

Journal of the Odisha Society of the Americas

ଉର୍ମି
URMI



Atlantic City, NJ

ବିନ୍ଦୁ ବିନ୍ଦୁ ମିଶି ହୁଏ ଯିନ୍ଦୁ

July 4 - 7, 2019



ବିନ୍ଦୁ ବିନ୍ଦୁ ମିଶି ହୁଏ ସିନ୍ଦୁ

ସଙ୍ଗଞ୍ଜନ୍ ସଙ୍ଗଦନ୍ ସଂ ବୋ ମନାଂସି ଜାନତାନ୍
ସମାନୋ ମନ୍ତ୍ରଃ ସମିତି ସମାନୀ,
ସମାନଂ ମନଃ ସହଚିତ୍ତମେଷାନ୍
ସମାନୀ ବ ଆକୃତିଃ ସମାନା ହୃଦୟାନି ବଃ
ସମାନମସ୍ତୁ ବୋ ମନୋ ଯଥା ବଃ ସୁସହାସତି ॥

May we move in harmony, speak in one voice.

May our minds concur

May we resolve with one accord

May our purpose be the same

May we all be of one mind.

May our hearts be in unison

May our thoughts be harmonious,

So that we may live together

With happiness and hilarity.

- Rig Veda 10/191/4

CORY A. BOOKER
NEW JERSEY



UNITED STATES SENATE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20510

July 4, 2019

Odisha Society of the Americas
6300 Powers Ferry Road
STE 600 #237
Atlanta, Georgia 30339

Dear Friends,

It is a pleasure to extend my warmest greetings and welcome you to New Jersey as you gather for the 50th Convention of the Odisha Society of Americas.

For half a century, the Odisha Society of the Americas (OSA) has worked to preserve and promote Odia culture within the United States and Canada. Through your vast network, OSA hosts Odia festivals, organizes cultural events, and promotes Oriya education for all those interested. As you celebrate your Golden Jubilee and reflect on your history, please know that I am grateful for all that you have done, and continue to do, for your community.

Again, congratulations. Please accept my best wishes for a memorable convention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C. A. Booker', with a large, stylized initial 'C'.

Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

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The Cover:

About the Cover: Drop by drop, an ocean is made. Over the last 50 years, we have been building - drop by drop - an Odia community in North America. This year marks the 50th year of celebrating Odisha's rich cultural heritage in a new land. With Odia language, dance, art, music, and architecture, Odisha has a plethora of culture to celebrate. This cover page depicts Odissi dance in the setting of the Konark temple; a breathtaking architectural feat of Odisha and the epitome of stone carving not seen anywhere else in the world. The ray of golden light coming from the top-right corner of the page represents how Odia cultural heritage continues to shine in North America, a setting which is depicted by the Statue of Liberty. Additionally, the Statue of Liberty signifies that our hosts for the 50th OSA Golden Jubilee Convention are the OSA New York/New Jersey chapter. All three watercolor paintings were created by Gagan Panigrahi and then digitally composited by Soman Panigrahi to achieve this cover page.



URMI EDITORIAL BOARD 2019



Saradindu Misra



Gagan Behari Panigrahi



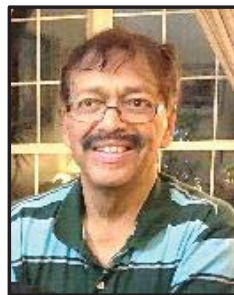
Bigyani Das



Sikhanda Satapathy



Satya Pattanaik



Pradyot Patnaik



Nagesh Rajanala



Prasanta Kumar Bhunya

URMI

Urmi is the annual souvenir of The Odisha Society of the Americas (OSA). This is published every year to commemorate the annual convention that is held during the 4th of July weekend. The name "Urmi" for this annual publication/souvenir was selected in 2014. The souvenir provides a medium for OSA members to express themselves. Each year the annual convention committee selects the editorial committee to take charge of publishing the souvenir for the participants of the convention. In addition to publishing the annual

souvenir and directory, OSA convention editorial committee also manages Meghna memorial award for OSA youth.

This year's souvenir contains seven sections. The editorial team came up with the idea to name these sections in synchronization with "Bindu Bindu Mishi Hue Sindhu" and this special moment of Golden Jubilee celebration. Today's success brings back the memories of 50 years of history, from which OSA has evolved as a strong organization. All the section names are related with OSA's contribution to Odia life in Americas.

The first section contains information on the convention team members, OSA official teams, the messages from OSA officials and the convener. We have named this section "*relationships*" (*samparka*). The organization creates this relationship among people who are different, who are of diverse interests, hobbies, thinking, and skills. These people come under one umbrella and a relationship starts among them. Hope you will examine the people behind all the work who volunteer their time for these relationships to be sustained. Be introduced to OSA and OSA officials, know about the convention organizers and the team members that are behind making this convention happen.

The second section is focused on this year's theme, "*Bindu Bindu Mishi Hue Sindhu*" (*The droplets together make up the ocean*). We have named this section "*close Union*" (*sanhati*). In this section the editorial team members have shared their life's journey with OSA. Their passions have found a path of expression in the close union with other OSA members with the same passion, that is being facilitated by OSA. Hope this will introduce you with the editorial team members better and take you through past several years of OSA.

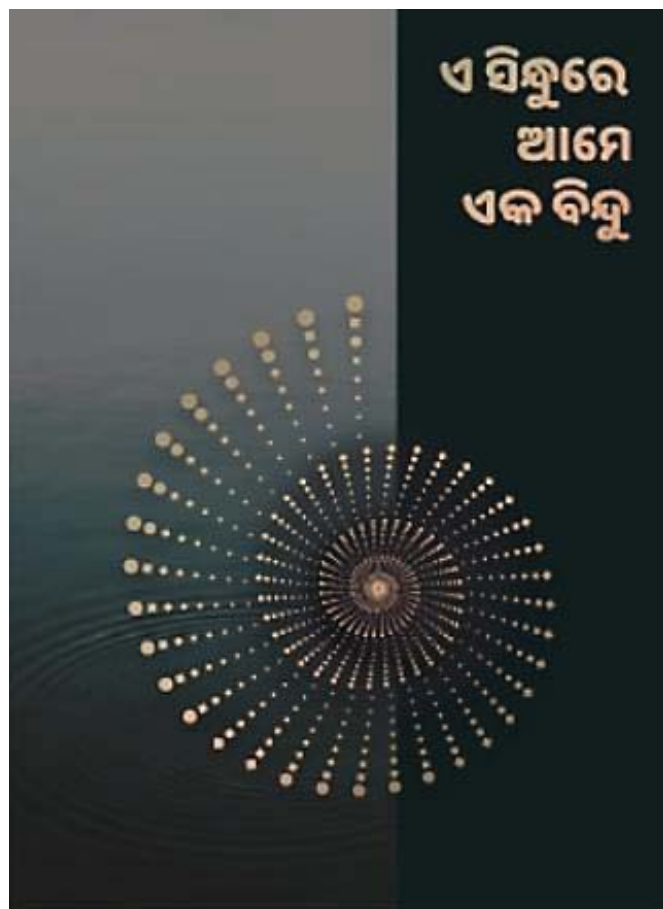
The third section contains writings from our OSA thinkers, philosophers and poets. We have named this section, "*self knowledge*" (*sambid*). The knowledge that comes from experience is the lasting knowledge. This knowledge is very pure, very unique to be explored.

The fourth section contains writings from our younger OSA members. We have named this section, "*determination*" (*sankalpa*). OSA has become a determination for many members who offer their services like a ritual. The children become inspired by their parents and engage themselves with OSA activities to enjoy, to volunteer and to share. Read their passion now and you will find this determination and devotion for OSA in them.

The fifth section is the literature section (Odia & English)section. We have named this section "*culture*" (*sanskriti*). A culture cannot be nurtured unless there is a requirement for it, a drive for it and a demand for it. Odia language is associated with Odia culture. It is a symbol of dignity. Without OSA it would have been difficult to keep up with Odia language in this foreign land.

The sixth section is for the OSA members that are no more. They have contributed significantly to OSA. We have named this section, "*purification*" (*sanskara*). They have brought good changes, reforms in OSA, purity in OSA. This section is our tribute to those departed souls.

The seventh or the last section is the section on important OSA information, activity reports, chapter reports, new members and the financial status. We have named this section "*motion*" (*sanchara*). OSA is flowing like a river with time, with changes that are beneficial for all the members. Know these movements, the activities of OSA in cultural sector, service sector, management sector and other sectors. OSA is the river which nurtures us. Let us make a promise to not dump any toxic waste in this river and always keep it clean. Then it will provide nourishment to all of us. Let this "Golden Jubilee" moment be auspicious to OSA and all the OSA members.



**Celebrating 50 Years of
Fun, Family, Friendship & Future**

We thank OdiSri for being OSA Grand Sponsor



ସମ୍ପର୍କ

RELATIONSHIP



CONVENTION TEAM

DR. UMA BALLAV MISHRA
Convener
SRIBATSA DAS
Co-Convener
NY/NJ Chapter President/Marketing
DR. NIRANJAN PATI
Co-Convener
Lead, Fundraising Committee
SUSIL PANDA
Co-Convener
OSA Vice President
SUBHASHISH TRIPATHY
Co-Convenor/NY-NJ Chapter Vice President
ANNIE MOHAPATRA
Co-Convenor/NY-NJ Chapter General Secretary
Logistics
TANMAYEE MOHAPATRA
NY/NJ Chapter Cultural Secretary
KULDIP MOHAPATRA
NY/NJ Chapter Event Coordinator
Convention Project Manager
LALATENDU MOHANTY
Advisor
OSA President
HEMANT PRADHAN
NY/NJ Chapter & Convention Treasurer
MANOJ PANDA
Treasurer
AMAR SENAPATI
Web Technology and Food
OSA General Secretary
TIRTHA DAS
Cultural
PRADEEP MOHAPATRA
Cultural
MAHASWATA RATH
Vendor Management
JEETENDRA PRADHAN (JP)
Food
PRABHAT MOHAPATRA
Registration
ANTARYAMI PANIGRAHI
Logistics/Treasury Advisory

DR. ASHUTOSH DUTTA
Advisor/Speaker Selection
Electrifying, Inspirational and Progressive
MITU PATI
Hospitality
Be our guest, feel at home
SRIDHAR RANA
50 years of History/Souvenir/Directory
JAGANNATH MOHANTY
Directory
SUDHENDU DAS
Awards/Recognition
DR. DURGA MISRA
Co-Convenor/Seminars
EVA MOHANTY
Decoration
DR. RANJAN DASH
Sponsorship
NAGESH RAJNALA
Advisor/Souvenir/Marketing
NATASHA MOHANTY
Youth Co-Convener
Powering the millennials
RAVINDRA ANGARA
Reunion
MR. BISHWANATH SAHOO
Re-unions
ROBIN DASH
Re-unions
JIGISHA BISWAL
Re-unions
DR. BASANT PRADHAN, MD
Re-union
MANAS SWAIN
Souvenir Re-Publication
LATA MISHRA, Cultural Advisor

CO CONVENORS

Sribatsa Das
Dr. Niranjan Pati
Dr. Akhileshwar Patel
Dr. Durga Madhava Misra
Brajendra Sahu
Subhashish Tripathy
Annie Mohapatra
Natasha Mohanty (Youth)

National Advisors

Dr. Sita Kantha Dash
Pratap Das
Dhirendra Kar
Tapan Padhi
Dr. Sukant Mohapatra
Nagesh Rajanala

Regional Advisors

Dr. Birendra Jena
Jnana Dash
Dr. Ashutosh Dutta
Sabita Panigrahi
Sujata Patnaik
Kiron Senapati
Sekhar Dora
Kew Ray

50 Years History

Srigopal Mohanty, Canada
Arjun Purohit, Canada
Dr. Lalatendu Mansingh, Canada
Hara Padhi, Canada
Dr. Kula Mishra, Tennessee
Satyabrata Mishra, New England
Dr. Surendra Ray, DC
Dr. Bigyani Das, DC
Gyana Pattnaik, Chicago
Annapurna Pandey, California
Kuku Das, California
Priyaranjan Mohapatra, Georgia
Manaranjan Pattnaik, New Jersey
Saradindu Misra, New Jersey
Nrusingha Biswal, New Jersey
Suvasri Das, New Jersey
Susmita Jyotishi, New Jersey
Rajshree Rath & Pradip Tripathy
Tirtha Das
Padmanava Pradhan, New Jersey
Sridhar Rana, New Jersey

Awards & Appreciation

Sudhendu Das
Jyoti Biswal
Prem Sahoo
Ashutosh Dutta

CULTURAL

Akhila Mohapatra
Anindita Nanda
Anupam Z
Aradhana Das
Bani Ray
Chandan Das
Chinki Patnaik
Deepa Bhandari
Dipleena Sharma
Eva Mohanty
Lata Mishra (Advisor)
Leena Mishra
Mahasweta Mishra
Milu Kar
Mina Kar
Nisha Mohanty
Pradeep Mohapatra
Pratap Das
Ranjan Mishra
Reema Mishra
Riti Mohanty
Ritu Mishra
Sanjeeb Swain
Shibani Padhi
Sonali Daspatnaik
Suchit Satpathy
Sunita Mishra
Surama Panda
Tanmayee Mohapatra
Tirtha Das

Consular Service

Sudhendu Das

Decoration

Eva Mohanty
Anuradha Mishra
Reema Mishra
Swetaluna Behera
Anshuman Panigrahi
Aradhana Das
Milly Panda
Samit Panda
Shilpa Parija
Madhusmita Mohanty
Lal Mohanty
Rosy Biswal

Reena Pattanayak
Saswati Nayak

Food

Jitendra Pradhan
Amar Senapati
Rosi Biswal
Milly Panda
Mona Panigrahi
Bijaylaxmi Rana
Julie Khandei
Sarita Dehury
Swetaluna Behera
Subhashree Parida
Lisa Pradhan
Jyoti Biswal
Aradhendu Sarangi
Amrut Patnaik
Premanshu Khandai
Dinesh Rout
Sanjiv Roy
Soumendra Samal
Krishna Satapathy
Bijay Mohanty
Manabesh Das
Bichitra Pattnaik
Pranaya Mishra
Nila Sundar Jena
Bijay Pattnaik
Sidharth Mohanty
Akhila Mohapatra

Advisors

Litu Panda
Jhuni Baral
Litu Das
Sourya Mohapatra
Lulu Pattnaik
Soumya Pattnaik
Dhirendra Kar
Rohit Patel

Hospitality

Mitu Pati
Chaitali Roy
Annie Mohapatra
Rajshree Rath
Sonee Mishra

Milly Panda
Swetaluna Behera
Sudhir Sahu
Rashmi Ranjan Sarangi
Ardhendu Sarangi
Debi Mohapatra
Sudhendu Das Priyabrata Tripathy
Pratyasha Dash
Subhasish Panda
Tapana Patro
Mita Mohapatra
Reena Patnaik
Lora Mohanty
Reema Mishra
Lucky Rana
Lisa Pradhan
Sudha Patnaik
Rasmita Swain

Legal Counsel

Devjani Mishra
Sunanda Holmes

Logistics

Antaryami Panigrahi
Annie Mohapatra
Chaitali Roy
Nagashewar Prusty
Ajit Parhi (Bapi)
Deepak Sahoo
Pradeep Choudhury
Malaya Mohanty
Suchit Satpathy
Biswajit Nayak
Pradip Tripathy

Marketing

Sribatsa Das
Nagesh Rajnala
Anshuman Panigrahi
Ardhendu Sarangi
Manoj Mishra
Sameer Senapati
Som Mohanty
Soumya Mohanty
Subrat Sahu
Sushmita Pradhan

Tapana Patro
Ashok Panigrahi

Registration

Shanti Mishra
Prabhat Mahapatra
Suman Kothari
Bijay Mohanty
Kuldip Mohapatra
Nilasundar Jena
Sujit Mallik
Subhasish Panda
Namrata Das
Supriya Jena
Rashmi Pani
Saswati Nayak
Namrata Das

Reunions

Jigisha Biswal
Ravindra Angara
Robin Dash
Basant Pradhan
Biswanath Sahoo

Seminars / Symposiums

Durga Mishra
Sukanta Mohapatra
Anapurna Pandey
Ajay Mohanty
Nrusingha Biswal
Chitta Baral
Ranjan Dash
Basant Pradhan
Devaki Choudhury
Asutosh Dutta
Sushanta Routray
Pratap Rout (Bahamas)
Srikant Sarangi
Dr. Saswati Mahapatra

Souvenir

Saradindu Mishra (Advisor)
Bigyani Das
Satya Patnaik
Pradyot Patnaik
Gagan Panigrahi

Nagesh Rajanala
Prasanta Kumar Bhunya
Sikhanda Satpathy

Sponsorship

Niranjan Pati
Dhirendra Kar
Gagan Panigrahi
Subhashish Tripathy
Lalatendu Mohapatra
Uma Mishra
Lalatendu Mohanty
Chaitali Roy
Annie Mohapatra
Pradeep Mohapatra
Sribatsa Das
Pratap Das
Sourya Mohapatra
Subrat Patnaik
Smruti Biswal
Dr. Akhileshwar Patel
Vani Mishra
Priyabrata Tripathy
Soumendra Samal
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Brajendra Sahu
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Parameshwar Dora
Bobby Patnaik
Rohit Patel
Ranjan Dash
Satya Mohanty
Satish Mohapatra
Sukeshini Dehury
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Anshul Dalua
Dinesh Rout
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Sushmita Pradhan
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Amar Senapati
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Susil Panda
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OSA National Executives 2019 – 2021



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March 19, 2019

MESSAGE

I am glad to know that the Odisha Society of Americas (OSA) is celebrating its 50th Convention on July 4-7, 2019 at Harrah's Atlantic City.

It has been a remarkable journey for the Odisha Society of Americas (OSA) from 1969 till date. It has evolved and grown carving a distinct identity with its activities and programmes covering a wide range of areas and fields from cultural to social to preserving Odia-American heritage. Further, the OSA strives to uplift the quality of lives of people by reaching out to their roots in Odisha and India. It is heartening that the members of OSA have made their mark in their chosen professions.

The Golden Jubilee Convention is a momentous occasion. The milestone event brings delight to the Odia diaspora in Americas as they celebrate the spirit of togetherness that developed over last five decades. The landmark event is to feature cultural programmes and intellectual discourses besides promoting Odisha as a favourable destination for investment. The OSA deserves appreciation for utilising the platform as the lead campaigner of "Make in Odisha".

Odisha is a land of huge opportunities and possibilities. Odisha seeks active participation and patronage of Odias living across the world to glorify and popularise the image of brand Odisha. On this joyous occasion I extend my greetings and good wishes to the OSA and I am confident that it would rededicate to the cause of Odisha.

Ganeshi Lal

(Ganeshi Lal)

President's Message



Congratulations to my Odisha Society of the Americas for preserving the Odia culture and heritage for fifty years while bringing in Odias around North America together.

The feeling of early Odias arriving here, must parallel with Neil Armstrong or Edwin Aldrin landing on the moon. While history will remember 1969 as the year of the moon landing a giant leap for mankind, Odias around the world will not forget the visionary Odias thinking ahead of holding onto their roots in this far land. Coming from an old world country in a new land with different lifestyle is not much different from landing on moon.

As we reflect back, we must realize the circumstances in which few passionate Odias came together thinking about a society, ultimately building the oldest Indian society in America.

Now forget moon, let's go to mars!

A relation comes in many forms but for Odias like us living faraway from our families & relatives, it is the bonding, ସମ୍ପର୍କ, that we built by being around each other, at good times and bad times.

Our root is our identity. We are unique because of our robust roots, magnificent culture, and the strong heritage. Our roots are not in landscape or a country, or a people, they are inside us, and they are our ସଂସ୍କୃତି and ସଂସ୍ମାରଣ.

Community is our strength. We thrive to provide a social safety-net for all Odias by looking out for each other in this far land. OSA as an organization is the strength to each Odia, member or not. OSA ସଂସ୍ପର୍ଶ is what we preach for all Odias.

Whatever we do, wherever we go, Odisha will continue to remain close to our hearts. We will continue to be part of the Odisha at her success as well as at her adversity. We will stand beside everyone who makes a meaningful impact on the bottom-of-the-pyramid segment. We will continue to support social entrepreneurship, advocate for social justice, facilitate opportunity for higher education and, end the digital divide.

While we think about less privileged in Odisha, we must not forget the community we all are now part of. Without involvement in local community, we will not have a strong quality of life for ourselves. It always intrigues me to know that we have fifty thousand Odias in North America while OSA could only reach out to 5% of them. I always thought we can do better. We tried hard in branding the Odisha Society, making sure all understand the need of staying connected, necessity of being the strength to each one and significance of being the voice for all Odias. But we need to do way more than we tried and be more persistent than before.

While I reflect back our last two years, I definitely feel we accomplished many but surely missed some. We started with full energy with lot of dreams to make a difference. I won't deny, but many times I felt helpless, sometimes the job seemed to be overwhelming.

Leading the society is a big sacrifice by itself. Executive Team stretched itself thin to make an impact. Personally, I tried hard to reach out to as many members as I could. I met many by being in local chapter events throughout the country and many thru electronic media. Travelled Odisha twice just on OSA business. But my dream to hit 5000 voting members, left unfulfilled.

Lot many got unfinished but, I am sure, our successors will take them further.

It's time to think positive than before, time to think of a larger cause with much longer impact. Let's partner for a higher goal, whether it is to improve the skillset, provide farm-aid for farmers, digitize Odisha, eradicate Malaria, or to promote Odisha in the world forum.

There are challenges, more challenges as we grow our base. More challenges now particularly when voluntarism is on a steady decline. A four member team can do so much.

As society grows the voluntary base needs to grow. To succeed, we must empower chapters to play a critical role with national team standing by their side.

I feel great of being the volunteer for the society. Many of our accomplishments could not have been possible without small but dedicated voluntaries supporting us throughout our tenure. A big shout out to Award Committee, OSANet Team, PRO, Guest selection, Library Team, Convention Audit, OSA Impact, Election and Editorial Team. I saw genuine leaders in OSANE, Ohio, South East and many other sections of OSA.

I also had an amazing hard working team, they inspired me, gave the crisp advice and supported me to become more effective.

Finally, I thank my wife, my daughter for respecting me for the role I signed for even if they felt ignored a lot. At the same token I thank my New Jersey family who made my tough journey easy by just being there for me.

Best wishes Odisha Society. Best wishes to its members.

Jai Jagannath!

Lalatendu Mohanty
President

Vice - President's Message



My hearty congratulations to all members of Odisha Society for the 50th anniversary since our founding. Having served for last two years, I have seen the immense enthusiasm and drive to remember our roots, celebrate our culture and most importantly, set a foundation for the next generations. My sincere thanks to the founders, who brought the group together 50 years ago without any modern tools we are using today.

It has been a pleasure and honor to serve for the last two years. But it has not been easy with a full time profession and other responsibilities towards family/society. But I have enjoyed each and every moment. Working with members of the Executive Committee, Board of Governors, and various committees and initiatives, each and every moment reminded me about the great group of people we are and the rich heritage we try to experience and preserve. Most importantly, I got to personally know many members of the society and build long lasting relationship with them. It has been truly a privilege to serve you all. My thanks to every member of the society for this opportunity.

We as a society have accomplished quite a lot in last two years, thanks to all the volunteers contributing valuable time towards the accomplishments. To list a few: increased active membership, the engagement and empowerment of members such as through surveys and Lifetime Achievement Award selection, the promotion of our culture in mainstream events, the Odia language in Google translate, collaborations such as Malaria No More and MoSchool, the OSA Impact grants, social media such as member only Facebook group, digitizing souvenirs, publications such as Utkarsa and Urmi, fundraising for Fani. But we have a lot more to do. The impact of Fani will be felt for a long time in Odisha and we need to help.

The incoming executive team is a group of outstanding individuals and I hope they will take the society to a different level. But they will need our support. I ask each and every member to volunteer at least for one initiative, either at local chapter or at national level. This will make us stronger as an organization, and will help immensely to bring everyone together and build stronger connection with our roots.

Finally, I wanted personally thank Lalatendu, Amar and Sachi for a great partnership in the executive team. The teamwork was above and beyond any experience I had before. Truly, it was *"All for One and One for All"*, working together for one goal, which is Odisha Society's mission/vision. I will always cherish this friendship and experience.

I wish all attendees a great time at the convention and the very best to all members of Odisha Society.

Sincerely,

Susil Panda
Vice President

Secretary's Message



I take this golden opportunity to congratulate all on the 50th anniversary of Odisha Society of the America's. This is indeed a proud moment for all Odias living in North America. Our seniors started this organization back in 1969 as a social platform and gifted to future generations which has grown to such a vibrant community during last 50 years. I feel very proud to be part of this family and very fortunate to serve the community as a volunteer for the last decade.

Odisha Society will be celebrating the golden jubilee year at Atlantic City, NJ organized by New York & New Jersey Chapter from 4th – 6th July. I cordially invite you and your family to join and to be part of this historic lifetime convention. New York & New Jersey Chapter volunteers under the leadership of convener Dr. Uma B Mishra are working relentlessly around the clock to make it a grand and an enjoyable convention for all of us.

The Odisha Society BOG Members have been taking their responsibility very seriously. Every month we conduct BOG meeting on every 2nd Sunday at 7:00 PM EST and there have been record participation during last meetings. The minutes of the meeting are duly recorded and are available in OSA Website through the link <http://www.odishasociety.org/bog-meeting-minutes/>

The Odisha Society membership as of May 2019, stands at 1334 in total. Benefactor – 42, Patron – 52, Life Member – 1139, 5 Year Member – 50, Annual Family / Single – 51. The new members enrolled for 50th convention is not considered. I would like to take this opportunity to share few major highlights and developments at national and local chapters since Aug 2018.

- New OSA executives were elected (un contested) to serve and manage the society from 2019 – 2021. Kuku Das (CA) – President, Anil Pattnaik (Ohio) – Vice President, Vivek Das (MI) – Secretary and Utkal Nayak (MD) – Treasurer.

- OSA has involved and partnering with few major programs in Odisha for Malaria No More & Mo-School.
- Unfortunately, we lost few Odia's in USA within last 1 year. OSA came forward and helped the families in cremation and sending the body to families back in Odisha.

- New office bearers joined for OSA CA, Mt Hood, Ohio and SE chapters.

I request and encourage all chapters due for elections (normally every 2 – 4 years) to elect new representatives following a democratic process.

I would like to encourage every OSA member to participate in all local events throughout the year in big way to spread the Odia culture in North America. My sincere request to make every effort to spread our message among all other Odia friends to motivate them joining OSA as life members to make this organization stronger. We are almost 50 thousand Odiya's living in NA but unfortunately, we just have less than 3000 members. With the membership growth, we can represent ourselves as a strong and integral Indian community in this adopted land. Let's keep on trying advocating the good words and great strengths of the community to bring in more to be part of this family.

At the end, I would like to convey my heartfelt gratitude to all OSA members who are spending their countless hours for volunteering for our community to make it strong and vibrant. Just few months left for me as the Odisha Society secretary but it was a great pleasure to serve for my own community. My personal thanks to Lal Bhai, Susil and Sachi for such a wonderful team work to manage the society during the last 2 years along with all the support from all BOG members throughout. It would have been impossible without their support.

As always proud to be an Odia and proud to be part of Odisha Society.

Jai Jagannath !!!

Amar Senapati
Secretary

Chapter - President's Message

NY - NJ



Let's Look to The Sky: Our possibilities are limitless

Dear Fellow Odias,

Chaitali and I welcome all of you to OSA Golden Jubilee Convention. Thank you for taking time to join us at this milestone convention. We hope you enjoy your stay, network with fellow Odias, network with alumni, enjoy the cultural extravaganza, enjoy the food and hospitality of OSA NY/NJ Chapter.

I would like to thank our 200 volunteers for sacrificing personal time for over a year to make this convention possible. I would like to thank our individual and corporate sponsors for their generous contribution. I would like to thank corporations who have contributed through matching program.

The convention team has worked hard and achieved a lot. Key highlights are as follows.

1. Registered largest number of families
2. Orchestrated record number of participants in the cultural programs
3. Re-published souvenirs from 1984-2018 in Digital – Amazon.com Kindle, Google Play, Google Book and Digital Library. 1993-2018 souvenirs are available on Amazon.com in Print Edition. Other print editions are in progress. <https://www.osa2019.org/souvenir-re-publication/>
4. Created a history channel on YouTube uploading 1/2 TB of videos converted from VHS, Hi8, DVDs and other media. This is worth 200 full length movies. Watch them at <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UcaUgLWD7Oz9GNUqBM0tuLrg>
5. Created Google Assistant – “Ok Google, talk to Hello OSA”. Link to video <https://youtu.be/45s6Fxp8-xA>
6. Created SMS Chatbot – send a SMS to (973) 339-0611
7. Innovative Marketing – e-mail campaign, SMS campaign, Facebook Ad, postcard mailer, TV Ad, and Newspaper ad

All these has been possible due to believing in limitless and challenging the status quo. We dreamt big, worked hard and achieved a lot.

We have a lot of work in front of us. We can go as far as we can dream. Let's look to the sky. Let's build bridges to the next fifty years while we celebrate 50 glorious years of our togetherness. Let's integrate the new arrivals and generations born here to make our community vibrant and stronger together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sriabatsa Das' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sriabatsa Das

Co-Convener and President, Odisha Society of Americas New York/New Jersey Chapter

Convenor's Message



It is my honor and privilege to serve as the convener of the 50th OSA Convention, and I am especially humbled to do so on this landmark Golden Jubilee occasion. I am not a professional organizer. I never ran for any office. Though I am now retired, when I was a student and later a doctor, I did not have much time to nurture artistic or creative hobbies, and I never considered myself an accomplished speaker or writer. But twice in ten years, I have been asked to take on the challenge of bringing together this great gathering of Odias. So, just as I did ten years ago, I am pondering the reasons that the members of OSA NY-NJ chapter asked me to lead this convention.

It is fitting that our 50th convention is taking place in Atlantic City. What bigger gamble could there be, than emigrating to this country from a tiny village, Sundergram? And yet, what an unbelievable jackpot awaited us here. I came to the U.S. in 1972 to join my wife and we worked together to pursue the American Dream. Unlike our younger counterparts, we did not arrive with any thought of returning to India; we always believed this would be our home, even as we carried our old home in our hearts. We were proud to become U.S. citizens; our three children, who are now professionals themselves, and our two young grandchildren, are all very much Americans.

Yet we always participated in OSA and Odia events, dating back to the first gatherings in basements and borrowed churches. In those days, any Odia arrival was a great event for our small community and we searched each other out in paper phone books that our grandchildren would not even recognize. Perhaps it sounds like hyperbole, but because we lived in the New York area, like the Statue of Liberty, we welcomed countless Odias to this country. Our kids became used to the frequent drive between our home and J.F.K. Airport and joked about living in the Mishra Motel.

Of course, we were not the only ones who played this role. As OSA grew around the country, every newcomer could find someone to help allay their homesickness. There was a place to go to have Ganesh Puja, Saraswati Puja and Kumar Purnima. There were friendly faces who knew the difference between Balasore and Berhampur. Our kitchens hosted assembly lines of pani poori and rasagola. Over the years, the OSA membership increased by leaps and bounds and every successive generation brought their hope and enthusiasm. We grew up together, mourned together and celebrated together.

When I went to grammar school, the literacy rate in Odisha was only 17% for males, lower still for females. The recent Odia immigrants are brilliant, hardworking, and resourceful. Many of them are our children's age or even younger. They grew up in a different Odisha than we did, and benefited from demographic and socioeconomic changes along the way. They also benefited from the efforts of longtime, established OSA members to reach back to Odisha and "pay it forward". But they still were raised by their parents to respect their elders. Maybe that is why they asked me, a 70+ year old retiree to lead this convention, the

biggest celebration of our community.

Having worked with the Convention teams over the past year, I marvel at the energy and the problem-solving skills of the current OSA leadership. This 50th Convention unites OSA's past, present and future; the organizing committees have wielded every social media channel (some that I have not even heard of!) as well as old fashioned letters, messages and voice calls to draw record attendance. And, no matter how many past conventions you may have attended, the organizing teams have created something new for everyone. This Golden Jubilee convention will include everything from collegiate reunions, historical reflections, an Odia Bazaar and a Pitha competition to our own beloved Ratha Yatra. We encourage you to take advantage of all of these opportunities.

Even as we celebrate, we are mindful of the recent destruction caused by Cyclone Fani. We are proud to use this historic gathering as a venue to continue our fundraising efforts and commit that we will help restore our homeland in the wake of the storm. Given recent events, we are so touched to be joined by the artists and luminaries who are traveling from Odisha to mark this historic event. You inspire us. But in truth, all of you who joining us are luminaries in your own right. We are thrilled to welcome an unprecedented number of attendees, particularly those from OSA's founding generation who blazed the way for all who came after them. We cherish every moment that we can spend with you.

At the same time, we also welcome our second generation, and our third, so many of whom grew up with us, but have not been actively involved with OSA for a long time. Whether you call yourself an immigrant or a native, or Odia, Indian, Canadian, or American, we hope that your connection to Odisha remains meaningful to you throughout your lives. Wherever you go, you are meaningful to us.

And, I must recognize the incredible generosity of our many donors and sponsors, too many to list here by name. Odias are not the largest Indian community in North America, nor do we have the greatest resources. But your contributions have helped us to create a Golden Jubilee Convention that will be remembered for years. This truly would not have been possible without you. We hope you will forgive the fundraising team for their persistence.

As we used to say in the OSA NY-NJ newsletters, we hope that "a great time will be had by all." Of course, in any project of this size, some mistakes and oversights will be inevitable. Please know that all these are unintended, and that the Convention teams have done their very best to create an event for Odias everywhere to take pride in. On their behalf, I ask for your understanding and patience as we manage the logistics of this event.

So ultimately, why was I asked to take on this challenge? At the end of the day, I am just one Odia who has lived an American Dream, like so very many of you, and that is my only true qualification to hold this post of Convenor. And although I have been given this platform to address you, there is no "I" in team.

As I said at the outset, it has been my privilege to work with a dedicated, passionate group of OSA members, who have worked tirelessly to create a convention like no other before it. I thank each of them and their families for all of their efforts and for the chance to give them a little advice along the way. And, I am happy to pass the torch to them. As OSA marks its 50th Convention, it rests in capable hands, and it is poised for ever greater success.

look forward to greeting and spending time with as many of you as I can, and I wish you a wonderful stay in Atlantic City

Uma Mishra
Convenor





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ପ୍ରିୟ ଓସାବନ୍ଧୁ ଓ ବାନ୍ଧବୀ ମାନେ

ନମସ୍କାର ।

ପଚାଶ ବର୍ଷ ତଳେ ବିଦେଶ ଭୁଇଁରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପୁଅଟିଏ ଖୋଜୁଥିଲା ବନ୍ଧୁଟିଏ, ଯା' ସହିତ ଘଡ଼ିଏ ମିଶିବ, କଥାବାର୍ତ୍ତା କରିବ, ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ମିଶି ଖାଇବ, ଗୀତ ଗାଇବ, ନାଚତାମସା କରିବ, ଗପ କରିବ ଓ ବୁଲିଯିବ । ଆପାର୍ଟମେଣ୍ଟର ଲିଭିଙ୍ଗରୁମରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହେଲା ସେ ମେଣ୍ଟ, ସେ ମିଳନ । ଆଉ ସେଇ ମେଣ୍ଟ ଆଜି ବୃହତ୍ ଓସା ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନର ରୂପ ନେଇଛି; ଆଜି ପଚାଶ ବର୍ଷ ପରେ ପାଲୁଛି ସୂଚକ ନିବନ୍ଧ ହାରାଃସ୍, ଆର୍ଲାଣ୍ଡ୍ ସିଟି ଭଳି ଏକ ଆଭିଜାତ୍ୟପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ରେସୋର୍ଟ ହୋଟେଲ୍ରେ । ସେ ସମୟରେ ବେଶି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଏ ଦେଶରେ ନଥିଲେ; ଇମିଗ୍ରେସନ୍ରେ ଅନେକ କଟକଣା ଥିଲା ଓ ଛାତ୍ର ଜୀବନର ସ୍ୱଳ୍ପ ଆୟରେ ଭାରତ ଯିବାଆସିବା ଏତେ ସହଜ ନଥିଲା । ଏବେ ଆମେରିକାର ଅନେକ ସହର ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବହୁଳ; ଏବେ ଅନେକ ସହରରେ କୁମାର ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣମୀ, ରଜ, ରଥଯାତ୍ରା ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପର୍ବପର୍ବାଣୀ ସବୁ ପାଳନ କରାଯାଉଛି । ଏବେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା, ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଗୀତ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ନାଚ ସ୍ଥୁଲ ପ୍ରାୟ ଅନେକ ସବୁ ସହରରେ ଖୋଲିଗଲାଣି । ଅନେକ ଜ୍ଞାନୀ, ଗୁଣୀ ପ୍ରବାସୀ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଆଜି ଓସାର ସଭ୍ୟଭାବେ ଓସାର କଲେବର ବର୍ଦ୍ଧିତ କରିଛନ୍ତି ଓ ଓସାକୁ ନିଜର ସମୟ, ଜ୍ଞାନ ଓ ଅର୍ଥଦାନରେ ବଳିଷ୍ଠ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ସେଇମାନଙ୍କ ସହଯୋଗର ବିନୁ ଆଧାର କରି ଆଜି ଓସା ମହାସିନ୍ଧୁ ରୂପ ଧାରଣ କରିଛି । “ବିନୁ ବିନୁ ମିଶି ଦୁଏ ସିନ୍ଧୁ” । ସେ ସିନ୍ଧୁର ପବିତ୍ର ଜଳ ଆଜି ଯୁଗ୍ମ କରିପାରିଛି କେତେକେତେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପ୍ରାଣକୁ, ଖାଲି ଏ ଦେଶରେ ନୁହେଁ, ବିଶ୍ୱର ପ୍ରତି କୋଣକୁ ଯୁଗ୍ମ କରିପାରିଛି ଓସାର ସେ ଅଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ ଅବଦାନ । ଓସାର ଉଦାହରଣ ନେଇ ବିଶ୍ୱର ଅନ୍ୟ ଦେଶମାନଙ୍କରେ ଗତି ଉଠିଛି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ମାନଙ୍କର ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ସଂସ୍କୃତି ସବୁ ।

ଏ ସାରା ପଚାଶ ବର୍ଷ ସବୁ ସମୟରେ ଓସା ପାଇଁ ସହଜ ହୋଇନି । ନାନା ଘାତ, ପ୍ରତିଘାତ ଓ ପ୍ରତିକୂଳ ପରିବେଶର ସମ୍ମୁଖୀନ ହୋଇ ମଧ୍ୟ ଓସା ଆଗେଇ ଚାଲିଛି, ଏବଂ ଚାଲୁଥିବ ମଧ୍ୟ । ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଭୂମିର ମହାନ ଦର୍ଶନତତ୍ତ୍ୱ ‘ମହା’ ଭାବରେ ଅନୁପ୍ରାଣିତ ହୋଇ ଓସା ସଭ୍ୟମାନେ ଓସାକୁ ସେବା ଯୋଗାଇ ଆସିଛନ୍ତି । ଓସାକୁ ସଂରକ୍ଷିତ କରି ରଖିଆସିବା ପଚାଶ ବର୍ଷର ସମସ୍ତ ଓସା କର୍ମକର୍ତ୍ତା ଓ ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛାସେବୀ ମାନଙ୍କର ଦୃଢ଼ ସଂକଳ୍ପ, କଠିନ ଶ୍ରମ ଓ ଓସା ପାଇଁ ଶୃଙ୍ଖାର ଭାବନା ହିଁ ଆଜି ଓସାକୁ ଏତେଦୂର ଆଗେଇ ଆଣିଛି । ସେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଆମମାନଙ୍କ ତରଫରୁ ଅନେକ ଅନେକ ଧନ୍ୟବାଦ ।

ଏମିତି ଏକ ବିଶିଷ୍ଟ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତରେ ବାର୍ଷିକ ଓସା ସ୍ମରଣିକା ଉର୍ମିର ସଂପାଦନା ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ଭାର ଗ୍ରହଣ କରି ଆମେମାନେ ନିଜକୁ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଭାଗ୍ୟବାନ ମନେକରୁଛୁ । ଯେଉଁ ଲେଖକ, ଲେଖିକାମାନେ ସଂକଳ୍ପବଦ୍ଧ ହୋଇ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଲେଖା ପଠାଇଛନ୍ତି, ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଆମମାନଙ୍କର ଅଶେଷ ଅଶେଷ ଧନ୍ୟବାଦ । ସହ ସଂପାଦକ ଓ ସଂପାଦିକାମାନଙ୍କ ସହଯୋଗରେ ସଂପାଦନାର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟଭାର ବଣ୍ଟନ କରି ସମସ୍ତେ ମିଳିମିଶି ଏ ପ୍ରକାଶନୀ ଉର୍ମିକୁ ଆପଣମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ କରିଛୁ । ଆଶା, ଆମମାନଙ୍କର ଏ ପ୍ରୟାସ ଆପଣମାନଙ୍କ ମନକୁ ଛୁଇଁପାରିବ ।

ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧା ସୁମନାସ ସହ

ଶରଦିନ୍ଦୁ ମିଶ୍ର

ବିଜ୍ଞାନୀ ଦାସ

ଗଗନ ବିହାରୀ ପାଣିଗ୍ରାହୀ

ସତ୍ୟ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ

ଶିଖଣ୍ଡ ଶତପଥୀ

ପ୍ରଦ୍ୟୋତ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ

ନାଗେଶ ରାଜନାଲା

ପ୍ରଶାନ୍ତ ଭୂୟାଁ

Editorial – Golden Jubilee



Dear Friends
Greetings!

This is a very exciting time in OSA history. The organization which started with a few friends for simple celebration of togetherness has grown to establish itself as an organization of high repute serving Odias not only in North America, but also touching every Odia in the whole world. This year, this organization is celebrating its 50th anniversary, the golden jubilee year. The organization had its challenges as every organization does, however, it stood to face the challenges, to prove its importance, significance and its unique service and contribution to multiple generations of Odia Americans. This year's theme "Bindu Bindu Mishi Hue Sindhu" (The droplets together make up the Ocean) is very appropriate to convey the message that every OSA member has contributed to the existence and success of OSA. OSA is celebrating its golden jubilee because each of you have become a part of it and added yourself as a drop to make up this OSA ocean.

OSA volunteers are animated, members are excited, convention organizers are stimulated, and everybody is waiting for the July 4th weekend to experience history. Record number of registrants, excellent selection of invited performers from Odisha and the chief guest Hariprasad Chourasia will all be in Harrah's in Atlantic City, New Jersey to be a part of this history making.

We, the editorial team members are thankful for the convention committee for trusting us to be the editors for the Golden Jubilee convention. Thanks to all the authors for this OSA 2019 souvenir issue. Without your articles, the souvenir would not have its existence in its present form. Our editorial team members Saradindu Mishra, Gagan Panigrahi, Pradyot Patnaik, Satya Pattanaik, Sikhanda Satapathy, Bigyani Das, Prasanta Kumar Bhunya and Nagesh Rajanala have worked hard for helping in reviews, decision making and communicating with the authors and publishers. Each of us is grateful to other members of the team for their willing assistance and collaboration as we are to the contributors.

Meghna Memorial award in creative writing is coordinated by Prasanta Kumar Bhunya. This award is managed by the souvenir team every year in honor of Meghna from Michigan chapter. We are thankful to the judges, Arun Sahu and Anil Purohit for donating their valuable time to help OSA judge the children's writing fairly and effectively. We are thankful to Kshirod Parida and Bhaswati Basu for their valuable time to judge Visual Arts Competition.

We take this opportunity to thank all the advertisers for their generous donation/sponsorship to support the souvenir publication.

