his own countrymen here." All the leaders burst into laughter.

"OK..your president is too impotent to save you...but we can save you...even my four years old daughter can save you...she will choose anyone of you who will be shot between eyes tonight, other two will be freed for a second chance" the leader kept on continuing "Aassera had her birthday yesterday...so it will be a good birthday bash for her as well..let me call assera."

"Aassera...you meet these three uncles...all of them are having their birthday today...so we all will celebrate their birthday playing a game here...you choose anyone of them and give your birthday gift to him...he will be the winner of this game !!"

"Why are they getting punished father?" Aassera asked.

"They are not punished , they are playing the game."

"OK...then let me get the birthday gift!! It's in my room."

Aassera came with the barbie doll in her hand, handed it over to David, gave him a peck and said "Why didn't you tell me today is your birthday? I promised you to give my best gift to you !!"

Aassera kept her words.

Chapter 3

Next day newspaper headlines read "Promising young military officer David Keans was brutally killed in Rustamiya."



THE LOST WINNER

~a story by *Subhasree Mitra*

Chapter 1

Nisha was very busy in scheduling meetings, two should be in the afternoon time as it's the days' beginning in US and another one is yet to decide.

"I will fix it at 6 today", she said as she found she needs to complete the reports by today.

"This is not the end. Client has made a change request but never wants to provide sufficient time". She nodded.

"Nisha!", she heard a trembling voice. She said to come, but could not get time to stare at the person already entered.

"I want a leave on next Friday."

Now she frowned and saw her new team mate Smita standing. "Have you been mad?"

Smita did not understand why she should be mad in asking for a day's leave. But she remained silent.

"No, it is not possible", Nisha shouted.

"OK, what can be done if it is not possible at all. I won't take leave in this scenario." Smita tended to turn.

"Listen, by the way, for what purpose you want the leave? Is it very crucial? Do you want it badly?"

"No, I just planned for a three days' trip to Puri with my husband. That is why."

"I just do not understand that being a grown up lady, how come you people just plan! You do not have any commitment to work. You are always planning to leave early and today you just planned for a leave! Idiotic!"

Smita got really stunned. She paused for a while and then told, "I already mentioned that I won't ask for a leave more. You asked me the reason, I told so. I do not get the point why you are getting so annoyed."

"You know what Smita that you are very rude."

Smita thought to answer again but she didn't, she went calmly. She had always found Nisha misbehaves with her though she does not know the reason behind. She is sincere and devoted.

"Anyway, let it go.", she shrugged.

"Try to understand that I have not got the leave and I cannot pledge, you know. She told it is impossible, now I cannot say please to her." Smita is trying to make her husband D cool down now. They were planning the trip for two weeks. A lots of thinking every night, what to wear, how to enjoy, all have gone in vain. She understands that D is upset, in fact, she is too. But she really cannot help.

She opens her mailbox. She finds her assigned task from Nisha, the entire responsibility is on her, though Client has clearly mentioned to divide among her and Nisha. She again goes to Nisha to say time given is really very short and she cannot complete. While she returned to her seat, she was crying.

Chapter 2

Two days passed. Smita was fighting with her work. Whenever she was having doubts, none was there to help out. Nisha was scolding tremendously every time, she was helpless.

She goes to balcony to talk to her husband. Just then she opens her mouth to say something really bad about Nisha, Nisha comes and shouts, "What are you doing here? I dropped a mail to you a long time back, still no reply from your side. Are you paid here for work or talking over phone?"

Smita hastily disconnected the phone and ran towards her seat. She finds an escalation mail to her project leader that she is not working properly. She could not resist and started crying.

“I really work properly, you see.” Smita says to the PL as he summoned her getting the mail.

“OK, you have been given one more chance. Go and work well. Don’t waste your time.”

Trying to hard to keep her tears in, Smita starts working.

“I tried to call you, but your phone is switched off. Why is it so?” In the evening Nisha goes to Smita. Smita gets really afraid, she explains, “my husband has called me about six times. But I did not have time to talk. Finally I made her phone switched off.”

“Good, at last you are learning how to behave in office. Teach your husband too.” Nisha answered.

Friday afternoon is over. Delivery is done. Nisha is very much busy today. After meeting, calls and a bunch of slangs from Nisha, Smita was cleaning up things.

“Are you leaving early today?”

“Yes, delivery is done. I came very early too.”

“OK, but there is a small work to do. Please come. Are you going to somewhere today?”

“Yes, that we could not go to the trip, so today we are going to see a movie.”

“Oh really? It’s good. But come for a while. When is the show timing?”

“From 7.”

“OK, then you have some buffer time.”

Nisha gave Smita loads of work, to make all the internal reports and the design documents for future use. She gave a smile and told, “Complete your work before 7 so that you don’t miss movie show.”

Smita was doing as fast as she could but gradually she found reports are too complicated and to make a design document of a whole project by her own is really very difficult, if not impossible.

Meanwhile D called Smita, he rebuked her, he promised never to go to anywhere with her. She listened to all and calmly did her work. Finally at 10 O' Clock, Nisha told Smita, "My dear lady, I don't think you can complete your work ever, you can leave, please." Nisha was very happy. She was in a jovial attitude like she had got victory in a race.

"It is too late, you cannot come alone. I am coming." D came in front of her office. While they were running behind shuttle taxis, they found Nisha going sitting in her car. Being afraid, Smita left D's hand which she held.

Nisha came back home at last. Her attendant came, he served her coffee. She relished it. Then she went to her room. Being surprised, she called her husband, "Where are you? Have not you returned yet?"

"Oh no! I am leaving today for some official cause. I came home. I took my luggage. I called you too. You did not pick up. May be, you were busy."

"Yes, I was busy. Where are you going? When will you return?"

"To Finland, dear. I will be back within six months. Take care, dear. Hey, Nandita, we are getting late. Please be fast...Nisha you please don't mind...I have to rush now..bye."

"Listen. Who else is going with you? Nandita, means your bogus team partner? You know, she likes you. Why do you take her with you every time??"

"Ah! Stop it Nisha, I really don't have time to listen to these nonsense now...and you know what she is the best lady to be in a trip with. Bye. Take care."

Chapter 3

For some one hour, Nisha remained seated like she does not have anything to do. She forgot to make tomorrow's plan. She forgot to check her mailbox. Then she went to take a bath. She opened the shower. Water, flowing over her face, got mixed up with her tears. She understood she had lost.