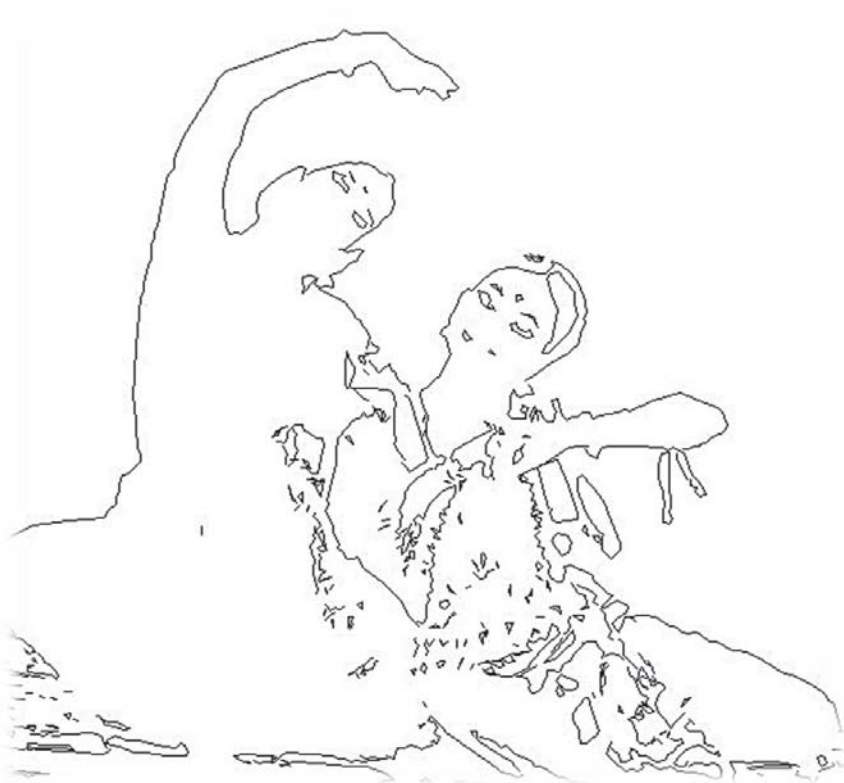
Last, but not least, we thank our family members, for being understanding and always providing support for this passion.

Producing annual OSA souvenir is a team effort in a very large scale. The task is complex and time

intensive. A lot of hours are used in editing, typesetting, formatting, communicating and re-checking. Multiple languages and multiple Odia fonts add to this complexity. Irrespective of all our hard work, there might be some oversights. We ask for your forgiveness for these unintentional mistakes.

Enjoy the souvenir and enjoy the Golden Jubilee celebration.

Saradindu Mishra,
Gagan Panigrahi,
Pradyot Patnaik,
Satya Pattanaik,
Sikhanda Satapthy,
Bigyani Das,
Prasanta Kumar Bhunya,
Nagesh Rajanala



ଓସା ସହିତ ଦୁଇ ଦଶନ୍ଧିର
ଏକ ଅନନ୍ୟ ସଂପର୍କର କାହାଣୀ
ବିଜ୍ଞାନୀ ଦାସ



ଅନେକ ଦିନ ତଳର କଥା । ନିଉଜର୍ସୀରେ ୧୯୯୪ ମସିହାରେ ଓସାର ଗୌପ୍ୟ କୟ୍‌ହୁଟୀ ପାଳନ କରାଯିବାର ଆୟୋଜନ ଚାଲିଥାଏ । ୧୯୯୩ରେ ଅରୁନେଶ୍‌ରେ ତକ୍‌ଟର୍ ଶ୍ରୀଗୋପାଳ ମହାନ୍ତି ସେ କନ୍‌ଭେନ୍‌ସନ୍‌ର ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତି ନେଇ ଅନେକ ବିବରଣୀ ଦେଉଥାନ୍ତି । ଆମେ ସେତେବେଳେ ଆଲବକର୍କି, ନିଉମେକ୍ସିକୋରେ ରହୁଥିଲୁ । ସେଠି ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କ କଥା ଛାଡ଼ି, ଭାରତୀୟ ମାନଙ୍କ ସଂଖ୍ୟା ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ କମ୍‌ ଥିଲା । ଗଣିଦେବା ଭଳି କେତୋଟି ପରିବାର । ନିଉଜର୍ସୀର କନ୍‌ଭେନ୍‌ସନ୍‌ରେ ଏତେ ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କ ମିଳନ ହେବା କଥାଟା ପଢ଼ିଦେବା ମାତ୍ରେ, ମନରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଭାବନା ଜାଗ୍ରତ ହେଲା । “ସତରେ କଣ ଆମେ ସେପଟେ କିଛି ଚାକିରି ପାଆନ୍ତୁନି, ତେବେ ସେ ଓସା କେମିତି ଜାଣନ୍ତେ, ଓସା ଲୋକଙ୍କ ସହିତ ମିଶନ୍ତେ, ଆମେ ବି ଓସା କନ୍‌ଭେନ୍‌ସନ୍‌ ଯାଆନ୍ତେ, ଏମିତି ଖୁସି, ମଜା କରିବାକୁ ବନ୍ଧୁ ମିଳିଯାନ୍ତେ ।”

ଏ ମନ ଭାରୁଥାଇ ଯାହା, କାଳେ ପ୍ରାପ୍ତ ହୁଏ ତାହା । ସତକୁ ସତ ଜୀବନରେ ସେମିତି ସୁଯୋଗ ଆସିଲା । ମତେ ମେରୀଲାଣ୍ଡ ରାଜ୍ୟର ବାଲ୍‌ଟିମୋର୍ ସହର ଛିଡ଼ା କନ୍‌ସ୍‌ ହସ୍ପିଟାଲ୍‌ ଯୁନିଭର୍ସିଟିରେ ପୋଷ୍ଟଗ୍ରେଜୁଏଟ୍‌ କାମ ପାଇଁ ସୁଯୋଗ ମିଳିଲା । ମୋ ସ୍ବାମୀ ମଧ୍ୟ ନାସା, ଗୋଡାର୍ଡ ସେଣ୍ଟରରେ ଚାକିରି ପାଇ ମେରୀଲାଣ୍ଡ ଆସି ମୋ ସହିତ ଯୋଗ ଦେଲେ । ନିଉଜର୍ସୀ ନହେଲା ନାହିଁ, କିନ୍ତୁ ମେରୀଲାଣ୍ଡ ରାଜ୍ୟରେ ଅନେକ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପରିବାରଙ୍କୁ ଭେଟିବା ପରେ ମନଟା ପରିତୁପ୍ତ ହୋଇଗଲା । ତେବେ ୧୯୯୪ ଜୁଲାଇ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣମୀ ପରେ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟନ୍‌ ଡିସି ଚାପ୍‌ଟର୍‌ରେ ବିଭାଜନ ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହେଲା ଓ କିଛି ସଭ୍ୟ ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ଚାପ୍‌ଟର୍‌ ଗଢ଼ି ଅଲଗା ହୋଇଗଲେ । ସେ ଘଟଣା ଆମମାନଙ୍କ ମନରେ ନକାରାତ୍ମକ ପ୍ରଭାବ ପକାଇଥିଲା ସତ, ତେବେ ଆମେ ଅନେକ ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖି ଖୁସି ହେଉଥିଲୁ ଓ ସମସ୍ତ ସାମାଜିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମରେ ସାମିଲ୍‌ ହେଉଥିଲୁ । ପୁଣି ଯୋଗକୁ ମେରୀଲାଣ୍ଡରେ ୧୯୯୬ରେ କନ୍‌ଭେନ୍‌ସନ୍‌ ହେଲା । ୧୯୯୫ରେ ତକ୍‌ଟର୍‌ ଦିଗମ୍ବର ମିଶ୍ରଙ୍କ ପ୍ରରୋଚନାରେ ପତି ମୋ ସ୍ବାମୀ ଓସାର ଆଜୀବନ ସଭ୍ୟ ହେବାକୁ ଫର୍ମ ପୂରଣ କରିଦେଇଥିଲେ । ଆମେମାନେ କନ୍‌ଭେନ୍‌ସନ୍‌ ହାୱାରେ ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟନ୍‌ ଡିସି ଚାପ୍‌ଟର୍‌ର ମଧ୍ୟ ଆଜୀବନ ସଭ୍ୟ ହୋଇଗଲୁ ।

୧୯୯୬ କନ୍‌ଭେନ୍‌ସନ୍‌ରେ ଏତେ ଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖି ଆମେ ଅନେକ ଖୁସି ହେଲୁ । ମୁଁ ପ୍ରଥମ ଥର ପାଇଁ ଆମେରିକାରେ କବିତାପାଠରେ ଗୋଟିଏ କବିତା ପଢ଼ିଲି । ପି.ଏଚ୍‌.ଡି କରିବା

ସମୟରୁ ମୁଁ କିଛି ବର୍ଷ ଲେଖାଲେଖି ଛାଡ଼ି ଦେଇଥିଲି । ଓସା ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଲେଖାଲେଖି କରି ମୋ ହୃଦୟର ଭାବକୁ ବାଣ୍ଟିପାରିବାର ଧାରଣା ଯେତେବେଳେ ମୋ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ପଶିଲା, ସେତେବେଳେ ମୁଁ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଉତ୍ସାହିତ ହୋଇପଡ଼ିଲି । ଗୋପା ଅପା ମୋ କବିତାଟିକୁ ଭାରି ପ୍ରଶଂସାକଲେ । ସେ ପ୍ରଶଂସାରେ ମୁଁ ଏମିତି ଖୁସି ହୋଇଗଲି ଯେ, ତା ପରଠାରୁ ଟିକେ ସମୟ ମିଳିଲେ କବିତାଟିଏ ଲେଖି ପକାଉଥିଲି ଓ ଅରୁନେଶ୍‌ରେ ବାଣ୍ଟୁଥିଲି । ଓସାର ଯେହେତୁ ଗୋଟିଏ ବାର୍ଷିକ ସ୍ମରଣିକା ପ୍ରକାଶିତ ହେଉଥିଲା, ସେଥିରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ମୁଁ ମୋ ଲେଖା ପ୍ରକାଶିତ କରିବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ପାଇଲି । ଏଣୁ ହୃଦୟ ଭିତରେ ବନ୍ଦୀ ହୋଇ ଛଟପଟ ହେଉଥିବା ମୋ ଲେଖକ ଚେତନା ମୁକ୍ତ ହେବାକୁ ସୁଯୋଗ ପାଇ ଉନ୍ମାଦିନୀ ହୋଇଉଠିଲା । ପ୍ରତିକ୍ଷଣକୁ ସଜାଇବାକୁ ମୁଁ ଲେଖାର ଆଶ୍ରୟ ନେଲି । ନୂଆବର୍ଷ ପାଇଁ ଗୀତ ଲେଖିଲି, ହୋଲି ପାଇଁ ଗୀତ ଲେଖିଲି, ଓସାର କବିତା ପାଠ ପାଇଁ ଗୀତ ଲେଖିଲି, ରକ୍ଷାବନ୍ଧନ ପାଇଁ ଗୀତ ଲେଖିଲି, କୁଆଁର ପୁନେଇଁ ପାଇଁ ଗୀତ ଲେଖିଲି, ଥ୍ୟାଙ୍କ୍‌ସ୍‌ଗିଭିଙ୍ଗ୍‌ ପାଇଁ ଗୀତ ଲେଖିଲି ।

୧୯୯୯ରେ ଯେତେବେଳେ ତକ୍‌ଟର୍‌ ବିଜୟ ମିଶ୍ର ଟରଣ୍ଟୋ କନ୍‌ଭେନ୍‌ସନ୍‌ରେ କବିତାପାଠ ଆୟୋଜନ କରାଇବାରେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ମାଗି ଅରୁନେଶ୍‌ରେ ଅନୁରୋଧ କଲେ, ମୁଁ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଉତ୍ସାହିତ ହୋଇ ତାଙ୍କୁ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିବି ବୋଲି ପ୍ରତିଶ୍ରୁତି ଦେଲି ।

୧୯୯୯ କନ୍‌ଭେନ୍‌ସନ୍‌ରେ କବିତାପାଠ ମେନ୍‌ ଷ୍ଟେଜ୍‌ ଉପରେ ହେଉଥାଏ । ଶହେରୁ ଅଧିକ ଲୋକ ସେ ହଲ୍‌ରେ ବସିଥାନ୍ତି । ହେଲେ ବିଜୟ ବାବୁ ମତେ କବିତାପାଠର ପରିଚାଳନା ଭାର ଦେଇ ଦର୍ଶକଙ୍କ ଗହଣରେ ବସିଗଲେ । ମୁଁ ସାହାଯ୍ୟକାରୀ ଭାବେ ଯାଇଥିଲି, ତେବେ ଯେତେବେଳେ ବାୟିତ୍ସ ମୋ ଉପରେ ପଡ଼ିଗଲା, ମୋ ସାହସ ମଧ୍ୟ ବଢ଼ିଗଲା । ସେତେବେଳକୁ ମୁଁ ଟୋଷ୍ଟମାଷ୍ଟରରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେଇ ସଭା ପରିଚାଳନା କରିବାର ଅନେକ ସୂତ୍ର ଶିଖି ସାରିଥିଲି ଓ ସେସବୁ ସୂତ୍ର ପ୍ରୟୋଗ କରି କବିତାପାଠ ସୁଚାରୁ ରୂପେ ପରିଚାଳନା କରିପାରିଲି । ମୋ ସାହସ ବଢ଼ିଲା ।

ସେ ବୟସରେ ମୋ ମନ ଅତି ସରଳ ଥିଲା, ଛନ୍ଦକପଟ ବୁଝି ନଥିଲା । ଯାହା ଭାରୁଥିଲି, ତାହା ପ୍ରକାଶ କରୁଥିଲି । ସେତେବେଳେ ଓଡ଼ିଆମାନଙ୍କର କୌଣସି କାରଣ ପାଇଁ ଭେଟାଭେଟି ବେଳେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଲୋକମାନେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଓଡ଼ିଆ

କହୁନଥିଲେ, ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କ କଥା ଛାଡ଼ । ମୋ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ କିନ୍ତୁ ସେ ସମୟରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ନିଶା ପଶିଥାଏ । ମୁଁ କାହାକୁ ତ କିଛି ସିଧାସଳଖ କହିପାରୁ ନଥାଏ, ତେଣୁ ଅରୁନେନ୍ଦ୍ରରେ ସେ ବିଷୟରେ ଲେଖି ପକାଇଥାଏ । ଓଡ଼ିଆକୁ ପ୍ରସାର କରାଇବା ପାଇଁ କେତେଜଣ ସମାଜ ଭାବନାର ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କ ସହିତ ମିଶି “ଏ ସମ୍ବାଦର ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଶବ୍ଦ”, “ଏ ମାସର ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଅନୁଚିନ୍ତା” ଇତ୍ୟାଦି କିଛି ସ୍ୱୟଂ ଅରୁନେନ୍ଦ୍ର ତିସ୍କକସନ୍ ଗ୍ରୁପ୍‌ରେ ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲୁ । ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ ପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଲେଖକଙ୍କ ଲେଖାକୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆଲୋଚନାର ବିଷୟବସ୍ତୁ କରାଇଲୁ । ସେ ସମୟରେ ଏକ ଅନୁଭବ ହେଲା ଯେ ଓସା ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ କିଛି ସିଧାସଳଖ କରାଇବାରେ ପ୍ରତିବନ୍ଧକ ରହିଛି । ତାପରେ ଆମେମାନେ ସେତେବେଳେ ଓସାରେ ନୁଆଁ, ମୋ କଥା କିଏ କାହିଁକି ଶୁଣିବ ? ତେବେ ନିଜ ଇଚ୍ଛାକୁ ସାକାର ରୂପ ଦେବାକୁ ମୁଁ ଓ ମୋ ସ୍ୱାମୀ ଅଲଗା ଉପାୟ ଖୋଜିବାରେ ଲାଗିଲୁ ।

୧୯୯୮ ମସିହାରୁ ତିସି ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ ଆମେ “ମାସିକ ଭଜନ ପ୍ରୋଗ୍ରାମ୍” ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲୁ । ସେ ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀକୁ ଆମେ “ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭଜନ ଗ୍ରୁପ୍” ନାମରେ ନାମାଙ୍କିତ କରିଥିଲୁ । ସେଇ ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଭଜନ ପତ୍ରିକା ‘ତିରନ୍ତନ’ ପ୍ରକାଶ ପାଇଲା, ହୋଲି ପାଳିତ ହେଲା ଓ ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଶିଖାଇବାର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ ବି ରହିଲା । ବାର୍ଷିକ ଓଡ଼ିଆ କୋର୍ସର ସିଲ୍‌ବସ୍ କରା ଆମେ ତାକୁ ଯୋଗ ଗୃହପୁଷ୍ପରେ ରଖିଲୁ । ୨୦୦୧ରେ “ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭଜନ ଗ୍ରୁପ୍” “ଯୋଗ” ନାମରେ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ ହେଲା । ସେ ବର୍ଷ ପ୍ରଥମ ଯୋଗ ପଞ୍ଚବାର୍ଷିକ ମୁଖପତ୍ର “ଯୋଗସୂତ୍ର” ପ୍ରକାଶ ପାଇଲା ।

୨୦୦୦ ମସିହା ବେଳକୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ ଲେଖିବା ପାଇଁ ଓଡ଼ିଆନ୍ ସର୍ଟ୍‌ଓୟାର୍ ବାହାରି ସାରିଥିଲା । ସବିତା ପାଣିଗ୍ରାହୀ ମଧ୍ୟ ଲାଟେକ୍‌ରେ ଟାଇପ୍‌ସେଟ୍ କରିହେବା ଭଳି ଏକ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସର୍ଟ୍‌ଓୟାର୍ ବାହାର କରିଥିଲେ । ମୁଁ ସବୁ ରକମର ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସର୍ଟ୍‌ଓୟାର୍‌ରେ ଭଲଭାବେ ଟାଇପ୍ କରିବା ଶିଖିଗଲି । ୧୯୯୯ କନ୍‌ଭେନ୍‌ସନ୍ ସମୟରେ ଗୋଟିଏ କଥା ଆମମାନଙ୍କୁ ଅତି ଆନନ୍ଦିତ କରାଇଥିଲା । ସେଇଟା ହେଲା ହୋଟେଲ୍ ରୁମ୍‌ରୁ ବାହାରିଲେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ମିଳୁଥିଲା, ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ଶୁଣିବାକୁ ମିଳୁଥିଲା, “ଭାଇ”, “ଅପା”, “ମଉସା”, “ମାଉସୀ” ଡାକରେ ସ୍ନେହ ଭାବ ଫୁଟି ଉଠୁଥିଲା ଓ ମନ ଭିତରେ ଖୁସିର ଫୁଆର ଛୁଟାଉଥିଲା । ସେ ସମୟରେ ମୁଁ ଓ ମୋ ସ୍ୱାମୀ ମିଶି ଗୋଟିଏ ସିଦ୍ଧାନ୍ତ ନେଲୁ, “ଆମେ ସବୁବର୍ଷ ଓସା କନ୍‌ଭେନ୍‌ସନ୍‌ରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେବା” । ତାହାହିଁ ହୋଇଛି । ଆମେ ୧୯୯୯ ମସିହାରୁ କ୍ରମାଗତ ଭାବେ ଓସା କନ୍‌ଭେନ୍‌ସନ୍‌ରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେଇ ଆସୁଛୁ ।

୨୦୦୦ ମସିହା ନାଶ୍‌ଭିଲ୍ କନ୍‌ଭେନ୍‌ସନ୍‌ରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ମୁଁ ତତ୍‌କାଳୀନ ବିଜୟ ମିଶ୍ରଙ୍କ ସହିତ ସହ-ପରିଚାଳିକା ରୂପେ କବିତାପାଠ ପରିଚାଳନା କଲି । ସେ ବର୍ଷ କବିତାପାଠ ଦୁଇଦିନ ହୋଇଥିଲା ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଅନେକ ପ୍ରମୁଖ ଲେଖକ ଓ ବକ୍ତା, ଗୌରହରି ଦାସ, ସହଦେବ ସାହୁ ଓ ରଜତ କର ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଯୋଗ ଦେଇ

କବିତାପାଠ କରିବା ସଙ୍ଗେସଙ୍ଗେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାର ପ୍ରଚାର ବିଷୟରେ ବକ୍ତବ୍ୟ ଦେଇ ଆମମାନଙ୍କୁ ଉତ୍ସାହିତ କରିଥିଲେ ।

ତତ୍‌କାଳୀନ ବିଜୟ ମିଶ୍ର ୧୯୯୯ରୁ ୨୦୦୧ ମସିହା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଓସାର କୋଷାଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷ ଭାବେ ନିର୍ବାଚିତ ହୋଇ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ସଂପାଦନ କରୁଥିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କ ପ୍ରଚେଷ୍ଟାରେ ଓସାର ଗୃହପୁଷ୍ପକୁ ନୂତନ ରୂପ ମିଳିଲା । ସେଥିରେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରୁଥିବା ସଂଜିତ ମିଶ୍ର, ନିଜର ଏକ ଷ୍ଟେସିଆଲର୍ ମହାନଦୀ-କମ୍ ଖୋଲିଥିଲେ ଓ ସେଥିରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷା ପାଇଁ କେତୋଟି ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ପୃଷ୍ଠା ରଖିଥିଲେ । ସେ ପୃଷ୍ଠା ମାନଙ୍କରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଗଳ୍ପ, କବିତା ଓ ଆବୃତ୍ତି ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ପ୍ରକାଶିତ ହେଉଥିଲା । ଯଦିଓ ସେଇଟା ସିଧାସଳଖ ଓସା କାମ ନୁହେଁ, ତେବେ ଓସା ସହିତ ସେ କାମ ଜଡ଼ିତ ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲା ଓ ଓସାର ଆଉ କେତେ ଜଣ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେ ପୃଷ୍ଠା ମାନଙ୍କରେ ନିଜର ଲେଖା ପ୍ରକାଶିତ କରୁଥିଲେ ।

ମୁଁ ଭାବିଥିଲି ଓସାରେ କେବଳ ଓଡ଼ିଆ, ଲେଖାଲେଖି ଓ ନାଟଗୀତ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟରେ ସଂପୃକ୍ତ ରହି ମଜା କରିବି । ହେଲେ ଓସା ସହିତ ମୋର ସଂପର୍କ ପିରେପିରେ ବଢୁଥିଲା । ୨୦୦୨ ମସିହାରେ, କନ୍‌ଭେନ୍‌ସନ୍‌ରେ ଓସା ତିସି ଚାପ୍‌ଟର୍ ତରଫରୁ ଆମେମାନେ “କଂସ ବଧ” ଡ୍ରାମା କରି ପ୍ରମୋଦ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ ପୁରସ୍କାର ଜିତିଥିଲୁ । ସେଇଟା ମୋର ଓସାରେ ପ୍ରଥମ ଡ୍ରାମା । ୨୦୦୩ ମସିହାରେ ମୁଁ ପ୍ରଥମେ ଡ୍ରାମା ଲେଖି ଓ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶନା ଦେଇ, ଓସା ତିସିର ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାଙ୍ଗମାନଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ ଡ୍ରାମା କରାଇଥିଲି । ସେ ଡ୍ରାମାର ନାମ ଥିଲା “ସୁନା ହରିଣୀ” । ସେବର୍ଷ ମୁଁ ମଧ୍ୟ ଓସା ସୋଭେନିରର ସହ ସଂପାଦିକା ଭାବେ ରହିଥିଲି । ୨୦୦୩ରେ ସେତେବେଳର ପ୍ରେସିଡେଣ୍ଟ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ ନାରାୟଣ ଭୂୟାଁ ମୋତେ ଓ ତତ୍‌କାଳୀନ ସୁର ରଥଙ୍କୁ ଓସା ନେସନାଲ୍‌ର ସଂପାଦକ ଭାବେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ନିର୍ବାହ କରିବାକୁ ଅନୁରୋଧ କଲେ । ଯେହେତୁ ମୋର ଲେଖାଲେଖିରେ ଆଗ୍ରହ ଥିଲା, ସେ ଅନୁରୋଧ ମୁଁ ଟାଳି ପାରିଲି ନାହିଁ । ମୋ ପାଖରେ ସମୟ କମ୍ ରହୁଥିଲା । ମୋର ତିନୋଟି କନ୍ୟା ବଡ଼ ହେଉଥିଲେ ଓ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଶିକ୍ଷା ସମ୍ପ୍ରାପ୍ତ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମରେ ସଂପୃକ୍ତ ରହୁଥିଲେ । ମୋ ନିଜ ବାକିରି ଜୀବନରେ ମଧ୍ୟ କେତୋଟି ମୋତେ ଆସିଥିଲା । ସେସବୁ ସତ୍ତ୍ୱେ ମଧ୍ୟ ମୁଁ କିଛିକିଛି ନୂଆ ଭାବନା ନେଇ ଓସା ମୁଖପତ୍ରର ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ସମ୍ଭାଳିଲି । ପ୍ରଥମ ଥର ପାଇଁ ମୁଖପତ୍ରର ସମସ୍ତ ସଂଖ୍ୟା ଓସା ଗୃହପୁଷ୍ପରେ ଡିଜିଟାଲ୍ ଫର୍ମାଟ୍‌ରେ ରଖାଗଲା । ଓସାର ସମସ୍ତ ସଭ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଟେଲିଫୋନ୍ ଓ ଇମେଲ୍‌ରେ ଯୋଗାଯୋଗ କରି ସବୁ ଅଞ୍ଚଳର ଲେଖକ, ଲେଖିକା ଓ ନେତୃତ୍ୱ ନେଉଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ମାନଙ୍କ ଠାରୁ ଲେଖା ସଂଗ୍ରହ କଲି । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପର୍ବପର୍ବାଣୀ ବିଷୟରେ ପ୍ରଥମ ଥରପାଇଁ ଓସା ମୁଖପତ୍ରରେ ଖବର ଛପିଲା । ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କର ଗ୍ରାନ୍ଥସନ୍ଦ, ବିବାହ, ଓ ମୁଖିଆ ଓସା ସଭ୍ୟଙ୍କର ତିରୋଧାନ ବିଷୟ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେ ମୁଖପତ୍ର ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ସମସ୍ତ ଓସା ସଭ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ପହଞ୍ଚୁଥିଲା । ହେଲେ ମୋର ସେ ଭଲ କାମ, ମୋ ପାଇଁ ଆଦୁରି ଅପିକ କାମ ଆଣି ଦେଲା ।

କବିତାପାଠର ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ନେଇ ମୁଁ ଅନେକଟା ମଜ୍ଜିଯାଉଥିଲି । ତାହା ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଅନେକ ଭାବୁକ, ଦାର୍ଶନିକ ଓ ଲେଖକ ମାନଙ୍କ

ସଂସ୍କୃତିରେ ମିଶିବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ମିଳିଥିଲା । ଆମ କବିତାପାଠ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମରେ ୨୦୦୩ରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସୁନାମଧନ୍ୟ କବି ପ୍ରତିଭା ଶତପଥୀ ଯୋଗ ଦେଇଥିଲେ, ୨୦୦୪ରେ ଅମରେନ୍ଦ୍ର ଖଟୁଆ କବିତାପାଠ ଉଦଘାଟନ କରିଥିଲେ, ୨୦୦୫ରେ ମନୋରମା ମହାପାତ୍ର, ପ୍ରତିଭା ରାୟ, ସହଦେବ ସାହୁ ଓ ବ୍ରଜ ଭାଇ ଯୋଗ ଦେଇଥିଲେ, ୨୦୧୦ରେ ଦେବଦାସ ଛୋଟରାୟ, ୨୦୧୩ରେ ପ୍ରତିଭା ରାୟ, ୨୦୧୪ରେ ବିଭୂତି ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ, ୨୦୧୬ରେ ରାମଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ବେହେରା, ୨୦୧୮ରେ ଦାଶ ବେନୁକୁର କବିତାପାଠରେ ଯୋଗଦେଇ କବିତା ପଢ଼ିବା ସହିତ, ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଜୀବନ କାହାଣୀ ଓ ଅନୁଭବ ବାଣ୍ଟି ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଆତ୍ମୀୟତା ବଢାଇ ପାରିଥିଲେ ।

କେବଳ କବିତାପାଠ ନୁହେଁ, ଡ୍ରାମାରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ମୁଁ ମଜ୍ଜିଗଲି । ଦୂର ସହର ମାନଙ୍କରେ କନ୍ଝେନ୍‌ସନ୍ ହେଲେ, ତିସି ଅଞ୍ଚଳରୁ ଅନେକ ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚପତ୍ରକୁ ଡରି ଯାଉନଥିଲେ । ତେଣୁ ଯେଉଁ କେତୋଟି ପରିବାର ଯାଉଥିଲେ, ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ ମୁଁ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଡ୍ରାମା ଲେଖୁଥିଲି ଓ ଆମେମାନେ ଓସା କନ୍ଝେନ୍‌ସନ୍‌ରେ ତିସି ଚାପ୍‌ଟର୍‌କୁ ରିପ୍ରେଜେଣ୍ଟ କରୁଥିଲୁ ।

୨୦୦୫ରେ ମୁଁ ଓସା ସେକ୍ରେଟେରୀ ଭାବେ ନିର୍ବାଚିତ ହେଲି । ଏମିତି ଏ ପରଦେଶରେ ନିର୍ବାଚନ ଲଢ଼ି ଯେ ଦିନେ ନେତ୍ରୀ ହେଲି, ସେ କଥା ଭାବିଲେ ମତେ ଏବେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଲାଗେ । ଗବେଷଣା କରିବା ମୋର ପ୍ରଫେସନ୍ । ସେଥିରେ ପରିବାର ଓ ତିନିତିନୋଟି ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କର ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ । “ମୁଁ କାହିଁକି ସେ ନିର୍ବାଚନରେ ଲଢ଼ୁଥିଲି”, ଏବେ ସେ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ପଚାରି ନିଜେ ବି ଉତ୍ତର ଦାଏନି । ତେବେ ଗଲା କଥା ତ ଗଲାଣି । ବିଗତ ସମୟକୁ ଫେରେଇ ଆଣି ହେବନି । ଓସାର ସେକ୍ରେଟେରୀ ଭାବେ ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିବା ପରେ ମୋର ଓସା ସହିତ ସଂପର୍କ ପ୍ରଗାଢ଼ ହେଲା । ଓସା ସଭ୍ୟ ମାନଙ୍କର ତାଲିକା କେମିତି ଠିକ୍ ଭାବେ ଗଣତି ହେବ, ସବୁ ସଭ୍ୟ କେମିତି ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସଭ୍ୟ ହେବାର ଗୌରବ ଅନୁଭବ କରିବେ, ସବୁ ସଭ୍ୟମାନେ କେମିତି ଠିକ୍ ସମୟରେ ଓସାର ସମସ୍ତ ଖବର ପାଇପାରିବେ, ଏସବୁ ଚିନ୍ତା ମୋ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ପଶିଲା ଓ ମୁଁ ଆନିମେଟେଡ୍ ହୋଇ ସେସବୁ କାମରେ ମଜ୍ଜିଗଲି ।

୨୦୦୬ରେ କୌଣସି ଚାପ୍‌ଟର୍ ଓସା କନ୍ଝେନ୍‌ସନ୍ ନେବାକୁ ଆଗେଇ ଆସିଲେନି । ମିଟିଗାନ୍ ଚାପ୍‌ଟର୍‌ର ନେବାର ଥିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ସେବର୍ଷ ମେଘନାର ଅକାଳ ତିରୋଧାନ ପାଇଁ ଚାପ୍‌ଟର୍‌ର ମୁଖିଆମାନେ ମନର ସରସତା ହରାଇ ଥିଲେ ଓ ସେମିତି ଶୋକାହ୍ୱାନ ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ ସେମାନେ କନ୍ଝେନ୍‌ସନ୍ ନେବାକୁ ମନା କରିଦେଲେ । ଏମିତି ଅନେକ ମାସ ବିତିଗଲା । ଅନ୍ୟାନ୍ୟ ଚାପ୍‌ଟର୍‌ମାନେ ପଛଘୁଞ୍ଚା ଦେଲେ । କିଛି କୌଣସି ସମାଧାନ ଦିଶୁନଥିଲା । ଶେଷରେ ମୁଁ ଓସା ନେସ୍‌ନାଲ୍ କନ୍ଝେନ୍‌ସନ୍ ଆୟୋଜନ କରିବାର ଓ ଡକ୍‌ଟର୍ ଜୟଗୋପାଳ ମହାନ୍ତିଙ୍କୁ କନ୍ଝେନ୍‌ସନ୍ ଭାବେ ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ନେବାର ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଦେଲି ।

ସେଇଥିରୁ କନ୍ଝେନ୍‌ସନ୍ କରିବାର ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତି ଆରମ୍ଭ ହେଲା । ମାତ୍ର ତିନିମାସରେ କନ୍ଝେନ୍‌ସନ୍ ଆୟୋଜିତ ହୋଇପାରିଲା । ସେବର୍ଷ କନ୍ଝେନ୍‌ସନ୍‌ରେ ମୁଁ ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମର ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ନେଇଥିଲି । କନ୍ଝେନ୍‌ସନ୍ ସମୟରେ ତିନିରାତି ପୂରା ଅନିଦ୍ରା ରହିଛି । କାମ ଜମା ସରୁନଥାଏ । କନ୍ଝେନ୍‌ସନ୍ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଘରେ ଗୁଞ୍ଜାନ ନୃତ୍ୟସଂସ୍ଥାର ୧୧ ଜଣ ଓ ଗାୟକ ତାନ୍‌ସେନ୍ ସିଂହ ରହୁଥିଲେ । ସେ ସମୟରେ ଏତେ ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ମୁଁ କେମିତି ସମ୍ଭାଳିଥିଲି, ଏବେ ସେଭଳି ଦୁଃସାହସ କରିବାକୁ ଭାବିଲେ ମନରେ ଭୟ ଆସିଯାଉଛି ।

୨୦୦୭ରୁ ୨୦୧୦ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଓସାର ଜୀବନରେ ଅନେକ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଆସିଲା । ସେ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନର ଏକ ମୁଖ୍ୟଅଂଶ ରୂପେ ମୋର ଭୂମିକା ରହିଲା । ଓସାର କାହିଁ କେତେବର୍ଷ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଜମିଥିବା ସମସ୍ତ ଅଳିଆକୁ ଝାଡ଼ିବା ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ମୋ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ପଡ଼ିଲା । ମୁଁ ସେ ସମୟରେ ଏକାଧାରରେ ବଡ଼ ଅସହାୟତା ଓ ବଳଶାଳୀ ଅନୁଭବ କରିଛି । ତଥାପି ମୁଁ ସାହସ ହରେଇନଥିଲି । ୨୦୦୯ରେ ମୁଁ ଓସାର ପ୍ରଥମ ନିର୍ବାଚିତା ନାରୀ ପ୍ରେସିଡେଣ୍ଟ ରୂପେ ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ନେଲି । ଓସାର ପ୍ରଥମ ନାରୀ ପ୍ରେସିଡେଣ୍ଟ ଗୋପା ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକଙ୍କୁ (୧୯୯୭-୧୯୯୯) ନିର୍ବାଚନରେ ଲଢ଼ିବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିନଥିଲା । ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧାନନ୍ଦ ମିଶ୍ରଙ୍କର ସେ ସମୟର ଅବଦାନ ଓସା ପାଇଁ ଯେମିତି ଈଶ୍ୱର ପ୍ରେରିତ ଥିଲା । ସେ ସମୟରେ ଓସା ଯେମିତି ଘଡ଼ିସରି ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତ ଦେଇ ଗତି କରୁଥିଲା, ତାଙ୍କର ଠିକ୍ ସମୟରେ ଠିକ୍ ପଦକ୍ଷେପ ଓ ଓସା କର୍ମକର୍ତ୍ତାମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ସହାୟତା, ଓସାକୁ ଏକ ନୂତନ ରୂପ ଦେଲା, ଓସା ବଳିଷ୍ଠ ହେଲା, ଓସାର ସଭ୍ୟ ସଂଖ୍ୟା ବୃଦ୍ଧି ହେଲେ, ନବୀନ ପରିଚୟରେ ଓସାର ଶରୀର ଝଲସି ଉଠିଲା, ଦେଶବିଦେଶରେ ଓସାର ପ୍ରଚାର ଓ ପ୍ରସାର ହେଲା, ଓସା ସେଇଦିନରୁ ବସନ୍ତର ଯୁଗରେ ପୁଲକିତ ହେଲା । ତେବେ ସେ ସମୟରେ ଓସାର ମାଟିକୁ ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଖୋଳିତାଢି ଝାଳନାଳ ବୁଢ଼ାଇ ଉର୍ବର କରିଥିଲେ, ସେମାନଙ୍କର ପରିଶ୍ରମ ଓ କଷ୍ଟ ଯେ ବ୍ୟର୍ଥ ଯାଇନି, ତାହା ମୁଁ ଦୃଢ଼ ଭାବେ କହିପାରିବି । ଆଜିର ଏ ହସୁଥିବା ଓସା, ପତାଶବର୍ଷ ପାଲୁଥିବା ଓସାକୁ ଦେଖିଲେ, ମନ ପରିପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ହୋଇଯାଏ, ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧା ଓ ଭକ୍ତିରେ ସେଇ ଉତ୍ସର୍ଗୀକୃତ ପ୍ରାଣମାନଙ୍କ ନିକଟରେ ମଥା ନଇଁଯାଏ ।

ଓସା ସହିତ ଆଦୁରି ଅନେକ କାହାଣୀ ରହିଛି, ଯାହାକୁ କହି ବସିଲେ ଉପନ୍ୟାସଟିଏ ହୋଇଯିବ । ତେବେ ଗୋଟିଏ କଥା ସତ୍ୟ, ଓସା ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ମୁଁ ଅନେକ ସାଙ୍ଗପାଥୀ ପାଇଛି, ଅନେକ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପରିବାରଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଆତ୍ମୀୟତା ବଢେଇପାରିଛି ଓ ନିଜର ସୁନ୍ଦରୀ ପ୍ରତିଭାକୁ ବିକଶିତ କରିପାରିଛି । ଅନେକ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଅନେକ ଭଲଗୁଣ ଶିଖିଛି । ବିଦେଶରେ, ଓସା ଆମର ନିଜ ପରିବାର, ସେଇ ହିଁ ମୋର ଓସା ପ୍ରତି ରହିଥିବା ଭାବନା । ସେ ପରିବାରର ମଙ୍ଗଳ ଓ ସୁରକ୍ଷା ପାଇଁ ମୁଁ ସବୁ ସମୟରେ ନିଜକୁ ନିୟୋଜିତ କରି ରଖିବି । ଏଇ ହେଲା ମୋର ଓସା ସହିତ ଦୀର୍ଘ ୨୪ ବର୍ଷର ସଂପର୍କର କାହାଣୀ ।

ନିଜର ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତାରୁ ମୁଁ ଯାହା ଅନୁଭବ କରିଛି, ଓସା ପାଇଁ

ଯେଉଁମାନେ ବାୟୁକୁ ନିଅନ୍ତି, ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଅନେକ ସମୟ ପ୍ରତିବନ୍ଧ କରିବାକୁ ପଡ଼େ । ସମୟ ଅଭାବରୁ ବେଳେବେଳେ ଆଖିରୁ ନିଦ ହଜିଯାଏ, ବ୍ୟବସାୟିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟରେ ବାଧା ଉପୁଜେ, ପରିବାରରେ ଓ ସାଙ୍ଗ ସାଥୀମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଭୁଲ୍ ବୁଝାମଣା ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହୁଏ । ଆଉ ତା ଉପରେ କିଛି ଯଦି ସଂଘର୍ଷ ଉପୁଜେ, ବିଚରା ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛାସେବୀତ୍ୱ ମନରେ ସେବା କରିବା ନେଇ ପୃଥକ୍ ଭାବନା ଜାଗ୍ରତ ହୁଏ । ତେଣୁ ସବୁ ଓସା ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛାସେବୀ ମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ମୋ ହୃଦୟ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସର୍ବଦା ଅନେକ ଅନେକ ଧନ୍ୟବାଦ ଓ କୃତଜ୍ଞତା ଥାଏ ।

ବିଭିନ୍ନତାରେ ଯେତିକି ବୈଭବ ଥାଏ, ସେତିକି ବୈଷମ୍ୟ ମଧ୍ୟ ଥାଏ । ଓସାର ସମୃଦ୍ଧି ସହିତ ସବୁବେଳେ ମତପାର୍ଥକ୍ୟ ଯୋଗି ହୋଇ ରହିଛି ଓ ରହିବ । ଯେ କୌଣସି କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ, କିଛିଟା ସମାଲୋଚନା ମିଳିବ । ଯଦି ସବୁ ସଭ୍ୟଙ୍କ ମନରେ ପରସ୍ପର ପ୍ରତି ମାନବିକତାର ମର୍ଯ୍ୟାଦା ରହେ, ତେବେ ସେମାନେ ଅନ୍ୟମାନଙ୍କୁ, ଓସାର ନେତୃତ୍ୱ ନେଉଥିବା ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛାସେବୀ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ବୁଝିପାରିବେ ଓ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ସମ୍ମାନନୀୟ ରହିବେ ।

ସମାଲୋଚନା କରିବା ସହିତ, ସମସ୍ୟାର ସମାଧାନ ପାଇଁ ମଧ୍ୟ ଆଗଭର ହୋଇ ବାହାରିବେ ଓ ନିଜର ମନ, ପ୍ରାଣ, ଧନ ଓ ଜ୍ଞାନର ଆଲୋକ ବାଣ୍ଟି ଓସାକୁ ଉଦ୍‌ଭାସିତ କରିପାରିବେ । ଆଶା, ଭବିଷ୍ୟତର ଓସା ଆହୁରି ସରସ, ସୁନ୍ଦର ଓ ସମୃଦ୍ଧ ହେବ । ମାନିଲେ ଦେବତା, ନ ମାନିଲେ ପଥର । ଓସାର ସଭ୍ୟମାନେ ଯଦି ଓସାର ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ଉପଲବ୍ଧି କରି ନିଜ ଜୀବନରେ ଓସା ସମାଜକୁ କିଛିଟା ଗୁରୁତ୍ୱ ଦେବେ, ତେବେ ଓସା ସବୁଦିନ ପାଇଁ ସେମିତି ଝଲସି ରହିଥିବ ।

ପରାଗ ବର୍ଷର ଜନ୍ମଦିନ (ସୁବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଜୟନ୍ତୀ) ପାଳନ ଅବସରରେ ଓସା ଓ ଓସାର ସମସ୍ତ ସଭ୍ୟ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ମୋର ଅନେକ ଅନେକ ଅଭିନନ୍ଦନ ।