THE WINNER

~a story by *Sandipan*

Chapter 1

"This is ridiculous, you are in the industry now for more than 5 years and I still need to boss you so much on every bit. This is unfortunate. See here is the need of true education. I really doubt whether we will be able to manage with this full house of folly graduates. Graduation is no education. It only gives you the right to start your higher education, I mean the real education." Anand hold his nerves to keep himself quiet and listen to all these words from Mr. Renault, his project lead.

"This is not fair Mr. Renault. Is there really a reason to fuss so much on this?" Anand argued.

"See this is the difference between you and me. I understand this is not your fault. But my friend, this is too heavy for a graduate to manage." Renault placed a fist on the discussion table.

"Mr. Renault...it's not about degree I guess....it's about the experience"

"Age doesn't matter my pal...it's expertise which deepens with your knowledge"

"Why are you after my degree leaving everything else? Do you want me to resign?"

"You are the best judge, but I doubt you understood anything"

"You are insulting me Renault"

"It's not me , it's your project lead who is sensitizing you"

Chapter 2

Anand left office with a baffled mind and started to drive home back. He was honored full

of buckets last week only when he completed his 5 years in this company and today his project lead is after him for no reason. Anand was sinking in umpteen un-directional thoughts when his car halted at a red signal. His phone beeped. It was Abeli.

"Hello!"

"Hey Anand, have you started from office? Where are you now?"

"I'm on the way, will reach in half an hour"

"OK dear! Don't forget the sweet cake, otherwise there will be no dinner for you today".

"OK, I shall take dozen for you"

"Ummm...I love you!!!"

"Me too...it's a green signal...I need to start...bye" Anand hung up.

This was really a whiff of fresh air coming inside his suffocated mind. Abeli has a natural charm which attracted him at the very first sight. Now, even after three years of their marriage Abeli hasn't changed the slightest. Her childish knack towards sweet cake really amuses Anand the most. It's a very easy handling for Anand after any family brawl to appease her...only a packet of sweet cake brings back the smile on her face...Anand sometimes feels gratitude to these sweet cake makers as they have unknowingly helped them a lot to stay as a happy couple ever since.

Anand stopped in front of the sweet-shop and bagged plenty of sweet cakes for keeping Abeli happy for this week.

"I have made my mind, I'll study further...how come they don't even give minimum respect to a 5 years experienced engineer just for being B.Tech graduate? Is it that too easy to get? I have sucked up my two years completely to clear the entrance test and they behave like as if you are

illiterate...now I understand, it's only the chair which matters...Abeli, indeed I need to study and study a lot....not for the sake of another degree but to be in a position to boss that bloody Renault one day....that's my dream....and I know, I will achieve it one day."

This followed few events like Anand's resignation, relentless preparation,cracking GRE in the first attempt, studying abroad for 6 years to get the degree, coming back home, joining old company and today....again Anand is in a closed door meeting with Mr. Renault in a review session. Things are a bit twisted this time. Anand is to review the presentation made by Renault, his one of the subordinates in the team.

"Age doesn't matter Mr Renault...it's expertise which deepens with your knowledge" mockery in Anand's voice was very apparent. "Anyway,I must be thankful enough to you for your precious advices which have really turned the things around for me,in fact, for you as well. We have swapped our chairs in 6 years, right?"

Renault had no option but to listen to Anand,his manager.

Anand was waiting for this day. He is more than satisfied today. He has bought these moments with the price of his perseverance, sacrifice and hard work. He is a proud man today, happier more. Anand was remembering that dreadful day bits and pieces on his way back home. In fact, he has thought of it every moment in his last 6 years which kept alive his zeal.Today is the day of celebration and who more than Abeli will be happier today knowing his accomplishment? Anand stopped before the sweet cake shop and ordered for couple of jumbo boxes full of varieties of sweet cakes. He mentioned to wrap the boxes with gift wrappers.

"After a long time Sir? Where have you been these days?" the shopper acknowledged their old and probably the most frequent customer.

"I was abroad for last 6 years, have returned recently." Anand smiled back to him. The door bell rang. Abeli was very much familiar with Anand's footstep song. Abeli opened the door and Anand hugged her tight.

"Today I feel like the king of world" Anand was actually flowing with his emotions.

"Abeli, I have done it. Today proved to be the most coveted day in my life, I have answered the insult of that scoundrel." Abeli was smiling with her eyes "OK Mr....I hereby declare the winner of the six years marathon tussle is none other than Mr. Anand Mishra, my sweet hubby.Now go, bath and sit for the dinner. What's there in the box?"

"It's Surprise....Guess what !!!"

"I don't know"

Abeli tore the wrappers and opened the box.She stared at the box without any expression for a minute, slowly looked up and smiled at Anand.

"Wait, I am coming !" Abeli took the boxes with her to the kitchen.She came back with a plate in her hand with couple of sweet cakes on it and handed it over to Anand.

"Hey, is this the first time you are offering sweet cake to someone else than eating it first? I though, you love sweet cakes more than me" Anand picked one sweet cake and offered it to Abeli.

"I shall eat later, you have it now" Abeli couldn't resist her eyes from getting wet.

"Hey, what's wrong? Are you not happy? I know, it is my success, it is my achievement but the celebration is ours. Isn't it? Haven't you not looked at me for the last 6 years? Haven't you seen the amount of effort I have put to see this day?"

"I am a diabetes patient for last 3 years and I don't touch any kind of sweet now. Even I take my tea sugar free."



PAY OFF

~a story by *Subha*

Chapter 1

"You will make it to national team oneday...believe me" Sonia kept going with her one hand over Ronit's palm..."When I saw you for the first time playing for your college, I knew it that day only." "I feel flattered Sony...but seriously, you have changed me...Since my first day with you, I have changedand changed a lot...you mean so much to me Sony" Ronit had a real adoring voice. It was a pleasant evening in a midtown coffee shop brimming with couples. This is the place where Ronit knelt down before Sonia exactly a month ago seeking her hand..."May I have the privilege to be the permanent driver of your car?" Sonia grinned...."You are a full mad Rony".

Ronit is an astounding allrounder not only in the game of cricket, but in every means. He never bunks a class, doesn't go to pubs, never gets into any odds. Ronit's friends call Sonia to be Ronit's only Achilles heel. Ronit gave a damn to it, he knew they were jealous. Today, they have decided to choose the same table where they were seated a month back. "This table brought me the costliest sapphire on earth"...Rony pressed Sonia's hand tightly.

"When is your next match? I would like to go to cheer you up" Sonia asked.

"Today we are having the quarter final. I have withheld my name. Otherwise, I would have missed this beautiful evening spending with the most beautiful girl in the world." Ronit felt a sense of satisfaction.

"But...it was quarter final, dear ! They will surely miss you Rony." Sonia sounded concerned.

"Nah Sony, don't worry. Our team is good enough to get past these minnows without me. It's not at all a deal. I told you dear, you come first , then everything else and ofcourse a cakewalk cricket match." Ronit's voice was full of emotion.

"May I have your order please SIR ??" Waiter was standing just behind their table. None of Sonia and Ronit had any mood to lend ear to it...they were loooking at each other's eyes. "Excuse me Sir !! May I get a chance to serve you anything? Other people are waiting outside." It was embarrassing.

"What did you say?" Ronit frowned at him.

The waiter cleared his throat and answered "Sir, I was only asking for orders. You are sitting here for a while, so I thought..."

"So you thought you will get us out of here? What do you think who you are? Be sure I shall teach you a lesson today"...Ronit got hurt on his ego and that too before Sonia.

"Sir, please try to understand, I never had any intention to ..." the waiter had something to say which was stopped by Sonia..."How dare you preach us? Are you really aware of which slum do you hail from?"

This was enough to multiply Ronit's wrath, he made it a point to show his heroics before Sonia.

"Please call your manager, I have to talk to him"...Ronit straight way made a move to the counter where the manager was seated without waiting for any further words from the hapless waiter. He had a long loud chat with the manager. Ultimately, he was given with a feedback form which Sonia filled up.

At night, Ronit was trying hard to sleep, his mind was ruffled with the day's incidence. But he was sure, Sonia liked his heroics. That only matters !!!

Chapter 2

"Hi Rony, how are you? Can we meet today evening?" It was after one month Ronit got a call from Sonia . Ronit was fumbling in excitement "Sony....where have you been for so long? You know, I tried calling you thousand times a day, you never picked them up...I really care for you..Don't you know that Sony? Are you alright? "

"Yes Rony, don't worry, I am fine. Are we meeting today evening?"

"Absolutely!!"

"Fine then. Sharp 5.30 at our same coffee shop. Don't get late Rony "

"See you Sony".

"See you Rony".

Rony took really long time to get dressed up with the best clothes in his stock. He was looking handsome as always. Girls in his college died for him, but he was always after Sonia. She was his love. Roni headed for the meeting well ahead of time and stopped before a bouquet shop.

'Red roses make a date perfect'..Ronit thought and picked a fresh bouquet "How much does it take?" Ronit was taken aback. This was the same waiter guy sitting in the bouquet shop.

"What the hell are you doing here?" Ronit got suddenly tempted.

"I lost my job that day, now I work for this shop. They pay me half, but the manager is a very good person." the guy looked indifferently to Ronit.

"Don't blame others. You paid off for what you did"...Ronit told him.

He stepped in the cafe with the bouque. Sonia has already come. They took the the same table.

"I have so many things to tell you Rony" Sony was excited.

"So I have" Ronit grinned and gave the bouquet to Sonia.

"Ladies first!!" Ronit was so happy to see his Sonia so ecstatic.

"OK Sony...your turn.But first tell me where did you elope suddenly and what was the matter with your cellphone? "

"I was abroad...I mean, we were abroad...everything happened very quickly,dad had a business contract to sign in Texas, so we all went there. Now, we are going to settle there permanently. We are leaving tonight Rony."

"What? You are leaving tonight?"

"Yup"

"So, this is not done Sony. Have you ever consulted with me before you leap for such a big decision?"

"Consult what?"

"You will be there in Texas forever, I am here? What will happen to us? "

"Don't talk like a loser Rony !! "

"Loser? I was not a loser....You made me a loser Sony!! Do you really care for me? You know, that day our team lost the quarter final...and they decided to drop me out for the next season for not playing the match with such short notice...What would happen to me now? I sacrificed my carrier for you Sony and you are leaving just like that..."

"Don't blame others!! You paid off for what you did. Bye !!" Sonia left.

Ronit was still seated in the table for another half an hour...only the last words of Sonia were whirling in his mind ..."Don't blame others!! You paid off for what you did".

Slowly , he stepped out of the shop with a blank mind and stopped in front of

the bouquet shop. That same guy asked "Do you want anything Sir?"

Ronit answered "I am Sorry ."



MONEY HAI TO HONEY HAI

- *Sudipto Das* (Dec, 2010)

The fact that I'm a great fan of Govinda has nothing to do with this. I just plagiarized the title of his movie. Yes, it's true that for a country like India where close to 90% (that's 90 crore) of her population thrives on less than \$2/day and close to 45% (45 crore) on less than \$1/day, nothing else than money can be sweeter than honey.

Putting it in different words, nearly 180 million households live on an income of less than \$10/day and 100 million on less than \$5/day. Just for a bitter comparison, even a single Gold Class ticket at PVR is more than what 90% of Indian households don't have at their disposal on any day of the year. Well, 500 bucks is not a small amount when a wholesome *vada pao* costs less than 10 bucks in Bombay. But there's lot more than just the two meals in a day for an entire family to survive, especially when the head of the family has to pay for the education and healthcare of his/her family from his/her own pocket because our government spends peanuts for both of these necessities. So how do we go about it? Well, there are more intelligent people than me to come up with novel plans to solve these problems. A lesser mortal like me can see the gross things in lives and here is what I see.