ତେଜନ୍ , ମେରୀଲାଣ୍ଡ



ଓସା ସହିତ ତେତିଶ ବର୍ଷ

ଗଗନ ପାଣିଗ୍ରାହୀ



ମୋର କାନାଡା ଆସିବା ୧୯୮୫ ମସିହା ନଭେମ୍ବର ମାସରେ । ଲଣ୍ଡନ ଓଷ୍ଟାରିଓରେ ଥିବା ଯୁନିଭରସିଟି ଅଫ ଷ୍ଟ୍ରେସ୍‌ସ୍ ଅଣ୍ଡାରିଓ ବାୟୋକେମିଷ୍ଟ୍ରି ଡିପାର୍ଟମେଣ୍ଟରେ ମୁଁ ଆସି ଯେତେବେଳେ ପୋଷ୍ଟଡକ୍ଟରାଲ ଫେଲୋ ହିସାବରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେଲି । କିଛିଦିନ ଅନ୍ତେ ବଂଧୁ ଇପିଲି ଦୁର୍ଯ୍ୟୋଧନଙ୍କ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ପ୍ରଫେସର ଲଲାଟେନ୍ଦୁ ମାନସିଂ (ଲାଲୁ ବାବୁ)ଙ୍କ ସହିତ ମୋର ପରିଚୟ ହୋଇ ଘନିଷ୍ଠତା ବଢିଲା । ତାଙ୍କ ପାଖରୁ ଜାଣିଲି କାନାଡା ଓ ଆମେରିକାରେ ଏକ ଓଡିଆ ସୋସାଇଟି ଅଛି ଯାହାର ନାମ ‘ଓଡିଶା ସୋସାଇଟି ଅଫ ଆମେରିକା’ ଯାହାକୁ କି ସଂକ୍ଷେପରେ “ଓସା” ବୋଲି କହୁଛନ୍ତି । ପୁଣି ଶୁଣିଲି ୧୯୮୬ ମସିହାରେ ଓସାର ସପ୍ତଦଶ ବାର୍ଷିକ ସମ୍ମିଳନୀ ଟରୋଣ୍ଟୋ ସହରରେ ପାଳନ ହେବାକୁ ଯାଉଛି । ଲାଲୁ ବାବୁ ସୋଭିନିଅର ଦାୟିତ୍ବରେ ଥାଆନ୍ତି । ଅଳ୍ପ ଦିନ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଯେ ମୋର ଚିତ୍ର ଆଙ୍କିବାର ପାରଦର୍ଶିତା ଜାଣି ଯାଇଥାଆନ୍ତି । ତେଣୁ ସେ ମୋତେ ଅନୁରୋଧ କଲେ କିଛି ଚିତ୍ର ସୋଭିନିଅର ପାଇଁ ଅଙ୍କନ କରିବାକୁ । ମୁଁ ବିନା ଦ୍ବିଧାରେ ରାଜି ହେଇ ଚିତ୍ର କିଛି ଆଙ୍କିଦେଲି ଯେଉଁ ଗୁଡିକ କି ସୋଭିନିଅରରେ ସ୍ଥାନ ପାଇଲା । ସୋଭିନିଅରଟି ସେ ବର୍ଷ ଡିସେମ୍ବର ସହ ମାତ୍ର ୨୧ ପୃଷ୍ଠାର । ପୁଣି ଓଡିଆ ଅକ୍ଷର ଗୁଡିକ ହାତ ଲେଖା । ବାହାର ଆବରଣ ଉପରେ ଦଶାବତାର ଓ କୋଣାର୍କ ଚକ୍ରର ଚିତ୍ର । ଲାଲୁ ବାବୁ ବଡ ଯତ୍ନ ସହିତ ତାଙ୍କ ଡାକ୍ତରୀ ପ୍ରେସ୍‌ରେ ଜରନାଲଟି ବନେଇ ଛପେଇଲେ । ମୋତେ ଗୋଟିଏ କପି ବି ଦେଲେ । ହେଲେ ଦୁଃଖର ବିଷୟ ନୁଆ ନୁଆ କର୍ମ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତତା ହେତୁ ଆଉ ମୁଁ ସେ କନଭେନସନରେ ଯୋଗଦେଇ ପାରିଲି ନାହିଁ । ଯେତେବେଳେ ଲାଲୁ ବାବୁ କିଛି ବର୍ଷ ଧରି ଓସାର ଜରନାଲ ଦାୟିତ୍ବରେ ରହିଥାନ୍ତି । ତା ପର ବର୍ଷ ପାଲୋ ଆଲଟୋ, କାଲିଫର୍ଣ୍ଣିଆରେ କନଭେନସନ ହେଲା । ଓଡିଆ ଅକ୍ଷର ସେମିତି ହାତଲେଖା । ଇତି ମଧ୍ୟରେ ୧୯୮୭ ମସିହାରେ ବିବାହ ପରେ ମୋର ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ସବିତା ମୋ ସହିତ ଆସିଲେ । ସେ ଲାଲୁ ବାବୁଙ୍କ ସହିତ ମିଶି ତାଙ୍କ ଅତିସରେ କମ୍ପ୍ୟୁଟରରେ ଓଡିଆ ଅକ୍ଷର ବନାଇବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲେ । ଏମିତି ଦିନେ ମୁଁ ସେଠାରେ ପହଞ୍ଚି ଏହା ଦେଖିବାକୁ ପାଇଲି ଓ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଅକ୍ଷର ବନେଇବାରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେଲି । ଏମିତି ବି ଚିତ୍ର କରିବା ବା କାଲିଗ୍ରାଫି କରିବା ମୋର ନିଶା । ତେଣୁ ଅକ୍ଷର ବନେଇବାଟା ମୋତେ ବେଶ୍ ପୁହେଇଲା । ସେ ବର୍ଷ ୧୯୮୮ ମସିହା । ମିତିଗାନର ସାଗିନ ସହରରେ କନଭେନସନ୍ ହେବାର ସ୍ଥିର ହୋଇଥାଏ । ଲାଲୁ ବାବୁ ପୁଣି ଜର୍ଣ୍ଣାଲ୍ ଦାୟିତ୍ବରେ ଥାଆନ୍ତି । ଆମେ ସ୍ଥିର କଲୁ ଯେ ସେ ବର୍ଷ

ଓସା ଜରନାଲ ପାଇଁ ଆଉ ହାତରେ ଓଡିଆ ନଲେଖି କମ୍ପ୍ୟୁଟରରେ ଛପେଇବୁ । ଛୁଟି ଦିନ ମାନଙ୍କରେ ଅନେକ ରାତି ଯାକେ ଲାଗି ତିନିଦଶ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଓଡିଆ ଅକ୍ଷର ବନେଇଲୁ । ଓଡିଆ କବିତା, ପ୍ରବନ୍ଧ ଓ ଗଳ୍ପ ସମସ୍ତ ଓଡିଆରେ ଟାଇପ ସେଟ କଲୁ । ୧୯୮୮ ମସିହା ସାଗିନ କନଭେନସନ ଜରନାଲର ଓଡିଆ ଅକ୍ଷର ହାତ ଲେଖା ବଦଳରେ କମ୍ପ୍ୟୁଟର ଅକ୍ଷରରେ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ରୂପେ ପ୍ରଥମ ଥର ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରାଗଲା । ସେ ବର୍ଷ ଜରନାଲର କଲେବର ଡିସେମ୍ବର ସହ ୯୦ ପୃଷ୍ଠାକୁ ବୃଦ୍ଧି ପାଇଲା । ଯଦିଓ ଆମର କିଛି ଯୋଜନା ନଥିଲା ଯିବାର ଆମେ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଭାବରେ ସେହି ଦିନ ବନ୍ଧୁ ମାନଙ୍କ ଦ୍ବାରା ପ୍ରଭାବିତ ହୋଇ ସେଇ କନଭେନସନ୍‌ରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେଇଥିଲୁ । ସେ ଥିଲା ଆମର ଓସାର ପ୍ରଥମ କନଭେନସନ । ପରେ ପରେ ମୁଁ ପ୍ରାୟ ପ୍ରତି ସଂଖ୍ୟାରେ ମୋର କବିତା ପ୍ରକାଶ ପାଇଁ ଓସା ଜରନାଲକୁ ଦିଏ । ଅନେକ ସମୟରେ ଆର୍ଡ୍ ଥ୍ରାଉ ବି ଦିଏ ଏବଂ ସମ୍ପାଦକ ହିସାବରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ତୁଲାଇବାରେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ବି କରେ ।

ଅକ୍ଷର ବନେଇବା ଓ ଜରନାଲ୍ ଛପେଇବା ସମୟରେ ଲାଲୁ ବାବୁଙ୍କ ସଂଯୁକ୍ତରେ ଆସି ଉତ୍ତର ଆମେରିକାର ଅନେକ ଓଡିଆ ଲୋକଙ୍କ ନାମ ସହିତ ଆମେ ପରିଚିତ ହେଇଗଲୁ । ଯେତେବେଳେ କନଭେନସନ୍ ଯାଉ ସେଇ ନାମ ସହିତ ମୁଖମୁଣ୍ଡକର ସଂମ୍ପର୍କ ସ୍ଥାପନ ହୋଇଯାଏ । ଲୋକ ମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ସଂପର୍କ ବଢିବା ସହିତେ ଓସା ସହିତ ଆମର ସଂପର୍କ ମଧ୍ୟ ଧୀରେ ଧୀରେ ବୃଦ୍ଧି ପାଇବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲା । ୧୯୯୦ ମସିହାରେ ଦିଗମ୍ବର ଭାଇନା (ମିଶ୍ର)ଙ୍କ ଅନୁରୋଧ କ୍ରମେ ଆମେ ଓସାର ଆଜୀବନ ସଭ୍ୟ ହେଲୁ । ୧୯୯୪ ମସିହାରେ ଓସାର ରକ୍ତ ଜୟନ୍ତୀ ପାଳନର ବର୍ଷ । ନ୍ୟୁ ଜର୍ସିର ପୋମୋନା ସହରରେ ପାଳନ ହେବାର ସ୍ଥିର ହେଲା । ଏ ଉପଲକ୍ଷେ ଶ୍ରୀ ଗୋପାଳ ବାବୁ (ମହାନ୍ତି) ଫକୀର ମୋହନଙ୍କର ଛ ମାଣ ଆଠ ଗୁଣ୍ଠ ନାଟକ ଟରୋଣ୍ଟୋରେ ବାସ କରୁଥିବା ଓଡିଆ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ ମଞ୍ଚସ୍ଥ କରିବାର ଯୋଜନା କଲେ । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ମୋତେ ଭଗିଆ ଓ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ସବିତାଙ୍କୁ ସାଗିଆ ଭୂମିକାରେ ଅଭିନୟ କରିବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ମିଳିଲା । ଏଥି ପାଇଁ ଏକ ଘଣ୍ଟା ସମୟ ଦେବାକୁ କନଭେନସନ ମହାଶୟ, ମନୋରଞ୍ଜନ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ ପ୍ରଥମେ ଅମଙ୍ଗ ହେଲେ । ତାର କାରଣ କେଉଁ ସ୍ଥରରେ ନାଟକକୁ କଳାକାର ମାନେ ଅଭିନୟ କରି ଉପସ୍ଥାପନା କରିବେ ତାହା ତାଙ୍କୁ ଅଜଣା ଥିଲା । କଳାକାର ମାନଙ୍କର ଦକ୍ଷତା ମଧ୍ୟ ଜଣା ନଥିଲା । ତେଣୁ ଏହି ନାଟକଟିକୁ କେବଳ ତାଙ୍କରି ପାଇଁ କନଭେନସନ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଥରେ କାନାଡାର ହାମିଲଟନ ସହରରେ

ବିଷୁବ ମିଳନ ଉପଲକ୍ଷେ ମଞ୍ଚସ୍ଥ କରିବାର ସ୍ଥିର କରାହେଲା । ସେ ନିୟୁତରୁ ଆସି ଦେଖିବେ ବୋଲି କହିଲେ । ସ୍କୁଲ, କଲେଜ ଜୀବନରେ ମୁଁ ଓ ସବିତା ଅନେକ ନାଟକ କରିଆଉ, ତଥାପି ଏହା ଶୁଣି ଆମ ମାନଙ୍କର ପିଲେହି ପାଣି । ଭଲ ହେଲେ ସୁଯୋଗ ମିଳିବ ରଜତ ଜୟନ୍ତୀରେ କରିବା ପାଇଁ, ମନ ହେଲେ ନାହିଁ । ରାତି ଦିନ ପରିଶ୍ରମ କରି ହାମିଲଟନରେ ମଞ୍ଚସ୍ଥ କଲୁ । ମନୋରଞ୍ଜନ ବାରୁ ଏକୃତିଆ ଆସିଲେ ନ୍ୟୁୟର୍କରୁ କେବଳ ନାଟକଟିକୁ ଦେଖିବା ପାଇଁ । ନାଟକ ଦେଖି ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ପ୍ରୀତ ହେଲେ ଓ ରଜତ ଜୟନ୍ତୀରେ ମଞ୍ଚସ୍ଥ କରିବାକୁ ଆମକୁ ଅନୁମତି ମିଳିଲା । ପୋମୋନାରେ ଅନେକ ଉତ୍ସାହ ଉଦ୍‌ଘାଟନାରେ ନାଟକଟି ମଞ୍ଚସ୍ଥ ହେଲା । ଓସା ତରଫରୁ ଏହା ଥିଲା ପ୍ରଥମ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ନାଟକ ମଞ୍ଚସ୍ଥ । ଯଦିଓ ନାଟକ ପରିବେଷଣର ସମୟରେ ଅନେକ ବିଳମ୍ବ ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲା ତଥାପି ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଦେଖିବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ପାଇଛନ୍ତି ଏବେବି ସେମାନେ ସେ ବିଷୟରେ ଚର୍ଚ୍ଚା କରନ୍ତି ଓ ଆମକୁ ଭରିଆ ସାରିଆ ବୋଲି ଡାକନ୍ତି । ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଦେଖିଥିଲେ ଅନେକେ ଏ ମର ସଂସାରରୁ ବିଦାୟ ବି ନେଲେଣି । ତା ପରେ ପରେ ଆମେ ଓସାର ବିଭିନ୍ନ ମଞ୍ଚରେ, ଐତିହାସିକ, ପାରିବାରିକ, ସାମାଜିକ, ହାସ୍ୟ ରସାତ୍ମକ ଓ ପୌରାଣିକ ଏମିତି ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଭୂମିକାରେ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ନାଟକରେ ଅଭିନୟ କରିଅଛୁ । ଡେକ୍ଟର୍(୨୦୦୭) ରେ ଗୋପାଳ ଛୋଟରାୟ ଓ ଓହାୟୋ (୨୦୧୪)ରେ ମନୋରଞ୍ଜନ ଦାସଙ୍କର ନାଟକରେ ଅଭିନୟ କରି ପ୍ରଥମ ପୁରସ୍କାର ପାଇଛୁ । ୨୦୦୮ ରେ ଟେରୋଷ୍ଟୋ ସହରର ରୋଜ ପ୍ରିଏଟରରେ ବୈଷ୍ଣବ ପାଣିଙ୍କର ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ କର୍ଣ୍ଣାଜ୍ଞାନ ଗୀତିନାଟ୍ୟ ପରିବେଷଣ କରି ଦର୍ଶକ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ଆପ୍ୟାୟିତ କରିବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ପାଇଛୁ । ଏହି ନାଟକ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ପ୍ରିଏଟର ଯଥା ପେଟ୍ରିଅଟ, ଫୋଡ଼ ସେଣ୍ଟର ଫର ପରଫର୍ମେନ୍ସ ଆର୍ଟସ ଓ ଓହାୟୋ ପ୍ରିଏଟରରେ ଅଭିନୟ କରିବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ପାଇ ପାରିଛୁ ବୋଲି ଗର୍ବ ଅନୁଭବ ମଧ୍ୟ କରିଛୁ । ଏହା କେବଳ ସମ୍ଭବ ହୋଇ ପାରିଛି ଓସାର ପୃଷ୍ଠପୋଷକତା ଯୋଗୁଁ । ଏହା ବ୍ୟତୀତ ଆଞ୍ଚଳିକ ନାଟକ ମହୋତ୍ସବରେ ଭାଗ ନେବାପାଇଁ ଡେକ୍ଟର୍ ଏବଂ ଓହାୟୋ ଯିବାକୁ ଅନେକ ବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ପାଇଛୁ । ଅନେକ ନାଟକ ମଞ୍ଚସ୍ଥରେ ଅଭିନୟ କରିଥିବାରୁ ଏବଂ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶନା ଦେଇଥିବାରୁ ଓ ଉତ୍ତର ଆମେରିକାରେ ନାଟ୍ୟ କଳାର ସଂପ୍ରସାରଣ ପାଇଁ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିଥିବାରୁ ଓସା ମୋତେ ୨୦୦୮ ର ଚାଲିଶତମ ନିୟୁତ-ନିଉ ଜର୍ସି କନ୍‌ଭେନସନ୍‌ରେ କଳାଶ୍ରୀ ସମ୍ମାନରେ ସମ୍ମାନୀତ କରିଛି । ଏହା ପାଇଁ ମୁଁ ଓସା ପାଖରେ ମୋର ହାର୍ଦ୍ଦିକ କୃତଜ୍ଞତା ଜଣାଉଛି ।

କେବଳ ନାଟକ ନୁହଁ, ଓସା ଅନ୍ୟ କଳାର ମଧ୍ୟ ପୃଷ୍ଠପୋଷକତା କରି ଆସିଅଛି ଯେଉଁଥିରେକି ମୁଁ ବିଶେଷ ଉପକୃତ ହୋଇଛି । ୧୯୯୯ ମସିହାରେ ଟେରୋଷ୍ଟୋ ସହରରେ ହୋଇଥିବା କନ୍‌ଭେନସନ୍‌ରେ ପ୍ରଥମେ କବିତା ପାଠ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୁଏ । ଏହାକୁ ବୋଷ୍ଟନର ବିଜୟ (ମିଶ୍ର) ଭାଇନା ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଥିଲେ । ସେତେବେଳେ ଅଳ୍ପ କେତେକେ ସେଥିରେ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରେମୀ ଯୋଗଦେଇଥିଲେ । ଏବେ ତାହାର କଳେବର

ବହୁମାତ୍ରାରେ ବୃଦ୍ଧି ପାଇ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଜନପ୍ରିୟ ହେଲାଣି । ମୁଁ ପ୍ରତି କନ୍‌ଭେନସନ୍‌ରେ ଏହାର ପ୍ରତୀକ୍ଷାରେ ଥାଏ । ସ୍ମରତିତ କବିତା ପାଠ କରି କେବଳ ମୁଁ ଯେ ଆନନ୍ଦ ପାଇଛି ତା ନୁହେଁ ଅନେକ ଶ୍ରୋତାଙ୍କର ମନୋରଞ୍ଜନ ଏହା ଦ୍ଵାରା ସମ୍ଭବ ହୋଇ ପାରିଛି ବୋଲି ମୁଁ ଅନୁଭବ କରିଛି । ତା ଛଡା ଏହା ଦ୍ଵାରା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରତି ଏକରକମ ମମତା ବି ବଢିଛି । କବିତା ପ୍ରେମୀଙ୍କର ସଂଖ୍ୟା ବି ବଢିଛି । କବିତା ପାଠ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାହିତ୍ୟ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଆମେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ଅନେକ ବିଶିଷ୍ଟ ସାହିତ୍ୟିକ ଏବଂ କବିଙ୍କର ସଂସ୍ପର୍ଶରେ ଆସିପାରିଛୁ । ଏମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରୁ ପ୍ରତିଭା ରାୟ, ଦାଶ ବେନଟୁର, ଦିନନାଥ ପାଠୀ, ବିଭୁତି ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ, ଦେବଦାସ ଛୋଟରାୟ ଇତ୍ୟାଦିଙ୍କର ନାମ ଉଲ୍ଲେଖ ଯୋଗ୍ୟ । ମୋର ଦୁଇଟି କବିତା ସଂକଳନରେ ଓସାର ପ୍ରଚ୍ଛଦ ପଟର ଭୂମିକା ଅତୁଳନୀୟ ।

ଏହା ଛଡା ପ୍ରତି କନ୍‌ଭେନସନ୍‌ରେ ଚିତ୍ର ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନୀ କରିବାରେ ମୋତେ ସୁଯୋଗ ମିଳିଛି । ଟିକାଗୋ କନ୍‌ଭେନସନ୍‌(୨୦୧୩)ରେ ସରିତା ମହାପାତ୍ରଙ୍କର ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶନାରେ ଚିତ୍ର ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନୀ ଆୟୋଜନ କରା ଯାଇଥିଲା । ସେଥିରେ ବିଶିଷ୍ଟ ଚିତ୍ରଶିଳ୍ପୀ ଦିନନାଥ ପାଠୀଙ୍କ ସହିତ ବାର୍ତ୍ତାଳାପ କରିବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ପାଇଛି । ବାଲୁକା ଚିତ୍ରଶିଳ୍ପୀ ସୁଦର୍ଶନ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ (ଓହାଉ, ୨୦୧୪), ପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧ ସ୍ଥପତି ରଘୁନାଥ ମହାପାତ୍ର(ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିାନ, ୨୦୧୫)ଙ୍କୁ ଭେଟିବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ପାଇଛି । ବିଜ୍ଞାନରେ ଗବେଷଣା କରିବା ମୋର ବୃତ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏ ସବୁ କଳା ବିଦେଶ ମାଟିରେ ରହି ଆଲୋଚନା କରିବା, ଅନ୍ୟ ମାନଙ୍କର ମନୋରଞ୍ଜନ ସକାଶେ ସହାୟ ହେବା କେବଳ ସମ୍ଭବ ହୋଇ ପାରିଛି ଓସା ପାଇଁ ।

ଆମେରିକା ଓ କାନାଡା ଦେଶ ସୁଦୂର ପ୍ରସାରୀ । କାହିଁ ପଶ୍ଚିମରେ ପ୍ରଶାନ୍ତ ମହାସାଗର ସୀମାରେଖା ଠାରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରି ବିସ୍ତୀର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଯାଇଛି ପୂର୍ବକୁ ଆଣ୍ଟାର୍କଟିକ ମହା ସାଗର ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ । ଏହି ବିସ୍ତୀର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଭୌଗୋଳିକ ସୀମାକୁ ନେଇ ଆମେରିକା ଓ କାନାଡାର ରାଜ୍ୟ ସମୂହ । ତା ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସୁଦୂର ଆଲାସ୍କା ଠାରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରି ଟେକ୍ସାସ, କାଲିଫର୍ଣ୍ଣିଆ ଠାରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରି ନିୟୁତ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ମାନଙ୍କର ବସତି । ସେମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରୁ ଅନେକ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ହେଉଛନ୍ତି ଓସାର ସଭ୍ୟ । ସୀମିତ ଅର୍ଥରେ ଏହାକୁ ସୁଚାରୁ ରୂପେ ପରିଚାଳନା ଓ ସଭ୍ୟ ମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସୁସଂପର୍କ ସ୍ଥାପନ କରିବା ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଦୁରୁହ ବ୍ୟାପାର । ଆଗକାଳରେ ଆଜିକାଲି ଭଳି ଇଣ୍ଟରନେଟର ସୁବିଧା ନଥିଲା । ଡାକ ଓ ଟେଲିଫୋନ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ସଂସ୍ଥାର ସମସ୍ତ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ତୁଲାଉବାକୁ ପଡୁଥିଲା । ତଥାପି ସ୍ନେହା ସେବା ହିସାବରେ ଅନେକ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ନିଜର ବହୁ ମୂଲ୍ୟ ସମୟ ବିନିମୟରେ ଓସା ସଂସ୍ଥାର ରକ୍ଷଣାବେକ୍ଷଣ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ବର୍ଷ ବର୍ଷ ଧରି ବାର୍ଷିକ ସମ୍ମିଳନୀର ଆୟୋଜନ କରିଆସିଛନ୍ତି । ଏହା ସତ୍ତ୍ୱେ ବି କେତେକ କୃତଚକ୍ରୀ ଏହି ସ୍ନେହାସେବାଙ୍କ ବିରୁଦ୍ଧରେ ଅନ୍ୟାୟ ଅନୀତି ଆଳରେ କୋର୍ଟ କେସ୍ କରି ଏମାନଙ୍କୁ କୋର୍ଟର ଦ୍ଵାରସ୍ଥ କରାଇଛନ୍ତି । ମନେ ପଡେ ୨୦୦୭ ଓ ୨୦୦୯ ମସିହାର

କୋର୍ଟ କେସ କଥା । ସେତେବେଳେ ଓରନେଟ ଇମେଲ୍ ଗୁପ୍ତ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଓସା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ସମସ୍ତ ଆଲୋଚନା ହେଉଥାଏ । ସେଥିରେ ମେମ୍ବର ଓ ଅଣମେମ୍ବର ସମସ୍ତେ ପୃଥିବୀର ସବୁଆଡୁ ଥାନ୍ତି । ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ ଏଥିରେ ଅନେକ ଆଲୋଚନାର ମୋଡ ଅପ୍ରେଟିକର ଆଡକୁ ମୁହଁଇ ଥାଏ । ନିରବରେ ମୁଁ ଏହାକୁ ଦେଖି ମନେ ମନେ ଭାବିଲି ସଂସ୍ଥା ସମ୍ବନ୍ଧୀୟ ସମସ୍ତ ଭଲ ମନ୍ଦ ଆଲୋଚନା ଓସାର କେବଳ ମେମ୍ବର ମାନଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସୀମିତ ରହିବା ଉଚିତ । ସେ ପାଇଁ ମୁଁ ପ୍ରଥମେ ଓସାଦେବ ଇମେଲ୍ ଗୁପ୍ତର ଆରମ୍ଭ, ଆଉ କେତେକ ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛା ସେବାଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲି । ଏହା ଓସାର ମୁଖ୍ୟ ସମ୍ବାଦ ସରବରାହ ମାଧ୍ୟମ ହେଉ ବୋଲି ୨୦୦୭ ମସିହା ଡେସେମ୍ବର କନ୍ଭେନ୍ସନ୍ରେ ଆଗତ କରାଯାଇ ସର୍ବସମ୍ମତି କ୍ରମେ ଗୃହୀତ ହେଲା । ସେହି ଦିନ ଠାରୁ ସମସ୍ତ ଭଲ ମନ୍ଦ ଓସା ନେଟରେ ହିଁ ଆଲୋଚନା ହେଲା । ଏହା ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଓସାର ସମ୍ବାଦ ସରବରାହର ମୁଖ୍ୟ ମାଧ୍ୟମ ।

କୌଣସି କାରଣରୁ ଦ୍ୱିତୀୟ କୋର୍ଟ କେସରେ ମୁଁ ମୋର ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛାସେବୀ ବନ୍ଧୁମାନଙ୍କର ମନୋବଳକୁ ଦୃଢ଼ୀଭୂତ କରିବାକୁ ଯାଇ ଏଥିରେ ନିରବ ଦର୍ଶକ ନହୋଇ ସକ୍ରିୟ ଭାବରେ ଜଡିତ ହେଲି । ଫଳରେ ଅନେକ ଟେକା ପଥର ଫୋପତା ଓ କୁସ୍ମାରଟନାର ସମ୍ମୁଖୀନ ହେଲି । ମୁଁ ଯେଉଁ ଓସା ନେଟ ସୃଷ୍ଟି କରିବାର ନେତୃତ୍ୱ ନେଇଥିଲି ସେଇ ନେଟ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ମୋତେ ଶରବ୍ୟ ହେବାକୁ ପଡିଲା । ତଥାପି ଆମେ ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛାସେବୀ ଗଣ ସେଥିରେ ବିଚଳିତ ନହୋଇ ଏହାର ସାମନା କରି କୋର୍ଟ କେସ ଜିତିଲୁ ଓ ଓସାକୁ ଆହୁରି ଦୃଢ଼ କରିବାରେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କଲୁ । ଦୁର୍ବଳ ହେବା ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତେ ୨୦୦୭ ମସିହା ପାଖରୁ ଓସା ସବଳ ହୋଇ ଉଠିଲା । ଅନେକ ସମୟରେ ଓସାର ରକ୍ଷଣାବେକ୍ଷଣ ପାଇଁ କାମ କରିବାର ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ପଡିଲେ ମୁଁ କେବେ ପଶ୍ଚାଦପଦ ହୋଇ ଯାଇ ନାହିଁ । ଆହୁର୍ତ୍ତ କମିଟିର ଚେୟାର ଏବଂ ମେମ୍ବର ହିସାବରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରିଛି, ଆହୁର୍ତ୍ତ ଗାଇଡ ଲାଇନ ଲେଖିବାରେ ଭାଗ ନେଇଛି, ଇଲେକ୍ସନ କମିଟିର ମେମ୍ବର ହିସାବରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ତୁଲେଇଛି, ଡ୍ରାମା କମିଟିସନରେ ଜର୍ ହିସାବରେ ରହିଛି । ସଂସ୍ଥା ପାଇଁ ଏ ସବୁ କରିବାରେ ମୁଁ କେବେହେଲେ କୁଣ୍ଠା ବୋଧ କରିନାହିଁ ବରଂ ଏହାକୁ ମୋର କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ ଭାବି କରିଛି ଓ ଆନନ୍ଦ ବି ପାଇଛି ।

୨୦୦୮ ଟରୋଣ୍ଟୋ କନଭେନ୍ସନ୍ରେ ମୁଁ କନଭେନ୍ସନ୍ ହିସାବରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ତୁଲେଇଥିଲି । ଏଥିରେ ପ୍ରଥମ ଥର ପାଇଁ ଓଡିଶାର ରାଜ୍ୟପାଳ ଶ୍ରୀଯୁକ୍ତ ମୁରଲିଧର ଭଣ୍ଡାରେ ଯୋଗଦାନ କରିଥିଲେ । ବିଶିଷ୍ଟ ରାଷ୍ଟ୍ରପତି ପୁରସ୍କାରପ୍ରାପ୍ତ ଚଳଚ୍ଚିତ୍ର ନିର୍ମାତା ଶ୍ରୀଯୁକ୍ତ ଅକ୍ଷୟ କୁମାର ପରିଜା ଓ ରେଲପ୍ରେ ବୋର୍ଡର

ଚେୟାରମ୍ୟାନ ଶ୍ରୀଯୁକ୍ତ କଲ୍ୟାଣ କୁମାର ଜେନା ମୁଖ୍ୟ ଅତିଥି ହିସାବରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେଇଥିଲେ । ସେମିନାର ସେସନରେ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ମିଶ୍ର, ସନ୍ଦିପ ଦାଶବର୍ମା ଓ ତିରୁ ବରାଳ ପ୍ରମୁଖ ବିଶିଷ୍ଟ ସଭ୍ୟମାନେ ରେଲପ୍ରେ ବୋର୍ଡର ଚେୟାରମ୍ୟାନ ଶ୍ରୀ ଜେନାଙ୍କ ଆଗରେ ଓଡିଶାରେ ନୂତନ ରେଲପ୍ରେ ଲାଇନ ନିର୍ମାଣର ଦାବୀ ଉପସ୍ଥାପନା କରିଥିଲେ । ଫଳ ସ୍ୱରୂପ ଓଡିଶାରେ ରେଲପ୍ରେ ଲାଇନର ଉନ୍ନୋରୋଭର ଉନ୍ନତି ଅବିଳମ୍ବେ ସମ୍ଭବ ହୋଇ ପାରିଥିଲା । ପ୍ରଥମ ଥର ପାଇଁ ଓଡିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଉପରେ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ସେମିନାରର ଆୟୋଜନ କରାଯାଇଥିଲା ଯେଉଁଥିରେ ମେନକା ଠଙ୍କୁର, ଆନ ମରି ରେସ୍ତନ, ଏଲୋରା ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ, ଚିତ୍ରଲେଖା ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ ଓ ସୁଜାତା ମହାପାତ୍ର ପ୍ରମୁଖ ନୃତ୍ୟାଙ୍ଗନା ମାନେ ଅଂଶ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିଥିଲେ । କହିବା ବାହୁଲ୍ୟ ଏହି କନ୍ଭେନ୍ସନରେ ପ୍ରଥମ କରି ପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧ ନୃତ୍ୟାଙ୍ଗନା ସୁଜାତା ମହାପାତ୍ରଙ୍କୁ ଉତ୍ତର ଆମେରିକାକୁ ଆମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ କରାଯାଇଥିଲା ନୃତ୍ୟ ପରିବେଷଣ ପାଇଁ । ମୁଁ ଯେତେବେଳେ ଉତ୍ତର ଆମେରିକାକୁ ଆସିଥିଲି ସେତେବେଳେ କୌଣସି ଜଣେ ହେଲେ ଓଡିଆ ମୋର ପରିଚିତ ନଥିଲେ । ଓସା ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଆମେରିକା ମହାଦେଶର କୋଣେ ଅନୁକୋଣେ ଓଡିଆଙ୍କ ସହିତ ସୌହାର୍ଦ୍ଦ୍ୟପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ବନ୍ଧୁତ୍ୱ ସ୍ଥାପନ ସମ୍ଭବ ହୋଇ ପାରିଛି । ଓସା ଯେ କେବଳ ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମରେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ତାହା ନୁହଁ, ଅନେକ ଓଡିଆଙ୍କ ଦୁର୍ଦ୍ଦିନରେ ଏହାର କର୍ମକର୍ତ୍ତାମାନେ ଅଣ୍ଟା ଭିଡି ଛିଡା ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି । କେବଳ ସେତକ ନୁହଁ ଓଡିଶାବାସୀଙ୍କ ଅସମୟରେ, ଧୋଇ ହେଉ ମରୁଡି ହେଉ, ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିବାକୁ ପଛେଇ ଯାଇ ନାହାନ୍ତି ।

ବହୁ ଝଡ଼ଝଞା ଅତିକ୍ରମ କରି ଓସାର ବୋଇତ ସମୟର ସ୍ରୋତରେ ଭାସି ଭାସି ଆଜି ଆସି ପରାଗ ବର୍ଷରେ ପଦାର୍ପଣ କରିଛି । ସୁବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଜୟନ୍ତୀ ଉତ୍ସବ ପାଳନର ଶୁଭ ଶଙ୍ଖ ବାଜି ଉଠିଛି । ଓସାର ସବୁଠାରୁ ପୁରାତନ ଏବଂ ବଡ଼ ଚାପୁର ନିୟୁର୍କ ନିଉଜର୍ସି ଏହି ପାଳନର ଗୁରୁ ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ବହନ କରିବାକୁ ଆଗେଇ ଆସିଛନ୍ତି । ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛାସେବୀ ମାନେ ଦିବାରାତ୍ର ଅଳ୍ପାଳ୍ପ ପରିଶ୍ରମ କରି ଏହାକୁ ସ୍ମରଣୀୟ କରିବାର ପ୍ରଚେଷ୍ଟାରେ ଅଛନ୍ତି । ଅଭିନବ ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ ଆୟୋଜନର ଯୋଜନା ଚାଲିଛି । ନୂତନ ପୀଢିରେ ସଭ୍ୟମାନେ ମନପ୍ରାଣ ଏଥି ଲାଗି ଢାଳି ଦେଇଛନ୍ତି । ଆଶାକରେ ଏହା ସଫଳ ହେବ । ଓସା ଏଇମିତି ବର୍ଷ ବର୍ଷ ଧରି ଶତ ଶତ ବର୍ଷ ଚାଲୁ । ଏହାହିଁ ମୋର ଏହି ଶୁଭ ଅବସରରେ ଏକାନ୍ତ କାମନା ।

ଟରୋଣ୍ଟୋ, କାନାଡା

What's in a name?

Sikhanda Satapathy



Was it a wrong decision to reject the suggestion of my department secretary to adopt a more Americanized name?

I was 'fresh off the boat' from India, and it was my first day of graduate school. I was at the department secretary's desk to fill out the paperwork. Understandably, she had difficulty pronouncing my name. She gave it many a good-intentioned try, mimicking my Indian pronunciation, only to see a slanted smile on my face indicating my hesitation to concur with her Americanized way of saying my name. Almost giving up on her attempts, she asked, "Sir, would you consider adopting an easier name, like John or James, as what many other foreign grad students do here?" What? Change my name that I have been known for my whole life, that my parents had so carefully chosen? And that too after what I have been through my life with this endearing name of mine?

"Sikhanda" was an unusual name, even in India. I hadn't come across any other namesake! It was unique. My father, being a Sanskrit scholar, perhaps thought that his younger son would certainly develop unique qualities with a unique name. It is not uncommon for parents to name their kids after Gods or Goddesses in the hope that the children would acquire some of those Godly qualities. Also, many folks believe, at least they would accumulate some punya (good Karma) by taking God's name while calling the namesake kids - the Ajamila story serving the point. Ajamila is a Puranic character. He was a Vedic brahmin with a beautiful wife. Influenced by circumstances, he marries another woman of questionable character who bears him a son. Ajamila names the son "Narayana." Blinded by the love of the new consort, he stops practicing religious rituals and lives an impious life. Suddenly he falls very ill, and on his deathbed sees Yamadutas - the demons from hell - trying to take his soul to the hell. Very scared, he calls out his son Narayana for help. Suddenly, two attendants of Lord Narayan appear

and forbid the Yamadutas from torturing Ajamila as he has taken Lord Narayana's name. Therefore, the expectation is that the namesake God would save parents' soul. All that is good, but the problem is, if many people used the same name for their kids, say Shiva, would not Lord Shiva get confused as to where the call came from for appropriately crediting the punya? So, by extension, a unique name would bestow unique account address for accrual of the good deeds. Of course, my name had a Godly meaning too. "Sikhanda" meant the beautiful feather of a peacock. Therefore, my name, "Sikhanda Sekhar" implied the one who wore the peacock's feather, i.e. Lord Srikrishna. I am not sure how many Odias, even those somewhat endowed in Sanskrit knowledge among us, would have made this connection without my clue. My school friends certainly didn't.

Both of my parents hailed from the southern district of Ganjam. Naturally, my diction and accent were bound to be slanted somewhat to southern style. My new friends in the high school found it very amusing and I promptly got called "dakshiNi," whenever I was disagreeable to them! As I made more friends, and my language skills improved, this awkward appendage to my name, which would be offensive to any teenager, got dropped. My sigh of relief was short-lived as my detractors found my name itself to be amusing! Of course, many would call me "Srikhanda," appending an extra "r" after "S." Even my teachers thought, "Sri-khanda" was more appropriate name than "Sikhanda" as it had a meaning "Sri+Khanda," i.e. part of venerable attribute of God! That sounded reasonable, and I would have been perhaps okay with it, until one creative kid substituted the trailing "a" with an "i." That was war! From proudly carrying my favorite God's name to being part of a Godly attribute, to now being called the unthinkable...the Mahabharata character responsible for Bhishma's downfall - Shikhandi - the eunuch, upon whose appearance the great

warrior Bhishma laid down his weapons as he couldn't fight one who was neither a man nor a woman! A fist fight or wrestling the hapless kid to the ground, who would dare call such an atrocious name, would have taken care of the issue, until one heard the giggles from the pretty girls in the class! Aggravate or run?

ଉପସର୍ଗେ ଅନ୍ୟତକ୍ରେ ଚ ଦୁର୍ଭକ୍ଷେ ଚ ଉଦ୍ଭବହେ;
ଅସାଧୁର୍ଭବନମ୍ବରକେ ଯଃ ପଳାୟତି ସ କାବତି ...

One who runs while retreating, while on another's land, while in famine and fear, or while in bad company, survives. Wise saying indeed! Did I complain to my father for coming up with this name that caused me so much anguish in school? You bet. My father would assuage my feelings by citing many Sanskrit shlokas containing my name in praise of Lord Krishna, including Baladeba Ratha's Odia champu,

ଶ୍ୟାମ ଶିଖଣ୍ଡ ତୁଳ, ଶ୍ରୀ କି ଆଦି ଯାକେ,
ହେଲା ସଫଳ, ଶ୍ୟାମ ଶିଖଣ୍ଡ ତୁଳ,

which became my favorite song, sung by Smt. Shyamamani Patnaik. I perhaps considered changing my name to the middle name, "Sekhar," or something less controversy-prone and easier, like what my department secretary in US was suggesting to do now! Well, like many young teenagers, I too got over this awkwardness slowly and forgot about it altogether. That is until I entered engineering college in a north India town. Many Odias (and Bengalis) do not differentiate between "ba" and "va," e.g. "Bibekananda" vs. "Vivekananda," and between hissing sibilant, "sa" and hushing sibilant, "sha," e.g. "sake" vs "shake." Many non-Odias find it very comical and don't hesitate to point it out at inopportune moments - sometimes in dainty company. Is it "Sikhanda" or "Shikhanda?" After settling the sound to be the hushing sibilant, "Shi" then the argument would be why not change the name to "Shikhanda?" Some would also revert to "Srikhanda," confusing my name with the famous sweet curd from the Bombay. Long story short, soon all settled on calling me by my last name, as I was the only Satpathy in town! Seeing me utterly confused, my department secretary pointed out to the guy standing next to me. "Meet Wayne; his original name was Weiqiong" – struggling to say Weiqiong. Pointing

to a girl in the corridor, she continues, "or for that matter look at her. She is from India, and changed her name to Katie from Kathyayani. Should I put down 'Sam' for you?" Nooo...off I went to her surprise. I told her to just use my original name, and that slowly folks would get used to my name. Did they ever? Even after my continuous correction, my name would be butchered several ways. My name got written in many unrecognizable forms, such as "Secunda" to "Shickanduh." Finally, I gave up and folks settled on calling me "Sikhandaa" as in "Amanda." That name stuck among my American friends. My high school complex of being called "Shikhandi" had completed full circle, when somebody over phone insisted that she wanted to talk to the lady of the house, "Sikhanda." Of course, she had assumed that with "Amanda" sounding name, the person had to be a lady. Some mails would also be addressed to me with "Ms" prefix on the same assumption. The agony was unmitigated when an Indian person called back looking for "Sikha" since her caller ID had truncated my name to "Satapathy, Sikha!"

My discomfort level with my name being butchered slowly eased as I came across Joaquins, Zhardanicks, Tchaikovskys, etc. more and more. With the length of my stay in US, my name, albeit being mispronounced "Sikhanda" as in "Amanda," doesn't create any significant issue now. I don't have to spell out my name as often as I did before, or if I do spell it out, it has just become an easy routine. But often, the question lingers in my mind...should I have accepted the departmental secretary's suggestion to become Sam? Would Sam's career trajectory have changed compared to where Sikhanda ended up? Would some of the transactional negotiations have been easier with Sam rather than with Sikhanda? There is no way to know. Perhaps my departmental secretary didn't make the suggestion just to make her life easy, rather to make my life easy. Maybe she had my best interest in mind so that I would have easier assimilation and would avoid potential discrimination. As I reflect over my journey of life, I am glad that I am still Sikhanda. How could I forego the fun history I have had with my name? The unique name that offers a unique address to deposit Punya for my friends and family?

Winds of Change

Nagesh Rajanala & Sushmita Pradhan

Two OSA parents view

"Bindu Bindu Misi Hue Sindhu" through a new lens

Every few decades, we come across an innovation that fundamentally changes how we live and connect with each other. Before the industrial revolution, people were living in small self-sufficient colonies in relative isolation. The industrial revolution created massive industrial complexes and people started moving away from the villages and created new cities. This led to greater social interaction, evolution of entertainment, arts, literature and brought about a fundamental shifts in society.

Improvements in transportation and the ability to travel large distances in a short span of time, brought in the waves of globalization and we are able interact with each other in very new ways.

The internet, established in the 1960s brought in a new level of information sharing across the world. In the past two decades, Social media has again fundamentally changed how we connect and communicate with each other.

One of those fundamental changes that is now evolving is how the next generation is using technology to create a new global culture and values. And this is still evolving as we are categorizing the next generation as Millennials, iGen, Gen X, Gen Y, Gen Z.

Many OSA parents express surprise at the ease with which the this generation of youth discuss topics that were considered difficult for the previous generation – Menstruation, LGBTQIA, Gender Equality, Social Justice, Wealth distribution, Environment, Gun Control, War etc. Above all, the generation places immense value on human dignity.

The generation will be known for:

Being very accepting of their peers exploring their

sexual orientation and discussing the topic with ease. This will lead the way to equal treatment socially and legally for all humans and ultimately eliminate all forms of discrimination.

Being very accepting of the fact that men and women are different anatomically but not with their intellectual abilities. This will lead the way to elimination of the gender pay gap and discrimination in career progression. Women will also receive appropriate benefits for shouldering the burden of bearing children that furthers the human race.

Being willing to sacrifice personal gain in the interest of the larger community. This will lead to greater equity in monetary policy and a fair wealth distribution process. This trait will also pull along the people who get left behind due to foundational changes in society.

Being very conscious of the environmental impact of human activity. This will lead to greater appreciation of the challenges like pollution and climate change and adoption of policies that will heal the planet.

The shooting incident at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida brought out the strength of the students who showed a lot of maturity in understanding the second amendment and why the people in the country are divided on the issue of arms control. These students have since organized strong support for change in the future.

Social media has facilitated an unprecedented level of real time communication and information sharing paving the way or a 'World Culture and Values' to develop among today's youth. This will lead to a more mature relationships between countries and a more reasoned approach towards conflict management. This will lead to greater prosperity for all and a reduction in conflicts across the world.

As parents, we see all these traits in children across the social spectrum. These are the drops we believe, that will change the color of the ocean to create a new world where all living things have an equal chance to share the earth's resources and thrive in coexistence.

Nagesh Rajanala & Sushmita Pradhan

OSA members living in New Jersey with their 3 children Aradhya, Aaryana and Archiit. Both are very active in the community supporting youth activities.