It's nothing new that corruption at the highest level is so rampant in India that we've learnt to say *chalta hai* and ignore. But even the most complacent citizen has waken up from his slumber in the recent past with the spate of news that has snatched even the little spaces allotted to the Spice Girls and Pamela Andersons and Sarkozies. It's long since I've last heard of the latest dimensions of Pammi's breasts because my favorite Times of India doesn't have any space to write about it

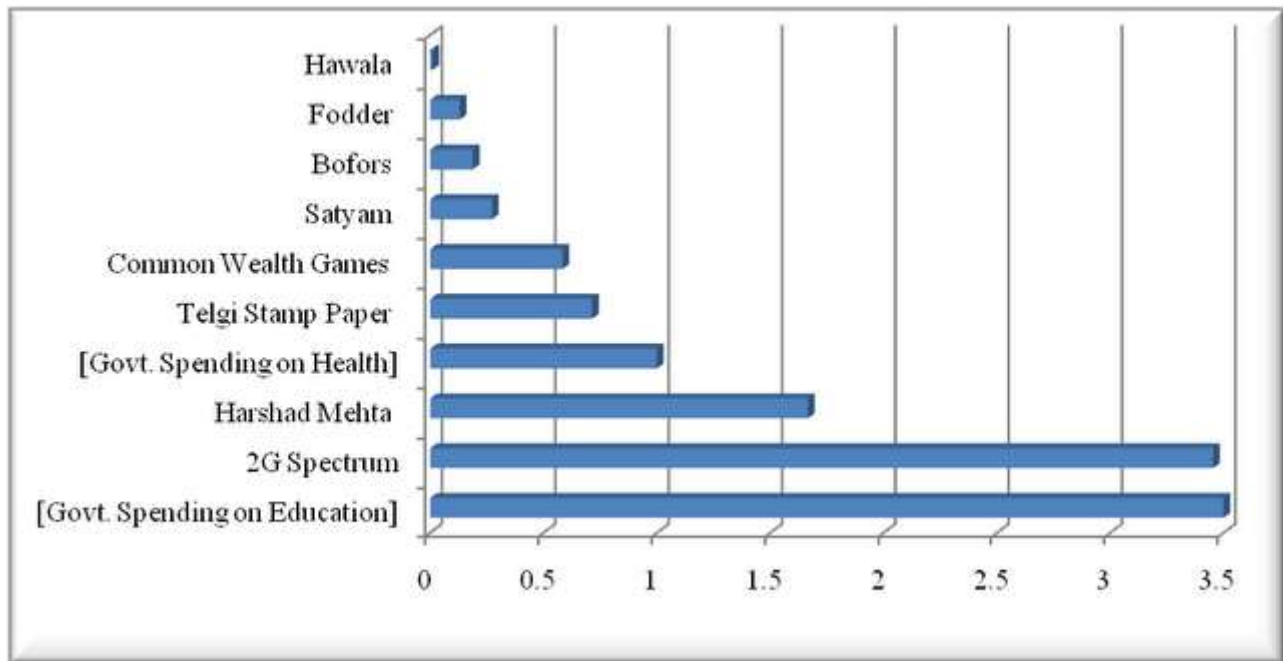
now-a-days - every micro inch of the paper now is filled with scams. So finally I thought enough is enough, let me find out what all these are about. And here is what I could figure out.

Scam	Year	2010 USD (Billion)		Govt.	% GDP
		Value	GDP		
Indian Money in Swiss Bank	2010	1500	1370	Multiple	109.48905
[Govt. Spending on Education]	2010				3.5
2G Spectrum	2009	38	1100	Congress	3.4545455
Harshad Mehta	1992	2.5	150	Private	1.6666667
[Govt. Spending on Health]	2010				1
Telgi Stamp Paper	2005	5	700	Multiple	0.7142857
Common Wealth Games	2010	8	1370	Congress	0.5839416
Satyam	2009	3	1100	Private	0.2727273
Bofors	1985	0.075	40	Congress	0.1875
Fodder	1996	0.35	270	RJD	0.1296296
Hawala	1996	0.025	270	Multiple	0.0092593

Let me explain it to you too - you may find it interesting in the absence of Pam's boobs!! These are perhaps the biggest scams in India. I've just put them together and presented the numbers in a standardized manner in terms of 2010 USD - this makes the figures comparable. Also I've added the GDP for each of the years of scam so that I get the perspective of how big or small a scam is. Of the top scams of all time two are private - Harsha Mehta's Stock Market scam and Satyam scam. Other than these all the other are done by the ruling governments - three are exclusively done by Congress and another three are group activities where Congress is one of the players. I'd have loved to include the names of other parties but Congress has left no stone unturned - like they have ripped me off my regular Pam-dose in Times of India. Well, along with the scams I've added two government expenditures - on health and education - which I feel are the foundations of India's growth. No doubt our politicians have improved a lot over the year. I really feel sorry for Rajiv and his company - they plundered just a paltry sum which amounts today to \$75 million. Silly fellow. His successors have plundered \$38 billion in just one of the scams this year. Bollywood is just

awesome - they have come up with the *jhatkas* and *matkas* of Munni and Sheila when our another set of Mannu and Shiela are rocking somewhere else!!

Anyway, let's see the same figures in the form of a chart - this shows the value of the top scams as percentage of GDP in the year of the scam.



As you can see the enormity of 2G scam is same as the amount that our government has been spending on education - or rather should I rephrase that it's as small as the amount our government spends for educating our countrymen? The value of Telgi and CWG scams could have sponsored government's spending on healthcare for almost two years.

Let me put some more numbers. The 2G scam amounts to \$38 billion. Now consider this. There are 180 million (18 crore) households who thrive on less than \$10/day. I'm sure that they are not in a position to spend good amount of money for proper healthcare. With the dismal performance of

the government health centers most of them have to go to private hospitals. Even it pinches me when I've to go to private hospitals - but I don't mind because I've medical insurance. I'm sure that with a 2K premium per year each of these families can be provided a decent medical insurance that will take care of most of their medical needs. If the government spends 2K per household for a complete term - that's five years - then also the amount $(180 \text{ million} * 2000 * 5 / 46)$ is less than \$38 billion. So this means that if the 2G spectrum was allotted rightfully then the government would have had the money to provide free medical insurance to each of these 180 million households in India for five years.

Now consider this. Even if government spends Rs20L each on constructing a small school and hospital in all the 6.5L villages in India, then the total amount comes to about \$56 billion - with \$38 billion 70% of the villages could have been covered.

So you yourself can see how much honey our own folks are being deprived of because Munna and Shiela are just mum!!

I know that Dr. Manmohan Singh or Shiela Dikshit may not be directly involved in the 2G and CWG scams. But it's unbelievable that they didn't know a bit when their guys were plundering. No one praises Bhishma Pitamah because he was silent when Draupadi was stripped. No one cares for whether Bhishma supported it from his heart or not. We all know that he kept quiet like an impotent and we don't have the slightest sympathy for him when he lay on the bed of thorns. Here even that bed of thorns is also missing!!