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ଆମେରିକାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସମାଜ

ଭାବଗ୍ରାହୀ ମିଶ୍ର

କଥାରେ ଅଛି ଡିଜି ସ୍ୱର୍ଗକୁ ଗଲେ ବି ଧାନ କୁଟେ । ଧାନ କୁଟିବା ଲୋକ ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ଚଷୁ ବି କୁଟେ । ସେ ଧାନ ହେଉ କି ଚଷୁ ହେଉ କି ପିଡ଼ିଆ ହେଉ, ଡିଜିର ବାଛ ବିଚାର ନଥାଏ । ତାକୁ କୋଉ ଅପନ୍ତରା ଗାଁରେ ପକେଇ ଦିଅନ୍ତୁ, ବିକାଶୋନ୍ମୁଖୀ ଆଦିବାସୀ ଅଧ୍ୟୁଷିତ ଜଙ୍ଗଲ ଭିତରେ ଥୋଇ ଦିଅନ୍ତୁ, ସମବାୟ ଭିତ୍ତିକ ଯୋଜନା ଭିତରେ କୌଣସି ମତେ କଷ୍ଟେ ମଷ୍ଟେ ଚଳେଇ ନେବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରନ୍ତୁ ବା ଆଧୁନିକ ନବ୍ୟ-ସଭ୍ୟ ସମାଜରେ ଘରକଣରେ ଲୁଚେଇ ଡିଜି ଜନିତ ବେପାର କରନ୍ତୁ, ତାର ପରିବେଶ ପରିବେଷ୍ଟନୀର ଭିନ୍ନତା ଭିତରେ “ଡିଜି” ଭୁଲିବା ସମ୍ଭବ ହୁଏ ନାହିଁ ।

କଥା ଲହସରେ ସେଦିନ ଉତ୍କଳ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ସମାଜର ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନର ସଭାପତି, ଏକଦା ମୋ ସାହିତ୍ୟିକ କର୍ମ ପଛତର ପ୍ରେରଣାଦାୟକ ଗୁରୁ କହୁଥିଲେ “ବୁଝିଲ ଭାବଗ୍ରାହୀ, ତମେ ଜଣେ ଯୋଦ୍ଧା”- ଯୁଦ୍ଧ କରିବା ଛାଡ଼ିବ ନାହିଁ । ଏବେ ମୁଁ ବୁଝୁଛି, ସେ ବୋଧେ ନିଖୁଣ ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ କହିଥିଲେ କହିଥାନ୍ତେ, “ତମେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଡିଜି ।”

ମନ ଭିତରେ, ରକ୍ତ ଭିତରେ, ଚିନ୍ତା ଧାରାରେ ମୋ ଓଡ଼ିଆମୀ ଭୂତ ଗୋଟିଏ ବଡ଼ “ଡିଜି” । ସେ ଡିଜି ଯୋଉଠିକି ଯାଇଛି, ଯାହା ନୂଆ କଥା ଶିଖିଛି ବା ଯାହା ପୁରୁଣା କଥାକୁ ନୂଆ ଲେବେଲମରା ନବ୍ୟ ସଭ୍ୟ ଭାଷାରେ ଶୁଣିଛି, ତାହା ସହିତ ନିଜ “ଓଡ଼ିଆମୀ” କୁ ଯୋଡ଼ିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରିଛି । କିଛିଟା କରିଛି “ମୁଁ” ପଣିଆ ଭିତରେ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ପ୍ରଚେଷ୍ଟାରେ, ଲେଖା ଛାପି, ବିଜ୍ଞ ମଣ୍ଡଳୀଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କ ବିଷୟରେ ଜଣେଇ, ଫେରାଦ ହୋଇ ବା ବାହାଫ୍ଲୋଟ ମାରି, ବାକିଟା “ଆମପଣିଆ” ସାଧୁ ଭାଷାରେ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି ଓ ସମସ୍ତ । ନିଜେ ଯେତେ ବାହାବା ପାଇଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ “ଜାତି” ବଞ୍ଚିଲେ ମୁଁ ବଞ୍ଚିବି । ପୁଣି ମୁଁ ନବଞ୍ଚିଲେ ଜାତି ବଞ୍ଚିବନି । ଏଥିପାଇଁ ନିଜ ଚେଷ୍ଟା, ନିଜକୁ ଆଜିର ଯୁଗରେ “ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ” କରେଇ ପାରିଲେ ସିନା ଜାତି କଥା ଭାବିବା । ଏଇ ଦୃଢ଼ ଭିତରେ ବହୁ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ଗଢି ହେଉଛି, ଭାଙ୍ଗୁଛି, ପୁଣି ନୂଆ ସଂଜ୍ଞା ନେଇ ତିଆରି ହେଉଛି । ଏଇ “ନୂଆ କରିବାର” ଅହମିକା ଭିତରେ “ପୁରୁଣା” ମନଟି ଲୋଡ଼ା । ଏଇ ମନ ଚାହିଁଲେ ଗୋବର ଗାଡ଼ିଆ “ଗଙ୍ଗା” ହେଉଛି । ପୁଣି ବୈଜ୍ଞାନିକ ଚକ୍ଷୁରେ “ଗଙ୍ଗା” ହେଉଛି ପୋଚା ଗୋବର ବା ସିମିତିକା ଜିନିଷର ଗାଡ଼ିଆ ।

ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କୁ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ଦେଶ ଭିତରେ, ଦେଶ ବାହାରେ ଚିହ୍ନିବା କାମ ମତେ କେହି କେବେ ବରାଦ ଦେଇ ନାହାନ୍ତି କିମ୍ବା ସେଇ

ସ୍ଥାନୀୟ ଦେଇ ମୁଁ ଜୀବିକା ଚଳେଇବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରିନି । ସେଇଟା ମୋର ଗୋଟାଏ ମନର “କଣ୍ଠ” । ସେ “କଣ୍ଠ” ମୋ ମନକୁ, ଚିନ୍ତା ଧାରାକୁ ବେଳେ ବେଳେ ଲହୁଲହାଣ କରେ । ଯୁଦ୍ଧରେ ରକ୍ତାକ୍ତ ନହେଲେ ଜିଦ୍ ବଢେନା । ଆଉ ସେମିତିକା ଜିଦ୍ ନ ବଢିଲେ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ଗଢି ହୁଏନା ।

୧୯୬୬ ମସିହା କଥା । ଆମେରିକା ଯିବାର ସବୁ ଯୋଗାଡ଼ ପ୍ରାୟ ସରି ସରି ଆସିଥାଏ । ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର ରବୀନ୍ଦ୍ର ମଣ୍ଡପରେ ସେତେବେଳେ ଚାଲିଥାଏ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଯୁବଲେଖକ ସମ୍ମିଳନୀ । ସମ୍ମିଳନୀର ଘୋଷିତ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମରେ ମୁଁ ବରାଦି ବକ୍ତା ନଥିଲି । ଦର୍ଶକ ଓ ଶ୍ରୋତା ମଣ୍ଡଳୀରେ ବସିଥାଏ-ହଠାତ୍ ଡକରା ଆସିଲା ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ନାଟକ ଉପରେ ବକ୍ତୃତା ଦେବାକୁ । ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଭୂଇଁରେ ଆଶୁ-କବିଙ୍କ ପରମ୍ପରା କ୍ରମେ କମିଆସୁଥିବା ବେଳେ “ଆଶୁ ବକ୍ତାଙ୍କ” ସଂଖ୍ୟା କମିନି । ସେତେବେଳେ ମୁଁ ଥିଲି ଜଣେ ଆଶୁ ବକ୍ତା । ସଭା ମଞ୍ଚପରେ ଠିଆ ହେଲା ପରେ ନାଟକ ଓ ନାଟ୍ୟକାର ସମସ୍ୟା ଉପରେ ବେଶ୍ କିଛି ସମୟ କହି ଚାଲିଲି । ସଭା ଶେଷରେ ତୁଣ୍ଡବାଇଦରେ ସେତେବେଳକୁ ଜଣା ପଡ଼ିଗଲାଣି ଯେ ମୁଁ ଆମେରିକା ଯାତ୍ରୀ ହେବା ଉପରେ । ବନ୍ଧୁ ଗହଣରୁ ବରାଦ ଆସିଲା ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଆମେରିକାରେ କିଛି ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା କରି ଆସିବାକୁ । ଏ କାମ ନିଖୁଣ ଅର୍ଥନୀତି ମାନ ଦଣ୍ଡରେ ଦେଖିଲେ ମୋ କାମ କାହିଁକି ହେବ ? ଏଥିପାଇଁ ଭାରତ ସରକାରଙ୍କର ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ସବୁ ରହିଛି । ତା ଜରିଆରେ ହିନ୍ଦୀ, ବଙ୍ଗଳା, ତାମିଲ ଆଦି ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ, ପରିଚିତ ଓ ତାଙ୍କ ଧ୍ୱଜା ଉଡେଇ ଚାଲିଛନ୍ତି-ବିଚରା ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କୁ ପଚାରେ କିଏ ?

ଓଡ଼ିଶା କହିଲେ ଆମେରିକା ବାସୀ (ଯେତିକି ଲୋକ ଭାରତ କଥା ଜାଣନ୍ତି) ଙ୍କ ଭାଷାରେ ଏକ ବଣ ଜଙ୍ଗଲର ଦେଶ-ପ୍ରଗତିର ଷ୍ଟିମ ରୋଲର ତଳେ ଏମାନେ ଏପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ପେଷି ହୋଇ ନାହାନ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏ “ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ” ଭିତରେ ଯେତିକି ସମ୍ଭବ କରିବା ଚାହିଁବା, ତା ନହେଲେ ଯେ ମନର ଓରିମାନା ମେଣ୍ଟିବନି ।

୧୯୬୬ ରୁ ୧୯୭୯ ଚାଲିଲା ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କ ଖବର ସଂଗ୍ରହ । ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବିଷୟରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରିଥିବା ଆମେରିକାନ୍‌ଙ୍କର ଠିକଣା ସଂଗ୍ରହ । “ଏସିଆ ବିଦ୍ୟା” ସମ୍ମିଳନୀରେ, ଲୋକ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ସମ୍ମିଳନୀରେ ପାଠକ୍ରମରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବିଷୟକ ପ୍ରବନ୍ଧପାଠ, ଆଲୋଚନା ଆଦି । ଚେଷ୍ଟା କଲି ହୁଏତ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ବିଷୟରେ କିଛି ଗବେଷଣା ବା ସେହିପରି ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ଗଠନ ସମ୍ଭବ ହେବକି ? କ୍ରମଶଃ ଜଣାଗଲା

(ଚିପପତ୍ର ବିନିମୟରୁ ଏହି ସିଦ୍ଧାନ୍ତରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଲି) ଯା ସମ୍ଭବ ହେଲେ ବି ସମୟ ସାପେକ୍ଷ ବା ସେମିତିଆ ସହଯୋଗ ଲୋଡ଼ା । ଏ ଦରିଦ୍ର ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ସେ କିମିତି ସମ୍ଭବ ? ମହାଭାରତୀୟତା ଭିତରେ କିଛିଦିନ ବୁଡ଼ି ରହିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରାଗଲା । ଆମେରିକା ଆସୁଥିବା ବହୁ ମହାଭାରତୀୟଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ମୋ ଘର ସାହାଣ ମେଲାହେଲା । ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତା ଅନୁଭୂତିରୁ ଜଣା ପଡ଼ିଲା ଏ “ଭାରତୀୟତା” ଏକ “ଯାତ୍ରାପୋଷାକ” । ନିଜକୁ ଆଇନକାନୁନର କଷଟି ପଥରରେ ପରଖିବା ବେଳେ ଏଇ ପୋଷାକର ଦରକାର ଦୁଃ-ପରିତୟ ଦେଇ ହୋଇଯାଏ “ଆମେ ଭାରତୀୟ” । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏଇ ଯାତ୍ରାର ପୋଷାକ ତଳେ ଆମେ ଦୁଃସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଗୋବରା ଗୋଛେଇତ ବା ଶ୍ରୀକାନ୍ତ ମନ୍ତ୍ରମଦାର୍ ବା ଗୋବିନ୍ଦ ମାଖନ୍ଦ୍ରାଲା । କଥା ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ କହିଲେ ଆମେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ, ସେ ଆମ୍ଭ ଆଉକିଏ ବଂଶାଳୀତ କେହି ପୂର୍ବରବାସୀ । ତା ଭିତରେ ପୁଣି ଆମ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଚଳେ କରଣ କି ବ୍ରାହ୍ମଣ କି ସାରସ୍ୱତ କି କାନ୍ୟକୁବଜି କି କୋଙ୍କଣି । ଏଇ ଯଦି ଆମ ପରିଗଣ ବର୍ଷିଆ ଭାରତୀୟତାର ଲେବୁଲ୍, ତେବେ ଆମ ଆମ ପ୍ରକୃତ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଟାକୁ ଆନୁଷ୍ଠାନିକ ନକଲେ ମହାଭାରତୀୟତାର ସମୁଦ୍ର ଡୁଆର ଭିତରେ ବା ରାଜନୈତିକ ଭାଷାରେ କହିଲେ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଭାଷାଭାଷୀଙ୍କ “ସାମ୍ରାଜ୍ୟବାଦ” ଭିତରେ ଡିସ୍ପି ରହିବା ସମ୍ଭବ ନୁହେଁ । ପାଟି ନଖୋଲିଲେ ଆମ ମୁହଁରେ “ଭାରତୀୟତାର ତୁଣ୍ଡି” ।

ମଣିଷ ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତା, ଅନୁଭୂତିରୁ ଶିଖେ ବେଶୀ । ବହିପାଠ ବାଡ଼ି ବାଲଗଣ ଭିତରେ ଆକାଶ ପାତାଳ ତପାତ । ଆମେରିକାରେ କିମିତି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜ ଗଢ଼ାହେଲା, ସେ କଥା କହିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ନିଜ ଦେଶ ଭିତରେ ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତାଟାକୁ ଟିକେ ସୁକ୍ଷ୍ମରେ ବଖାଣିଦିଏ । ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତା ଆଦି ସେ ବେଳର କେତେକ ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କର ମନେଥିବ । କେହି କେହି ବି ଭୁଲି ଯିବେଣି । ୧୯୫୮-୬୦ ବିଶ୍ୱଭାରତୀୟ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଏମ୍.ଏ.ର ଛାତ୍ର ଥିଲି । ସେତେବେଳେ ବିଶ୍ୱଭାରତୀୟ ପକ୍ଷରୁ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ ପତ୍ରିକା (ମାଁ ବୋଧହୁଏ “ସପ୍ତପର୍ଣ୍ଣୀ” କି କଣ ମନେ ନାହିଁ)ରେ ଇଂରେଜୀ, ବଙ୍ଗଳା ଭାଷାରେ ଲେଖା ପ୍ରକାଶ ପାଉଥାଏ । ମୁଁ ଉପାଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟଙ୍କୁ (ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଅନୁବାଦ କୁଳପତି) ହିନ୍ଦୀ/ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଲେଖା ଛାପିବାକୁ ନିବେଦନ କଲି । ନିବେଦନ ଗୃହୀତ ହେଲା ନାହିଁ । ମୁଁ “ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକତା” ଦୋଷରେ ଦୋଷୀ ସାବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ହେଲି । ତିନିଦିନ ଅନଶନ ଧର୍ମଘଟ କଲି । ସେତେବେଳର ଉପାଚାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଶ୍ରୀ ଦାସ(ପୂର୍ବତନ ସୁପ୍ରୀମ କୋର୍ଟ ବିଚାରପତି) ବହୁ ଧମକ ଦେଲେ, ଶେଷକୁ ଲୋକ ଲଜ୍ୟା ଭୟରେ ପ୍ରତିଶ୍ରୁତି ଦେଲେ ୧୯୬୧ ମସିହାରୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପ୍ରକାଶ ପାଇବ । ପୂର୍ବତନ ବିଚାରପତିଙ୍କ ବିଚାରକୁ ମାନିନେଲୁ । ଏବେ ଶୁଣୁଛି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ବିଶ୍ୱଭାରତୀୟ ପତ୍ରିକାରେ ପ୍ରକାଶ ପାଉଛି । ଯାହାହେଉ ବଙ୍ଗଳା, ହିନ୍ଦୀବାଲାଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ଆମେ ବସି ପାରୁଛୁ-ହେଲେ ବି ଆମେ “ହରିଜନ” (ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ଯଦି “ହରି” ସାଂଜ୍ଞାରେ ରାଜି, ତେବେ ସେଇ ଦେଶର ଲୋକତ ଆମେ) ବା ଆଦିବାସୀ(ଜଗନ୍ନାଥେ ପୁଣି କୁଆଡ଼େ ଆଦିବାସୀ ଦେବତା) ।

ଆମେରିକାର ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ଯେଉଁଠି ଭାରତୀୟ ଭାଷା ଓ

ସଂସ୍କୃତି ପଢ଼ା ହେବାପାଇଁ ଅଧ୍ୟୟନ, ଅଧ୍ୟାପନା ଓ ଗବେଷଣା ଚାଲିଛି, ସେଠି ଏ ବଙ୍ଗଳା ହିନ୍ଦୀ, ତାମିଲର ରାଜତ୍ୱ କାଁ ଭାଁ ତେଲୁଗୁ, ମରାଠୀ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପଢ଼ା ହୋଇଛି, ହେଉଛି ଓ ହେବ । ଆମେରିକାରେ ଶ୍ରମିକ ଠାରୁ ସଭାପତିଙ୍କ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସମସ୍ତେ ଉଣା ଅଧିକେ ବିଜ୍ଞାନୀ ମନ ନେଇ କାମ କରନ୍ତି । ସବୁଠି ଗାଣିତିକ ବିଦ୍ୟାର କରାମତି । ଭାରତର ୫୫ କୋଟି ଲୋକଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାଭାଷୀ ୨ କୋଟି ମାତ୍ର । ଏ ସଂଖ୍ୟା ନ୍ୟୁନ ଜାତିର ଗୋଟାଏ ଭାଷା ଓ ସାହିତ୍ୟ କଣ ଆଇପାରେ ? ବାହାର ଜଗତରେ ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଭାରତୀୟ ଭାଷା ଓ ସାହିତ୍ୟର ଅଧ୍ୟାପନ କରନ୍ତି ବା ଗବେଷଣା କରନ୍ତି, ସେମାନେ ସଂଖ୍ୟାଧିକ୍ୟ ଭାଷାଭାଷୀଙ୍କ କଥା ନଜାଣି ସଂଖ୍ୟାନ୍ୟୁନଙ୍କୁ ଚିହ୍ନିବେ କିଆଁ ? ଯଦିବା ଚିହ୍ନିବାକୁ ଜାଣିବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା ଥିବ, ସେଥିପାଇଁ ସରକାରି ସମର୍ଥନ ଲୋଡ଼ା-ଉଭୟ ସରକାରଙ୍କର । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଲୋଡ଼ା ଆମ ପକ୍ଷରୁ “ପ୍ରଦେଶ” ଭିତରେ, ଦେଶ ଭିତରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟାନୁଷ୍ଠାନ । ନିଜର ଗୌରବ ଗାରିମା ଦେଶ ଭିତରେ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା ଦେଶ ଭିତରେ ନ ପାଇଲେ ଦେଶ ବାହାରେ ଟାକୁ ଚିହ୍ନେ କିଏ ? ଚିହ୍ନାଇବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରିବା ଅପଚେଷ୍ଟା । ହଠାତ୍ ଯଦି ରାଜନୀତିକ ବାତାବରଣରେ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଘଟିଯାଏ ତେବେ ଆମେରିକାର ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ଭାଷା ସାହିତ୍ୟ ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ଗବେଷଣା ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇଥାଏ । ଚିରନ୍ତନ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନକାମୀ ଆମେରିକାର ଶାସକ ଯୁଗ ଓ ସମୟର ଚାହିଦାକୁ ଚାହିଁ ଶିକ୍ଷା ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥାର ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ କରି ଚାଲନ୍ତି । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଭାଷାର ଅଧ୍ୟାପକ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ପଡ଼ିଲେ ତେଲୁଗୁ ପଢ଼ାନ୍ତି ନଚେତ୍ କମ୍ପାନୀରେ ମ୍ୟାନେଜର ହୋଇଯାନ୍ତି । ଏଭଳି ଏକ ଦୁର୍ଦ୍ଦଶାମୀ ଦେଶରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆକୁ/ଓଡ଼ିଆକୁ ପରିଚିତ କରେଇବା ପାଇଁ, ଦୁଃସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ରାଜନୈତିକ ପରିସ୍ଥିତିର ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଦରକାର, ବ୍ୟବସାୟଗତ ବନ୍ଧୁତ୍ୱ ଦରକାର । ନଚେତ୍ ନିଖୁଣ ଜ୍ଞାନ ପିପାସା ଦରକାର । ତେବେ ଶେଷଟି କରିବା କେମିତି ?

ଏଇ ପରିସ୍ଥିତିକୁ ଆଖି ଆଗରେ ରଖି ବହୁ ବିଶ୍ୱ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟର କର୍ମକର୍ତ୍ତାଙ୍କୁ ପତ୍ରାଳାପ କରିଛି । କିନ୍ତୁ ସବୁଠୁଁ ନାସ୍ତି ବାଣୀ ଶୁଣିଛି । ଶେଷରେ ସ୍ଥିର କଲି ଆମେରିକାର ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କୁ ଏକାଠି ନକଲେ, ଆନୁଷ୍ଠାନିକ ଐକ୍ୟ ସ୍ଥାପନ ନକଲେ, ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଂସ୍କୃତିକୁ ଆମେରିକାରେ ପ୍ରବେଶ କରାଇବା କଷ୍ଟ ସାଧ୍ୟ ହେବ ।

୧୯୬୯ ମସିହାରେ ଯୁକ୍ତରାଷ୍ଟ୍ର ଆମେରିକାର ପୂର୍ବାଞ୍ଚଳରେ ଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଏକ ବିଧିବଦ୍ଧ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ଗଠନ କରିଯାରିଥାନ୍ତି- ନାମ କରଣ ହୋଇଥାଏ “ନ୍ୟୁ ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜ”- ପୁରୋଧା ଡକ୍ଟର ଗୌରୀଚରଣ ଦାସ, ଡକ୍ଟର ଯୋଗେଶ ରଥ (ଏବେ ବରଗଡ଼ରେ ଡାକ୍ତରୀ କରନ୍ତି) ଆଦି ବୋଷ୍ଟନ ସହରର ଅଧିବାସୀ । ୧୯୭୦ ମସିହାରେ ଏମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ମୋର ପତ୍ରାଳାପ ହୁଏ । ସିଦ୍ଧାନ୍ତ ନିଆଗଲା ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନର ନାମକରଣର ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଓ ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟର ପରିସର ବୃଦ୍ଧି । ୧୯୭୦ ଅକ୍ଟୋବର ମାସରେ ପୂର୍ବାଞ୍ଚଳର ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କୁ ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ ଦିଆଗଲା । ହାର୍ଟଫୋଡ଼ରେ ପ୍ରଥମ ସମାଗମ-ସଂଖ୍ୟା ପ୍ରାୟ ୭୦-୮୦

ଭିତରେ । କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ନିର୍ବାହିକା କମିଟି ଗଠନ କରାଗଲା-ତତ୍କ୍ଷର ଗୌରୀଚରଣ ଦାସ ରହିଲେ ସଭାପତି, ନ୍ୟୁୟାର୍କର ତତ୍କ୍ଷର କୃଷ୍ଣମୋହନ ଦାସ, ଉପସଭାପତି ଓ ମୁଁ ରହିଲି ସମ୍ପାଦକ ଓ “ଉତ୍କଳ ସମାଚାର”ର ସମ୍ପାଦକ । ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନର ନାମ କରଣ “OSA, ORISSA SOCIETY OF THE AMERICAS”.

ଯୁକ୍ତରାଷ୍ଟ୍ର ସରକାରଙ୍କର କେନ୍ଦ୍ର ଦପ୍ତରକୁ ଦରଖାସ୍ତ କଲୁ ଓ ଏହା ଏକ ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ଭାବରେ ସ୍ୱୀକୃତି ପାଇଲା । ସ୍ୱୀକୃତି ପାଇବା ପରେ ବଙ୍ଗଳା ଓ ହିନ୍ଦୀ ଭାଷାଭାଷୀଙ୍କ ପକ୍ଷରୁ ମୁଁ କଥୋପକଥନ କରିଆରେ “ପ୍ରାଦେଶିକତା” ଦୋଷରେ ଦୋଷୀ ହୋଇଛି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏସବୁକୁ ଭୁଲେଇ ନକରି ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନକୁ ଆଗେଇ ନେବାପାଇଁ ମୁଁ ତତ୍ପର ହୋଇଛି ଓ ରହିବି । ଅନେକ ମହା ଭାରତୀୟ ନେତୃବର୍ଗଙ୍କ ସହିତ ଏ ଦିଗରେ ମୋର ମନାନ୍ତର, ମତାନ୍ତର ହୋଇଛି । ମୁଁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ହୋଇପାରିଲେ ହିଁ ଭାରତୀୟ ହୋଇ ପାରିବି-ଏହା ହିଁ ମୋର ଯୁକ୍ତି । ମୋର ଅନ୍ୟ ଭାଷାଭାଷୀଙ୍କ ସହିତ କଳହ କରିବାର କୌଣସି କାରଣ ନାହିଁ- କିନ୍ତୁ ସେମାନେ ମୋତେ “ବଣ ଜଙ୍ଗଲୀ ଦେଶ”ର ଲୋକ ବୋଲି ଉପେକ୍ଷା କଲେ ସେ କେବଳ ମତେ ଅପମାନ ନୁହଁ, ମୋ ଜାତିର, ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ ଅପମାନ । ସଂଖ୍ୟାଧିକ ହିନ୍ଦୀଭାଷୀ ଯେ ଭଳି ଭାରତୀୟ, ସଂଖ୍ୟାନୁ୍ୟନ ଓଡ଼ିଆଏ, ଆଦିବାସୀ ହରିଜନ ସେହିପରି ଭାରତୀୟ । ଏ ଭାରତୀୟତା ଭିତରେ ଯେଉଁ ଜାତିଆଣ ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା ଚାଲି ଆସିଛି, ମୁଁ ତାର ବିରୋଧୀ । ଆମେରିକାର ଭାରତୀୟ ଦୂତାବାସ ଓ ଉପଦୂତାବାସର କଥା ଦେଖନ୍ତୁ । ସେଠି ପଚାରି ବର୍ଷ ଭିତରେ କିରାଣି ଚାକିରି ପାଇଁ ଗୋଟିଏ ହେଲେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଉପଯୁକ୍ତ ବିବେଚିତ ହୋଇ ପାରିନାହିଁ । ଏହାର ଏକମାତ୍ର କାରଣ ଆମ ନେତୃତ୍ୱର ଗୌଣତ୍ୱ ।

ଛାତ୍ରନ୍ତୁ । ୧୯୭୦-୭୩ ମସିହା ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସମାଜ ତାର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟବାହିକା ସମିତିର କର୍ମକର୍ତ୍ତା ନିର୍ବାଚନ ସ୍ୱରୂପରେ ଚଳାଇ ଆଣିଛି । କାନାଡାରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରି ମିସିସିପି ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବହୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କର ଠିକଣା ସଂଗୃହୀତ ହୋଇଛି । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ରାଜଶା ଖାଇବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ମିଳିଛି, ନୃତ୍ୟ ଗୀତ ପରିବେଷଣର ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରାଯାଇଛି । ପ୍ରଥମ ଅଧିବେଶନ ହୋଇଥିଲା ହାର୍ଟଫୋର୍ଡରେ, ୨ୟ ନ୍ୟୁୟାର୍କରେ, ୩ୟ ହାର୍ଟଫୋର୍ଡରେ ଓ ୪ର୍ଥ ନ୍ୟୁ ଜର୍ସିରେ । ଗତବର୍ଷ ମୁଁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମାଜର ସଭାପତି ନିର୍ବାଚିତ ହୋଇଥିଲି । ଦିଲ୍ଲୀର କଳା ସଂଗମର ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଶିକ୍ଷକ ସୁରେନ୍ଦ୍ର ନାଥ ଜେନା ବୋଷ୍ଟନ ଠାରୁ ନ୍ୟୁଜର୍ସି ମଧ୍ୟରେ ବହୁ ସ୍ଥାନରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ପରିବେଷଣ କରିଥିଲେ । ଏବେ ଆମେରିକାରେ ତାଙ୍କର ଦୁଇଟି ଛାତ୍ରୀ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟର ଗ୍ରୀଷ୍ମକାଳୀନ ସ୍କୁଲ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା କରି ପାରିଛନ୍ତି । ସେମାନେ ହେଲେ ଶ୍ରୀଯୁକ୍ତା ଫ୍ରେଡ୍ରିକା-ନୃତ୍ୟର ପି.ଏଚ୍.ଡି ଛାତ୍ରୀ ଓ ଅନ୍ୟଜଣକ ଶ୍ରୀଯୁକ୍ତା ଆର୍ଲିନ ରାୟ-ଜଣେ ବୋଷ୍ଟନରେ ରହନ୍ତି ଓ ଅନ୍ୟ ଜଣକ ବ୍ଲ୍ୟୁମିଙ୍ଗଟନ ଇଣ୍ଡିଆନାରେ ।

ଏବେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ କାମ କରିଥିବା ଆମେରିକା ବାସୀ କ୍ରମଶଃ ଏହି ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନର ସଭ୍ୟ ଓ ସମର୍ଥକ ହେଉଛନ୍ତି । ଗତ ବର୍ଷର ପ୍ରାକୃତିକ

ବିପର୍ଯ୍ୟୟ ବେଳେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସମାଜର ପ୍ରଚେଷ୍ଟାରେ ଓ କେତେକ ଓଡ଼ିଆଙ୍କ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଗତ ପ୍ରଚେଷ୍ଟାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର ଓ ଭାରତ ସରକାରଙ୍କ ନିକଟକୁ ପ୍ରାୟ ୧୫/୧୬ ହଜାର ଟଙ୍କା ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ଦିଆଯାଇଛି ।

ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନର ପାଣ୍ଠି ସୀମିତ ତ ଆମେରିକା-ଜୀବନର ବ୍ୟସ୍ତତା ଓ ଜୀବିକା ନିର୍ବାହର ଘାତ ପ୍ରତିଘାତ ଭିତରେ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନକୁ ବଞ୍ଚେଇ ରଖିବା ପାଇଁ ସମୟର ଅଭାବ ଅନୁଭୂତ ହେଉଛି । ଏବେ ଏହାକୁ ଏକ ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନରୁ ଏକ “ତ୍ରଷ୍ଟ ଫଣ୍ଡ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ”ରେ ପରିଣତ କରିବାର ପ୍ରଚେଷ୍ଟା ଚାଲିଛି । ସମ୍ପାଦକ ପ୍ରମୋଦ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ ସେ ଦିଗରେ ପ୍ରଚେଷ୍ଟା ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଗତ ଅକ୍ଟୋବର ମାସରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଫେରିବାକୁ ସିଦ୍ଧାନ୍ତ କରିବାରୁ ମୁଁ ସଭାପତି ପଦରୁ ଇସ୍ତଫା ଦେଇ ଦେଇଛି । ସମ୍ପ୍ରଦାନ ଅନୁଯାୟୀ ତତ୍କ୍ଷର ଶ୍ରୀ ଗୋପାଳ ମହାନ୍ତି ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ସଭାପତି ।

ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନର ସଭ୍ୟ ତାହା ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ଚଳାଇବାକୁ ଯଥେଷ୍ଟ ନୁହେଁ । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଆଜୀବନ ସଭ୍ୟ ହେବାର ପରମ୍ପରା ଆମେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିଛୁ । ଆଜୀବନ ସଭ୍ୟ ଶ୍ରୀଯୁକ୍ତ ବିମଳ ଚରଣ ମହାନ୍ତି ଓ ମୁଁ । ଆଉ ଓଡ଼ିଆଏ କ୍ରମଶଃ ଯୋଗ ଦେବେ ବୋଲି ଆଶା ।

ଯାତେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଭିତରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସରକାର ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମର ପ୍ରସାର ପାଇଁ ଆମେରିକାର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସମାଜ ସହିତ ସମ୍ପର୍କ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା କରିବେ ବୋଲି ଆଶା ରଖିବା ମୋ ପକ୍ଷରେ ସ୍ୱାଭାବିକ । ଜାତି ବଞ୍ଚେ ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ ପ୍ରଚାର ପ୍ରସାର ପ୍ରତି ସମର୍ଥନ ଜଣାଇ । ଏବର ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ତାହା କେତେ ପରିମାଣରେ ସମ୍ଭବ ତାହା ଓଡ଼ିଶାବାସୀ ବିଚାର କରନ୍ତୁ ।

ମୁଁ ଗୋଟାଏ ଡିଜିଟାଲ, ଡେଜିଟାଲରୁ ଅଲକାପୁରୀ ଆମେରିକା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଯେଉଁଠିକି, ଯାଇଛି ଓ ଯିବି, ସେଠାରେ ଏହି ଡିଜିଟାଲ ପ୍ରତିପାଦିତ କରିବା ମୋର କାମ ହୋଇଛି ଓ ରହିବ । ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଉପରେ ଗବେଷଣା କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଜଣେ ପି.ଏଚ୍.ଡି ଛାତ୍ରଙ୍କୁ ଗତ ବର୍ଷ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପଠାଇଥିଲି । ସେ ସାରଳା ଚଣ୍ଡୀ ଉପରେ ନୃତ୍ୟାତ୍ମକ ଗବେଷଣା କରି ଫେରି ଯାଇଛନ୍ତି ଓ ଏବେ ଥେସିସ୍ ଲେଖା ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ମୋର ଆଶା ଆମେରିକାରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ, ଓଡ଼ିଆବାସୀ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ ଆମେରିକାନ୍ ଛାତ୍ର ଓ ଗବେଷକଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସାଂଯୋଗ ସ୍ଥାପିତ ହୋଇ ପାରିଲେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ ପ୍ରଚାର ପ୍ରସାର ଭିତରେ ଆମେ ବହୁ କି ନ ବହୁ ଜାତି ବଞ୍ଚି ରହିବ ।

(ସହକାର ଡିସେମ୍ବର, ୧୯୭୩)



ସ୍ମୃତି ଓ ଇତିହାସ: “ଓସା”

ଭାବଗ୍ରାହୀ ମିଶ୍ର

ପ୍ରାୟ ୨୨ ବର୍ଷରୁ ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ୱ ହୋଇଗଲା । ଏଇ କେତେ ବର୍ଷ ଭିତରେ ପୃଥିବୀରେ ବହୁ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ ଘଟି ଯାଇଛି । ସେହି ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନର ଧାରାରେ “ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସୋସାଇଟି ଅଫ୍ ଆମେରିକାନ୍” – ଓ.ଏସ୍.ଏ. ବୋଧହୁଏ ଆଉ ଦୁଇ ତିନି ବର୍ଷ ପରେ ତାର ଗୌରବ ଲୁଚାଇ ପାଳନ କରିବ । ଏବେ ଯୁକ୍ତରାଷ୍ଟ୍ର ଆମେରିକା ଓ କାନାଡାରେ ପ୍ରାୟ ୫୦୦ ରୁ ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ୱ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପରିବାର ବାସ କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ଭାଷା ସଂସ୍କୃତି-ପରିଚିତିର ପ୍ରୀତି ସୌହାର୍ଦ୍ଦ୍ୟ କ୍ରମଶଃ ଘନୀଭୂତ ହେବାର ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ କରୁଛି- ଦୂରରେ ଥାଇ ।

କେଉଁ ପରିପ୍ରେକ୍ଷାରେ ଏପରି ଏକ ଶିକ୍ଷା ସଂସ୍କୃତି ମୂଳକ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା କରାଯାଇଥିଲା, ତାର ବିବରଣୀ “ଓସା”ର ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ ଇତିହାସ ପାଇଁ ହୁଏତ ବହୁ ହର୍ଷ ବିଶାଦ ଘଟଣାର ସମାହାର ଲିପିବଦ୍ଧ କରିବାର ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ଥାଇପାରେ । କାରଣ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଜାତି, ଭାଷାଭାଷୀ ଗୋଷ୍ଠୀ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ପରିଚୟ ଲୋଡ଼ନ୍ତି । ସେମିତି ହୁଏତ ଲୋଡ଼ିବେ ଆଜିର ଆମେରିକାନ୍ ଯୁବକ, ଯୁବତୀ, ଛାତ୍ର, ଛାତ୍ରୀ, ତରୁଣ ତରୁଣୀ, ସେଉଁମାନଙ୍କର ପୂର୍ବ ପୁରୁଷ ଜୀବନ ସଂଗ୍ରାମରେ ଯୁକ୍ତରାଷ୍ଟ୍ର ଆମେରିକାକୁ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ବାସସ୍ଥଳୀ, ଜୀବିକା ଅର୍ଜନର ଏକ ମୁକ୍ତ ସମାଜ ଭାବରେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିନେଇଥିଲେ । ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରୁ ଅନେକ ସ୍ୱାଭାବିକ ପ୍ରକ୍ରିୟାରେ ଆମେରିକାର ନାଗରିକ ବା ଅନ୍ୟ କେହି ସ୍ଥାୟୀ ବାସିନ୍ଦା । କିନ୍ତୁ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ଭାଷା, ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ସେଉଁ ଧାରାଟି ରହିଛି, ତାକୁ ଜୀବିତ ରଖିବାର ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟରେ ଏହି ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନର ପରିକଳ୍ପନା କରାଯାଇଥିଲା ।

ମୁଁ ମୋର ପରିବାର ସହିତ କନେକ୍ଟିକଟ୍ ହାର୍ଟଫୋଡ୍ ସହରରେ ରହୁଥାଏ । ଆମେ ଉଭୟ ହାର୍ଟଫୋଡ୍ ସେମିନାରୀ ଫାଉଣ୍ଡେସନ୍‌ରେ ଅଧ୍ୟାପନ କରୁଥାଉ । ସେ ସହରରେ ଅଳ୍ପ କେତେଜଣ ଭାରତୀୟ ରହୁଥାନ୍ତି । ଏହି ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଭାଷାଭାଷୀ ଭାରତୀୟଙ୍କ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସୌହାର୍ଦ୍ଦ୍ୟ ବେଶ୍ ବଢି ଉଠୁଥାଏ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତାରୁ ଅନୁଭୂତିରୁ କ୍ରମଶଃ ଜଣା ପଡିଗଲାଯେ ଏକ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦିଷ୍ଟ ଭାଷାଭାଷୀ ଲୋକଙ୍କର ସଂଖ୍ୟା ବଢିବା ସଙ୍ଗେ ସଙ୍ଗେ ଭାରତୀୟ ସୌହାର୍ଦ୍ଦ୍ୟ ହ୍ରାସ ପାଇବାରେ ଲାଗେ । ଏହି ଭଳି ସମୟରେ “ସମାଜ” ଖବର କାଗଜରେ ସମ୍ବାଦଟିଏ ଦେଖିଲି । ବୋଷ୍ଟନ୍ ସହରରେ ତତ୍କାଳୀନ ପଞ୍ଚମାୟକ, ତତ୍କାଳୀନ ଗୌରୀ ଚରଣ ଦାସ ଓ ତତ୍କାଳୀନ ଯୋଗେଶ୍ୱର ରଥ ଏକ ନିଉ ଇଂଲଣ୍ଡ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଆସୋସିଏସନ୍ ଗଠନ କରିସାରିଥାନ୍ତି । ଏପରି ଏକ ଆଞ୍ଚଳିକ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ମନକୁ ପାଇଲା ନାହିଁ । ତେଣୁ ୧୯୭୦ ମସିହାରେ ଏହି ବନ୍ଧୁମାନଙ୍କୁ ଚିଠି ଲେଖି ଫୋନ୍ କରି ହାର୍ଟଫୋଡ଼ଠାରେ ଏକ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସମ୍ମିଳନୀ ଡକାଇବାର ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା

କଲି । ଏଥିରେ ଆମେରିକା ଓ କାନାଡାରେ ବାସ କରୁଥିବା ଶତାଧିକ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଯୋଗ ଦେଲେ । ସେତେବେଳେ ମୁଁ ହାର୍ଟଫୋଡ୍ ସହରରେ (ବିଖ୍ୟାତ ଆମେରିକାନ୍ ଲେଖକ ମାର୍କ ଟ୍ୱାଇନଙ୍କ ଘର ପାଖରେ) ୮୫ ସରମାନ୍ ଷ୍ଟୁଡେଣ୍ଟ ରହୁଥାଏ । ସେହି ଘରେ ତତ୍କାଳୀନ ଗୌରୀଚରଣ ଦାସ, ତତ୍କାଳୀନ ଯୋଗେଶ୍ୱର ରଥ ଓ ମୁଁ ବସି ଆଲୋଚନା କରି “ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସୋସାଇଟି ଅଫ୍ ଆମେରିକାନ୍”ର ସମ୍ବିଧାନ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ କଲୁ ଓ ପ୍ରଥମେ ତତ୍କାଳୀନ ଦାସ ଏହି ସଂସ୍ଥାର ସଭାପତି ନିର୍ବାଚିତ ହେଲେ-ପ୍ରାୟ ଦୁଇ ବର୍ଷ ଏହି ସଂସ୍ଥାର ସମ୍ପାଦକ ଭାବରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରିଛି । ସଭ୍ୟବାନା ସଂଗ୍ରହ କରି ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନଟିକୁ ବହୁ କଷ୍ଟରେ ତିଆରି କରାଗଲା । କାଳକ୍ରମେ ଏହା ଯୁକ୍ତରାଷ୍ଟ୍ର ଆମେରିକା ସରକାରଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଏକ ସଂସ୍କୃତିକ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ଭାବରେ ସ୍ୱୀକୃତି ଲାଭ କଲା । ପ୍ରଥମେ ସଂସ୍ଥା ତରଫରୁ ଏକ “ନିଉଇଂ ଲେଟର” ପ୍ରକାଶ କରାଯାଉଥିଲା । କ୍ରମେ ଓଡ଼ିଆମାନେ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଗବେଷଣା କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରିଥିବା ଆମେରିକାନ୍‌ମାନେ ଏହି ସଂସ୍ଥାର ଅଗ୍ରଗତି ପାଇଁ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିଚାଲିଲେ ।

ମନେ ହେଉଛି ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ସମୟରେ ଅର୍ଥାତ ୧୯୭୧ ମସିହାରେ ମୁଁ ଏହି ସଂସ୍ଥାର ସଭାପତି ନିର୍ବାଚିତ ହେଲି ଓ ବୋଧହୁଏ ଏହି ସଂସ୍ଥାର ପ୍ରଥମ ଆଜୀବନ ସଭ୍ୟ ମୁଁ ଓ ମୋର ପତ୍ନୀ । ସଂସ୍ଥା ତରଫରୁ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ବର୍ଷ ଯୁକ୍ତରାଷ୍ଟ୍ର ଆମେରିକାରେ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ସହରରେ ବାର୍ଷିକ ଉତ୍ସବମାନ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠିତ ହେଲା । ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ସଙ୍ଗୀତର ଚର୍ଚ୍ଚା ସହିତ ସେହି ଉପମହାଦେଶରେ ବାସ କରୁଥିବା ଓଡ଼ିଆମାନେ ପରସ୍ପର ସହିତ ଯୋଗସୂତ୍ର ସ୍ଥାପନ କଲେ ଓ କାଳକ୍ରମେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାରୁ କେହି ଆମେରିକା ବୁଲି ଗଲେ ଓ.ଏସ୍.ଏ. ର କର୍ମକର୍ମୀମାନେ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଅତିଥି କଲେ । ମୁଁ ଥିବା ଭିତରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଦର୍ଶନୀ ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରଥମେ ଦିଲ୍ଲୀରୁ ସୁରେନ୍ଦ୍ର ଜେନାଙ୍କୁ ନିଆ ଯାଇଥିଲା । ଏଥିପାଇଁ ବୋଷ୍ଟନ୍ ସହରରେ ବାସ କରୁଥିବା ଆମେରିକୀୟ ଅଧ୍ୟାପିକା ଫ୍ରେଡରିକା ମାର୍ଗଲିନ୍ ପ୍ରଚେଷ୍ଟା କରିଥିଲେ ।

ମନେ ପଡୁଛି, ସେଥିପାଇଁ ବୋଧହୁଏ ଅନୁଦାନ ଯୋଗାଇ ଦେଇଥିଲେ ଭାରତରେ ଯୁକ୍ତରାଷ୍ଟ୍ର ଆମେରିକାର ରାଷ୍ଟ୍ରଦୂତ ଅଧ୍ୟାପକ ଗାଲ୍‌ବ୍ରେଥ । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ଏହି ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ଗଠନରେ ସକ୍ରିୟ ଭୂମିକା ନେଇଥିବାରୁ ମୁଁ ରାଜନୀତି କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ସରକାରୀ କୋପ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିର ଶରବ୍ୟ ହୋଇଛି । ମନେ ପଡୁଛି ହାର୍ଟଫୋଡ୍ ସହରରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ ନୃତ୍ୟର ଆୟୋଜନ କଲାବେଳେ ଭାରତନାଟ୍ୟମ୍‌ର କାହିଁକି ଆୟୋଜନ କରୁନାହିଁ ବୋଲି କୌଣସି