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ক্ল্যাশ ব্যাক

~ a poem by Sandip Sar

বিশটা বছর পার হয়ে এগিয়ে এলাম আজ
ফিরে দেখার জন্য তো নয়,
কাব্য করার তাগিদেও নয়,
মন হয়েছে সাজতে হবে এবার শেষের সাজ ।

মনে পড়ে দিঘীর ধারে সন্ধে নেমে এলো,
অস্তরাগের আবছা আলোয় দুজন মিলে ভালো,
এক পৃথিবী লেখার আশার
স্বপ্ন গড়ার ভালবাসায়
চলার পথে অন্ধ হয়ে দৌড়ানো সার হল ,
ভালবাসা কখন হঠাৎ অভ্যাস হয়ে গেল ।

ভালবাসার রঙীন খামে ক্লান্ত ধুলোর রেখা
দুজন মিলে জীবন জুড়ে একলা বাঁচতে শেখা।
জীবনপুরের পথ ভুলেছি
কালবেলার এই গান ধরেছি
জীবন মানে মিথ্যে রঙে রঙিন স্বপ্ন আঁকা,
চলা শুরু কর দিঘীর ধারে আজকে আমি একা ॥

কবিতা

~ a poem by Dr. Souvik Das Gupta

এক :

আমি কি কবিতা লিখি?

এই কয়েকদিন বেশ কয়েকদিন

নাচছে অস্থির অন্তরে ।

কাদের কবি বলে ?

সে সংজ্ঞা লেখা নেই কোথাও ;

লেখা আছে উজান জলে ।

আঁকা থাকে দূরের বলাকায়

অথবা বিরহের হাহাকারে ।

ভগবান সে চোখ দেয় নি আমায় ।

তবু প্রতিদিন ঘরে ফিরে

অবাধ্য কলম ছড়িয়ে দেয়

কি সব ছাই ভস্ম – কাগজের পাতায় ।

লোমশ হাত , অর্বাচীন পশুহ

নিয়ে ভেসে থাকি অনুক্ষণ

অশ্রু - বীর্য - রক্তের সাগরে ।

আর অজান্তে অথহীন শব্দের সারি

উপচে পড়ে বাস্তুবের পথে ।

তারা মিছিল করে চলে

আমার চেতনার বনবীথিরে ।

আমি তাদের আঁকড়ে ধরি,

আর অন্যমনস্ক ভাবে

সাজাই নোটবুকের বুকো ।

একে কবিতা বলে কি ?

হয়ত নয় ,

অথবা হতেও পারে ।

আমার জানা নেই ,

অবশ্য -

বুঝতেও চাইনি কখন ও ,

শুধু, এই টুকু মানি -

ও' গুলো আমার ঔরসে

কল্পনার গৰ্ভজাত

অনামী সন্তান ॥

দুই :

কবিতার ডাকে

ঘুম ভাঙে সকালে ।

বাথরুম ফেরত বারান্দায় দেখি

দুটো কাপ, দুটো টোস্ট -

আমার আর কবিতার ।

বাড়ি থেকে বেড়িয়ে ,

স্ট্যান্ডে দাঁড়িয়ে গল্পগুজব ,

সিটিসির শেষ সিটে

আমরা দুজন -

আমি আর কবিতা ।

কলেজের ক্লাসে চুপচাপ -

আমি চেয়ে থাকি

কবিতার দিকে,

কবিতার নীল চোখ

আমার মুখে ।

তারপর ,
ক্যান্টিনে জমিয়ে আড্ডা ,
অথবা সি আই টি রোডের
হং কং রাইস , দু'প্লেট -
আমার আর কবিতার ।

গ্যালারি, নন্দনে , থিয়েটারে
এক সাথে এসে বসি ,
ভুট্টা ভাজা, চিপস হাতে
একেবারে পাশাপাশি ।

বাড়ি ফিরে পড়ার টেবিলে
আবার মুখোমুখি ,
একসাথে পড়া ,
মায়ের চোখে ফাঁকি দিয়ে
লুকোচুরি খেলা ।

ছাদের আলসেতে ,
খাবার শেষে রোজ ,
আমি আর কবিতা ,
নড়ে দুটো ঠোঁট ।

রাতে শোবার ঘরে
আমি আর কবিতা,
জেগে জেগে তারাগুলি
আমি আর কবিতা ।

সত্যিই,
আমায় খুব ভালোবাসে কবিতা ॥

তিন :

যখন তখন , অফিসে ক্লাবে
না জানিয়েই আমার কাছে
সে হঠাৎ চলে আসে ।

বুকের সামনে দাঁড়িয়ে,
পোশাক খুলে ফেলে
জন সমক্ষে প্রকাশ্যে ।

নিখুঁত পাগলীর মত,
বাস- ট্রাম - চৌরাস্তায়
জড়িয়ে ধরে শুয়ে পড়ে । আর অসহায় আমার
মুখ টিপে ধরে ,

পূরে নেয় ভেতরে ।

সাঁতার জানিনা, তাই -
হাবুডুবু খেতে খেতে
ডুবে যাই গর্তের গভীরে ।

তারপর , আবিষ্কার করি -
পড়ে আছি নোংরায় ,
ফুটপাতে , রাস্তার ধারে ॥

চার :

এলোমেলো শব্দগুলো
উপুড় হয়ে আছে ,
একে অপরের উপর ,

বর্ণ গুলোর সামনে পিছনে
বিবর্ণ সব অক্ষর ।

একের পর এক
ধসে যাওয়া বাক্য -
আসছে আর যাচ্ছে ।

বিকলাঙ্গ ছন্দরাও
পরপর জন্ম নিচ্ছে ।

বোবা - কালা - অন্ধ
নব জাতকেরা এখন
শুক্রের পাহারায় ,

হামাগুড়ি দিচ্ছে
আপেল গাছের ছায়ায় ।

পেন আর পেনসিল
এক ই সাথে শুচ্ছে -
নীচে কাগজের বিছানা !

শুরু হয়ে গেছে -
ন' মাস ধরে দিন গোনা ।

এদের ই মাঝে আমি
উলঙ্গ হয়ে ছুটছি -
ঝর্ণা খোঁজার নেশায় ;

সমস্ত আগুন ধুয়ে,
স্নান করার আশায় ॥

২৫ শে বৈশাখ

~ a poem by Sudeep

আজকে পূজোর দিন।

ভক্ত চলেছেন স্বপ্ন গমনে

হাতে পূজোর থালা,

গলে শ্বেত পুষ্পমালা ।

কপাল জুড়ে চন্দন রেখা

যন্ত্র ভরে আঁকা,

কত আশায় উদ্বেল মন –

ভক্ত চলেছেন স্বরিত চরণ

অবসান হবে যত চাওয়া ছিল

প্রার্থনা প্রতিদিন –

আজ সেই পূজোর দিন ॥

পূব লাল হোলো আকাশ জুড়ে,

উঠলো আলতা রবি ।

গঙ্গাবক্ষে ভক্ত তখন –

বক্ষ জলে মন্ত্রোচ্চারণ,

ভক্তিরসে ভিজছে নয়ন ,

দেখা দিলেন কবি ॥

কি অর্ঘ্যে তার করবে পূজা

ভক্ত না পায় ভাবি ॥

কবি এলেন শান্ত পদে,

স্মিত হেসে সম্মুখেতে

দাঁড়ান এসে বলেন তাকে –

“হঠাৎ কেন এ ডাক ?”

ভক্ত তখন বানী হারায় ,

কি বলবে তা খুঁজে নাহি পায় ,

কাঁপা কাঁপা গলায় বলে

“আজ ২৫ শে বৈশাখ “ ॥

কবি শুনে হেসে বলেন

“ব্যাস, আর তো কিছু নয় ? “

ভক্ত কহিলেন করি সাহস সঞ্চয় –

“কিছু নেই অবশেষ ,

সব হয়ে গেছে শেষ –

খানিক দাঁড়াও এসে ধরনী ‘পরে ;

যে প্রদীপ জ্বলেছিলে

তার শিখা গেছে চলে –

যে পতাকা দিয়েছিলে মোরে বহিবারে ,

সে বোঝা হয়েছে ভারী –

তারে না বহিতে পারি ;

ক্ষমা আজ নাহি চাই এই শুভদিনে –

দিয়েছিলে ডালি ভরে

পারিনি রাখিতে তারে -

দয়া কর -

সেই ধন দাও ফিরায়ে এনে

তব শুভ জন্মদিনে ॥“

ঠিক সেই সময় উজান এল -

গঙ্গা বক্ষে বান ডাকল ,

স্নোতের তোড়ে এলোমেলো হয়ে

ভক্ত গেলেন ভেসে ।

ভুলে গিয়ে সব মল্লোচ্চারণ -

কবির কথাও নেই তো স্মরণ ,

স্নোতের সাথে যুদ্ধ শেষে

পাড়ে উঠলেন এসে ।

পাসে তখন এক অভাগিনী মা

কাঁদছেন বসে হাপুস নয়না ,

কোলের ছেলেটি গেছে চলে তার

জোয়ার জলেতে ভেসে ।

রোগা কালো এক মেছুনীর ছেলে

দাঁড়ায় এসে সেই ছেলে কোলে -

জোয়ার জলে ঝাঁপ দিয়ে সে

ছেলেকে এনেছে তুলে ।

চুমো খেয়ে তার দুই আঁখিপাতে
ফিরিয়ে তাকে মার বুকটাতে,
কিসের খেয়ালে গান জুড়ে দিলো
নৃত্য করলো শুরু ।

বেসুরো সে গানে কানে তালা লাগে ,
বেতলা নাচেতে দতিও ভাগে ,
ভক্ত ভাবেন বিরক্ত মনে
কুঞ্চিত করে ক্র -

“এতো উৎপাত না সহিতে পারি
এই বুঝি কবি ফিরে যান চলি “
ঠিক সে সময় কবি দেখা দেন ,
শান্ত কর্ণে হাসিয়া বলেন -