ଅଜ୍ଞାତ ଭାରତୀୟଙ୍କର ପ୍ରଚ୍ଛନ୍ନ ଧନକ ଚେଲିଫୋନ ଯୋଗେ ପାଇଛି । ଏହି ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ଗଠନରେ ମୋର ସକ୍ରିୟତା ମୋର ଜୀବନକୁ ରକ୍ତାକ୍ତ କରିଥିଲେ ବି ମୁଁ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଆନନ୍ଦିତ ଯେ, ଯୁକ୍ତରାଷ୍ଟ୍ର ଆମେରିକା ଓ କାନାଡାରେ ବାସ କରୁଥିବା ବହୁ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପରିବାର ଏହି ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନକୁ ଏକ ସକ୍ରୀୟ ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ଭାବରେ ଗଢି ପାରିଛନ୍ତି । ଏବେ ଖବରକାଗଜମାନଙ୍କରେ ଏ ସମ୍ପର୍କରେ ସମ୍ବାଦ ପ୍ରକାଶ ପାଉଛି ଓ ଏହି ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନର ଆତିଥେୟତା ବହୁ ସମାଜ ସେବୀ, ରାଜନୀତିଜ୍ଞ ଓ ସାହିତ୍ୟ, ସଙ୍ଗୀତ, ନୃତ୍ୟ ନିପୁଣ କଳାକାରଙ୍କୁ ଯୁକ୍ତରାଷ୍ଟ୍ର ଭ୍ରମଣରେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିପାରିଛି । ଅନ୍ୟ ଭାବରେ କହିଲେ ଓ.ଏସ୍.ଏ. ଯୁକ୍ତରାଷ୍ଟ୍ର ଆମେରିକା ଓଡ଼ିଶା ମଧ୍ୟରେ ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ ବିନିମୟର ଏକ କେନ୍ଦ୍ର ହୋଇ ପଡିଛି । ଏବେ ଆଉ ଏହାର ଜନ୍ମ ଜାତକର ବେଦନା ଓ ତିକ୍ତ ଅନୁଭୂତି ସ୍ମରଣ କରି ଲାଭନାହିଁ-କାରଣ ଏହା ଏକ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ଓ ଏହି ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ ଓଡ଼ିଆମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ଏକ ଆତ୍ମସମ୍ମାନ ଓ ଗୌରବ ବୋଧ ଜାତ କରିପାରିଛି । ଭାରତ ବର୍ଷରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଦୁଃସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଅର୍ଥନୀତି ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ଏକ ଅନଗ୍ରସର ରାଜ୍ୟ ରହିଛି, ଉତ୍ତମ ଭାରତୀୟ ଓ ଆମେରିକୀୟ ଅର୍ଥନୀତିଜ୍ଞଙ୍କ ମାପକାଠିରେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ, ଭାଷା, ସାହିତ୍ୟ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ତାହାର ଐତିହ୍ୟ ସମ୍ମାନ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା କରିଛି, କରି ସାରିଛି, କରି ପାରିଛି । ଓଡ଼ିଆ ମାନଙ୍କର ସମ୍ମିଳିତ ଉଦ୍ୟମ ଫଳରେ- ଏ ଦିଗରେ ମୋର ବିଶେଷ କୌଣସି ଅବଦାନ ନାହିଁ । କିଛି ମାତ୍ରାରେ ଭାରତର ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ ପ୍ରେମୀ ଏକ ସାଧାରଣ ନାଗରିକର ସାଙ୍ଗଠନିକତାର ଏହା ଏକ କ୍ଷୁଦ୍ର ଦୃଷ୍ଟାନ୍ତ ହୋଇପାରେ । ଏଥିପାଇଁ ଜୀବିକା ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ଅର୍ଥନୈତିକ ଦୂରାବସ୍ଥା ଯୋଗୁଁ ମୁଁ ଅନେକ ପରିମାଣରେ କ୍ଷତିଗ୍ରସ୍ତ ହୋଇଛି । ସେ କ୍ଷତି ମୋତେ ଯେତେ ଦୁଃଖ ଦେଉନାହିଁ-ତା ଠାରୁ ଅଧିକ ଆନନ୍ଦ ହେଉଛି ଓସାର ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା । ଆର୍ତ୍ତରାଶ୍ଟ୍ରର କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ସଠିକ କ୍ରିୟାଶୀଳ ଭୂମିକା ନେଇ ପାରିଲେ ଓସା ଏକ

ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ ଅନୁଷ୍ଠାନ ଭାବରେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାବାସୀଙ୍କର ଗର୍ବର ବିଷୟ ହେବ । ୧୯୭୩ ମସିହାରେ ଅମଲାତାନ୍ତିକ-ରାଜନୈତିକ ଷଡ଼ଯନ୍ତ୍ର ଫଳରେ ଭାରତ ଫେରିଲି । ସେହି ୧୯୭୩ ମସିହାରେ ଓସାର ସଭାପତି ପଦରୁ ଇସ୍ତଫା ଦେଇଥିଲି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏବେ ବି ଓସା ମୋର ମାନସ ପଟରେ ରହିଛି । ଓସାର ବିକାଶ ଓ ଉନ୍ନତି ମୋର ଏହି ପରିଶ୍ରମ ବୟସରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ମତେ ଗଭୀର ଆନନ୍ଦ ଯୋଗାଇ ପାରୁଛି । ଇତିହାସର ଏହି କୁରତା ନୂଆ କଥା ନୁହେଁ । ସ୍ୱାର୍ଥ ପରତା ଠାରୁ ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ୱକୁ ଉଠି ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ ଚେତନାର ଧାରାକୁ ପ୍ରବାହିତ କରିବା ଦିଗରେ ଓସା ଆହୁରି ବଳିଷ୍ଠ ହୋଇ ପାରିବ ବୋଲି ମୋର ଦୃଢ଼ ଧାରଣା ରହିଛି । ଆମର କନ୍ୟା ଓଡ଼ିଶା ନୃତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରବୀଣା ଓ ଡାକ୍ତର, ଲୁସି ଏବେ ଆମେରିକାରେ ନାଗରିକ ଓ ବୁମ୍-ପି-ଟନ, ଇଣ୍ଡିଆନାରେ ବାସ କରୁଛି । ତେଣୁ ଯୁକ୍ତରାଷ୍ଟ୍ର ଆମେରିକାର ଓସା ସହିତ ପାରିବାରିକ ସଂପର୍କ ପୁଣି ଗଢି ଉଠିଛି । ଏବେ ଓସା ତିରେକୁରିରୁ ଦେଖୁଛି ମୋର ଜାମାତା କମ୍ପ୍ୟୁଟର ଇଞ୍ଜିନିୟର କମଲେଶ ।

ଏହି ଅବସରରେ ପ୍ରଥମ ସମ୍ମିଳନୀ ପାଇଁ ହାର୍ଟଫୋର୍ଡ ସେମିନାରୀ ଫାଉଣ୍ଡେସନର କର୍ମକର୍ତ୍ତାମାନେ ବିନା ଦ୍ୱିଧାରେ ସମ୍ମିଳନୀ ପ୍ରକୋଷ୍ଠ (ମେକନଜି ହଲ୍) ଯୋଗାଇ ଦେଇଥିବାରୁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଧନ୍ୟବାଦ ଦେବା ଉଚିତ ମନେ କରୁଛି । ଆଶା କରୁଛି ଓସା ଉତ୍ତମ ଦେଶ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ଏକ ସାଂସ୍କୃତିକ ସେତୁ ଭାବରେ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରିବ ।

(ଭାବଗ୍ରାହୀ ମିଶ୍ର ଓସାର ଅନ୍ୟତମ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠାତା । ଏହି ଲେଖାଟି ଦିନଲିପି ୩୧.୧୦.୧୯୯୧ରେ ପ୍ରକାଶ ପାଇଥିଲା । ଏହାକୁ ଲାଲୁ ମାନସିହାଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ହସ୍ତଗତ କରାଯାଇ ସୁବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଜୟନ୍ତୀ ଉପଲକ୍ଷେ ଓସାର ଇତିହାସକୁ ଆଖିରେ ରଖି ପୁଣି ଥରେ ଏହି ସ୍ମରଣିକାରେ ପ୍ରକାଶ କରାଗଲା)



Golden Anniversary of The Odisha Society of Americas

Lalu Mansinha



This is the story of the formation of the Odia community in the United States and Canada. From the first Odia who stepped on American soil back in the late 1909, to each of the estimated 10,000 Odias who are in US and Canada in 2019, there are truly 10,000 interlocking stories. This recount of the OSA, therefore is really a frame, to be adorned with the 10,000 stories together, to make complete and give life to the saga of the people of Odisha in America.

From the year 2000 onwards, the story of the Odia community in US and Canada is well documented on the web. The focus for this article is the Odia community in US and Canada in the second half of the 20th Century, prior to the year 2000.

Prior to India's independence in 1947, only a few students from Odisha had ventured to UK and USA for studies at Universities. To the best of our knowledge Sarangadhara Das of Dhenkanal (1887 – 1957) was the first Odia to arrive in America. In 1909 he attended University of California at Berkely to study Sugar Technology. He returned to India, became a leader of the Socialist Party, and was elected to the Constituent Assembly, and the Parliament. In 1945 Braja Bandhu Misra of Talcher studied Mathematics, first at the University of Michigan and then at Columbia University. He returned to Odisha, was appointed Reader of Mathematics and then Principal of Ravenshaw College.

This article celebrates 70 years of the Odia presence in North America, and the 50th

anniversary of the founding of the Odisha Society of the Americas (OSA). The celebration is not just about the presence of Odias in America (in this article we often use the term *America* to mean United States and Canada jointly), but of Odias as part of the fabric of life and culture of America, and of the expatriate Odias' contribution to Odisha.

It is worth reflecting on the reasons for which so many of us have elected to stay on in US and Canada. America was built on principles that was so eloquently expressed by Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg Address:*brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.*The American system is not perfect, but even with all its flaws, so many of us have decided that this society is the optimum choice to stay here, raise a family, educate the children, knowing well that the children who grow up here will not return to live in Odisha. And so many of us accepted the necessary cost of putting down roots in US and Canada. We pay the price of weaker family bonds of our children and grandchildren with the joint, extended family back in Odisha. The small minority that do return to live in Odisha, after spending the better part of their mature years in America, do so only when they are able to recreate a cocoon of the American way of life in Odisha.

The estimated numbers of Odias in North America are 1900:0; 1940:4; 1950:10; 1960:50; 1970:300; 1980:1000; 1990:2000; 2000:4000; 2010:6000; 2019:10,000. These are educated guesses, based on anecdotal evidence. There

are no reliable census data. The pattern of the Odia immigration to America pattern the result of a complex interplay of global events, and the changes in discriminatory immigration laws in United States and Canada.

Two of the early Odia visitors to US were Shyam Sundar Misra (father of Saradindu Misra), who came in 1950, and Golak Bihari Dhal, who followed a year later, in 1951.

In 1943 some 3 million people died of starvation in Bengal, in the Great Bengal Famine. The Servants of India Society, an NGO, came into Bengal to look after the orphans. Shyam Sundar Misra was a part of that team. The United Nations offered Shri Misra a six-month fellowship to visit the US and study orphanages and other aspects of social work practices in America.

Golak Bihari Dhal, who later became an eminent Sanskrit and Odia scholar, went to UK in 1949 to study Phonetics. After two years in London he spent four months in America under a US fellowship. He wrote a book on his experiences *America Anubhuti*. Both Shyam Sundar Misra and Golak Bihari Dhal comment very favorably on the extraordinary friendliness and hospitality of the Americans.

It was not always thus. A sizable part of the population in both United States and Canada were opposed to allowing in anyone from Asia, resulting in the formation of the Asiatic Exclusion League in 1905. Discriminatory laws ensured to limit Indians coming to the US and Canada. From 1900 to 1965 the US and Canada each allowed only about a hundred immigrants from India per year to enter.

A skilled labor shortage and other factors made US and Canada change their discriminatory immigration practices. The US adopted the 1965 Hart-Celler Act that allowed immigration

based mainly on skill and ability, not on race or skin color. With gates opened up for students as well as mid-career skilled persons, there was a jump in Indian immigration numbers to America; from the 1965 figure of 100/year to a much high number of 80,000/yr (US) and 30,000/yr (Canada) in 2000.

There was a sharp uptake by 1970, with about 300 Odias on the continent. More important than the total count was the concentration of Odias around Boston, New York and Toronto.

In the intervening 70 years since 1950, both Odisha and America have changed. The most dramatic change has been in Odisha, with rapid urbanization and rise in the standard of living. The Odisha and Odias of 1950 and the Odisha and Odias of 2019 are similar but not identical.

The Odias, who arrived in the 1950s and 60s, came from an impoverished country, from homes with no phone, fridge, car and quite possibly no electricity. In contrast, the Odias who arrived in US or Canada after 2000, come from an Odisha with a standard of living and lifestyle not very different from that in America. The Odisha of 70 years ago was mostly rural, with a few small towns. Cuttack, with less than 100,000 population, was not yet a city. The social personalities of Odias nurtured by the rural, impoverished state of 1970s are different from those growing up in urbanized Odisha with higher standard of living.

The Odias of the 50s on arrival in America were suddenly thrust into a sea of all whites. Meeting someone from Odisha was a major event. Dinner invitation followed the first meeting, the very same evening or next; the beginning of a life-long friendship. Most of us from that era searched the phone directories for typical Odia surnames- Mohanty, Mahapatra, Patnaik, etc. to locate other Odias

in America.

The Odia immigrants after the first wave had a much easier time in the new land. They were received by a cousin, or uncle, classmate or a friend of a friend, and eased into an existing circle of friends. Whereas the previous generation of immigrants searched for Odia friends across a continent. The modern Odia immigrants do not have to search for other Odias at continental distances. Now there are significant populations of Odias in every major city in US and Canada.

The Early Years

In this section we present the very early years of the founding of the OSA. and that of two selected OSA chapters: Toronto and New York.

Founding of the Odisha Society of America

On December 14, 1969, Sunday afternoon, during an after-lunch discussion at the apartment of Prasanta Patnaik, Jogeswar Rath suggested that they form an association of Odias in the New England area. Everybody was enthusiastic about the idea and the New England Utkal Samaj was born, with Gauri Das as the President, possibly the first association of Odias outside India.

About eight months later, during the Labor Day weekend in 1970, at the home of Shanti and Bhabagrahi Misra in Hartford, Connecticut, the formation of a larger society with broader objectives was discussed. Letters were sent to all known Odias in US and Canada, to attend a convention on October 17, 1970 in the Hosmer Auditorium, Hartford Seminary Foundation. Bhabagrahi and Shanti Misra were the only Odia family in Hartford and all the Odias coming from elsewhere stayed in their house.

On October 17, 1970 at 5 PM, 55 Odias from various places of North America gathered in

Hosmer Auditorium. It was a unique experience and those who were present there will never forget it. There was joy and excitement in the air. The ladies had prepared the dinner. After the dinner and the cultural program, with the enthusiastic approval of everybody, an organization of Odias in US and Canada, named Orissa Society of Americas was inaugurated. Earlier Bhabagrahi Misra and Gauri Das had drafted the constitution and bylaws. Gauri Das was elected President, Amiya Patnaik, Vice President, Bhabagrahi Misra, Secretary, Nagabhusan Senapati, Treasurer and Krushna Mohan Das, Jogeswar Rath, Sakuntala Mangaraj and Rabi Patnaik members of the Executive Committee. It was decided to publish a quarterly newsletter called the *Orissa Society News* or *Utkal Samachar*.

In March 1971, the Executive Committee of OSA was reconstituted. Krushna Mohan Das became the First Vice President. Rabi Ray, Promode Patnaik, Sita Kantha Das, Bijoy Das, Surya Misra and Rabi Kanungo joined the Executive Committee as members. New York and Boston were the first to open local chapters of OSA, followed by San Francisco, Toronto, Atlanta, Chicago and South Dakota.

Canada-Odisha Society of America (CanOSA)

On July 4, 1971 Odias in Toronto, Hamilton and vicinity in Canada gathered at the residence of Sri Gopal Mohanty in Dundas, Ontario, and agreed to form a local chapter called *Toronto Chapter of OSA*. The original name has been changed four times, to *Utkal Samaj*, then to *Orissa Society of Canada*, and finally to the current name, *Canada-Odisha Society of America*, all the while continuing to be the Toronto or Canada chapter of the OSA. In the first major social gathering of the chapter in the summer of 1971, Odia families in Toronto, Hamilton and nearby areas gathered for a *Pakhala Party* at the residence of Shanti and Sri

Gopal Mohanty. A few months later, on October 28 1972, Kumara Purnima was celebrated. Chitrlekha Patnaik and Mina Sarangi gave Odissi dance performances, one of the earliest Odissi dance exposition in America. In the Winter of 1972 Odia families in Toronto and region celebrated Saraswati Puja for the first time.

In Summer of 1972 the first Odia cottage weekend was organized by Manaranjan Pattanayak and Pratap Pattanaik. A very enjoyable and memorable three days spent in boating, fishing, singing, skits. Speaking Odia, cooking and eating Odia food was a treat. So successful was this first Odia cottage weekend, that for succeeding years Odias from as far away as the east coast, Florida and Alabama came. The annual three-day cottage weekend gathering initiated by the Odias in Canada was in many ways a precursor to the annual three-day convention of the Odisha Society of the Americas.

The Summer 1973 Baishaki celebration featured the one act play *Pahada Ra Atma Katha* by Suren Mohanty. Perhaps this is the first time an Odia play was staged in US and Canada.

In 1976 the Canada chapter hosted the 7th OSA Annual Convention. Jnana Ranjan Dash was the convener. A full length Odissi dance repertoire was presented by Menaka Thakkar of Toronto.

OSA New York (OSANY)

In 1969 there was only one Indian grocery store in lower Manhattan, run by an Iranian. There was no place of worship for Indians. There were a few Odias scattered around New York. They used to gather in the house of Basi Apa and Krushna Mohan Das. In one such gathering the Orissa Society of New York was formed, later evolving into Odisha Society of

America New York (OSANY), with Krushna Mohan Das as the chapter president.

Among the Odias at that time, Krushna Babu and Basi Apa were the only ones with a house, and most OSANY gatherings were held there. Basi Apa hosted many memorable Thanksgiving dinners and New Year Eve parties at her home. With the growth of the Odia population in the greater New York area, OSANY played a leading role in shaping the OSA.

Duryodhan Mangaraj took over the OSANY presidency in 1974. Rabindra Ray, Columbia University alumnus, arranged for regular broadcast of Odia songs over the Columbia University broadcast network. Lata and Saradindu Misra produced the program, aired every other month, initially for 30min, then for 45 min. The OSANY Odia radio program, was a first in America, and continued for more than five years.

Ram Saran Sahu took over the presidency in 1976. For the first Kumar Purnima celebration Ritha Devi and Ratilekha Mitra gave performances. OSANY organized a campsite weekend in the Bellplain State Forest, an annual event which continued for 12 years. OSANY was invited to participate in an outdoor concert at the Lincoln Center. Lata Misra, with Pratap Das and party thrilled thousands of New Yorkers with their Odia songs and music. OSANY also organized a Ratha Jatra at the Flushing Hindu Temple in 1977 in collaboration with the Jagannath Society, founded by Bimal Mahanti.

In 2005 OSANY merged with the neighboring chapter OSA New Jersey to become OSANY-NJ.

The Early Conventions

The First Convention, the founding meeting of the OSA, on October 17, 1970, and the next 6

conventions, were on a shoe-string budgets. The 3rd Convention in Riverdale, NJ, had a total expenditure of \$40. All delegates were put up in the homes of nearby Odia families. The early conventions were half a day affair. The 4th Convention on July 6, 1974 in College Park MD, started at 3pm, with dinner at 5:30pm, variety entertainment at 7:30. The first multi day convention was in Chicago on July 10, 11 and 12, 1981, with all delegates housed in the dormitories of North Central College, Naperville, IL.

During this infancy of OSA, the level of involvement by the OSA membership in the convention was very high, almost 100%. Everyone was a delegate as well as a worker. Since delegates stayed with local families, everyone contributed. From 1981 onwards, the cost of attending a convention went up, and the level of involvement of members and delegates with the organization of the convention came down. 1981 was a great divide, both in the costs, and in the level of involvement. Here is a vignette from the 1984 convention:

On dawn on July 1, 1984, a bunch of us were on the steps of the Dining Hall of Glassboro State College, facing the brightening horizon on the east. We raised the glasses to the rising Sun, welcoming the new day, Sunday, July 1, 1984, the start of the 15th Annual Convention of the Orissa Society of the Americas. We were in Glassboro, in rural New Jersey, about an hour away from Philadelphia.

The group consisted of Lalu Mansinha, Kula Mishra, Prafulla Padhi, Chandra Misra, Ram Saran Sahu, Rabi Patnaik (President, OSA), Manaranjan Pattanayak (Convener) and others. For most of the night we had been washing, chopping, stirring, preparing the meals for the next day. We were taking a pause from our assigned daytime convention duties, at the end of our all night kitchen shift, before our other

daytime duties began, on this, the first day of the convention.

The toast in the light of the rising Sun on July 1 was in fact a toast to us, a celebration of the camaraderie of OSA, of working side by side with new friends and old. We were both tired and energetic simultaneously. There was an exhilaration in sweating it out in the trenches with your friends. We felt good about ourselves, about our friends, about OSA and the world. All we needed was a bracing cup of tea or coffee, and we were ready to go another 24 hours in the service to OSA, our own community.

Imagine the President, Convener, Editor and friends chopping vegetables and cooking the whole night before the opening of the Convention, and then going on to their assigned duties on the opening day. Those were the days!

With steadily increasing Odia population in urban centers OSA had more members. The additional numbers, and rising income levels, allowed conventions to be organized more professionally; delegates were housed in hotels; meals were catered; and the cultural programs were staged in professional auditoriums.

OSA Collateral Benefits

The primary goal at the formation has been to form a community association. Just having an association of Odias has produced a number of collateral benefits. In this section we list a few such beneficial fallouts:

OSA and Literature

Every issue of the annual Urmi, and the quarterly Utkarsa, and their predecessor journals, have encouraged creative writing in Odia and English. At every Convention since

1999, there has been a Poetry Reading session, originally initiated by Dr. Bigyani Das. At the Poetry Readings, works of published poets and novice poets are read and enjoyed. Individuals who thought they had no poetic talent, are inspired to create poetry.

Sahitya Patha Chakra, an annual literary event in the Toronto Odia community since 2007, was originally organized by Gagan Panigrahi, Sumitra Padhi and Niranjana Misra. Just by hearing the poetry of novice poets has led to a remarkable number of lay persons in Toronto to discover their hidden creative talents. The literary discussions and the poems are a pleasure to hear, even for those with no literary talent.

Global Odia Publishing

In 2012 Satya Pattanaik of Dublin, OH launched a high quality annual Odia literary journal *Pratishruti*, edited and published in the United States, printed in Odisha, and available everywhere. The first issue had 180 pages. The 2018 volume consisted of some 400 pages of quality Odia literary writings, and quickly sold out in both US and Odisha.

On April 1, 2019, Satya Pattanaik announced the founding of **BLACK EAGLE BOOKS**, a non-profit publishing initiative, to propagate Odia and Indian literature globally. The goal is to publish 500 quality books in 5 years.

This publishing house is different because each published book is a digital file, stored on a server, and printed only when a customer orders a copy. There is no physical warehousing of printed copies. Black Eagle books are made available worldwide through Amazon and Barnes and Noble. Black Eagle Books is a portent of the future of book publishing, and will shakeup the publishing industry in Odisha.

OSA and Odissi

At the time the first Odias arrived in America, Odisha's classical dance form had not yet been named. The name *Odissi* was to appear later. International recognition was far away, it would take many years for Odissi to be named and recognized inside India. Many Odias who arrived in America before 1990 would have heard of Odissi, but may have never seen an Odissi presentation. In America Odissi and OSA grew together.

On October 28 1972, in Toronto, during Utkala Samaja (CanOSA) celebration of Kumara Purnima Chitrlekha Patnaik and Mina Sarangi gave Odissi dance performances. About the same time Mrs. Frederica Marglin had started teaching Odissi dance at Om Theater Workshop, Boston Center for the Arts. She was a student of Guru Surendra Nath Jena. Ratilekha Das, a student of Guru Raghunath Dutta of Kala Vikash Kendra, Cuttack, had been giving performances of Odissi dance around New York area. On December 1 and 2, 1972, she presented a full repertoire of Odissi at Hunter College, New York. **In 1976** the Canada chapter hosted the 7th OSA Annual Convention. A full length Odissi dance repertoire was presented by Menaka Thakkar. This was first for a OSA Convention.

Over the decades that followed, talented dancers such as Minati Misra, Sanjukta Panigrahi, Menaka Thakkar, Rita Devi, Sharon Lowen gave Odissi performances in cities in US and Canada. Many revered Odissi Gurus, such as Kelu Charan Mahapatra and Gangadhar Pradhan, visited and taught Odissi in America. In 2000 and 2003 Pratap Das organised the First and Second International Odissi Dance Festival in Washington DC.

In many cities Odissi dance schools opened, providing the next generation with an opportunity to learn Odissi dance. Second

generation Odias are now teaching Odissi to another generation. Shalini, Shibani and Laboni, the Patnaik Sisters at the Odissi Dance School of The Center for World Music in San Diego. Niharika Mohanty, 2nd Generation Odissi dancer now teaches Odissi at Guru Shradha in San Francisco. Ellora and Devraj Patnaik, born and brought up in Canada teach Odissi at the Chitraklekha Dance Academy in Toronto.

OSA and Drama

Every OSA convention has included multiple stage plays and skits. In the early days, often the skit was conceived the same day, minimally rehearsed perhaps once, and presented on stage. There is the inter-chapter drama competition, named in 1980 to honor Dr. Pramod Patnaik. Dr. Patnaik was the 4th President of OSA (1978-1980) and a great leader, orator, dramatist, and creative actor.

Fakir Mohan Senapati's Chha Mana Atha Guntha was presented first at a CanOSA, then at the 25th anniversary convention at Pomona New Jersey in 1994. This play was so well done that it is being presented again for the 50th Anniversary Convention in Atlantic City.

Regional Drama Festival

A large number of Odias are unable to attend the OSA convention every year. In 2007 Sandip Das Verma and Srigopal Mohanty decided to organize several Regional Drama Festivals (RDF) with participations from nearby chapters. Sri Gopal Mohanty was the first RDF Coordinator.

The first RDF was staged in 2009 in Denton, TX. Currently five drama festival regions have been organized: Eastern, Northern/North Eastern, Central/Northern (Chicago) and South Western (Texas and Arkansas), and Pacific West. The concept of Regional Drama Festivals has been wildly successful. From 2009 to 2018, a total of 80 Odia dramas have been staged at

multiple locations in United States and Canada. To encourage young Odias to participate Sumitra Padhi (Toronto) and Gyan Patnaik (Chicago) initiated children drama in 2009. In the performance of Mauna Shila at Austin in 2013 an astonishing 29 Odia children acted. The mass participation of the next generation is noteworthy and praiseworthy.

Ornet & Osanet

In 1991 Subrat Mahapatra created an email id list (with 30 names), and Mihir Mohanty came up with the name ORNET. Chitta Baral and Asutosh Dutta (then at Columbia University) set up ornet@cs.columbia.edu. Membership on this list grew quickly to over 800 names, spread out over US, Canada, Odisha and globally. The list served as a discussion forum on many important issues, including an early discussion on setting up private engineering colleges in Odisha, before there were any. In 1999 ORNET was a key element in rapid raising of funds to help the super cyclone victims. In 2007, a new email net was created solely for OSA members, OSAnet@yahoogroups.com, with Gagan Panigrahi as the moderator. In 2013, Asutosh Dutta and Chitta Baral migrated ornet to ornet@yahoogroups.com.

Investing in Community

The early Odia arrivals, prior to about 1970, had lesser earnings, but still had some discretionary income leftover after meeting essential living expenses. Many sent home part of the discretionary income to help in wedding, medical treatment, repair the family home. Help also went to the village school, temple etc. These are small amounts, but considered as a group, it amounts to gentle and almost imperceptible investment in Odisha.

On a personal level many Odias initiated small projects, outside the immediate family, on their own, such as Sita Kantha Das, Devi

Misra and Subhas Mohapatra, and many more. In 1993 SEEDS (Sustainable Economic and Education Development Society) to help Western Odisha, after persistent reports of starvation in Kalahandi and Bolangir. SEEDS was founded by a group of then graduate students, Priyadarshan Patra, Somdutt Behura, Abani Patra and others. Essentially SEEDS pooled together small contributions to support a few larger projects over longer periods.

After the 1999 supercyclone, OSA, Kalinga Hospital and other charities associated with OSA provided short term relief. SEEDS and CanOSA helped in long term sustainable projects.

In 1989 a group of Odia doctors in US, among them Ram Prasad Patnaik, Kailash Pani and Ramesh Raichoudhury, developed the idea to bring modern hospital care to Odisha. Construction started in 1993. There were concerns about the progress. In 1994 Mana Ranjan Pattanayak agreed to manage the construction. The first patient was admitted on February 17, 1997. The first Open Heart Surgery in Odisha was performed in Kalinga Hospital on September 9, 1997 by a team led By Dr. Raichoudhury. Kalinga Hospital showed that a modern multispecialty hospital can be viable in Odisha. After Kalinga some dozen modern hospitals have opened up in Odisha, several with OSA members as stakeholders. The net result has been dramatic. Prior to 1990s to get proper medical care Odisha patients were going to distant hospitals in other states. Now people from outside Odisha, even outside India, are coming to Odisha for treatment.

Two Odias stand out in philanthropy. Sita Kantha Dash of Minneapolis is funding innovation centers and an endowed professorship at IIT-Bhubaneswar. He has also setup an endowed innovation center Chair at South Dakota State University. Sradhananda (Dan) Misra of Toronto has donated \$5 million to the South Asia section of the Royal Ontario

Museum, and \$2 million to the Jagannath Temple in Toronto.

Two Rosters

The Unsung Ranis

In many cities in America, in the Odia community there is one lady who knows everyone, invites every new Odia for dinner, invites everyone for all Odia osa, pooja, and parba. There is always a hustle and bustle in her house because she loves to cook and feed her guests absolutely delicious Odia dishes. She keeps the local Odia community together. Although known to everyone locally, they rarely receive national recognition. Here is a small partial list:

Basanti (BasiApa) and Krushna Mohan Das; described as a generous, saintly lady.
Sumitra and Hara Padhi, Burlington, a suburb of Toronto, Canada
Minati (MiniApa) and Manaranjan Pattanayak. Burlington, near Toronto, moved to Philadelphia, then Kansas City.
Anupama (Runu) and Pramode Patnaik, Huntsville, Alabama
Puspa (Pinu) and Pratap Das, Washington, DC;

and there are many others at other localities throughout US and Canada.

Roster of Leaders

On this list are a few Odias who stand out above the crowd for their multifaceted leadership roles.

Chitta Baral; Bioinformatics: A doer and mover for Higher Education in Odisha.

Bigyani Das; Mathematics; Odia poet, author, community leader.

Jagannath Prasad Das; Educational Psychology, Childhood Development; Order of Canada.

Late Krushna Mohan Das, Veterinary Sciences;
Odia community leader

Kuku Das, Odia for children, community leader.

Pratap Das, International Odissi Festival;
Community leader.

Sita Kantha Das, Entrepreneur and
Philanthropist.

Sandip Das Varma, Rural Math Talent Search;
Regional Drama Festival.

Asutosh Dutta, Starting and maintaining Ornet;
community leader.

Dhirendra Kar, Entrepreneur, Social worker in
Bhubaneswar slums, community leader.

Jayshree (Ranu) Mahanti, Social worker, rural
women, Aamara Biswas NGO, Nano Finance.

Bijoy Mishra, Sanskrit and Odia literature.

Niranjan Mishra, Drama, community leader.

Devi Misra, Odisha Foundation, Philanthropy.

Lata Misra, Odissi music, Champu, drama,
performing arts, community leader.

Sradhananda Misra, Entrepreneur and
Philanthropist

Sri Gopal Mohanty, Drama, Performing Arts
leader.

Sumitra Padhi, Historical Odia children's plays,
Odia poetry, community leader

Annapurna Pandey, Odisha Anthropology,
community leader.

Gagan Panigrahi, Photographer, artist,

craftsman, Odia poet, drama, community
leader.

Sabita Panigrahi, Drama, classical and popular
singing, community leader.

Pinaki Panigrahi, Epidemiology, Global Health,
Neonatal probiotic vaccine; Asian Institute of
Public Health (AIPH), AIPH University,
Bhubaneswar.

Manaranjan Pattanayak, Construction and
operation of Kalinga Hospital, community
leader.

Late Pramode Kumar Patnaik, Odia Performing
Arts, community leader.

Prakash Patnaik, Air Defence Systems, National
Research Council of Canada, multiple NATO
and international honours, community leader.

Satya Patnaik, Odia literature; Pratishruti
Magazine; Black Eagle Publications.

Priyadarshan Patra, Co-founder SEEDS
(Sustainable Economic and Educational
Development Society), Charity and community
leader.

Bhakta Bhatsala Rath, Head of Material Science
and Component Technology, US Naval Labs,
Padma Bhusan; numerous awards and honors.

Undoubtedly there are many others who
should be on this roster.

Final Introspection

For those of us who came before 1990, Odisha
Society of America has been a substitute for
the extended family that we miss. Often the
bonds of friendship that we create here are
stronger than family bonds. Our friends are
present at all important days: birth of a child,
successive birthday celebrations, high school

graduations, university graduations, weddings, birth of grandchildren, and also the sad moment, the funeral of whoever goes first.

With increased chapter memberships, there are more local Odia community events which also have become more elaborate. The larger chapters organize multiday gathering with cultural presentations and other programs rivaling in quality those of the OSA Convention. The local chapter events do not involve much travel, and are less expensive. The OSA convention is held only once a year, whereas the local chapters functions have formal and informal gatherings several times a year. This is true of the larger local chapters such as CanOSA, OSANY-NJ, OSASW, OSACalif, OSA Chicago etc. Several chapters publish their own journal in print and/or online.

One astonishing fact is that regardless of the professional specialization, people from Odisha bring in extraordinary talent in Odia culture, Odissi dance and music, literary talent and interest, visual arts. Thus, even as the national OSA recedes in the horizon of new arrivals, the larger talent pool is benefiting both national OSA and local chapters.

In the long term, social studies have shown that unless there is a continuous external threat, most 3rd generation immigrants have only a minimal knowledge of the mother tongue of the old country. The prognostication is that national and local OSA will continue to flourish, as long as there is an inflow of new arrivals from Odisha. Our 3rd generation and beyond progeny will become a barely identifiable part of the American melting pot, a minuscule part of the American gene pool.

In retrospect: I landed in Vancouver Canada, in 1959, and experienced being the lone Odia for a year in a city of a million, before two other Odia students, Nalini Hota and Surya Misra arrived. We became instant best friends. After Vancouver, I went to Houston, where once again I was the lone Odia for a year.

I thank Sri Gopal Mohanty, Gagan Panigrahi and Mana Ranjan Pattanayak for help in writing this article, but I take sole responsibility for all errors of omission and commission. ---- Lalu Mansinha,

131 Ambleside Drive, London, ON, N6G 4P8, Canada



Remembering the first OSA Convention in Canada in 1975 (44 years back)

Jnana Ranjan Dash

OSA was only 6 years old in 1975. The late Dr. Gauri Das called me from Boston and said that no one was volunteering to host the OSA annual convention. I instantly assured him not to worry and that I would handle it. I had no idea of what I was signing up for, but the enthusiasm overtook the organizational challenges ahead. I was newly married and my wife had just arrived in Toronto two months back. My friend Sradhananda Mishra was also recently married that summer. The other bachelor friends were Hara Padhi and Om Prakash Mohapatra. The date was fixed to be August 31st. I think the total number of Odia families in and around Toronto were about 20 or so. We had over 100 people attending that convention.

The Preparation

I was living in a newly-purchased two bedroom condominium in Don Mills area of Toronto, close to my work at IBM's Canadian headquarters. We instantly booked a place (Flemingdon Community Center) close to my building. The whole convention was going to be a one-day affair and we started calling and writing to friends who could attend. Several senior members of OSA committed to come driving all the way from Boston (Gauri Das, Prasanna Samantray), New York (Jagat & Menka Subudhi, Amiya & Kabita Patnaik, Rabi Ray), Detroit (Samar & Munmun Bhuyan, Sirish & Sanju Mishra), Montreal (Rabi & Minati Kanungo), Kingston (Arjun & Padmini Purohit), and nearby places in Ontario. Many local friends like Mana Ranjan Pattanayak, Sri Gopal Mohanty, and Gopanbandhu Mishra were hosting visiting families in their homes. The day before the convention, we had four families in

our 2-bedroom place (Samar Bhuyan, Sirish Mishra, Gauri Das, & Prasanna Samantray), a total of 10 people. Food was going to be cooked at our tiny kitchen. I had outsourced the dessert to a UP friend (Rosogollas for 100 people). I approached a well-known Odissi dancer Menka Thakkar and requested her to perform in front of an all-Odia audience. She normally charged a hefty fee, but immediately agreed to perform free for us. She said that it was a rare honor to perform in front of an all-Odia audience.

The Day of the convention

Early morning of August 31, my place was a humdrum of many activities. Gauri Babu was frying "puri's" while other ladies were cooking curry for 100 people. Menka Thakker was going to come to our place to get dressed for her dance recital later. People started arriving at the convention center by 10am. Prasan Samantray sat at the door registering attendees. The event began with the convener's welcome address. Arjun Purohit presided over the general body meeting. Then president of OSA the late Amiya Patnaik spoke followed by the late Gauri Das on their vision of OSA and its future. The OSA office-bearers present were – president Amiya Patnaik, vice-president Samar Bhuyan, Secretary Rabi Ray, Treasurer Prasan Samantray, editor Jnana Dash, and executive committee members Menka Subudhi and Gauri Das.

After food, the entertainment program started. Jini (Niharika) Mohanty, daughter of Sri Gopal Mohanty gave a short Odishi dance

performance. This writer and Bijoy Mishra sang songs to the tabla accompaniment of Pramod Patnaik. Jay Mohanty (Dayton, Ohio) presented a skit. The late Gopa Mishra was the master of ceremonies. Menka Thakkar (originally from Mumbai, but spent five years in Cuttack learning Odishi from guru Kelu Charan Mohapatra) presented the full repertoire of Odishi from Mangala Charan to Moksha. Her brother Rashesh Thakkar, a professor at York University did the narration of the dance numbers and their meaning.

It was a great convention and for the first time, the Canadian Odias learnt a lot about OSA and its founding members. Although 44 years have gone by and several other conventions have taken place in Canada, the first one is always historic.

My memories of searching for Odias in various cities during the early years (1970-2000)

I always wanted to meet Odias outside of Odisha/India. During the early 1970s, after I came as a student, the homesickness drove me to find Odias everywhere. I remember compiling the first Odia directory in North America during 1974-75. There was no email or Facebook, or WhatsApp in those days. The PC was yet to be invented and the Internet was far off. Those were the days of the mainframe and even the minicomputer was just new in the market. So how did I compile a directory? First the software called hand-write. Then the good old typewriter in the hands of a Canadian lady secretary at IBM office did the trick (I was employed at IBM Canada then).

The following are instances of my meeting new Odias everywhere. When I called them out of the blue, I was prepared to be brushed off or even get negative reaction on such intrusion. But my track record is 100%, as everyone was excited to meet me and often invited me for

dinner to their house. We Odias are a very friendly and hospitable bunch. The following is a sample of such discovery meetings.

Back in 1970 just after I arrived in Ottawa, Mana Ranjan Pattanayak was visiting me from Sudbury and told me that there was one Odia family in Ottawa, Mr. Behera. We looked up the number and called, but there was no response.

The following week, I called again and it was Saroj Behera. He got so excited that in 15 minutes he came to pick me up and took me to his apartment. Subsequently I became a regular guest at his place every weekend. Both Saroj Babu and Sunity are the best people with their warmth and graciousness.

Soon after meeting Saroj babu, we drove to Kingston and met Arjun Purohit and family. I have visited Arjun babu's place so many times after that and they were always the most loving hosts.

At St. Louis (Missouri) I called Dr. R.N.Mohapatra and wife Manorama (a doctor also) and instantly got invited for dinner. The year was 1976.

I called Prafulla Mohanty, an Odia painter and writer in London back in 1977. Prafulla babu was gracious to invite me to his flat. He gave me a copy of his newly published book, "My village, my life". I met him many times after that first meeting.

On a trip to Chicago in the 1970s, the late Pramod Patnaik was also visiting from Alabama. We met at his hotel for the first time and I remember spending the whole night talking. The next day, we both went to Surya Mishra's house for an amazing fun evening. Such joy of meeting the first time is beyond words.

During my student days at University of Waterloo, I visited New York for the first time in 1972 and met Saradindu Mishra, Rabi Ray, Ashok Misra, etc. For the first time, I met senior OSA stalwarts like KM Das, Jagat Subudhi, Amiya Patnaik, Bimal Mohanty, and Dr. Pati.

In 1976, during my first visit to Boston we stayed with Prasan Samantray and met local Odias there – Nag Bhushan Senapaty, Bijoy Mishra, Gauri Babu, and others.

At Brussels, I called Dr. Baidyanath Mishra (from Sambalpur) a physics professor and met his family. Baidyanath Babu was very soft-spoken but great lover of Odia literature.

On a trip to Connecticut in early 1980s, I invited myself to the house of Dr. Kalpataru Kanungo and met his family. They were very gracious hosts.

At Birmingham (UK) I was looking for Dr. Prashant Patnaik, but got a different P. Patnaik. He immediately came to the hotel and took me home for dinner. The following day, I found Prashant Babu at the university and we had a great couple of evenings. This was back in 1978.

In Sydney, Australia I contacted the late Arvind Mohanty and he would invite several Odia families on a week-day evening to meet me. In Canberra, Australia I called an Odia professor who would insist on taking me out for lunch in a 2-hour window.

In Dusseldorf, Germany I called Dr. Adwaitananda Mishra who was gracious enough to invite me to stay at his place overnight.

Back in 1978, I was visiting Austin on work. I located one Odia family Dr. Brundaban Panigrahi in College Station. I had no idea of where it was. When I called him and said I might come to visit, he had apprehensions on

how I could drive and locate his house. Those were pre-GPS days (no Google Maps). The following day I drove 90 miles and knocked at his door. He and his wife were shocked and we had the best evening ever.

On a visit to Washington in 1976, I stayed with my college friend Man Mohan Subudhi who took me to another Odia nearby, the late Dilip Satpathy. I subsequently met Dilip Babu and family in various locations – LA, Topeka, and Sacramento. I also met Pratap Das during that trip.

On a visit to Redmond, Washington during the 1980s, I called Nil Madhab Mohapatro at Microsoft. He and his wife hosted me over dinner. Great experience knowing them.

On a visit to Washington during the early 1980s, I met several people like Saura Sahu, Sanjib Mishra, Manas Das, Niva Kodalikar, Sudip Patnaik, Jacob Patnaik, Rabi Patnaik, and Nilambar Biswal. Wonderful people that they are, they have remained life-long friends.

During the 1970s, I and two bachelors in Toronto (Sradhananda Misra and Hara Padhi) heard of an Odia family in Buffalo – Dr. Nirod Mohanty. We called and said we are coming for lunch at his place. We drove from Toronto and met the family and drove back same day. On my first visit to Edmonton, Alberta I contacted Dr. J.P.Das, a professor at the university. I had written to Jagannath Babu earlier and knew of him. But the evening with him and wife Geeta is very memorable. During a trip to Miami in early 1980s, I sought out the late Prakash Patnaik and his wife Babuli, who was undergoing kidney treatment. During that same trip, I looked up Santosh Das and Sulekha in West Palm Beach and visited them.

On a trip to Hawaii, I checked the phone



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book for a Patnaik/Mohanty/Satpathy/Panda (unmistakably Odia names) and found one such name. My kids were shocked when we called and got invited for tea. We did visit the young couple and had a nice time.

During the mid 1970s we drove to Corning, NY to spend time with Dr. Gitimoy Kar and family. Those moments are very sweet in our memory.

I am sure there were many more such occasions. But something has changed. Since the year Y2K (2000) a large number of newcomers have arrived. The San Francisco bay area used to have 20 families during the 1980s. Now we have more than at least 500 families. With such growth in numbers and with the ease of communication (smartphone, WhatsApp, etc.) that homesickness is gone. The young ones also have travelled much more inside India and outside. So I do not see that yearning or passion to meet Odias in this generation. It is not a criticism, but just an

observation. The general priority seems to be more immediate friend circles (not necessarily Odias). But what binds us all is the language and our heritage. Many other Indo-ethnic groups seem much more vibrant than OSA. Our membership continues to be very low compared to the total population. Hence we must attempt to pull all Odias into OSA and make them feel good about our organization, much like what the Telugu or Bengali or Marathi groups do. OSA is the oldest Indo-ethnic organization in North America.

The author is a life member of OSA since the 1970s. He was the editor of the OSA Newsletter for 12 years. After a long career as a senior executive at companies like IBM and Oracle, he is serving on a few boards and advisory boards.

Congratulations and Best wishes to Odisha Society of Americas on 50 Years celebration



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OSA in fifty years- 2069

Bijoy M Misra



The completion of fifty years is a milestone in life. The nurture of a social organization through volunteer work and with a democratic set up is an achievement for any group. We take the opportunity of recognizing many of our previous leaders whose enthusiasm and service have carved the road that we travel today. We recognize the enormous talents and the skills of the current team that is organizing the 50th OSA Convention. We connect to our tasks as immigrants in a different land and try to sustain activities that distinguish our identity. I take the opportunity to reflect and look forward to the next fifty years through my window in life.

Reflection on my Personal journey

I left Orissa in 1969 to come as an Air India Research Fellow at Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology in Pune. Orissa was not in vocabulary of people; I felt homesick and lonely. Dr. Debiprasanna Patnaik, who was then a Professor in Deccan College, somehow discovered me and gave me a home for the next several months. I realized that an Odia person abroad is a part of the family. We made a large club quickly. While I gained reputation professionally, my association with our local Odia friends became a part of the social life.

In 1972, I came to the US as a Visiting Scientist at National Center for Atmospheric Research, Boulder, Colorado. I had not learned how to conduct myself as a scientist in an international group. Professor Baidyanath Misra in Physics Department at University of Colorado came to know of me and became a friend. I spent a part of almost every day at his house with his family. I met faculty members, other seniors in the community and learned of the world. I felt at home. We traveled to neighboring States, but we did not meet another Odia family.

I returned to India and eventually came to Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in

Cambridge in 1974. Dr Gauri Charan Das, the first President of OSA, became my host. Late Dr. Nagabhushan Senapati, my senior in High School, was already in MIT. Then I met two other seniors from our High School, Sri Nityananda Misra and Sri Chandrasekhar Mohanty. The pain of leaving India under difficult political circumstances was completely relieved by the new home-like affectionate social atmosphere. The community was an asset to my wife and my little daughter. During the time, I met Dr. Jogeshwar Rath who was one of the early pioneers of OSA. Dr Rath gave me the affection of an elder brother. Now in Arizona, he has been in attendance in almost all of the OSA Conventions for fifty years!

Gradually I met more people. I would travel to Alabama to have Odia evenings with late Dr Pramod Patnaik. We built a huge Odia group in New York, doing music, plays and children's activities. Particularly memorable was the Odia school which was a labor of love of Sri Samar K Bhuyan, who has moved to Bhubaneswar since. Sri Pratap Das in Maryland noticed the activity and took OSA Convention to a college campus in 1983. This was my first Convention to attend. We produced our first on-stage Odia play in USA. Dr. Umaballava Mishra, Dr. Umashankar Paty, Sri Pafulla K Padhi, Dr. Kalpataru Kanungo (now in Bhubaneswar), and late Dr. Kashinath Sahoo joined me.

The year, 1984 was more momentous. Sri Manaranjan Pattanayak had moved to the tri-State area; Dr Lalu Mansingh pitched in, and together with Sri Saradindu Misra, they produced the first published OSA Convention Souvenir. The Con-vention had many firsts. It had a better preparation and a tighter organization. Dr Sarat Misro from California joined me in producing the first Odia Dasakathia event in a late-night

amphitheater event. OSA had officially entered teen-age.

Growth and Youth

Success brought rivalry and painful animosity. The New York Chapter was split in two. It was corrosive. From a cultural organization, OSA became a political organization. Groups emerged for control and leadership. One had to be in one side or the other. The fractiousness reached Boston in 1988, when our nascent Chapter broke in two. We had selected an all-ladies team to run our organization; that idea did not materialize.

OSA had lost child-artist Lita Sarangi of Canada in an airline accident in 1985 and had another severe loss with the accidental death of the star performer Subrina Biswal in 1989. It was a time for reflection. Dr Pramod Patnaik himself passed away in 1992 March, just a month before the inauguration of the Sri Jagannatha deities in Nashville Hindu Temple. The Temple brought refuge to many. It remained a pilgrimage for me for a decade.

We saw many more untimely deaths, and went through the process of thinking about eventual cremation away from the homeland. It was a period of individual planning, reflection about life, profession and family. At the same time, young professionals from Orissa were arriving in the '90s to fill the market in the US. Here arose two different groups in the organization, young recent arrivals from Orissa and the older households who were parents to second generation young professionals.

OSA has struggled to create a bridge between the two groups; we have still not succeeded. The effort to create OSA leadership from the second generation resulted in disarray since the new membership from the recent arrivals was more into rehabilitation and nostalgia. The second-generation children were looking for new brothers and sisters among the new population. Matrimonial issues were many.

The second-generation group through the local cultural influence is more individualistic. We failed to create enough social mixing to bridge the two groups. Our kids, who were the mainstay of the early OSA, appeared as strangers in the new set up. They gradually kept away from the OSA activities. Thus, we failed to tap into the enormous resources that the second-generation children could bring into the organization.

Actually, at the present time, we have three different groups. The first group, which left the country in the 60's and the '70s and carries the vision of OSA to be the worldwide leader for Odia culture and Odia language. The pragmatics in this group join the younger immigrants to arrange various entertainment programs and simulate a club atmosphere. People like me and many other academics and professionals belong in a second group. We dream about the cultivation of language and culture, but remain confused about a strategic action plan.. The third group of children of Odia descent stay as bystanders in the process. There is no effort among the groups to create a consolidated path forward.

Social issues in the next fifty years

The population of Odia descent in the US and Canada can easily top a hundred thousand persons. Out of these, less than 5% participate in OSA activities, possibly 2% are regular members. Strength in membership only may carry a voice. The early OSA did not need a voice, since the goal was to adjust to the new society. But issues of discrimination, unemployment, untimely loss of support through death in the family and health problems need addressing by the social group. The important point is that the society is getting more competitive and it is not easy for all to keep a bilingual heritage. Many abroad are weak in their mother tongue

either through improper training or through the lack of interest in exploring one's own identity. The identity itself remains unexplained since the language may not remain as a criterion of Odia identity in the future. In the massive economic stress and the strenuous social struggle in the New World, we must look what distinguishes a person of Odia descent in the assembly of men and women in the world.

Does OSA have a role in catering to multiple groups? Multiple groups are a product of settlement in a new country and finding tracks of relief and growth. Many other immigrant groups get bound by their religious practices, but in the case of the oDiAs, our practices are no so explicit or mandatory. Our friendly association brings us apparent homeland security, but the latter gets replaced by financial security in course of time.

Here I want to draw the attention of the readers to a vision of OSA in the next fifty years. It would possibly continue its role as a forum of demonstrating the homeland culture in the foreign land. But it is likely that the representative nature of the cultural demonstration would move towards new creations utilizing the facilities and the cultural fabric of the new country. New plays and new operas might appear to depict the new social scene, its conflicts and achievements, its glory and its roots.

There have been several local literary contributions depicting the cultural pangs of immigration from other Asian countries and other regions in India. OSA could be a forum for new writers who want to analyze the new inter-cultural social scene that creates the foundation for a new community called oDiA-American or oDiA-Canadian. Creative contributions could be encouraged through Essay Competitions, Literary Forums and Poetry Recitals.

Define "oDiA"

By default, an ethnic identity emerges when we

operate as an ethnic group in a new community. Most ethnic groups are identified through their land of origin. In the case of the oDiAs, it is a culture within the land of India. While the rest of the land of India has developed some cultural identity through foods and habits, the oDiAs have created an identity through a belief system. While the belief system is lately termed as religious, it is secular and philosophical in its view.

Endowed with rivers and fertile lands, the oDiAs became a productive community. The oDiAs were engaged in trade in far-away lands. The members in the group became artisans, poets and engineers. Massive stone structures, jewelry, metal craft and sturdy boat making became the hallmark of oDiA cultural symbolism. With opulence, oDiAs maintained their independence and warded off intruders with impunity. It took major organization on behalf of the British to occupy Odisha. They eventually punished her on economic and administrative fronts.

The challenge for OSA for the next fifty years would be to help explore the oDiA independence for the benefit of the future generations. Such task is better done from the distant shores than in the land since one can observe more and compare the distinctiveness with other creative cultures in the world. The task contains the analysis of speech, grammar, the formation of words, and the syntax style in indigenous languages. It builds on the fundamentals of human living and the concept of time.

OSA's leadership would be helpful in the investigation of the Odissi music and dance and their relationship with other classical systems of India. Odissi music is voice-based giving it an ancestry comparable to the *vedic* recitation. A beat accompaniment makes the dance steps, but the lyricism is expressed in

the artistic expressions. The fluidity of movement makes Odissi a better representative of human emotions than other styles of expressive art. Research in art expression and the evolution of Odissi could be a topic for exploration by the future scholars.

Much of Odisha's history from the 1st century BC until about 1000AD remains to be reconstructed. The adventure of the oDiA sailors in the foreign lands through trade, commerce and colonialization would need examination by the future youth to map the new settlements as they happen in North America. The oDiA script has moved to Thailand and Cambodia and is adopted to create the local script. Cambodian texts and inscriptions need be studied for the oDiA connection in architecture and the artisanship.

The art and iconography of Sri Jagannatha should occupy the young minds from the aesthetic and technology point of view. Unlike other deities, Sri Jagannatha is not descriptive, He is symbolic. While the wood structure connotes the primitiveness of the construction, the use of colors is more recent. For the sake of completeness, the oDiA scholars must date the art and establish the origin of the iconography.

Projecting OSA, 2069

The OSA in 1969 consisting of a few families meeting in somebody's home is a distant past to the 50th year celebration in a neon-lighted hotel with cultural, literary and children's activities. The population of a few hundred scattered student-like families has changed to thousands of immigrants gainfully employed in supporting the economies of the US and Canada. The new OSA leadership should look into a larger vision of creating an entity identifiable in the world stage. Sri Jagannatha has been a place of pilgrimage in India; OSA can develop to be a center of convergence of other faiths and culture with the leadership of secular

naturalness and ethical freedom.

OSA would gradually develop into detailed Executive functions by organizing events and activities in different regions of North America with cultural association with the universities and social groups. These tasks would have to be delegated to an Executive Director for creating a strategy and execution. We can project a central office with a language school, a research center and a library containing books, manuscripts and artifacts. It could be a central repository for scholarly resources available to researchers around the world. It could also be a residence home for the scholars and artists from Odisha to conduct research and offer Master classes at the local institutions.

The first-generation immigrants would not be around, and the organizing would fall on the second and third generation citizens of oDiA descent. History and the genealogical customs suggest that there is always a natural curiosity among the third-generation offspring to look for their roots. We have to prepare OSA for this eventual opportunity of leadership. The language may not be oDiA, but the search would be deep. The search could be in anthropology, archaeology, technology, language sciences, history and philosophy. The culture would move to a global fusion with experiments in art forms, architecture, dance and music.

Cultural leadership from an ethic rooting without religious connotation is the challenge that OSA has to meet. I believe that the resources, the manpower and the enthusiasm would exist, but we have to prepare ourselves with a long-term strategic plan. An oDiA mind acts with independent views. Creativity is a hidden talent that has to be tapped. We have to create the groundwork for new activity and provide a

bold direction. So, would be the challenge for the older immigrants and the new settlers in the next few decades. The oDiA and oDishA are

worthy of such a challenge!

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OSA at 50: Organization Milestones in North America and OSA – Odisha

Amiya Nayak



Genesis

The OSA becomes 50 years old during late 2019. OSA was initiated and eventually formed through its precursor ethnic Orissa groups during late 1969 (New England Utkal Samaj, Boston) and late 1970 (Orissa Society of the Americas/ OSA, Connecticut), and late 1970 (Orissa Society of New York/ OSANY). OSANY created sometime during 1970, became a chapter of the bi-national OSA. Around the same time, few chapters such as: Boston, NY, Toronto (Canada) were opened through a list of Oriyas from Orissa, India. During the first *Bandhu Milan* in 1970 in Hartford, CT, Orissa Society of the Americas (OSA) was launched. On November 9, 1971, the USA Government first approved OSA as a tax-exempt non-profit organization (Documents need to be located for OSA history records.) It is unclear if during 1971, and if OSA was first registered as a legal entity at a specific State in the USA. During 1981, OSA was recognized by the IRS as a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) public benefit corporation registered at TN State. OSA is getting older, middle-aged and younger, and looking into the long-term future in north America, with an interest in its roots and heritage from Odisha.

Organization

The Orissa (now Odisha) Society of the Americas, Inc. (OSA) is a socio-cultural, voluntary and non-profit society based in North America (USA, Canada.) It seems, through the times, OSA had many co-founders and co-initiators during 1969-71 & afterwards, and late Dr. Gauri Das, one of the primary co-founders was nominated as the first President of OSA, and co-organizer of the very first

convention (*Bandhu Milan*, Hartford, CT, October 17, 1970.) OSA has redrafted its new constitution and various organizational guidelines during the recent past years.

Chapters

OSA has so far total 17 Chapters in NA (16 across US & 1 in Canada,) out of which several are larger chapters, and others medium or small, with some dormant chapters. Some larger chapters have been organizing socio-cultural functions and festivities during the year. Smaller chapters although do not host their activities independently, organizes socials through local Odia communities.

Memberships

OSA has been a member-based society built by community of member families (estimated total about 1200, few from Odisha, elsewhere in India, Bahamas, other countries). Based on the latest records, categories of family memberships are: Benefactor-42, Patron-52, Life-1123, 5- or 1-Year short term-266, Students etc. During the recent years, immigrant Odias have outnumbered the OSA memberships across NA regions in the demographic ratio of 10:1 immigrant families/ individuals.

Website

OSA website is the primary resource of information on the society and time to time the OSA website has been redesigned.

OSAnet

One of the most important mile markers of OSA was creation of OSAnet@ yahoogroups on May 27, 2007, which opened up OSA's old traditional systems of communications into an open democratized informational system. OSAnet is an internet-based virtual communication and information forum for the OSA members to discuss OSA activities in NA. Currently, OSAnet has about 673-member email IDs.

Annual Convention

Convention has been a legacy and pilgrimage for member families, and most important event of OSA held during the July 4 long weekend, and the hosting venue rotates across north American cities. Hundreds of families from across NA attend the convention and create a mini-Odisha for few days in north America. Invited guests, artists, government officials and sponsors also attend the event. The first Bandhu Milan/ convention was held in 1970 at Hartford, CT. OSA's 50th golden jubilee convention being held in NJ during July 2019 has captured various themes and created an OSA history by breaking all the past records in attendance and celebration. The OSA50 convener, convention team, EC and key coordinators are geared up for doing a wonderful job to celebrate OSA50 as a historic and memorable event in NA.

Publications

The Journal of the OSA (Urmi, Annual), Members Directory of OSA (Annual), Quarterly newsletter (Utkarsa) are the three major publications of OSA. Also, OSA publishes other materials posted at the website and OSAnet.

OSA Awards

During the convention, about 8 categories of

awards from NA, 1 national category of Odisha origin (lifetime achievement) are awarded by OSA to young adults, children, youth and invited guests, along with various service awards to elderly members/ contributors and volunteering committee members for their services.

Regional Drama Festival

RDF initiated during 2008, has been a well-attended feature that rotates regionally and attended by local Odias who organizes Odia language drama.

Voluntary Executive Council, Committees & Members

OSA being a voluntary society has voluntary Executive Council (EC – President, VP, Secretary, Treasurer, Editor) elected every 2 years. Other voluntary officials are the Board of Governors (BOG), Chapter ECs, convener, convention organizers, and other volunteers across north America who voluntarily help in various programs of OSA. About 15 voluntary committees support various activities of the OSA.

Contributions

The largest contribution of OSA has been socio-cultural and Odia-Indian heritage community development in North America. Promotion and celebration of Odisha/ Odia culture, Odissi classical dance, art forms, cultural exchanges, foods, ethnicity, language, tourism and traditions are the topmost offerings of OSA. Emergency help by OSA for Odisha/ Odia origin people based in North America and Odisha through donations and charity-based contributions to families in distress, natural disaster, cyclones, floods, and distribution of educational materials and information have been the major services provided by OSA and its members.

OSA-Odisha Development

Odisha Development Day Symposium (ODD Symposium) has been recently organized during the annual conventions (on and off based on the resources) and the committees cover topics such as: education, health, entrepreneurship (social/ business), library, socio-economic programs through microfinance type funding, interaction with the government & other organizations. The meeting draft proceedings have been difficult to be integrated to the emerging Odisha State Government policies, where development has been heavy financial investment intensive. OSA voluntary system has limitations in investment-based developments in Odisha. OSA type of distant entity with socio-cultural core cannot afford and compete in financial investment-based development in Odisha, and through a loosely organized voluntary format. OSA-Odisha Development should be a Think Tank style virtual format, through a symposium/ workshop/ roundtable followed by a brief proceeding to the GoO. The coordinators have helped create a suitable symposium format for Odisha Development in some key areas through OSA platform and by OSA & its Members.

OSA Impact

OSA Impact Insights, a bi-weekly email briefing created by new generation youth covers areas such as: social impact, writing articles, social entrepreneurship and web journal through the themes - Inform, Invest and Inspire.

OSA Lawsuit

Organizational conflicts and lawsuit (year 2009) involving OSA members (as plaintiffs and defendants) wasted OSA funds and precious voluntary times. However, the legal case, helped a critical review of the organization, in locating the old registration documents,

reorganize the society and redraft the constitution, election guidelines & other parameters.

Conclusion

Because of the fluidity and discontinuities, and changes in the EC system every 2 years, there seems to be no defined pathways or organizational processes on how OSA may partner with the North American broader Indian communities and Odisha (government, private, public, NGOs, community organizations.) OSA voluntary system has been involved in so many initiatives that it has not been able to keep track or focus in terms of continuity and impactful contribution.

There has been a proposal along with a General Body Meeting (GBM) agenda item to review and discuss among members whether to host biennial (once in 2 years) conventions instead of annual conventions. Various issues are raised in these discussions, such as volunteers' burden, logistics, continuous fund-raising pressure, and more importantly, the quality and productivity of the convention get-together to keep up with the changing times.

New generations (Odisha origin from North America and recent/ new arrivals from Odisha/ India/ other international regions) do not affiliate and integrate well within OSA system and have been reluctant for OSA memberships, perhaps because of the dynamic North American culture.

Establishment of an OSA Trust in Odisha State (India), and to delete the prefixed word (The) from the current full name "The Odisha Society of the Americas, Inc.", have been proposed and under discussion by OSA EC/ BOG, as posted at the website.

OSA looks forward to its next 5 decades to make the first century in North America. OSA

has become an Odisha immigrant community symbol in the Americas.

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JUDGES



Bhaswati Basu

A creative writer of poetry, short story, feature, etc and a translator who won many awards and accolades including Odisha Sahitya Academy Award, Prajatantra Bishuv Milana Poetry Award, Kadmbini Anubad Galpa Samman, Fakir Mohan Translation Award, and many more .

Currently he is the editor of an Odia literary magazine Nandika. He resides in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

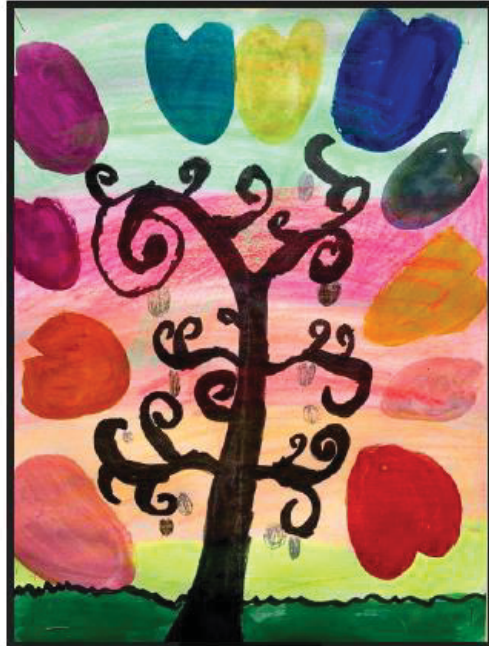
A post-Graduate in drama from Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya won the state award for film Kathatantra. She is a director of plays and translated many plays of different language into Odia and the author of an anthology on her father legend Asim Basu.

She is an mentor and actor of several reality shows she has proficiency in stagecraft in Rabindra Mandap. She lives in Bhubaneswar with her family.

Visual Arts Competition

JUNIOR

PAINTING & SKETCHES – JUNIOR - 001-01. JUNIOR



Biswaranjan Maharana – AGE 08

PAINTING & SKETCHES – JUNIOR - 001-02



Biswaranjan Maharana – AGE 08

Visual Arts Competition

INTERMEDIATE

DIGITAL ART / PHOTOGRAPHY – INTERMEDIATE - 001-01



TANISHA SENAPATY - AGE 12

PAINTING & SKETCHES – INTERMEDIATE - 002-01



SARTHAK DAS - AGE 14

DIGITAL ART / PHOTOGRAPHY – INTERMEDIATE - 002-01



SUSHRITA HARIPRIYA - AGE 17

PAINTING & SKETCHES – INTERMEDIATE - 005-01



SUSHRITA HARIPRIYA - AGE 17

PAINTING & SKETCHES – INTERMEDIATE - 003-02



AMRITA SAHU - AGE 15

PAINTING & SKETCHES – INTERMEDIATE - 001-02



RHEA SAHOO - AGE 13

PAINTING & SKETCHES – INTERMEDIATE - 002-02



SARTHAK DAS - AGE 14

DIGITAL ART / PHOTOGRAPHY – INTERMEDIATE - 001-02



TANISHA SENAPATY - AGE 12

PAINTING & SKETCHES – INTERMEDIATE - 004-01



ANIKSA SATAPATHY - AGE 15

PAINTING & SKETCHES – INTERMEDIATE - 001-01



RHEA SAHOO - AGE 13

PAINTING & SKETCHES – INTERMEDIATE - 003-01



AMRITA SAHU - AGE 15

PAINTING & SKETCHES – INTERMEDIATE - 004-02

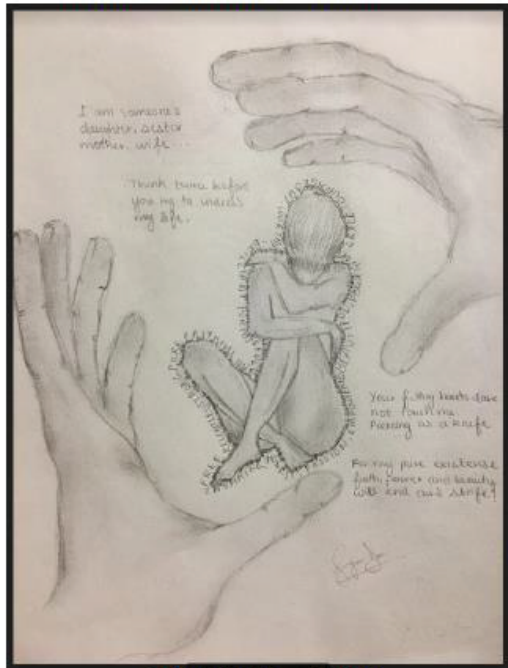


ANIKSA SATAPATHY - AGE 15

Visual Arts Competition

SENIOR

PAINTING & SKETCHES – SENIOR - 001-01



SRUJANI DAS - AGE 19

PURE PHOTOGRAPHY – SENIOR - 001-02



PARNEETA MAHAPATRA - AGE 18

PURE PHOTOGRAPHY – SENIOR - 001-01



PARNEETA MAHAPATRA - AGE 18

DIGITAL ART / PHOTOGRAPHY – SENIOR - 001-01



ARADHYA RAJANALA - AGE 21

“ପ୍ରାଣୀଙ୍କ ଆରତ ଦୁଃଖ ଅପ୍ରମିତ
ଦେଖୁଦେଖୁ କେବା ସହୁ ।
ମୋ ଜୀବନ ପଛେ ନକେ ପଡ଼ିଥାଉ
ଜଗତ ଉଦ୍ଧାର ହେଉ ।”
-ସମ୍ବୁକବି





MEGHNA MEMORIAL AWARD FOR CREATIVE WRITING WINNERS

JUNIOR

1st

Amrit Pradhan

2nd

Eesha Ray

3rd

Tanisha Senapaty

SENIOR

1st

Aaryana Rajanala

2nd

Nishant Mishra

3rd

Ananya Pradhan



Arun Sahu

JUDGES



Anil Purohit

High Commissioner of India to Trinidad and Tobago, he is a diplomat who served as a board member on the US-India Educational Foundation and Canada-India Centre for Excellence in Science , Technology Trade and Policy, Ottawa.

He writes essays, fictions and columns in both Odia and English. Two of his celebrated short story collections in Odia are Akashara Luha and Chira Malata

A forestry management graduate and at present with provincial Govt.

An author who loves poetry and he Published six books. Two of them are long poems rest are poetry collections. Recently one of his book was translated in Pita language and inaugurated Pratibha Ray.

He is living in Toronto with his wife Reenu and two kids Ankit and Anuja.

Imperialism was good for America!

Pooja Das

Imperialism was good for America because it brought out diversity in America and connected different cultures. Commodore Matthew Perry went to Japan in 1854. There Tokugawa Shogunate and Perry signed the Treaty of Kanagawa which allowed trade between the U.S and Japan. For example, "Japan was isolated from trade with other countries for many years because they feared the influence of outsiders on their small island nation." This is important because in the document it describes Japan's fear of becoming an imperialist country. Imperialism helped Japan begin trade and international affairs.

Another example of American Imperialism helping other countries was when they helped gain Panama's independence. Before 1903 travelling to California from New York was a challenge. President Theodore Roosevelt wanted to build a canal. He asked Colombia if they could build it there, but they said no. So, Roosevelt asked Panama. The U.S gave Panama money and helped give them independence. For instance, "Roosevelt decided to help them gain independence from Colombia." This is

important because when the U.S helped Panama they could build the Panama Canal. The U.S built a stronger relationship with Panama and could ship goods quickly.

Finally, imperialism helped the U.S to new resources. In 1867 Secretary of State William Seward bought Alaska for \$7.2 million from Russia. Most people thought this purchase was useless and called it "Seward's Folly," but Alaska had many resources. An example of this is "Alaska actually offered so many resources: Gold, Copper, Timber, Farming land, and added 1/5

more land to the U.S." This is important because more resources can create new opportunities such as inventions.

In conclusion, imperialism helped America expand, gain more resources, and bring out diversity. Other countries began to imperialize because of America. The U.S helped give other countries independence. For example, the U.S helped Panama. Even though there were some downsides to imperialism, it helped the U.S and other countries grow and develop.



Nobody

Tanisha Senapaty

In fact, I am a nobody. A piece of dirt. Compared to the world's population of six billion I'm a nobody. Compared to people like Barack Obama and Mahatma Gandhi I don't matter. But in my own small world, I try to matter. I try to be someone you recognize. Somebody happy. Somehow me.

I was different from the very beginning. I was born nine weeks earlier than they expected, but I survived and now I am a healthy person. I am an only child. Both my parents started to work again when I was three years old, so I was on my own more often than the other children, which was not bad at all. So I had to entertain myself. I grew up differently. When I was happy, I always sang songs nobody knew because I made them up in my mind. I have experiences nobody can share with me. Nobody grew up like I did. I grew up differently.

I still am. Different, I mean. I have all those pictures in my head, almost my whole life. Everything I see is like a picture stream in my head. I can see pictures of my first day at school and I can exactly remember the way the sun rays went through the windows of the classroom and illuminated my classmates' heads. I see a long road in the desert, it's already sundown – my first visit to India when I was six years old. I think I can keep those pictures better than other people. Other people forget those little details. I don't. I like to watch the people in the underground and try to imagine their life. Others wouldn't even realize them. I can look at a dirty wall or an uneven stone and suddenly I see faces or animals in those patterns of nature, although they are not really there. Other people would

call me insane if I'd tell them what I see. And what I see becomes stuck as a picture in my head.

I am so different because the pictures in my head get so many and sometimes I have the feeling that they'll make my head go off. So I have to get them out of my head. Therefore, I put them on a piece of paper. I write them down. I write what I saw once. Or I draw. Sometimes I even put those pictures in the music I make and share them with people. And then they don't call me insane anymore.

But there's also another reason besides the pictures for why I am so different and why I am who I am: I'm not reasonable. I mean I'm kind of reasonable in the way that I do my homework and go to bed at 10 pm, but I'm totally not emotionally reasonable. Let me give you an example: I once loved a person. It doesn't matter who he is. But if I were emotionally reasonable I would have told myself from the very beginning: Forget about him. It's neither reasonable nor possible that the two of you will ever come together. Then, for a normal person, it would be okay. But from the very beginning, I was not able to oppress my feelings in the way I just had to let the love out of me and see it as a possibility to do something weird in my life. Now since I know that he doesn't love me I can let it go, and in this point, I'm reasonable again, but at first, I'm as unreasonable as possible for as long as I can. And so are my plans and my lifestyle: Not reasonable from the very beginning. Tomorrow I could be hit by a car and die. And who tells me I have to go to university and that I have to marry someday? It's my life. And so I want it to

be unreasonable, unpredictable and not at all comparable with any other life on this earth.

My greatest aim is happiness, or at least the shape of happiness. I try to reach it every day. Going swimming in a lake with my clothes on is definitely unreasonable, but it just pushes the happiness out of me. You can hear nobody but me sing some hip hop songs aloud around the streets of Minnesota but these are exactly the best moments of my life. When nothing matters but happiness.

I really don't have any fixed plans for my future, but I like the thought of me traveling around and doing what I have always wanted to do. I love Minnesota because it's quiet and calming. I love Odisha because you can discover something behind each corner of this country. And I love Bhubaneswar because I feel at home there. And I love India because of the languages and culture. A strange combination of places, isn't it? It's like a mirror to my strange soul. I like calmness and loneliness, the heat and drought, but neither do I deny culture.

So, in fact, I'm a nobody, still, after all. I'm a piece of dirt although I wrote those lines in order to make myself matter. That's what you might think now after having read all these selfish words which don't matter either. And you're totally right: Compared to the world's population of six billion I'm a nobody and compared to you and your friends I don't matter.

But now, after all that, I slowly start to matter in your brain because you begin to remember what you just read about me and you think about me. Maybe you start to search and find pictures in your head, banned into an empty corner. You start to share them and then a sudden feeling of irrationality overwhelms you and you decide to visit your grandma and share ten cups of self-made frozen yogurt with her. You forget your future and live in the present. And maybe you even get to tell somebody that you love him or her, somebody of whom you thought up to this point: "It's either unreasonable or unrealistic."



The Declaration of Independence

Puneeta Choudhury

America endured many harsh experiences to gain independence. The Declaration of Independence was only the beginning of America's freedom. It is one of the most important documents in American history. The actions were taken by all 13 colonies who wanted to declare independence from Britain. Patriots were unhappy that they did not have any voice in their government and that they had to pay taxes. In order to stop this, a group of five men came together to find ways to become independent. Thomas Jefferson was selected to author the Declaration which is now a huge part of America's history.

The Committee of Five

As the frustrations of the colonists grew, the **Continental Congress**, also known as the Philadelphia Congress, was discussing whether to make a decision on independence. Despite all their disagreements, Congress nominated a drafting committee to compose a Declaration of Independence. This committee consisted of **John Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Robert Livingston, and Roger Sherman**. The author of, Give me Liberty! The Story of the Declaration of Independence wrote, "Congress then appointed a committee to draw up a statement explaining why the colonies would be justified in declaring themselves independent-just in case such a Declaration would be needed." These men wanted to be prepared.

On June 11, 1776, the committee was ordered by the Congress to draft a declaration. Within a day or two, the four committee members met to discuss the statement. Benjamin Franklin, who was ill, could not attend. The committee held several meetings. Thomas Jefferson

was chosen to write the Declaration of Independence.

Writing the Declaration of Independence

The Declaration of Independence was originally written by **Thomas Jefferson**. Initially, the **Continental Congress** wanted to appoint **John Adams** to write the document, but John Adams wanted Thomas Jefferson to write the declaration instead. As stated in, Give me Liberty! The Story of the Declaration of Independence, "Reason, first, you are a Virginian and a Virginian ought to appear at the head of this business. Reason second, I am obnoxious, suspected and unpopular. You are very much otherwise. Reason third, you can write ten times better than I can." To complete this important task, Jefferson moved away from the State House to the quieter outskirts of the city, at Seventh and Market Streets. He worked in a rented space on the second floor of the home of bricklayer **Jacob Graff**, in downtown Philadelphia.

Somewhere over the next 17 days, Thomas Jefferson created the first draft of the declaration, taking inspiration from **George Mason's** draft of the Declaration of Rights of Virginia and **Thomas Paine's** *Common Sense* and **John Locke**. Thomas Jefferson wrote several drafts and consulted with the committee. After minor editing suggestions from **Benjamin Franklin** and John Adams, the document was presented to Congress on June 28, 1776, for further editing and debate. Congress made more than ninety changes to Jefferson's draft, from changes in vocabulary to sentence structure. Congress also disregarded Thomas Jefferson's paragraph about grievances or complaints against the king and slave trade.

Congress made many changes that Thomas Jefferson was not happy about.

An Act of Courage

The final vote on July 2, 1776, was twelve colonies in favor of independence, none opposed. (New York's delegates added their approval later on) From July 2 to July 4, delegates went over the document word by word. In all, nearly 100 changes had been made to the document and Jefferson's text was cut by about a fourth. On the evening of July 4, 1776, a copy of the Declaration of Independence was taken to the Philadelphia printer **John Dunlap**. It is estimated that John Dunlap printed around 200 copies of the declaration. By the next morning, finished copies had been printed and delivered to Congress for distribution. As stated in <https://www.monticello.org/site/jefferson/printing-and-signing-declaration>,

"Twenty-five original copies of what is referred to as the "Dunlap Broadside" are still in existence." By July 9, all thirteen colonies had signified their approval of the declaration. On July 19, the Congress ordered that an official copy of the document be created.

On August 2, 1776, the declaration was ready to be signed. On that day it is known that 56 delegates signed the original Declaration of Independence. It took courage to sign the

declaration and the delegates knew that if they signed the document they would be going against authority and they could be accused of treason. The declaration was signed in **Independence Hall, Philadelphia, PA**. **John Hancock** was the first person to sign the declaration. One signer, named **Stephen Hopkins** of Rhode Island, had palsy that caused his hand to shake. As he took the pen to add his name to the declaration, he said, "My hand trembles, but my heart does not." **Timothy Matlack** is believed to be the person who printed the signed version of the declaration. Following the signing, it is believed that the document accompanied the Continental Congress during the revolution and remained with government records following the war.

Conclusion

The Declaration of Independence is an important document that has shaped our country today. The Declaration of Independence gave support to the colonists and gave hope to the army when the war was going poorly. The declaration provided the colonists with freedom and new rights. The committee worked together to create a statement and Thomas Jefferson generated the memorable words that we know of today. The courageous acts of the colonists has impacted our freedom today.



The Basement

Ajeetesh Ojha

Within moments the boreal small icicles started to melt. Small flowers began to bloom, their luscious purple and pinks bringing joy to the animals scurrying around. The grass's forlorn colors started to flourish into a saturated green. It was spring. The leaves of trees were rapidly growing and the air's fresh spring feeling was back. Deer were hustling around as the sounds of chirping birds filled the air, and so did the audible sound of fish swimming. This was the woods during springtime. A heavenly place, full of energy. Besides the trees, however, there stood a waterfall with a lake.

It was also here where Aliyah could escape the pressure of school and relax. Usually, after school, she would hurry over to this small area of the woods which she was sure was concealed from the outside world. Aliyah, to say the least, was unpopular in her school--Widdowsburg Middle School. From an overview with all the pretty scenery, anyone would have thought the people were just as nice. However, that would be, quite, unfortunately, an overstatement. The children well...They were certainly not the brightest or kindest and neither were their parents.

Aliyah was usually an easy victim of the bullies there. She paid little attention to them knowing that one day they will see how utterly dull and foolish their attempts to hurt her were. Of course they didn't have a valid reason to try to harm Aliyah but these incompetent children who were quite aware of that still tried their best to put Aliyah in a bad place.

It was one evening that Aliyah had left her house after finishing her homework and

headed to the woods. She had an unfavorable feel towards winter as she never had the opportunity to hide in the woods as it was so cold. Not only did she love the nature and the calmness around her to help her relax, but she would stay hidden from the bullies who, in the past, had harassed Aliyah on the way home many times. The evening sky was streaked with the oranges and pinks of the sunset as she sat down on a rock. She listened to the birds singing sweetly and looking down into the lake, she saw her reflection. She had a light brown complexion with black hair and her eyes being of a more rustic hazel color.

Aliyah had just closed her eyes when suddenly she heard shouts. Her eyes quickly fluttered open and she turned around, only to see her school bullies. Aliyah let out a shriek.

"Ha! You're scared!" one of them demanded.

"How did you get here?" Aliyah was trembling but desperately trying to keep her voice steady.

"None of your business," another one said.

Odd enough, Aliyah had never quite learned the names of bullies. "It is my business as you come here following me. Or are you just so bored that you have nothing else to do?" Aliyah spat back.

The first bully grabbed Aliyah by her collar and growled, "Don't you dare talk back to us." He dropped her on the floor.

Aliyah slowly stood up. They were all surrounding her now. She brushed the dirt off her knees, kicked one of the bullies, as there were three of them, and ran. She jumped over the fallen logs and the big rocks. A few times she found herself caught in a vine from a tree or slipping on the moss. And when this would

happen, she would pick herself up and run even faster. By this time she had gotten out of the woods and faced her school. Looking back she ran to it, jumped over the fence and tried opening the door. It was locked. She ran to the next door at the side of the school and desperately tried opening the door again. However, it did not work. She tried banging on the door as the bullies were getting closer and were in view.

The bullies were quite slow and were taking some time to get over the fence. During this time Aliyah was lucky enough to find an unlocked door. It was one of the back doors which no one ever quite used as it was most of the time covered up by the neatly trimmed bushes around all sides of the school. Heavily gasping, she locked the door behind her. She had no idea where she was—she had never seen this place in her school before. She looked for the lights and she felt her slip on something. Perhaps a mop? She turned on the lights after a good few minutes looking for it and found herself in the Janitor's closet. It was an old, smelly and musty area with countless cleaning supplies. She looked over into the bucket, and sure enough, she saw what appeared to be the vomit of another student.

Pinching her nose together, she figured that if those awful students were to come after her again she could hide here. Just as she was about to make herself comfortable she saw a door. A door that looked like every other. A gray solid door. She twisted the knob—it was unlocked. The door swung back and Aliyah took a glance into it. Or more so, down it. She had found the school's basement. It was quite dark, however with the little light she had from the Janitor's closet she saw the stairs were brown and probably made of wood. A bit skeptical, she went downstairs. She walked around her hands pressed against the wall trying to find the switch to the light, however she couldn't find it. Aliyah walked deeper into the basement and occasionally tripping or

stumbling over something.

After walking through the basement for what felt like hours she saw a glimpse of light in the distance. She picked up her pace and ran toward it. The light was growing bigger and brighter by the second. Finally, she reached the opening. She was surprised to see that this was not the school basement. In fact, this had been an underground tunnel/cave that slowly went up. And what she saw in the opening completely caught her by surprise. The cave exit was covered in moss and vines (however not enough that it could stop the light from flooding the cave), and pushing them aside she saw her hiding place in the woods. Aliyah walked into the woods confused. How had the school's "basement" lead her to her beloved spot in the woods. Not only this, but it appeared to have been night time. An inky blue had bled into the sky and the stars gleamed quite brightly against the dark sky.

"I better get home," she said aloud. "And the bullies are probably gone...It's so late," Running back home she found that her parents were still at work. She opened the door and walked in, exhausted. She decided that as her parents would probably get home later, she switched on the T.V. The screen flickered as she switched the channel to the news one. She was shocked. She saw her bullies there, being arrested for trying to trespass on school property! Not only this, but they were attempting to break down and destroy the fence. Her heart was beating fast. What if they included her in the story, and how she had gotten over the fence? Surely she had to, right? There was no other place to hide! To her luck however, she found that they did not include her in the story. Maybe that would cause them to get in even more trouble for high levels of harassment and bullying. Either way, it just proved to show that whatever you do and whatever you say, will always find a way to come back to you (karma).

A Second Chance

Amrit Pradhan

I was falling to my doom. At least I thought I was.

“Wait, I’m frozen in mid-air” I thought. Suddenly, I just see complete darkness. What happened?

I wake up in a dark room filled with all sorts of machinery. My wrist is attached to one of the many equipment through a wire.

“Where am I?” I ask as I start to get up. A bunch of people stare at me in shock.

“We thought you would never wake up?” The lady wearing a magenta coat says quietly.

I’m in even bigger shock as I stare at myself in the mirror, “Who is this?” I wonder.

“That’s you, Brendan Paul.” A man with a baseball cap looks at me even more worried than the lady with the magenta coat.

“You’re all set, but it seems like from the big fall you’ve got amnesia.” A man with a white coat clarifies.

A man with the white coat introduces me to the people.

I’m shocked as we head out to the car.

“Who am I?”

We reach a house my mom leads me up to my room. “What is this place?” I ask.

“It’s your room.” My mom says surprised. All I second chance,” I thought.

saw was a room with walls painted in shades of blue and white, with a few posters up on the walls. A bed and a desk are in the corner of the room as a tablet sits on it. I looked at the tablet, picked up the table and turned it on. The screensaver on the tablet had two boys on it in Halloween costumes. One of them looks like me and the other was taller than me. At last, I laid in bed and thought about everything that had happened today.

On the last day of summer vacation my mom and I went to build-your-own-ice-cream shop. I had ordered a three-scoop vanilla and strawberry ice-cream. I was right at the door at the exit when I saw an ice-cream come flying at me. When it finally hit me, I was splattered in cookies’ n cream ice-cream. The girl who threw it at me yelled “That’s what you get for what you did.” Then, she stormed out of the shop.

“What did I ever do?” I wondered.

Today was the first day of school. I was a little nervous because of what people would think of me after I was at the hospital all summer. I entered the building and walked through the crowd of students. Apparently, my mom told me I was a bully to other kids. I don’t have the best reputation, so I got some welcome backs but mostly strange looks. But as I walked down the hallway, I come across the person who was on the picture of my tablet. He’s supposed to be my “friend” named Barry.

“Huh? Brendan you are finally back? I’ve missed you so much!” said Barry.

“Hello, nice to see you” I responded. “Barry, I

need to tell you something.”

“You can tell me anything” he said sincerely.

“I can’t remember anything” I started. “I have amnesia.” I explain to him.

“What!” he exclaims.

“Yes, I know, it’s the sad truth, but I don’t even remember you.” I explain. Barry looks hard at me for a moment.

“Well, I’m going to help you in every way I can” he tells me.

“I really appreciate it” I told him.

One look at the principal’s office and it looked familiar. Most likely because of how bad I was at school. I saw a few trophies and posters as


well as pictures. One of the pictures included my league soccer team and I winning the state championship. I also saw a tall man sitting in front of me. The name plate in front of him gave away his name, Mr. Zunkenburg.

“Brendan, I have been told that you have the condition of Amnesia and it very serious. You don’t seem to recall any recent events. All the staff in this school have been told about your condition, but you need to be cautious?” He informed me. “Last school year you weren’t a really good student, but you were lucky enough to lose your memory and have a chance at restarting your life. Make this second chance worthwhile, do you understand?” Mr. Zunkenburg told me.

“Yes sir,” I replied. I left the office and traveled through the hallways to my first class. “A second chance,” I thought.