“অনেক দিনের পরেতে শুনলাম আবার গীতাঞ্জলি ॥“

রং মশাল

~ a poem by Subhasree Mitra

Technology, মগজবাজি,

তাই নিয়ে পথ চলা -

আজ যা নতুন, কাল ধরে ঘুন

সবই মায়ার খেলা ।

আজ যে কাছে, কাল সে পাছে

বহুদূরে যায় চলে -

ঘুচিয়ে বাঁধন, হাসি কাঁদন,

3G নামে ধরাতলে ।

Automobile মাইল মাইল,

Gap গিয়েছে কাটি-

ছেলে নেই ঘরে, আকুল পাথারে

মন পায়নাকো মাটি।

বহু কোটিপতি, luxury অতি

ঘুম নেই রাতে চোখে,

Multiplex, সব complex

File এর মাঝে ধোঁকে।

পাল্টেছে যারা, কি পেল তারা

অথবা পেলনা কিছু-

ঘুম পারানি গান, চির পুরাতন

আমি যাই তার পিছু ।

Status এর ফাঁকে, না বলে ডেকে

তোমাকেই যেন পাই -
পিদিমের আলো, আকাশের কালো
তোমার মাঝেতে চাই ॥

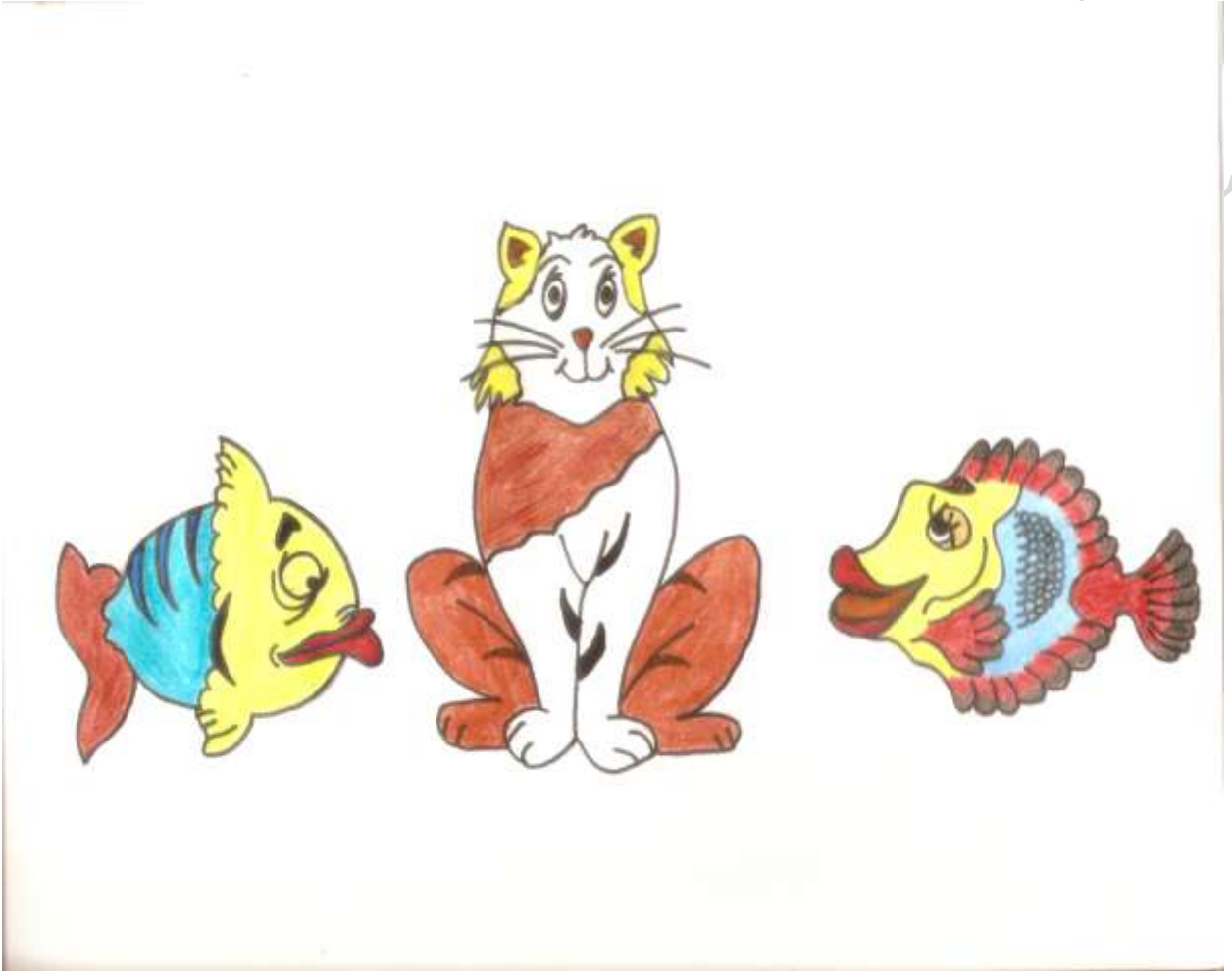


গন্ধ বিচার

~a poem by Subhamita

ভেটকি আর পাবদা মাছে লাগলো খিটিমিটি ,
কোথেকে এক হলো এল চক্ষু পিটিপিটি ।
কি হয়েছে কি সমস্যা এত কিসের গোল?
ভেটকি বলে- পাবদা ব্যাটার মাথায় গুগোল ।
বলছে - আমার গায়ে নাকি বেজায় আঁশটে গন্ধ,
পাবদা বলে - ভেটকি ব্যাটা নিতান্তই ভণ্ড।
হলো বলে - “আহা আহা, এই তো আমি আছি -
কে ভালো, কে মন্দ , না হয় আমি ই সেটা বাছি।
আয় তবে আয় ভেটকি সোনা সঙ্গে পাবদা রাণী “
পাবদা বলে - আমি আগে যাই, ভেটকি বলে আমি।
হলো বলে পাবদা মাছের লেজটা বাগিয়ে জোরে ,
গায়ে তোর বড় বিস্তী গন্ধ, দিলাম সাজা তোরে ।
তেমনি তোর মনটা নিচু কি হয় আজ দ্যাখ ,
বলতে বলতে পুরে নেয় মুখে ভেটকি হাসে খ্যাঁক।
“হলো মামা ঠিক করেছ, তুমি ই হলে রাজা
বেশ হয়েছে পাবদা পাজির, ঠিক হয়েছে সাজা ।“
হলো তখন মিচকি হাসে, দোলায় মোটা গোঁফ,
দুই মনে বদ বুদ্ধি ঝোপ বুঝে মারে কোপ।
“ভেটকি ওহে, বলি শোন, মাছ হয়েছে যবে -
জানবে তুমি আঁশটে গন্ধে বন্দী হলে তবে।

মাছ হয়ে যার গন্ধ চাই না, এমন অহংকার
কি লাভ সেই বেঁচে থাকার, জন্ম ঘুচুক তার।“
এই বলে দুই খাবা দিয়ে ভেটকি ধরে বিড়াল
লেজ বাঁকিয়ে মাথা মুড়িয়ে ভেটকি মুখের আড়াল।
পেট ভরিয়ে টেকুর তুলে লেজ দুলিয়ে যায়,
কাজীর বিচার করে হলো আরামে ঘুমায় ॥



ছাতার ইতিকথা

~ an article by Chandrima Sar

ছাতা ইংরাজি umbrella ল্যাটিন শব্দ “অ্যামব্রা” থেকে এসেছে। অ্যামব্রা” মানে ছায়া বা আশ্রয়। এই ছায়ার খোঁজেই ছাতার আবিষ্কার। পুরাণ গল্পে দশ আবতারের একজন পরশুরাম। তার পিতা মহামুনি ভৃগু ধনুর্বিদ্যার প্রবর্তক। ভৃগু প্রথমে রৌদ্রে ধনুর্বিদ্যা অভ্যাস করতেন। তাঁর স্ত্রী রেনুকা তির কুড়িয়ে আনতেন। কথিত আছে স্ত্রী কে রোদের হাত থেকে বাঁচাতে ভৃগু ছাতার আবিষ্কার করেন। চীন দেশেই প্রথম water proof ছাতার আবিষ্কার হয়। কাগজের ছাতাতে মোম মাখিয়ে জল নিরোধক ছাতা তৈরি করা হত। প্রথম দিকে তৈরি ছাতা গুলো বন্ধ করা যেত না। collapsible ছাতা ও চীন দেশে প্রথম আবিষ্কার। প্রায় ৭০০ বছর আগে Cao- Wei এর রাজস্বই collapsible ছাতা আবিষ্কার হয়।

আগে ছাতা শুধু মেয়েরাই ব্যবহার করত। পারসিক লেখক Jones Honway প্রথম পুরুষ যিনি ছাতা হাতে ইংল্যান্ড এর রাস্তায় নামেন এবং টানা ৩০ বছর ছাতা ব্যবহার করেছিলেন জন সমক্ষে। তাঁর মত বিখ্যাত ব্যক্তিত্বের ছাতা ব্যবহারের ফলে ইংল্যান্ডে ছেলেদের মধ্যে ছাতার ব্যবহার প্রচলিত হয় ও জনপ্রিয় হয়। সেই কারণে ইংরেজ রা ছাতাকে Hanway নামে চিহ্নিত করেন।

Italy র এক পাহাড়ি গ্রাম সিগ্রিজে আছে ছাতার মিউজিয়াম। তাই এই গ্রাম কে ছাতা ঘর বলা হয়।