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NILESH RANA**SAMIR PATEL**

The Real Face

Eesha Ray

Who am I?
When you picture someone, what image appears in your head?
Their face, but that's not them...
Their face is a mask, so is yours and everyone else's.
There are rules everywhere that keeps humans from doing things, that other worlds can.

But then you open your eyes and you're not there?
What happened?
Now...You can do whatever you want, fly, go wherever you want...
Now...your body is gone, left with no soul,
You are the soul itself, you are the personality.

You don't communicate by talking now
You are in a magical place now...
No darkness, only light, light, and more light.
You're not stuck inside a body anymore, you're...
Free.

How did you get here you ask?
You left the created world, the fake world and entered the real world,
Not all come HERE tho.
Some are not good enough to, and
Others are.

Everyone is perfect when they are born
But then they do stuff that take them the wrong way...
And their mind is filled with
Hate, jealousy, lies, and toxic thoughts that pop inside their heads and pollute it with poison.

A long time ago...
Everyone was connected with good
And were in contact with all souls and spirits who rose to the real world.
Back then they could summon a spirit for help
We can't do that NOW, can we?

Soon the souls and spirits began to notice
the humans misuse of things, and all the bad things they are creating harming everything good
From then on, they stopped staying in contact because
We are selfishly or unknowingly walking away from them.

So, don't be like that anymore
Don't be someone that no one will like...
Don't do damage to yourself just to make you "feel better"
It will only make things worse...

Don't do what you think is right,
Do what you know is right.
Don't do what you feel is right,
Do what's really right...
And live your life the right way.



Eagerly Waiting for You

Yashita Dash

Looking up at the sun
On the fresh grass I lay
Knowing my grandparents are thousands of miles away
I sit there humming
Knowing my grandparents are in Odisha and coming
And now I am going to have a great day
Thinking of all the fun and the play
Eagerly waiting for you
Doca-Papa and Mama, I really love you

My Heavenly Hair

Rhea Sahoo

My hair...
Is a l o n g, black, waterfall cascading down
my back
Soft as a feather
But, black as night
It is happy, flowing freely in the *wind*.
Rustling, *swaying* from side to side
It will move up and down.
Different style every day
Some say it's beautiful
Pretty, l o n g, wavy
Perfect
It says
I will change every day.
I will never be the same the next time you see
me.
Tomorrow is a new day.
...is the best part of me



The Lollipop of Life

Rhea Sahoo

Life is a lollipop
It doesn't last forever
It starts off open and untouched
The most precious thing to the holder
Takes the first lick
Precious
Takes more licks
Gets smaller and smaller
More licks
Smaller and smaller
Even more
Smaller
The last lick
Done
All that is left is the stick
Done
In the trash
Done
The time you have gets smaller and smaller as
you grow
Don't waste it

What it means to be American

Simoni Mishra

The word “American” means relating to or characteristic of the United States or its inhabitants. But what does that really mean? As Americans we are given certain rights and liberties, some of which are the freedom of speech, the freedom to the pursuit of happiness, and the right to play a part in deciding who we are represented by. The United States of America is a country labeled as the land of opportunity. Why? Because our country doesn’t stop anyone from achieving the impossible given that they put in the work and effort. Notice the word ‘anyone’, in particular. The impact of this word is enormous. In the sentence it shows that any person, regardless of their background, wealth, or status has the ability to achieve what they dream up in this country. Take for instance, many of our country’s presidents. Each were the face of our country at one point, yet many of them suffered from physical or mental disabilities such as depression, anxiety, hearing impairments, or in the case of FDR, polio. Regardless, they still were able to climb the ladder of success and secure themselves to the highest notch by leading this great nation for the durations of their terms.

As Americans, we are extremely fortunate to receive these liberties, so much so that it sometimes slips from our minds that others may not have what we do. If I speak for myself, then I do take for granted the freedoms that allow me to do simple things, like as a girl go to school and get an education. Ideally, it wouldn’t matter if this basic liberty was taken for granted, as everyone would have it. Regrettably, however, in this world, there are people whose governments don’t have the

power or will to grant them these things. There’s a saying that goes, “Your worst day may just be someone else’s best.” Despite that the struggles that we face as a country, we are a nation that is looked up to by others because of our notable presence in politics, economics, science, sports and entertainment.

We are citizens of a country that is looked up to by many other nations around the world. Children here excel in countless areas that go beyond normal schoolwork because of the amount of exposure that they receive at a young age. The ideas of community involvement and mentorship are prevalent and are embedded into the education system by the means of service hour requirements. What we learn at school is intent on teaching us life skills above the raw mathematics and history. Emphasis is given on skills such as collaboration, not only in class but by encouraging students to participate in clubs and other activities across the student bodies. Furthermore, starting in early on, schools make an effort to involve kids in work like fundraising. The fundraisers that are popularized ingrain a sense of community into our heads in that the sole way to achieve something is if everyone pitches in and works together. Our education system here puts all hands on deck to try and shape every child into adult who is a responsible citizen and a good human being.

The service hour requirements at school weren’t enough to convince me that volunteering was a marvelous concept. In my eyes, they were hours without which I

wouldn't be able to graduate. However, it took a senior citizen in an old age home to remind me of the big picture of the impacts of giving to the community and how it should be every citizen's duty. If we jog down memory lane, the story unfolds like this.

At an old age home, there's a woman who sits in a wheelchair in the corner of the life enrichment center and works on jigsaw puzzles. Every morning, when I arrived each day of summer, promptly at 9 o'clock, she would already be sitting there hard at work. She hummed to herself while she fiddled with the pieces, and without fail, each time someone passed by, this woman would turn with a smile and ask about their day. Yet, she's also the one who, one day, sat me down with a serious look plastered on her face. That day, upon seeing my confusion, she told me that she was glad I volunteered there. From what I remember, she said that she appreciated the small things that I did in an attempt to keep her company: the puzzles, eating, and talking with her. Simply stated, I was stunned. Never had anyone thanked me for something so simple yet so profound. Sure, a sentence of gratitude for birthday gifts or a compliment, but for being someone's beacon of light? Never.

That woman, Jean, taught me how to what it is to become better person, by gifting kindness to help change someone's day for the better. Because of her, I realized that being American

isn't just about living the so called "American dream", but instead giving to others in the way that they need it most.

A few weeks ago, I started to write this essay after coming back from the old age home. I was still thinking about Jean when I came to realize something. I realized that I wanted to send a message to everyone reading this that could create an impact. As people given the opportunity to live in this great country, it's our duty to give back, specifically by educating people from around the world of things that are of use to them. Even keeping in mind that time is of the essence and that the distance may be a barrier, in today's world nothing is impossible. Distance may stop us from volunteering on site, but doesn't impact volunteers providing virtual mentorship. Examples of this are working with schools to provide guidance through sharing our experiences. We can work with schools to setup various clubs ranging from academics to leadership or public speaking. We can encourage kids to care for our environment by managing trash in an effective manner. However, what won't work is doing nothing. Small efforts from each of us will add up and hopefully, one day, the difference that our joint efforts made will be visible for all of us to see. So on this historic occasion, let's not only join our hands to mark the gathering of Odias across the Americas but also to stand together and make a difference, starting back in our own villages back home.



A Pompeiian Lily

Ananya Pradhan

October 23, 79

I was to turn fourteen in three days and my mother and my father had invited all my relatives and friends for a celebration. Today, my mother wanted to buy me a new stola and palla that I would wear at the celebration. Along with the new tunic I had received a week ago, I chose a very decorative palla that would be draped across me with a fancy head covering. My stola was to be free flowing because of the angle it was attached to my tunic. I wore my both today and it looked beautiful. The brand-new cloth had a fresh scent to it and felt soft and light as it covered my skin. I also wore the slippers I had received a while ago and my pearl necklace that my grandmother had given to me before she passed. It matched my clothing and looked marvelous. Even Laelia said it looked spectacular when I showed her today. However, Lucius was the most excited of all. I hope that everyone could make it to my celebration though. Father seems very busy with his boat work, especially these past few days. He always seems to wear a tense and stern face. I hope everything is alright soon and Father can join the celebration.

Aurelia

"Aurelia?" My mother called.

"Yes mother?" I answered as the ink from my writing, curled onto the paper.

"Laelia is here to see you."

I set down my quill and wiped it clean with a cloth as I closed the container of my ink. Rushing to the door, I could feel the cool feeling of the autumn wind as Laelia stood in view.

"Laelia!" I exclaimed as I gave her a warm embrace. "What brings you here?"

"

Mila, Cassia, and I are going to walk to the lake near the bathhouse to pick up lilies for tomorrow's celebration" Laelia replied as she smiled from the embrace.

"Oh yes, the celebration for your father correct?"

"Yes, my father wants this celebration because of his new work. Is your family able to attend?"

"Yes, your father spoke to my father earlier in the day. Then, my father spoke to my family about it today during lunchtime."

"Okay, that's wonderful. Would you mind helping the three of us with the lilies? We will meet Mila and Cassia at the lake if you come."

"Of course," I immediately responded as I put on my soft slippers.

"Aurelia, you are still wearing your new stola and palla. It might get ruined near the lake." I look down and realize that Laelia is correct, my stola and palla drape across my arm, prone to dust and dirt.

"Oh yes, give me one minute" I replied as I rushed to the other room. After carefully taking off my stola and palla, I quickly drape an old stola over me as I push back my soft, brown hair from my face. As I shuffle back to the front door, I am careful not to trip over my stola. It can be bothering to wear it, but I must always when I go out in public. I grab a small basket sitting on a shelf by the door and walk out the door, the warmth of the sun hitting my face.

"The weather's so wonderful today, isn't it?" Laelia says as she sees the expression of delight on my face.

"Yes it is. But we have to hurry if we want to be able to pick enough lilies before sunset."

"Yes of course, let's go."

Even as we arrive, the sun is still high in the sky as it's rays shine upon the cerulean waters of

the lake.

"Aurelia!" I turn around to see Mila and Cassia waving their hands excitedly to catch my attention. I lift my hand up as I run over to them.

"Mila! Cassia! It's so good to see you, it's been a while."

"Yes, it is, we've missed you after our father had to leave for Capua and took us along with him" Mila cheerily says.

"Yes, how was Capua?"

"Oh, it was marvelous. Mother took us to the market and we saw many items that we've never seen before..." Cassia starts. My smile grew wider as I started visualizing what Cassia spoke about. It was delightful as I talked to my friends more and more each day, with more to write in my diary. Especially as we experienced the beauty of Pompeii.

It was almost 1 p.m. and I had almost finished organizing my clothing to wash. Yesterday was fun picking lilies and I wanted to go see Laelia again to visit the market. But I didn't want to go outside yet because Laelia had gone with her family to the amphitheater and both Mila and Cassia had gone out with their mother.

"Aurelia, could you call Lucius for lunch? He is outside playing with his friends near the market area" my mother called from the other room.

"Sure mother." To be quite honest, I was famished so getting Lucius wasn't a problem. I put on my slippers quickly and walked out the door, skipping on the cobblestone path.

The sky was a very vibrant blue today, only a few low clouds resided on the top of hill Vesuvius. Keeping my palla on my head, I

hurriedly walked over to the marketplace, where I quickly spotted Lucius playing a game with his friends.

"Lucius!" I called. His head spun in my direction and he smiled when he saw me. I smiled back as I rushed over to him, his friends stepping back.

"Do we have to go now?" Lucius asked, looking slightly disappointed. I bent over a bit to meet his eyes.

"Yes Lucius. Mother has lunch ready and she has plans to go to the market to get something for my birthday celebration in two days."

"Oh, can I come? Please, I want to get you more for the celebration." I lightly chuckled.

"That's very sweet of you Lucius, but first we have to go home. Then you can ask mother." He gave me a wide smile and I laughed back.

Suddenly, just as I was about to continue walking, I heard a booming noise. I turned my head in the direction of the noise so quick, that my hair fell in front of my face. Hurriedly brushing it aside with my fingertips, I saw it-- and I froze.

The clouds near hill Vesuvius had turned vicious. It was now like a demon, with fiery claws, lashing out from its home. It roared angrily as it spit ash and pumice to the air, landing on the ground. Its hair was a hot red and it breathed out smoke, as if it was wheezing.

Suddenly, screams of pain and shrieks of horror filled the air, snapping me out of my frozen state. I looked back at Lucius, where his friends had already ran away and Lucius's mouth was open in fear. I grabbed his hand firmly and yanked him along with me, hoping to find something to help me.

I darted past as many people as I could in the street, praying that I wouldn't get trampled. "Volcano," "Run!," "Boating docks" I heard. Suddenly, my mind lit up.

"AURELIA!" I heard a scream. I looked back to see that Lucius had lost me, and was stuck in the crowd. He coughed out blood from the dust. My eyes widened as I suddenly remembered- the blood from the cough was a part of a disease he was born with if he inhaled unhealthy air.

"LUCIUS!" I shrieked in fear as my eyes started to water. I dashed towards him as fast as I could, until my palla accidentally came off my head towards my feet, tripping me. I screamed in pain as I could feel the blood drip down my eyelids. My head throbbed and as I slowly lifted my hand to touch the wound, discovered that it was a big gash that covered my entire forehead.

"AURELIA!" I heard as I saw someone inching towards me with the hurry of feet that passed by my eyes.

"Lucius?" I whispered, my voice feeling sore from the dust.

"Yes... it's me" the voice coughed. "Lucius!" His face was now bright red. My back felt sore from landing on the cobblestone path, but I knew I had to get up. With immense effort, I did and I quickly found the palla that had landed besides me. I aggressively tore pieces from it and gave one to Lucius.

"Cover your face, it will prevent the cough." I heavily panted. "We have to get... get to... the boating docks. Father told me... how... how to use a boat once." Lucius wasn't listening anymore, he was shocked at what he saw and looked up. My gaze followed his and I saw a huge cloud of dark, black smoke. I looked worriedly at my brother, who held his hand up

to his head, dizzy from the effects of the dust. Quickly, and without even thinking twice, I picked him up and carried him in my arms, running in the direction of the boat. Instantly, I heard many screams in unison in the direction of the amphitheater. I looked and I saw that the amphitheater was already crumbling, the walls falling on top of each other.

"Laelia..." I whispered, tears dripping down my cheeks to my chin. I wiped them away, but they were only replaced by new ones by the second. "Where's mother and father?" Lucius whispered in a hoarse voice. My tears came down more easily now because the truth was, I didn't know where they were. Father could be anywhere in Pompeii and mother? She may not even have escaped the house since it was closer to Vesuvius and...

I shook my head, trying to get the negative thoughts out of my head, but I cried even harder when I saw that the part of my palla that I had given Lucius was bloody. I took it off him and threw it away, giving him mine as I started to feel the effects of the dust. Luckily, the marketplace had been so close to the boathouse that I instantly saw the boats people were escaping in. I looked up, the cloud of ash appearing closer. Suddenly I screamed, almost dropping Lucius on the street. His face filled with panic and I felt the harsh and hot sting of ash on my back. I fell forward, completely exhausted.

From my view, Lucius was almost unconscious by this moment and although I felt the pain and exhaustion travel through my body, I needed to find a way to escape. I picked up Lucius once more and headed towards the boats, where only one boat was left.

People saw me carrying Lucius as I rushed over. Their faces were filled with unimaginable terror and grief as they saw the state of both of us. I was covered with dust, with the feeling of ash

on my back. Lucius was also covered with dust and choked as he coughed.

I tried to climb in the boat, but I was instantly pushed off by a teenage boy. Anger seeped through me. I thought that he didn't care that the two of us were on the verge of death and he was pushing us away from survival. However, I saw a terrified look on his face and he said, "We can only let one of you come. If both of you come, the extra weight will tip the boat over and everyone on here will die."

I screamed in frustration, my tears knew no bounds now. Looking at Lucius, he was barely conscious as his body felt limp. I cried and cried, hugging his body for comfort, but I knew I had to think fast- the cloud was almost there. It wasn't right to blame the boy because he had a baby girl in his arms, probably a sister. He knew how this felt and he seemed to be the oldest of all the children in the boat. Quickly, I gave Lucius to the boy, who extended his arms to take him. I took off my palla and handed it to the boy too.

"My brother has a bad cough, please use this to help him." The boy nodded, tears dripping down his cheeks. Before the boat left, I reached over and kissed Lucius gently on the cheek.

"I love you" I whispered.

"Aurelia? Where are you going?" I heard faintly.

I didn't have the heart to answer as I sobbed on the shore. The boy wiped his cheeks and rapidly moved his hands, attempting to move the boat as fast as possible. I collapsed on my knees as I watched the boat move faster and faster, away from the shore. I wailed, knowing that I had just sealed my fate, but a large part of me inside was happy that Lucius had left. The last thing I remembered was seeing the boat as a small dot on the horizon, before I felt a searing pain.

October 24, 79

I was in the middle of nowhere, ocean surrounding me and in a boat full of other children. There was an older boy on the boat who takes care of me because of my coughing issue and he even gave me a book to write in, the one I am writing in now. I don't remember much, but I remembered Aurelia, my sister and an explosion from hill Vesuvius. According to the boy, Aurelia had given me a part of her palla which had a small lily tucked into it, most likely from the day she went outside with Laelia, Cassia, and Mila. It's a soft pink, its petals so light and smooth that light easily reflects off it. I don't know where Aurelia is now and no one answers me, not even the older boy when I ask. But the boy says that she was brave and incredibly selfless and I was lucky to have her as a sister. I miss talking and laughing with Aurelia within the past few days so I hope to see her again soon. Maybe I can even give her the lily when I see her. **Lucius**



The Portrait

Aaryana Rajanala

"Sonu!" lanthe called desperately, chasing after the boy as he ran away with her dark blue hat in his hands. "Sonu, give that back! And slow down, or I might--ah!"

She cried out as her foot caught on the edge of a tree root, landing in a heap on the forest floor.

"lanthe, are you coming?"

Sonu turned around to find his friend collapsed in the dirt.

"I told you not to go so fast," she grumbled as he hurried back and offered her a hand. She dusted off her hoodie, snatched her hat away from him, and reached up to her neck, then gasped and started looking around frantically. "My scarf! Where'd it go?"

Sonu glanced around briefly, then, unable to see the violet scarf, placed his hands firmly over lanthe's shoulders, keeping her in place for a moment. "Relax," he said softly. There were already tears in her eyes. "We'll find it. We can go back, okay?"

Slowly, she brought herself to nod, breathing in as she tried to clear the panic from her chest. "Yeah," she said at last. "We'll find it. We'll find it."

He started looking around. A dark purple scarf couldn't be too hard to find in a forest as red and orange as this one, right? But it was nowhere in sight. lanthe's breathing was speeding up again. "How about I go this way," he suggested, his voice still soft, sensitive, "and

you go that way so we can cover more ground?"

She nodded again, too afraid to speak.

He took her by the shoulders once more, putting a hand on her cheek, and forced her indigo eyes to meet his. "But you have to promise me something, okay? Don't freak out. Relax. Stay calm. We'll find it."

She breathed out. "Yeah. You're right. You don't remember where I lost it, do you?"

"No," he murmured. "But don't worry. Let's split up and look for it. We'll meet right here when the sun starts to set. If we don't find it by then, we'll have to come back tomorrow. Roaming the woods in the middle of the night somehow does not seem like a good plan to me."

"When the sun starts to set," she echoed. "Okay."

"Promise?"

"I promise."

Sonu nodded, then turned off in the other direction, diligently kicking away piles of leaves and parting the branches of bushes and low hanging trees to search for the scarf. lanthe turned and began to do the same.

Then, as soon as Sonu seemed to be out of earshot, she fell to her knees, struggling to breathe. No, no, no, she couldn't do this now, there was no time! She had to go find that scarf! How had she lost in the first place? What

could have possibly consumed her that she was so careless as to lose her most precious possession? She rubbed her neck, startled by how cool it felt. So the scarf must have been missing for a while. And how had Sonu not noticed? He was usually such a detail oriented person, why was this the one detail he missed?

How could he point out each flower, each tree, each little leaf in the forest and be utterly fascinated by it all, recognize things from previous trips into the woods, but not notice that lanthe had lost a part of herself?

She shook her head, managing to blink away the tears. This wasn't his fault. And it wasn't hers. They just needed to find the scarf. They would find the scarf.

She pushed herself to her feet, glancing around as a strong gust of wind pushed past her, filling the forest with the soft crackling of leaves in the breeze. That wasn't the first wind to hit since they'd gotten this far, and it likely wouldn't be the last. That scarf could be anywhere by the time one of them got to the place where she'd first lost it!

Heaving a breath, she tried to hear Sonu's voice in her head, telling her to stay calm. They would find the scarf. She kept walking, looking up into trees, sifting through dead branches and warmly colored leaves. Nothing. The sun had dipped a little further in the sky, the light filtering through the gaps in the foliage and casting long, foreboding shadows on the ground. She shuddered. Had it been this cold the entire time?

She froze as her foot caught on something again, barely managing to keep herself upright. Peering at it through the coating of leaves, she could tell it wasn't a tree root, but it did seem to be wooden. She kicked away the leaves, the crunch filling the silence of the woods, to find what looked like the edge of a frame. The

wood was almost the same color as the dirt, smooth paint chipped and scratched, the elegant carving whittled away by the elements. She and Sonu had agreed on a general rule not to pick up things they found in the forest unless they could be sure of where they came from, but there was something so intriguing about this single piece of wood that she couldn't help herself. She turned it over in her hands, frowning as she caught sight of a name carved into the inside, too worn away to make out. What was this doing out in the middle of the woods?

She kept walking, eyes looking out for both the scarf and the rest of the frame. She stopped. Was that...a house? She clutched the piece of wood in her hand as she hurried towards it. It looked old and weather beaten, a small wooden cottage with large glass windows on one side, but the windows were covered completely by flowers, the vines blanketing the inside of the glass.

"Hello?" a voice called out from beneath the flowers. lanthe stumbled back. "Is someone there?"

"H-Hello," lanthe stuttered in reply. "I'm sorry to bother you, b-but I lost my scarf, and I was just wondering--"

She was cut off as a young woman appeared in front of her, smiling delicately. "A purple scarf?" she asked.

lanthe nodded speechlessly, still struggling to figure out where the woman had come from.

"Come inside for a moment," she said. "I found it earlier and put it away, but it may take me a little bit to get it." She shivered. "It's getting chilly! Would you like some tea or anything?"

"No, thank you," lanthe murmured, following the woman through a cracked wooden door. While not picking up things in the forest was a

stated rule, not following strangers into creaky old houses was likely an implied one, but there was a certain kind of sincerity that hung around the woman. She stared at the house. It wasn't just the window that was covered with flowers; everything, the walls, the floors, even the ceiling, was concealed by a layer of leaves and vines and flowers of every shape, color, and size. Somehow, the unkempt mess of greenery was almost charming. They seemed to tilt towards her as she walked past.

"Don't mind the flowers," the woman chuckled. "They get jealous sometimes when I get visitors. Please, my little loves, relax! You know you have my heart. I'm only returning her scarf to her."

The flowers settled.

Ilanthe rubbed her palms together nervously, tucking the piece of the frame beneath her arm. She should have brought Sonu. What was wrong with her, walking into the house of some crazy lady who spoke to flowers in the woods? No, it was fine. She would just get the scarf and leave, find Sonu where they'd first parted, and go home. It was fine. She was just getting the scarf.

She glanced uneasily at the flowers, sensing an uncomfortable kind of envy from them.

"Oh," she mumbled, suddenly very aware of the wood in her arms. "Do you know where this came from?" Gingerly, she held out the dark fragment of the frame.

The woman turned around and gasped when she saw it. "Yes! Oh, goodness, I was wondering where that went! I haven't exactly been looking for it, but thank you so much for returning it!" She reached out for the wood with coarse hands, taking it from Ilanthe and cradling it in her arms for a moment. Then she began to peer at the wall, as if looking for something, her eyebrows rising in realization as

she put the piece of wood contentedly on the floor.

"What are you doing out here by yourself?" Ilanthe asked, curiosity overcoming her desire to leave the house.

"I'm here with my flowers!" the woman replied cheerily. "They're lovely, aren't they? The most beautiful things in the world to me. I don't know what I would do without them."

"But why are you alone here?"

"Alone!" the woman chuckled. "I'm not alone! These flowers keep me company."

Ilanthe frowned. Maybe this woman really was just crazy.

"What about you?" the woman asked her. "Why have you come so far into the forest?"

"I came with my friend Sonu," she answered. "He and I like coming here. It's peaceful, and we can get away from the world for a little bit." "No, that I completely understand. But why did you come so far looking for that scarf?"

Ilanthe touched her neck defensively. "Because it's important to me. You'd chase after your flowers if you lost them, wouldn't you? That's how I feel about this scarf."

"What? Of course not! If the flowers want to leave, then they are always welcome to. I'm not holding them prisoner or anything. If they love me, they can stay. If not, well, that's fine, too. I love them, but that doesn't mean I *need* the flowers."

A thin silence pervaded the air for just a moment before Ilanthe spoke again. "Are you still talking about the flowers?"

She sighed, smiling sadly. "Perhaps, perhaps not. What does it matter? Now, give me just a moment. I'll go get your scarf," the woman said, brushing back her dark hair and vanishing

into the hallway. The flowers seemed to lean towards lanthe again. She could almost hear them

Don't take her from us.

Please don't take her from us.

Don't take her from us.

Please, don't take her from us.

The woman came back quickly, footsteps calmly breaking the silence. "Stop that!" she scolded gently, frowning acutely at the flowers. "Be nice to her!" The flowers relaxed. "And here you are, dear. This is it, right?"

lanthe nodded, eagerly taking the scarf and wrapping it over her shoulders and around her neck. She sighed in relief.

"Wow," the woman breathed, "you really do care about that scarf, don't you? May I ask why?"

"The same reason you care about your flowers. They're beautiful and you love them. I love this scarf."

"Yes," she agreed lightly, "but I don't *need* them. You seem to think that you need that scarf. Do you need it?"

"No," lanthe said immediately. She stopped herself. "Yes."

She smiled gently. "Why is the scarf important to you?"

"Sonu gave it to me," she mumbled reluctantly. "A long time ago. And I don't want to just lose a gift like that." She could feel her heart aching. "I don't want to lose it."

The woman put a gentle hand on lanthe's

shoulder. "Are you still talking about the scarf?" lanthe didn't respond at first. "I should get going," she gasped, forcing herself to take deep breaths so she wouldn't cry. "Sonu must be wondering where I am."

"It's like that piece of wood," the woman continued. "It's important to me, it's part of something that's important to me. But I don't need to see it to know that it's still there, do I? I know that. The frame might be broken and overgrown with these marvelous flowers, but I

still know the portrait is there, smiling through the leaves. Maybe it's lost to my eyes, but my heart knows where to find it."

lanthe clutched the scarf with both hands.

The flowers whispered.

Your heart.

Your heart.

Your heart.

Sonu looked up at the sky to see the sun fading off into the horizon. Where in the world was lanthe? She'd promised him, she'd promised to come back when the sun set! She had that much control over herself, right? Enough that she wouldn't put herself in danger for a scarf? He looked up as he heard the leaves rustling. lanthe approached him slowly, smiling to herself. She looked...weightless.

"Did you find the scarf?" he called.

She nodded.

He raised an eyebrow. "Then...where is it?" A hint of a smile crept over his lips. No wonder she looked so free!

"I don't need it," she answered. "It's not that cold, anyways."

When the Day Ends

Nishant Mishra

Sunday crept along like the Grim Reaper, spelling Sahil's doom. The trip to the airport was devoid of any coherent thought. He adopted a state of perpetual fear, his face blanched and sweating. A part of him did not believe it. "I'm not leaving," quietly muttered, but he had no control over the situation. As they skittered across the highway, Sahil spotted the Barnes and Nobles that he had spent his free time for the last four years at, the park where he met his friends and the beaches that defined his summer days. Sahil's father glanced at the rear view mirror and saw his son's anguish.

"Hey, Sahil... can't you see this could be a good thing? You'll only be an hour away from New York City, so you'll be able to see the Empire State Building and the Statue of Liberty. And aren't you always saying that you want to visit Princeton University?" The words only made Sahil slump lower in his seat - he couldn't care less about cities and universities at the moment.

"I only wanted to visit Dad. I never.... I never said that I wanted to stay." His dad opened his mouth, not sure what else he could say. They spent the remainder of the trip without speaking, with only the whir of the car in the background fight off the silence.

The sight of the airport made him cringe. In the past, it had been a site of joy for Sahil - a place where he could travel to visit his family in India, and eventually return home. Now, it was a prison. The moment came. Sahil slinked out the cab and trudged to the airport sidewalk, an invisible force trying to drag him back to his school, his house, and his friends. He watched

helplessly at his sister, who went inside the clear glass doors of the airport, her luggage in tow, a calm expression on her face. He, on the other hand, couldn't bring himself to make the same expression. Sahil wanted to go anywhere but inside the building. So he turned around and saw... home.

I am leaving.

With a painful grimace, Sahil forced himself to turn his back on Florida, and walk inside the airport.

Sahil hated New Jersey the moment he got there. He scowled at the trees that encompassed his new town, hating how they blocked the sun that had shone so bright Florida. The cold bit at every part of his skin that he had exposed, and the lighting refused to move past a melancholy shade of blue. The house he had moved into was worn and creaky, and riding through the narrow streets lined by ancient buildings was nothing short of depressing. Everything, in his eyes, was the exact opposite of the beauty of his home town.

"Sahil, come on! Look, we've got a basement now! We could play ping pong just like we did Darryl's house." his sister said in a desperate attempt to jump-start him with the same energy that he always had. But the thought of having to find his way through the dark, cold basement only to spend the entire time brushing off spiders depressed him.

A week later, school started. But instead of

running up the steps like he had done last year, Sahil slowly dragged himself upward. He felt alienated, labeling each face around him as rude and unforgiving. *Why won't any of them say hi?* he thought gloomily, as he slowly lost hope in finding people to talk to. Years of remaining together had rendered the friend groups at his new school impenetrable. He could barely even muster the strength to ask where Room 242 was.

"Are you sure there isn't anything to do after school?" his mother would ask. There were, of course, but how could Sahil bring himself to spend more time in a place he couldn't stand? "No," he always ended up lying. "Not a thing."

Here, among a crowd of nobody he knew, Sahil's fast-paced, stumbling sentences were akin to speaking a foreign language. He would trip over the simplest things, blurting sentences like "*hiwhatwasthehomework?*" to any of his peers, getting nothing but blank stares in return. It had never been a problem at Florida - The four years of living there had familiarized his friends with the way he talked. It was mortifying to hear other people say, "wait, can you repeat that?" or "I have no idea what you just said," and Sahil's personal favorite, "I'm sorry, but I only speak English."

Presentations made him even more apprehensive. Walking up to the front and having to watch the words he had memorized spill out to the bewildered class in front of him bordered on horrifying. Getting flustered while watching the teacher scribble notes onto his project rubric was the beginning of a chain reaction. Sahil slipped and slurred, tripped, and tumbled, his mind feeling like it was sprinting through (and failing) an obstacle course. The obnoxious kid who muttered "hasn't he ever heard of pausing?" behind his back wasn't doing Sahil any favors either.

And that didn't change for a while. Sahil's routine was constant. In the rare occasion

that a person would walk up to him, they would always walk away not knowing what they had just heard. Sahil longed for a real conversation with someone his age, something he never thought he would lose. Lacking anything else to do, Sahil focused solely on his schoolwork. What he studied, he ended up identifying with. He read about the mass separation of the Japanese in the U.S. from their homes during World War II. When practicing for band, he would play songs written by individuals who wanted nothing more than to return to where they came from. His analysis of *The Odyssey* for English class proved to him that even famed heroes like Odysseus were plagued with homesickness. It helped - it became clear to him that he was not alone in what he was feeling, and when he looked outside, New Jersey seemed to be a shade lighter.

One day, however, went differently. During a history presentation, which Sahil had presented in his usual rapid-fire, perplexing manner, his teacher flashed him a smile and commented, "I don't even think my college thesis was able to convey that much information at once. Nice!" After giving back a shaky smile, Sahil sat back down in his desk, not trusting himself to say the right thing. He felt as he had won a marathon. On the way out, a student gave him a genuine thumbs-up. The gesture suddenly gave Sahil confidence that he hadn't seen in a long time.

At the cafeteria, another student from his history class, Kyle, came up to him, albeit reluctantly. Sahil could tell by his expression that he was hesitating, unsure if he would be able to take in what Sahil would give out. He spoke slowly as if to push Sahil to do the same. "Hey, Sahil... do you want to try out for the science bowl team after school today?" The question caught Sahil off guard, but seeing his chance, he quickly rebounded.

"Sure! I'll see you guys in the cafeteria after

school." The response had been quick, as it had always been - but for the first time since Florida, it had been clear. Kyle looked surprised, almost like he had never heard Sahil speak before. Sahil could hardly blame him - he could hardly remember the last time he spoke coherently in school. When he left, Sahil fist-bumped the air, mentally roaring "*He understood!*" A day later, and Sahil was part of his school's Science Bowl team, and part of a community that strikingly mirrored the people in his Reading Counts club in Florida. Sahil practiced alongside his new friends, cramming for upcoming competitions and cracking jokes about their hilariously wrong answers. For the first time, Sahil became eager to tell his fellow Floridians what he had experienced.

"I thought you said there wasn't anything to do here," Sahil's mother said when spring rolled around. Sahil finished tying his shoes as he grabbed his tennis racket. He jogged to the door and turned around to see his mother's smile.

"Okay, on second thought that might not have been entirely true..." Sahil said sheepishly as he pulled on a wrist band. His mother's smile widened. Sahil smirked, pushed his door open, and ran to his friends who were waiting outside.

Sahil began to see New Jersey in a different

light. He began to see the trees as pillars aspiring to reach up to the sky, hosting dozens of different creatures at a time. The leaves in the fall stunned him, offering more colors than he had ever seen. The snow that fell in early December fascinated him, as it dramatically changed the landscape overnight. Even the spiders in their webs remained still in their domains, respecting the boundaries of the other inhabitants of the house. For once, Sahil realized that it wasn't bad to move after all - The experience of trying new things, finding new friends, and expanding his horizons made it worth it. New Jersey wasn't depressing - it was just at peace. And at this point, so was Sahil.

It had been a while since Sahil had visited Barnes and Noble. He stood outside the door of the bookstore, peering into the clear glass windows. Would it have that same welcoming coffee aroma or the collection of chairs he used to sit in? He gritted his teeth and dragged himself inside. In front of him lay a setup identical to the one left behind. He slowly sank into a blue beanbag chair, clutching the book he had brought with him. After taking a second to sigh in relief, he relaxed and flipped to the first page. He glanced at the sky in the window and saw the sun setting - it was getting dark. It didn't matter. He was home, after all.



Sunflower

Sumedha Jena

Swinging 'Sunflower' with pools of honey in her eyes
From the aftertaste of the Sun's warm smile
Taking in his beauty upon herself
Like a single sunbeam on a summer day

More precious than gold
Smiling immensely brighter than the sun
Her shadow falls over the rest
They all gaze upon it in wonder

Breathing in life and letting go
Days become lingering and mellow
The night brings the frigid and crisp
The piercing pain that would bring

Yellow petals pushing past the green
Pluck you from the ground
Life is drained out painlessly
Blowing the air back in slowly

So vivid and thoughtless
Yet so young and fragile
And one harmful touch will break her
Just admire you from afar

A beautiful blessing
Makes you come back for more
Pulls you into a trance
Hooked onto the numb feeling

Growing roots deep and wide
Has her face staring at the sun
Its delicate heart floats
Dancing through waves of leaves

They are mirrors of glory
Pining for the light of the sun
Is where she strives to be
Unaware of the passing of time

And when it dies
All of the sunshine is gone
Clouds become a bitter gray
Winds start to push and blow

Sometimes it doesn't stay for long
And sometimes it does
Just like a sunflower
The feeling is eternal
Still the presence is ephemeral.

Divergence by Technology

Sarthak Dash

In this modernized age,
Technology is spreading like phage,
Making things more convenient,
But making us more lenient,
Technology is all around us,
There should be no fuss,
Being controlled by it is not okay,
Because in the future it'll make you pay,
Teenagers using their iPad and computers,
School is hard so they require a tutor,
Corrupted by technology,
Don't give an apology,
Spending no time with their family,
Its a non-violent tragedy,
Kids addicted to their phones,
They are in different zones,
Not being physical,
Not being logical,
Getting bad grades,
Trying to look good with their charades,
Messing around their own life,
Becoming other people's strife,
Virtually meeting,
Without physically greeting,
Teenagers abuse technology's powers,
That is why they text for hours, and hours,
Technology can be useful,
But the facts are truthful,



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ମାନବ ଧର୍ମ ସାନ୍ତନା ଦାସ

କଥାରେ ଅଛି
“ଧାର୍ମିକତା ଇତି ଧର୍ମହଃ” ।



ଧର୍ମ ଅର୍ଥାତ ଧାରଣ କରିବାର ଶକ୍ତି । ଏକ ଅଲୌକିକ ଶକ୍ତି ବା ମୂଳ ଯାହା ଉପରେ ଆମର ଅସ୍ତିତ୍ବ ନିର୍ଭରଶୀଳ । ଧର୍ମର ବହୁ ବ୍ୟାଖ୍ୟା ଆମକୁ ବହୁ ସ୍ଥାନରେ ଭିନ୍ନ ଭିନ୍ନ ଅର୍ଥରେ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ମିଳିଥାଏ । ତେବେ ଧର୍ମର ସଂଜ୍ଞା କଠିନ ନା ସରଳ । ସ୍ୱଳ୍ପ ବୁଦ୍ଧିରେ ମୁଁ ଯଦି ଖୋଜେ ତେବେ ଧର୍ମକୁ ବହୁତ ସରଳ ଭାଷାରେ ସରଳ ଭାବନାରେ ବୁଝିପାରେ , “ଯେଉଁ ମହା ପଞ୍ଚଭୂତର ସମସ୍ତରେ ଏହି ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଜଗତ ଗଢ଼ିଉଠିଛି ତାହାହିଁ ହେଉଛି ଧର୍ମ । ମନୁଷ୍ୟର ଚାଲିଚଳଣ ,ଭାବନା ହେଉଛି ଧର୍ମ,ଶରୀରର ପଞ୍ଚେନ୍ଦ୍ରିୟ ହେଉଛି ଧର୍ମ । ସମାଜରେ, ଶୁଦ୍ଧାଳିତ ଜୀବନ ଯାପନ ପଥରେ ମଣିଷ ଯେଉଁ ଧାରାରେ ନିଜକୁ ପୁଣ୍ୟାସିତ ଏବଂ ପୁଣ୍ୟଜିତ କରି ଉନ୍ନତି ପଥରେ ଗତି ତୋଳେ ତାହାହିଁ ହେଉଛି ଧର୍ମ ।“

Dharma means the righteous way of living. It is intended to provide guidelines in all social action and to harmonize relation between Kama and Artha. According to R V I Kane, “The writers on Dharma Sastras meant by Dharma not a creed or religion but a mode of life or code of conduct which regulated a man’s work and activities as a member of society and as an individual and was intended to bring the gradual development of man and to enable him to reach what was deemed to be the goal of human existence. “Therefore, Dharma implies those rules according to which a man must behave as a member of society.