ভাসান

~ a poem by Disphum

ঠাকুর গেছে জলে,
মাগো পেট যাচ্ছে জ্বলে;
পাঁচদিন ধরে মা
থাওয়ার চিন্তা ছিল না,
ঐ অনেক যাদের আছে,
ওরা পুণ্য করতে আসে,
ঠাকুর দেখতে যায়,
সাথে ভিক্ষা ছুঁড়ে যায়;
তুই চলে গেলে মা
ওরা কেউ আর আসেনা,
আর ভিক্ষা ও মেলে না;
আবার আসবি বছর পরে,
যদি না যাই মরে,
আমার পানে চাস,
দুটো কথা শুনে যাস;
দুটো ধান দিস মা ঢেলে,
সে সময় যদি না মেলে,
তুই জলেই ফিরে যাস,
আমায় সঙ্গে নিয়ে যাস ॥



Sarathi

স্বর্গলাভ

~ a poem by Sandip Sar

চলেছিলেম স্বর্গের পথে ।
জীবনের ধুলোমাটি লাগবেনা পায়ে ;
মৃত্যুর খিদে চোখে লাগবেনা ভয় ;
এ জগৎ বড় জঞ্জাল ,
ভেঙে যায় প্রতিপল, সিক্ত আঁখিজল
অবিশ্বাসের নিশ্চাকত রোগভোগ -
হতাশা নিরাশা আর ব্যর্থ অভিযোগ ;
অবশেষে করিলাম স্থির।
চড়িলাম রথে -
চললাম স্বর্গের পথে ।
পথে পড়েছিল ফুল,
ফোটেনি পুরোটা, দেখলাম চেয়ে -
কি যেন ভেবে নিলাম কুড়িয়ে,
বুকে চেপে ধরলাম তাকে,
বললাম - “যাবে তুমি সুরলোকে ?
যেখানে বাস করে অমরত্ব,
চিরশান্তি আর দেবকুল?”
ফুল তার পাপড়ি মেলে হাসে -
“স্বর্গ তো সেইখানে যেখানে সবাই ভালবাসে,
মিলেমিশে ভালবেসে থাকে দুখে সুখে
পেয়েছি আমার স্বর্গ তোমারই বুকে ।“

আর হয়নি যাওয়া -

তাই তো তোমায় পাওয়া ॥



একটি অভিমাত্রী কবিতা

~ a poem by Mitra

তোমার ভালবাসা শোকেসে সাজানো

ঝকঝকে উপহার,

সোনার জলে card এ লেখা,

অতীতের অভিসার।

নতুন কাগজে যল্লে লেখা

প্রেমের কবিতাখানি,

কিংবা mail র ছত্রে ছত্রে

গভীর কাব্য আনি-

নল বন বা ময়দানে বসে,

Format করা কথা,

V day তে হাত টি ধরে,

পথে চলা যেথা সেথা।

তোমার প্রেম তো কাঁচের পুতুল,

সাবধানে মুড়ে রাখা,

তোমার প্রেম তো আড়ম্বর,

অস্তরেতে ফাঁকা।

পুতুল যদি যায় গো ভেঙ্গে,

বা password হয় ভুল,

গভীর রজনী, আঁধার রাতি,

হাৰায় প্ৰেমের কূল।
সারাজীবনে হাতে হাত দিয়ে
চলার অঙ্গীকার,
যতদিন না রাংতা মোড়া
পুতুল চুরমার।।



"ସୃଷ୍ଟି"

କାବ ହିମାଳୟ ଶୃଙ୍ଗରୁ ଆସିଲା,
କାବ ହିମାଳୟ ବଢ଼ିଲା,
କାବ ହିମାଳୟ ଲାଗି ରହିଲା ?
ହଲୁ କୋଳରୁ ଆସିଲା,
ସୃଷ୍ଟି କଲେ ଆମର ଶରୀର,
ଆମ ଶରୀରରୁ କାବ,
ହଲୁ ଡାକେ ଶରୀର ଆକାଶ,
କୋଳରୁ ଶରୀର ଧରଣ,
ଆମ କୋଳରୁ ଆମର ହୃଦୟ,
ସୃଷ୍ଟି ଧରଣରୁ ଆସିଲା,
ଆକାଶ ଆକାଶ ମିଳିଲା ହାତ,
କାବ ହିମାଳୟ ଶରୀର ଆସିଲା,
ଆମ କୋଳରୁ କାବ, ଶରୀରରୁ ଆମ,
କୋଳରୁ ହୃଦୟ ଶରୀର ଶରୀର,
କୋଳରୁ ଆମର ଆକାଶ,

ସାରଥୀ

MAGICIAN'S ELEPHANT ESSAY

~ Manav Ghoshal

How the truth has changed for me.

I am Madam La Vaughn. I am a noble woman, and I am crippled. Keep this in mind before I tell you anything more: the truth is forever changing. The truth for me has personally changed a lot .If you're wondering how: I'm about to tell you.

As you know I am crippled. What you don't know is how it happened. I was in an opera house watching a Magician perform when suddenly the roof caved in and to my great surprise an elephant came crashing down on my lap. From that day on I have been crippled. The magician was held responsible for what happened to me & was imprisoned along with his elephant.

In the days that followed I was in great pain and had a lot of trouble getting around. The shock of what happened still vibrates through my body. I was very upset and angry at the Magician for what he had done to me and I wanted to see him punished even more. This was the truth!

In the coming weeks many events took place. Peter Duchene realized that the elephant was miserable & had to be sent back home to survive .He was assisted by Leo Matienne, both of them convinced the magician that if he could make the elephant appear suddenly, he could also do magic to make it disappear. So they took me to the prison along with the elephant and then all of us gathered to see what would happen. The magician walked in circles around the elephant saying his spell backwards & then suddenly the clouds disappeared & the stars shone brightly & while everybody was gazing at the starry sky the elephant

disappeared & Peter was the only one who saw it.

After the magician performed this great work of magic, he fell to his knees in the snow .It was then that I felt sorry for him. When Leo wanted to send him back to prison I decided that what had happened could not be changed and that there was no point in punishing him anymore .He had after all only intended lilies to fall from the roof. I forgave him & asked for him to be set free. I decided not to press any charges so they let him walk away scot free. This is how the truth changed for me: from anger & hatred, I chose forgiveness. Now, I felt a great weight lift from my shoulders as if I too were free!

SARATHI

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