ବୃକ୍ଷଟି ଯେତେବେଳେ ପାଣି, ପବନ, ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଆଲୋକରେ ବଢ଼ିଉଠି ଫୁଲଫଳ ଦେଇ ଆମ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ଭରଣପୋଷଣ କରିଥାଏ ସେତେବେଳେ ବୃକ୍ଷର ଧର୍ମ ସାଫଳ ହୋଇଉଠେ । ବାରିଧାରା ଯେବେ ମାଟି “ମା” ର କୋଳକୁ ପୁଣି କରେ, ତାତକଟିଏ ଯେତେବେଳେ ବାରିଧାରାରେ ନିଜର ତୃଷ୍ଣା ମେଣ୍ଟାଇଥାଏ , ସେତେବେଳେ ସେହି ବୃକ୍ଷରାଜିର ଧର୍ମ ଉପଲବ୍ଧି କରିଥୁଏ । ଏହିପରି ଯଦି ମୁଁ ଖୋଜି ବସେ ଧର୍ମର ଅନେକ ପରିଚୟ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ପାଇଥାଏ । ତେବେ ଯଦି ଆମେ ଆମ ଭିତରକୁ ଯାଇ ନିଜକୁ ଦେଖିବା ତେବେ ପାଇବା ଯେ ଗଠନ ବୃକ୍ଷ କୋଣରୁ ହାତ, ମାଂସ, ରକ୍ତର ଏକ ଶରୀର । ସେଥିରେ ହାତ,

ଗୋଡ଼, ଆଦି ଭିନ୍ନ ଭିନ୍ନ ଅଙ୍ଗ । ସବୁ ଅଙ୍ଗପ୍ରତ୍ୟଙ୍ଗ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ କରିବାର ଧାରା ବା ଧର୍ମ ବି ଭିନ୍ନ । ଏସବୁ ଶୁଦ୍ଧାଳିତ ଭାବରେ କାମ କରନ୍ତି ଆମର ମସ୍ତିଷ୍କର ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶରେ ,ଏଥିସହିତ ଆମ ଭିତରେ ରହିଛି ଆମର ଆତ୍ମା ଯାହାକି ସବୁବେଳେ ପରମାତ୍ମା ପ୍ରାପ୍ତି ଦିଗରେ ଅଗ୍ରସର ଥାଏ । ଭଗବାନଙ୍କ ସୃଷ୍ଟିର ସର୍ବୋତ୍ତମ ରଚନା ହେଉଛି ଏହି ମନୁଷ୍ୟ । ତେବେ ଆମର ଧର୍ମ କଣ ? ଏହି ମାନବ ଧର୍ମ କଣ ? କେମିତି ବୁଝିବା ଯେ ଆମେ କଣ କଲେ ,କିପରି ନିଜର ଜୀବନର ଧାରାକୁ ଆଗକୁ ବଢ଼ିନେଲେ ଆମର ମାନବ ଧର୍ମକୁ ସାଫଳ କରିପାରିବା ।

ସୁନାର ଦେଶ ଏହି ଭାରତ ବର୍ଷ । ଆମର ଐତିହ୍ୟ ,ଆମର ପରମ୍ପରା ସବୁଠାରୁ ଭିନ୍ନ । ବିଶ୍ୱଦରବାରରେ ଦେବଭୂମି ଭାରତର ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠା, ଆମର ଗରିମାକୁ ଉନ୍ନତ କରିପାରେ । ସେହି ଭାରତ ମା’ର ଆମେ ହେଉଛେ ସନ୍ତାନ । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ବୋଧେ “ମାନବ ଧର୍ମ”ର ପ୍ରକୃତ ମୂଲ୍ୟ ଆମେ ବୁଝିପାରେ । ଆମର ବେଦ ,ଉପନିଷଦରେ ଋଷିମୁନିମାନେ ବହୁତ ସରଳ ଭାବରେ ଜୀବନର ଶୈଳୀକୁ ବହୁ କିମ୍ବଦନ୍ତୀ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଆମକୁ ଦର୍ଶାଇ ଦେଇଯାଇଛନ୍ତି । “ପୁରୁଷାର୍ଥର “ପ୍ରକୃତ ଅର୍ଥ ଅବଲୋକନ କରାଇ ଦେଇଯାଇଛନ୍ତି । “ଧର୍ମ ”, ଅର୍ଥ, “କାମ”, ମୋକ୍ଷ”, ଏହି ଚାରିଟି ହେଉଛି “ପୁରୁଷାର୍ଥ ” । “ଧର୍ମ” ଅର୍ଥାତ ନୀତିଶୀଳ ଜୀବନ ଯାପନ କରିବାର ଧାରାକୁ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଧାରିତ କରିବା । “ ଅର୍ଥ” ଅର୍ଥାତ ସମୃଦ୍ଧିଶୀଳ ଜୀବନ ଯାପନ କରିବାର ଦିଗ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଧାରିତ କରିବା ।

ବହୁତଃ ଅର୍ଥ ଆମ ସାଂସାରିକ ଜୀବନରେ କିପରି ଉନ୍ନତ ରୂପରେ ଉପଯୋଗ କରିବା ତାହା ଦର୍ଶାଇଥାଏ । “କାମ” ଅର୍ଥାତ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଭଲପାଇ , ଏକ ସ୍ନେହଶୀଳ ଜୀବନ ନିର୍ବାହ କରିବାର ଉପାୟ ଆମ ଭିତରେ ଉତ୍ପନ୍ନ କରାଇଥାଏ । ଇନ୍ଦ୍ରିୟର ବଶବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ନହୋଇ ଏକ ସୁଜନଶୀଳ ସଂସାର କିପରି ଗତିକୋଳିବା ତାହା ମଧ୍ୟ ଆମକୁ ଦର୍ଶାଇଥାଏ । “ମୋକ୍ଷ” ଅର୍ଥାତ ଧର୍ମ, ଅର୍ଥ ଏବଂ କାମ ପଥରେ ଗତିଶୀଳ ହୋଇ ଆତ୍ମଜ୍ଞାନ ଲାଭ କରି ପରମାତ୍ମା ପ୍ରାପ୍ତି କରିବା । “ଧର୍ମ” ବିନା “ଅର୍ଥ” ଏବଂ “କାମ”ର ଯଥାର୍ଥତା ମିଳେ ନାହିଁ । ଆଉ ଏହି ତିନୋଟି ଜିନିଷ ଏକ ଧାରାରେ ପ୍ରବାହିତ ନହେଲେ “ମୋକ୍ଷ” ପ୍ରାପ୍ତି ହୁଏ ନାହିଁ । ତେବେ ଚାଲନ୍ତୁ ଧର୍ମ କେତେ ପ୍ରକାରର ଅଛି ତାକୁ ତା ବିଷୟରେ ଟିକେ ଆଲୋଚନା କରିବା ।

ଆଶ୍ରମ ଧର୍ମ

ମାନବ ଜୀବନର ସ୍ୱରୂପ ଧର୍ମ ଆଶ୍ରମରେ ବିଭକ୍ତ କରାଯାଇଛି । ବ୍ରହ୍ମଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ , ଗୃହସ୍ଥ , ବାନପ୍ରସ୍ଥ ଏବଂ ସନ୍ୟାସ । ବାଲ୍ୟାବସ୍ଥାରୁ ଯୌବନ ହେଉଛି ବ୍ରହ୍ମଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଆଶ୍ରମ । ଯୌବନରୁ ମଧ୍ୟମାବସ୍ଥା ହେଉଛି ଗୃହସ୍ଥ ଆଶ୍ରମ । ମାଧ୍ୟମ ଅବସ୍ଥାରୁ ପ୍ରୌଢ଼ ହେଉଛି ବାନପ୍ରସ୍ଥ ଏବଂ ପ୍ରୌଢ଼ରୁ ଜୀବନର ଶେଷ ଅବସ୍ଥା ଯାଏ ହେଉଛି ସନ୍ୟାସ । ଆମେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଏହି ଚାରୋଟି ସୋପାନ ଦେଇ ଆମର ଜୀବନ ଅତିବାହିତ କରିଥାଏ । ଏହି ସବୁ ଅବସ୍ଥାକୁ ନୀତି ସହିତ ପାଳନ କରି ନିଜ କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ ପଥରେ ଆଗେଇଯାଇ ମଣିଷ ଆଶ୍ରମ ଧର୍ମ ପାଳନ କରିଥାଏ । ବେଦ ଉପନିଷଦରୁ ମଣିଷ ଜୀବନ କାଳ ଭିତରେ ଗୋଟି (ଦେବ ଋଣ , ପିତୃ ଋଣ ଆଉ ଋଷି ବା ଗୁରୁ ଋଣ) ଋଣକୁ ନେଇ ଜୀବନର ଯାତ୍ରା ସମାପନ କରିଥାଏ । ଏବଂ କୁହାଯାଇଛି ଯେ ଯଦି ଏହି ଚାରୋଟି ଆଶ୍ରମକୁ ବିଧି ପୂର୍ବକ ମଣିଷ ପାଳନ କରେ ତେବେ ଏହି ଋଣରୁ ମୁକ୍ତି ପାଇଥାଏ ।

ବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଧର୍ମ

ଜୀବନର ଆଚରଣ କର୍ମ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ହିଁ ପ୍ରକାଶିତ ହୋଇଥାଏ । ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ଜୀବନରେ କର୍ମ କରିବାର କ୍ଷେତ୍ରକୁ ଚାରିଗୋଟି ଭାଗରେ ବିଭକ୍ତ କରାଯାଇଛି । ବ୍ରାହ୍ମଣ ଶିକ୍ଷାଦାନ, କ୍ଷେତ୍ରୀୟ ପ୍ରଶାସନିକ ଧର୍ମ ଆଚରଣ, ବୈଶ୍ୟ ବାଣିଜ୍ୟ ବା ବ୍ୟବସାୟିକ କର୍ମ, ଶୁଦ୍ର ଶ୍ରମିକ ଧର୍ମ ବା ସେବା ଦାନର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟ । ଏହିପରି ଭାବରେ ବିଭାଜିତ ହୋଇ ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ନିଜ ନିଜ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରର ଧର୍ମକୁ ଆଚରଣ କରି କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟପରାୟଣ ହୋଇ ନିଜର ଜୀବନ ନିର୍ବାହ କରିଥାଏ । ଏକ ସନ୍ତୁଳିତ ସମାଜ ଗଠନ କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଧର୍ମର ସ୍ଥାପନା କରାଯାଇଥାଏ ।

କୁଳ ଧର୍ମ

ଯେଉଁ କୁଳରେ ଆମେ ଜନ୍ମ ନିଏ, ସେହି ପୂର୍ବପୁରୁଷମାନଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧା ସମ୍ପନ୍ନ ରହି ନିଃସ୍ୱାର୍ଥପର ଭାବରେ ନିଜ ଧର୍ମର ଆଚରଣ କରି କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ ପଥରେ ଜୀବନ ଯାପନ କରିବା ହେଉଛି କୁଳ ଧର୍ମ । ସମାଜ ଗଢ଼ିଉଠେ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିର ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱକୁ ନେଇ ଏବଂ ଏହି ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱର ପରିପ୍ରକାଶ ହୋଇଥାଏ ତା'ର ଆଚରିତ କୁଳ ଧର୍ମକୁ ନେଇ । ନିଜର ସାମାଜିକ ଏବଂ ମାନବିକ ଧର୍ମକୁ ଉନ୍ନତ କରିତୋଳିବାରେ କୁଳଧର୍ମର ଆଚରଣ ଅନିବାର୍ଯ୍ୟ ।

ଯୁଗ ଧର୍ମ

ସମାଜ ହେଉଛି ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନଶୀଳ । ସମୟ ଏବଂ କାଳର ସ୍ରୋତରେ ଆମେ ସମସ୍ତେ ପ୍ରବାହିତ ହୋଇଥାଏ । ହଜାର ବର୍ଷରେ ଏକ ଯୁଗର ଅନ୍ତ ହୁଏ । ବାସ୍ତବିକ ପରିସ୍ଥିତି ଏବଂ ସମୟର ପ୍ରକୃତ

ଅର୍ଥ ବା ମୂଲ୍ୟ ବୁଝିପାରି, ନିଜର କୁଳଧର୍ମର ପାଳନ କରି ମଣିଷ ଯେତେବେଳେ କର୍ମାଭିମୁଖୀ ହୋଇ ଜୀବନ ଯାପନ କରେ ସେତେବେଳେ ଯୁଗ ଧର୍ମର ଆଚାରଣ କରୁଥିବାର ଜଣାପଡେ ।

ରାଜ ଧର୍ମ

ସମାଜକୁ ଉନ୍ନତ କରିତୋଳିବା ପାଇଁ କିଛି ଅନୁଶାସନ ଏବଂ ନୀତି,ନିୟମ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଧାରିତ କରାଯାଇଥାଏ । ସେସବୁକୁ ମାନି ନିଜ ନିଜର ଧର୍ମ ଏବଂ କର୍ତ୍ତବ୍ୟ ପାଳନ କରି ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ଯେତେବେଳେ ସେହି ଅନୁଶାସନରେ ଶାସିତ ହୋଇ ସାମାଜିକ ଜୀବନ ଅତିବାହିତ କରେ ସେତେବେଳେ ସେ ଯେଉଁ ଧର୍ମର ପାଳନ କରିଥାଏ, ତାକୁ ରାଜ ଧର୍ମ କୁହାଯାଇଥାଏ ।

ଆପତ ଧର୍ମ

ଏହି ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନଶୀଳ ସମାଜରେ ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ଯେତେବେଳେ ପରିସ୍ଥିତି ଅନୁଯାୟୀ ସମୟର ଅନୁଗାମୀ ହୋଇଥାଏ ସେତେବେଳେ ନିଜର ଧର୍ମକୁ ଧରି ରଖି କର୍ମର ପଥ ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତନ କରିଥାଏ । ଅର୍ଥାତ ଆପତକାଳୀନ ପରିସ୍ଥିତିରେ ବ୍ରାହ୍ମଣ ବ୍ୟବସାୟ, କ୍ଷେତ୍ରୀୟ ଶିକ୍ଷାଦାନ, ବୈଶ୍ୟ ସେବା, ଶୁଦ୍ର ବାଣିଜ୍ୟ କର୍ମ କରି ଆପତ ଧର୍ମର ପାଳନ କରିଥାନ୍ତି ।

ମାନବ ଧର୍ମ

ଧର୍ମ, ଅର୍ଥ, କାମ, ମୋକ୍ଷର ଅନୁସରଣ କରି; କର୍ମ, ପ୍ରେମ, ଭକ୍ତିର, ମାର୍ଗରେ ଅଗ୍ରସର ହୋଇ, ନିଃସ୍ୱାର୍ଥପର ସେବା କରି, ଆତ୍ମାଭିମାନ ପରିତ୍ୟାଗ କରି, ଆତ୍ମାର ସଦଗତି ନିମନ୍ତେ ଆଶ୍ରମ ଧର୍ମର ନିୟମକୁ ପାଳନ କରି ଜୀବନର ତରମ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ପରମାତ୍ମାଙ୍କୁ ପ୍ରାପ୍ତି, ସନାତନ ସତ୍ୟର ପ୍ରାପ୍ତି, ସତ-ଚିତ୍ତ-ଆନନ୍ଦକୁ ଜାଣି ସଚ୍ଚିଦାନନ୍ଦଙ୍କୁ ପାଇବା ପାଇଁ ମନୁଷ୍ୟ ଯେଉଁ ଧର୍ମର ଆଚରଣ କରିଥାଏ ତାହାକୁହିଁ ମାନବ ଧର୍ମ କୁହାଯାଇଥାଏ ।

ଏହିସବୁ ତତ୍ତ୍ୱରୁ ଜଣାପଡେ ଧର୍ମ ହେଉଛି ଏକ ପଦ୍ଧତି, ଏକ ଧାରା, ଏକ ନିୟମ, ଏକ ଅନୁଶାସନ ଯାହାକୁ ପାଳନ କରି ମଣିଷ ସମାଜରେ ଏକ ଶୁଦ୍ଧାବସ୍ଥା ଜୀବନ ଯାପନ କରି ନିଜ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ସ୍ଥଳରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିପାରିବ । ଜୀବନ ଶୈଳୀର ଧାରାକୁ ଅତି ସୁନ୍ଦର ଏବଂ ସରଳ ଭାବରେ ଆମେ ବୁଝିଥାଏ ଚାରିଗୋଟି ଆଶ୍ରମ ଏବଂ ପୁରୁଷାର୍ଥ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ, ଯଦି ଏହି ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଅବସ୍ଥାର ମହତ୍ତ୍ୱ ବୁଝି ସେ ଅନୁସାରେ କର୍ମ କରିଯିବା ତେବେ ନିଜ ଗନ୍ତବ୍ୟ ପଥ ସୁଗମ କରିପାରିବା ।

ମାନବ ଜୀବନ ହେଉଛି ଭଗବାନଙ୍କର ଆଶୀର୍ବାଦ । ଯାହାଦ୍ୱାରା ମଣିଷ ନିଜକୁ ବୁଝିପାରେ ଏବଂ ପରମାତ୍ମାରେ ଆତ୍ମଲୀନ ହେବାକୁ ଅଗ୍ରସର ହୁଏ । ଏହି ସମସ୍ତ ପ୍ରକ୍ରିୟା

ଭିତରେ ମୋ ମତରେ ସର୍ବଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ ପ୍ରକ୍ରିୟା ହେଉଛି "ଆତ୍ମସମୀକ୍ଷା" । ଯାହାଦ୍ୱାରା ଆମେ ଆମ ନିଜକୁ ଦେଖି ଜୀବନର ପ୍ରତିଟି ସୋପାନରେ ନିଜର ସହାୟକ ହୋଇ ଆଗକୁ ବଢ଼ିପାରିବା । ନିଜ ପରିସ୍ଥିତିର ଅବଲୋକନ କରି ଏକ ପବିତ୍ର ବାତାବରଣ ଆଣିବା । ନିଜର ପଞ୍ଚେନ୍ଦ୍ରିୟକୁ କେନ୍ଦ୍ରିତ କରି ଏକ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଚିନ୍ତାଧାରାରେ ନିଜର କାମକୁ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟାଲୋଚନା କରିପାରିବା । ଏହି ପ୍ରକ୍ରିୟାଟି ଆମେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଯଦି ଅଳ୍ପ ବହୁତ

ପାଳନ କରୁଛୁ ତେବେ ବହୁତ ଗୁଡ଼େ ସମସ୍ୟାର ସମାଧାନ ନିଜେ କରି ଏକ ଉନ୍ନତ ସମାଜ ଗଢ଼ିବାରେ ସକ୍ଷମ ହୋଇପାରୁଛୁ । ଭାଗବତ ଗୀତାର ଗୁଡ଼ ତତ୍ତ୍ୱକୁ ବୁଝି "ଆତ୍ମଜ୍ଞାନ" ଲାଭ କରି "ମାନବ ଧର୍ମ"ର ଯଥାର୍ଥତା ପ୍ରତିପାଦନ କରିପାରୁଛୁ ।

ନେପେରଭିଲେ, ଇଲିନୋଇସ୍



ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଉନ୍ନତିରେ ବିଜୁ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ

ନଳିନୀ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ



ଐତିହାସିକ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ବ, ଓଡ଼ିଶାର “ବରପୁତ୍ର”, ଇଣ୍ଡୋନେସିଆର “ଭୂମିପୁତ୍ର”; ପାଇଲଟ୍ ବିଜୁ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ ଦେଶ ବିଦେଶକୁ ନିଜର କର୍ମ କ୍ଷେତ୍ର ହିସାବରେ ଆଦରି ନେଇଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ନିଜର ମାତୃଭୂମିକୁ ଏକ “ସୁନ୍ଦର ଓଡ଼ିଶା” ରୂପେ ଗଢିବାର ସ୍ବପ୍ନକୁ ଭୁଲି ନଥିଲେ ।

ସେହି ସ୍ବପ୍ନ ସବୁକୁ ସାକାର କରିବା ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ନେଇ ସେ ନିଜର ସମସ୍ତ ଚେଷ୍ଟା ପ୍ରଚେଷ୍ଟାରେ ଏହି ସବୁ ଉଦ୍ୟୋଗର ସ୍ଥାପନା କରିଥିଲେ । ସେଗୁଡ଼ିକ ହେଲା; କଳିଙ୍ଗ ଏୟାରଲାଇନ୍ସ, ଓ.ଟି.ଏମ ଚୌଦ୍ୱାର, କଳିଙ୍ଗ ଇଣ୍ଡଷ୍ଟ୍ରିଜ, କଳିଙ୍ଗ ପବ୍ଲିକେସନ୍, ପାରାଦୀପ ବନ୍ଦର , ଜାତୀୟ ରାଜପଥ, ଦୈତାରୀ ପାରାଦୀପ ଏକ୍ସପ୍ରେସ୍ ରାଜପଥ, ରାଉରକେଲା ଇନ୍ଡିନିୟନ୍ କଲେଜ, ସୁନାବେତା ମିର୍ ବିମାନ କାରଖାନା, ରିଜିଓନାଲ୍ କଲେଜ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର, ବାଲିମେଳା ବଂଧୁ, ଚାର୍ବିଆ ବାୟୁସେନା ଅବତରଣ ସେଣ୍ଟର, ଓ ଯୁ ତି ଓଡ଼ିଶା, ନାଲକୋ, ବୁର୍ଲା ଇନ୍ଡିନିୟନ୍ କଲେଜ, ତାଲଚେର ଥର୍ମାଲ, ବୁର୍ଲା ମେଡିକାଲ କଲେଜ, ବ୍ରହ୍ମପୁର ମେଡିକାଲ କଲେଜ , ଇନ୍ଦବିହାର ବ୍ରହ୍ମପୁର , ଜ୍ୟୋତି ବିହାର ସମ୍ବଲପୁର, ସୈନିକ ସ୍କୁଲ ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର, ସି ଆର ପି କେଶ୍ବନମେଣ୍ଟ, ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର ଦୂରଦର୍ଶନ , ରେଭେନ୍ସାରେ ଆକାଶବାଣୀ ଶିକ୍ଷା ସେଣ୍ଟର, ଶିକ୍ଷା କ୍ଷେତ୍ରରେ ଅଧିକ ଆର୍ଥିକ ଯୋଜନା, ମହିଳା ମାନଙ୍କୁ ସମସ୍ତ ସ୍ତରରେ ଅଗ୍ରାଧିକାର ସହ ପଂଚାୟତରୁ ଜିଲ୍ଲା ଯାଏ ସମିତି ସଭ୍ୟା ତଥା ଅଧ୍ୟକ୍ଷା ନିୟୁକ୍ତି , ଶ୍ରମିକ ମାନଙ୍କ ସର୍ବନିମ୍ନ ମଜୁରୀ ବୃଦ୍ଧି । ଏହି ସବୁ ଅନନ୍ୟ ଉଦ୍ୟମ ଆଉ ଦୂରଦୃଷ୍ଟି ନିମନ୍ତେ ସେ ଆଜି ଓଡ଼ିଶାବାସୀଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଆଜି ଅମର ଓ ଆଦର୍ଶ ।

ସେ ସବୁବେଳେ ଉଚ୍ଚମନା ଓ କର୍ମ ତତ୍ପର ଥିଲେ । ତା’କ ପାଇଁ ଜାତି ଧର୍ମ , ଦେଶ ବିଦେଶ ସବୁ ଥିଲା ଏକ । ୧୯୬୨ - ୬୩ ଭାରତ ତୀର୍ ଯୁଦ୍ଧ ସମୟରେ ପଣ୍ଡିଚ୍ ଜବାହର ଲାଲ ନେହେରୁ ବିଜୁ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକଙ୍କୁ ପ୍ରଧାନମନ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କର ପ୍ରତିନିଧି

ହିସାବରେ ଆମେରିକା ପଠାଇଥିଲେ ଯୁଦ୍ଧ ପାଇଁ ସାମରିକ ସହଯୋଗର ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା ପାଇଁ । ସେଥିରେ ସଫଳ ହାସଲ କରି ଫେରିଥିଲେ ବିଜୁ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ । ସାହସୀ ବିଜୁ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର କଳା ଓ ସଂସ୍କୃତିର ମଧ୍ୟ ଆଦର କରୁଥିଲେ । ଛାନ୍ଦ ଓ ଚମ୍ପୁ , ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ସଂସ୍କୃତି , ସାହିତ୍ୟ ତଥା ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଓ ପରଂପରାର ବିଭିନ୍ନ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମରେ ସଦା ସର୍ବଦା ସେ ତତ୍ପର ଥିଲେ । ଶିଳ୍ପପତି ହିସାବରେ ଯୁବପୀଢ଼ିଙ୍କୁ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଶିଳ୍ପ ସ୍ଥାପନା ପାଇଁ ଉତ୍ସାହ ଦେଉଥିଲେ । ୧୯୯୦ -୧୯୯୫ ମୁଖ୍ୟମନ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଥିବା ସମୟରେ ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଭରା “ ଚିଲିକା “ କୁ ବିଦେଶରେ ହୃଦ ନଦୀ ସବୁର ଯେପରି ଉନ୍ନତି କରାଯାଏ ସେପରି କିଛି କରିବାର ପ୍ରୟାସ କରିଥାନ୍ତେ । କେତେକ କାରଣରୁ ତାହା ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ସୁଦ୍ଧା ପରିପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ହୋଇ ପାରି ନାହିଁ । ଏହି ସବୁ ପ୍ରୟାସ ଓ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିଗତ ନିଷ୍ଠାରୁ ଆମେ ହୃଦୟଙ୍ଗମ କରିବା ଉଚିତ ଯେ, ସେ କେତେ ଦୂରଦର୍ଶୀ ଥିଲେ । ସେହି ଦୂରଦର୍ଶିତା ଓ ଆଦର୍ଶ ଆମ ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରେରଣାର ଉତ୍ସ ହୋଇ ରହିଛି ଓ ରହିଥିବ ।

ସୁଦୂର ଆମେରିକାରେ ଆଜି ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସୋସାଇଟି ଅଫ ଆମେରିକାନ୍ ଗଠନ କରା ଯାଇଛି । ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସଂସ୍କୃତିକୁ ସଂହତି କରିଆରେ ଉପସ୍ଥାପନା କରାଯାଉଛି । ଆମେରିକାରେ ଜନ୍ମିତ ଆଗାମୀ ପୀଢ଼ି ବିଦେଶରେ ରହି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଜାଣିବେ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ପାଇଁ କିଛି ଉନ୍ନତି କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମରେ ମନ ବଳାଇବେ । ଏଇ ଅବସରରେ “ଓଡ଼ିଶା ସୋସାଇଟି ଅଫ ଆମେରିକା ”; ତାହାର ୫୦ ବର୍ଷ ଗୋଲଡେନ ଜୁବିଲି, ଜୁଲାଇ ୪ରୁ ୭ ତାରିଖ ଯାଏଁ ପାଳନ କରୁଛି ।

ବନ୍ଦେ ଉତ୍କଳ ଜନନୀ

୯୦୫ ଟ୍ରିବ୍ଯୁହୋମ୍ ଡ୍ରାଇଭ୍
ନାଶ୍ଭିଲେ,ଟେନେସି

ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଖାତାରେ ପ୍ରେମ

ପ୍ରତିଭା ରାୟ



ପିଲେ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ -

ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ଅଙ୍ଗେ ନିଭା ଅନୁଭୂତିକୁ ପରୀ କାହାଣୀ ଭଳି ଉପଭୋଗ କରନ୍ତି ପଛକେ ସତ ମଣନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କର ଦୋଷ ବି ନାହିଁ । କାରଣ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ପିଲାଦିନ ଓ ତାଙ୍କ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ପିଲାଦିନ ଭିତରେ ଆକାଶପାତାଳ ଫରକ୍ । ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କର ମନେହୁଏ ଯେ ତାଙ୍କ ବାପା ଓ ତାଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ଗୋଟାଏ ପିଢ଼ିର ଫାଙ୍କ ଥିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ପିଲେ ଓ ତାଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ଯେମିତି ପାଞ୍ଚ ପିଢ଼ିର ଫାଙ୍କ! ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ ଆମେରିକାର ଏକ ବଡ଼ ଆଇଟି କମ୍ପାନୀର ଭାଇସ୍ ପ୍ରେସିଡେଣ୍ଟ । ତାଙ୍କ ପିଲାମାନେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଜନ୍ମଗତ ଭାବେ ଆମେରିକାର ନାଗରିକ । ତେଣୁ ସେମାନେ ଆମେରିକୀୟ । ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ ଏତେ ବର୍ଷ ଆମେରିକାରେ ରହିବା ପରେ ବି ସେହି ଓଡ଼ିଆ ହୋଇ ରହିଛନ୍ତି, କାରଣ ତାଙ୍କର ମୂଳ ରହିଛି ନିଜ ଦେଶରେ, ନିଜ ଗାଁ ମାଟିରେ । ତାଳ ଲମ୍ବିଆସିଛି ବିଦେଶକୁ । ସେ ବିଦେଶରେ ଫୁଲଫୁଲରେ ମଣ୍ଡି ହୋଇ ନିଜେ ସମୃଦ୍ଧ ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି ଏବଂ ବିଦେଶକୁ ସମୃଦ୍ଧ କରିଛନ୍ତି । ଦେଶ ତା' ଦୁଃଖ ନେଇ ଯେମିତି ଥିଲା ସେମିତି ଅଛି ବୋଲି ତାଙ୍କର ବେଳେବେଳେ ହୃଦୟରେ ଅବ୍ୟକ୍ତ ବେଦନା ଜାତ ହୁଏ । କାହାକୁ କହିବେ? ତାଙ୍କ ବୟସର ସବୁ ବିଦେଶୀଙ୍କର ଏକା ଦୁଃଖ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଦେଶକୁ ଫେରିଲେ ସେ ବଡ଼ ସୁଖୀ ଓ ସମୃଦ୍ଧ ଦିଶନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କର ଚିହ୍ନାପରିଚିତ ସାଙ୍ଗସାଥୀ ଆଦର ଅଭ୍ୟର୍ଥନାରେ ଉଣା ନକଲେ ବି ସେଥିପାଇଁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଭିତରେ ଭିତରେ ଇର୍ଷା କରନ୍ତି ।

କାଲି ଭଳି ଅତୀତର ସବୁ କଥା ମନେପଡ଼େ - ‘କାଲି’ଟା ଯଦି ବୁମେରାଂ ଭଳି ଫେରିଆସୁଥାନ୍ତା ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ ଦୁଃଖୀ ହୁଅନ୍ତେ କି ସୁଖୀ ହୁଅନ୍ତେ ବୁଝିପାରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଦୁଃଖସୁଖର ଏହି ଅଛିଣ୍ଡା ଗଣିତ ଭିତରେ ସେ ବୟସ୍କ ହୋଇଗଲେଣି । କିନ୍ତୁ ପିଲାଦିନ କଥା ତାଙ୍କର ଆଦୌ ବିସ୍ମରଣ ହୋଇନାହିଁ । କାରଣ ପିଲାଦିନର ସ୍ମୃତି କେବେ ବୟସ୍କ ହୁଏନାହିଁ ।

ପିଲାଙ୍କ କ୍ଲବ୍‌ହାଉସ୍ ପରୀକ୍ଷା ପରେ ନୂଆବହି କିଣିବା ପାଇଁ ପୂର୍ବ ଶ୍ରେଣୀରେ ପଢ଼ିସାରିଥିବା ପୁରୁଣା ବହି ଓ ଲେଖିସାରିଥିବା ପୁରୁଣା ଖାତାକୁ ବିକ୍ରି କରିବାକୁ ହେଉଥିଲା ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ବାପା ରମାନାଥଙ୍କୁ । ପୃଥିବୀର ସମୃଦ୍ଧତମ ଆମେରିକାର ବୈଜ୍ଞାନିକ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ପିଲାମାନେ କେମିତି ବା ବିଶ୍ୱାସ କରନ୍ତେ ଏକଥା! ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ଭାଇଭଉଣୀ ମିଶି ସମୁଦାୟ ଏଗାର, ଏକାବେଳେକେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ବାର୍ଷିକ ପରୀକ୍ଷା, ପରୀକ୍ଷାଫଳ ବାହାରିବା ବେଳକୁ ସମସ୍ତେ ପାଏ । ଅର୍ଥାତ୍ ସବୁପିଲାଙ୍କର ନୂଆବହି, ନୂଆ ଖାତାପତ୍ର ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ପଡ଼େ । ଅବଶ୍ୟ

ବଡ଼ମାନଙ୍କ ପୁରୁଣା ବହି ସାନ ଭାଇଭଉଣୀ ପଢ଼ିପାରିଥାନ୍ତେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ରେଳତବା ଭଳି ଏଗାର ପିଲାଙ୍କ ଶ୍ରେଣୀଗୁଡ଼ାକ ତା' ପଛକୁ ପଛ ଲାଗି ନଥାଏ । ମଝିରେ ଦି'ବର୍ଷ, ତିନିବର୍ଷ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର ଫାଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗକୁ ବହିର ପାଠ ବଦଳିଯାଇଥାଏ, ନଇଲେ ଚିରିଯାଇଥାଏ ତଳୁ ଉପରୁ କେତେ ପୃଷ୍ଠା । ବିକିଦେଲେ ବରଂ ଗୋଟାଏ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରୁ ଭଲ । ଭାଇଭଉଣୀଙ୍କ ବହି ହେଉ ପଛକେ ପୁରୁଣା ବହିରେ ନୂଆଜ୍ଞାନ ଖୋଜିବା ବେଳେ ପିଲାଙ୍କର ମନ ଟିକେ ଉଣା ହୁଏ । ନୂଆବହିରେ ପ୍ରତିବର୍ଷ ମଲାଟ ମଡ଼ାଇବା ବେଳେ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ମୁହଁରେ ଜ୍ଞାନଲାଭର ଆଗ୍ରହ ଝଲମଲ ହେଉଥିବାର ଦେଖିଲେ କୋଉ ବାପର ବା ଛାତି କୁଣ୍ଡେମୋଟ ହୋଇନଯାଏ? ରମାନାଥ ବାବୁ ସହରରେ ସାନ ଚାକିରି ଖଣ୍ଡେ କରି ଭଲରେ ଚଳୁଥିଲେ ବୋଲି ବାହାରକୁ ଦିଶୁଥିଲେ ବି ଭିତରକଥା କେବଳ ସ୍ୱାମୀ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଜାଣୁଥିଲେ, ଭୋଗୁଥିଲେ । ପାଖରେ ଥିଲେ ବାପା, ବୋଉ, ଜେଜେମା' । ଭାଗ୍ୟକୁ ଗୁହାଳରେ ଗାଈ, କ୍ଷେତରେ ବର୍ଷକ ପାଇଁ ଧାନ, ମୁଗ, ବିରି, ବାଡ଼ି ପୋଖରୀରେ ବାଳିଆ, ସେଉଳ, କଉ, ମହୁରାଳି, ତେଙ୍ଗ, କେରାଣ୍ଡି । ଘର ପଛପଟ ଅରାଏ ବଗିଚାରେ ପନିପରିବା, ନଡ଼ିଆଗଛ, ବାଉଁଶବୁଢ଼ା ଥିଲା ବୋଲି ଏଡ଼େବଡ଼ ପରିବାର ପାଇଁ ଖାଇବା କଷ୍ଟ ସେତେ ନଥିଲା ଯିନା ପିନ୍ଧିବା କଷ୍ଟ ତ ଥିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ଭଲ ମନ୍ଦ ଖାଇବାକୁ ପିଲେ ମନକଲେ ଗହମ ଗୋଟି ଗଣିତା । କେତେ ବା ଦରମା ଥିଲା ସେକାଳେ? ଗାଈ ଗୋରୁ ବିଲ ବାଡ଼ି ବି କିଛି କମ୍ ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚାନ୍ତ କରାନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ପ୍ରତିବର୍ଷ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ନୂଆବହିରେ ମଲାଟ ମଡ଼ାଇବା ପରି ବାପ ଅଜା ଅମଳର ପୁରୁଣା ଘରର ମାଟିକାନ୍ଥ ଉପରେ ନଡ଼ା ଛପର ନକଲେ ନଚଲେ । ବହିରେ ପୁରୁଣା ଖବରକାଗଜ ମଡ଼େଇଦେଲେ କାମ ଚଳୁଥିଲା । ମାତ୍ର ପୁରୁଣା ନଡ଼ାରେ ଘର ଛାଉଣୀ କରିଦେଲେ କାମ ଚଳୁ ନଥିଲା । ତେଣୁ ଅନ୍ୟ ଖର୍ଚ୍ଚର ଲମ୍ବା ତାଲିକାକୁ ସମ୍ଭାଳିବା ପାଇଁ ଦରମାର ପଣତକାନି ସେତେ ଲମ୍ବା ନଥିଲା । ପିଲାଙ୍କ ପେଟ ଓ ପାଠ ବର୍ଷକୁ ବର୍ଷ ଯେତେ ବଡ଼େ ବାପାଙ୍କ ଦରମା ସେହି ଅନୁପାତରେ ବଡ଼େ ନାହିଁ । ଅଭାବର ମହୁଫେଣାଟା ଭଙ୍ଗାଉଜା କରି ଚଳିଲେ ଦେହକୁ ବିଛେ, ମନକୁ ବି ବିଛେ ।

ପର୍ବପର୍ବାଣିରେ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ନୂଆ ପୋଷାକ ହେଉ କି ନହେଉ ସରସ୍ୱତୀ ପୂଜା, ଗଣେଶ ପୂଜାକୁ ପିଲାଙ୍କର ନୂଆ ସାର୍ତ୍ତ, ନୂଆ ଫ୍ରକ୍ ନକଲେ ନଚଲେ । ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର ଜଣେ ଗରିବ ଛାତ୍ରୀ ସରସ୍ୱତୀ ପୂଜାରେ ନୂଆ ଫ୍ରକ୍ ହୋଇନଥିବାରୁ ଆମୁହତ୍ୟା କରିଦେବା ପରେ ବି ଏଗାର ଜଣଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଏକାସଙ୍ଗେ ନୂଆ

ପୋଷାକ କରିବା ସବୁ ବର୍ଷ ସମ୍ଭବ ହେଉ ନଥିଲା! କିନ୍ତୁ ସେଇ ଘଟଣା ପରେ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ବୋଉ ବାପାଙ୍କୁ ବିନତି କରିଥିଲେ - “ଘରର ସବୁ ପର୍ବପର୍ବାଣି ପଛକେ ବନ୍ଦ କରିଦିଅ, ପିଲାଙ୍କ ସ୍କୁଲ ପର୍ବ ବନ୍ଦ କରନାହିଁ । ସବୁ ପିଲା ନୂଆ ପିନ୍ଧି ସ୍କୁଲକୁ ଆସିବେ, ଆମ ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ କେମିତି ଲାଗିବ? ଦେଖିଲ ତ ଗରିବ ଝିଅଟି ବିଚାରୀ ସହିପାରିଲା ନାହିଁ ଏ ଅପମାନ - ଜୀବନ ହାରିଦେଲା ଖଣ୍ଡେ ଫୁଲ୍ ପାଇଁ? ହେ ଭଗବାନ!” ବୋଉ କାନ୍ଦି ପକାଇଥିଲା ସେଦିନ ପର ଝିଅଟି ପାଇଁ । ଆଦର୍ଶବାଦୀ ବାପା ସେଦିନ ସବୁପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ପାଖକୁ ତାକି ଧାଡ଼ିକରି ବସାଇ ଦେଇଥିଲେ । କହିଥିଲେ - “ତୁମମାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ସବୁଠାରୁ ମୂଲ୍ୟବାନ କ’ଣ?” ଆଉ କିଏ କ’ଣ ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଇଥିଲା ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କର ମନେନାହିଁ, କିନ୍ତୁ ବାପାଙ୍କର ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ଓ ସେଦିନ ଚତୁର୍ଥ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର ଛାତ୍ର ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ ନିଜେ ଦେଇଥିବା ଉତ୍ତର ତାଙ୍କର ସ୍ୱଷ୍ଟ ମନେ ରହିଛି । ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ ସହସା ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଇଥିଲେ - ‘ପାଠ’ ।

ବାପାଙ୍କ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ - ‘ପାଠ’ ପାଇଁ କ’ଣ ସବୁ ଜରୁରୀ ଆବଶ୍ୟକ? ଗଣେଶ ପୂଜା, ସରସ୍ୱତୀ ପୂଜାରେ ନୂଆ ପୋଷାକ ନା ନିଜର ନୂଆ ବହି, ପାଠ ପାଇଁ ପରିଶ୍ରମ ଓ ନିଜର ଜୀବନ?”

“ସବୁଠୁ ବେଶି ଆବଶ୍ୟକ ନିଜ ଜୀବନ । ବଞ୍ଚିରହିଲେ ସିନା ପାଠ ପଢ଼ିବ?” ଚଟ୍ କରି କହିଥିଲେ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ ।

ବାପା ଆନନ୍ଦରେ ବୋଉଙ୍କୁ ଆମ୍ବସନ୍ତୋଷଭରା ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରେ -ହିଁ କହିଥିଲେ - “ଶୁଣିଲ ଆମ ପୁଅର ଉତ୍ତର? ଆମର ସବୁ ପିଲାଙ୍କର ଏଇ ଉତ୍ତର ।”

ପୁଣି ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ କରିଥିଲେ - “ଗରିବ ହେବା କ’ଣ ଲଜ୍ଜା ଓ ଅପମାନର କଥା? ନା ଗରିବଙ୍କ ତଣ୍ଡିଟିପି, ସରକାରୀ ଅର୍ଥ ଆମ୍ଭସାଙ୍ଗ କରିବା, ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ ଠକି, ଚୋରିଚପଟ କରି ଧନୀ ହେବା ଲଜ୍ଜା ଓ ଅପମାନର କଥା?”

ସମସ୍ତେ ଏକ ସ୍ୱରରେ କହିଥିଲେ - “ଗରିବ ହେବା ଅପମାନର କଥା ନୁହେଁ - ଖରାପ କାମ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଧନୀ ହେବା ଅପମାନର କଥା ।”

“ତେବେ ଗରିବ ହୋଇଥିବା ଯୋଗୁଁ ସରସ୍ୱତୀ ପୂଜାରେ ନୂଆ ଫୁଲ୍ ପିନ୍ଧି ନପାରିବା ଅପମାନର କଥା କି?” ବାପାଙ୍କ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ।

“ନା - ନା” ସମବେତ ଉତ୍ତର ।

“ଝିଅଟା ଆମ୍ଭହତ୍ୟା କରିଦେବା ଠିକ୍ ନା ଭୁଲ୍?”

“ଭୁଲ୍ - ଭୁଲ୍”

ବାପା ଖୁସିରେ ଗର୍ବ ଗର୍ବ ହୋଇ କହିଥିଲେ - “ଆମ ପିଲେ ଯେ ବୋକୀ ଝିଅଟି ପରି ଏପରି ମୂର୍ଖ ନୁହନ୍ତି । ମନଦେଇ ପାଠ

ପଢ଼ିଲେ ସେମାନେ ବି ଉଚିତ୍ପାର୍ଶ୍ୱରେ ଧନୀ ହୋଇପାରିବେ । ଗରିବଙ୍କୁ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିପାରିବେ । କେବଳ ନିଜର ନୁହେଁ, ଦେଶର ଧନ, ମାନ ବଢ଼ାଇପାରିବେ । ନୂଆ ଜାମା ଖଣ୍ଡେ ହେଲା ନାହିଁ ବୋଲି ଜୀବନ ହାରିଦେଇ କାହାର କ୍ଷତି କଲା - ନିଜର ତ!”

“ହଁ ହଁ ନିଜର କ୍ଷତି କଲା” ପିଲେ ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଇଥିଲେ ।

ବାପା ସବୁବେଳେ ଜଟିଳ କଥାକୁ ସରଳ ଭାବରେ ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ବୁଝାଇଦେଉଥିଲେ, ଯାହା କଞ୍ଚା ସିଲଟର ଗାର ଭଳି ଅଲିଭା ଅକ୍ଷରରେ ଲେଖାହୋଇ ରହୁଥିଲା । ମାତ୍ର ବୋଉ ସରଳ କଥାକୁ ଜଟିଳ ଗଣିତ କରି ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କ ଆଗତ ଭବିଷ୍ୟତକୁ ନେଇ ଅଛିଣ୍ଟା ଆଶଙ୍କାରେ ନିଜେ କେବଳ ଦୁଃସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଭୋଗୁନଥିଲା ବାପାଙ୍କୁ ବାଧ୍ୟ କରି ସେଥିରେ ଭାଗୀଦାର କରୁଥିଲା । ମାତ୍ର ଦୂର ସ୍ଥାନରେ ଚାକିରି କରିଥିବାରୁ ସବୁ ଚିନ୍ତାଦକ ବୋଉ କାନିରେ ବାନ୍ଧିଦେଇ ବାପା ନିଶ୍ଚିନ୍ତରେ ଚାକିରି ତୁଲାଇଥିଲେ ଓ ଜାଣିଥିଲେ ଯେ ତାଙ୍କ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ସରଳା ବୋଉର ପାଠ ମାତ୍ର ‘ଅ’ରୁ ‘କ୍ଷ’ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ହୋଇଥିଲେ ବି ବୋଉ ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କ ପାଠପଢ଼ା ପ୍ରତି ଧ୍ୟାନ ରଖିବା ସହ ସାରା ଅଭାବୀ ପରିବାରର ଭାର ସମ୍ଭାଳି ନବ । ବୋଉ କିନ୍ତୁ ଛଅ ପୁଅଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ସରସ୍ୱତୀ ପୂଜାରେ ଖଣ୍ଡେ ଲେଖାଏଁ ହାତକଟା ଗଞ୍ଜି ଓ ପାଞ୍ଚ ଝିଅଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ପାଞ୍ଚ ରଙ୍ଗର ପାଞ୍ଚ ମିଟର ଛଅଶା ଦି’ପଇସିଆ ରିବନ କିଣି ଦେଉଥିଲା । ନାହିଁ ମାମୁଠାରୁ କଣାମାମୁ ଭଲ । ସେତିକିରେ ତାଙ୍କ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ରିଷ୍ଟ କଟିଯିବ ବୋଲି ଗଣେଶ, ସରସ୍ୱତୀଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଭରସା ଥିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ତଳଭାଇ ତିନିଜଣ ସ୍କୁଲରେ ପୂଜା ହେବା ବେଳେ ହୋମସ୍କୁଲରେ ଗରମ ହେଉଛି କହି ସଫା ହୋଇଥିବା ପୁରୁଣା ସାର୍ଟକୁ ଖୋଲି ବ୍ୟାଗ୍ରେ ରଖିଦିଅନ୍ତି ଓ ଖାଲି ଗଞ୍ଜି ପିନ୍ଧି ବୁଲନ୍ତି, ଖାସ୍ ସାଥୀପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖାଇବା ପାଇଁ ଯେ ସେମାନେ ବି ନୂଆ ପିନ୍ଧିଛନ୍ତି । କାରଣ ସେତିକି ମଧ୍ୟ କେତେ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ଭାଗ୍ୟରେ ନଥାଏ ସେହି ଗରିବ ଗାଁରେ ।

କେଜାଣି ବୋଉ ସ୍କୁଲ ମାଡ଼ିଥିଲା କି ନା ବାପାଙ୍କୁ ଜଣାଥିବ, ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ଜଣାନଥିଲା । ସେତେବେଳେ ଗାଁରେ ବୋଉମାନେ ଅଫିସ୍‌କୁ ଯାଉନଥିଲେ । ଏନ୍ତିଓ କାମରେ ଘରୁ ବାହାରି ଯାଉନଥିଲେ । ରାଜନୀତି ଦଳରେ ମିଶି ରାଜରାସ୍ତାରେ ଦଙ୍ଗା କରୁନଥିଲେ । ସେତେବେଳେ ବୋଉମାନେ ରାତି ପାହିଲେ ରୋଷେଇ ଘରକୁ ଯାଉଥିଲେ । ବାପାମାନେ କାମକୁ ଯାଉଥିଲେ, ପିଲାମାନେ ସ୍କୁଲକୁ ଯାଉଥିଲେ । ବୋଉ ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କ ହାତରେ ବହି ନଦେଖିଲେ ବାସ ମହ ମହ ହଲଦିଆ ଚମ୍ପାଫୁଲରୁ ଟାଣୁଆ ପାଖୁଡ଼ାର ନାଲି କାଠଚମ୍ପା ପାଲଟିଯାଉଥିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ବୋଉ ହାତରେ ପିଲେ କେବେ ବହି ଖଣ୍ଡେ ଦେଖିନଥିଲେ । ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଧାରଣା ଥିଲା ଯେ ବୋଉମାନେ ପାଠବହି ପଢ଼ନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ଖାଲି ରାମାୟଣ, ଭାଗବତ ପଢ଼ନ୍ତି ଯଦି ବି’ଅକ୍ଷର ପାଠ ପଢ଼ିଥାନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କ

ବୋଉର ସେତିକି ବି ନଥାଏ । ଘର ସଜାଡ଼ିବା ପଛକୁ ପକାଇ ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କ ବହିବସ୍ତାନି ସଜାଡ଼ିବାରେ ବୋଉକୁ ଅଧିକ ସୁଖ ମିଳୁଥିଲା ବୋଲି ବୋଉର ଦରହସିଲା ମୁହଁରୁ ଜଣାପଡ଼ିଯାଉଥିଲା । ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କ ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଖାତାକୁ ବୋଉ ନିରେଖି ଦେଖୁଥିଲା ଓ କେବଳ ସେହି ଖାତାର ମୂଲ୍ୟାୟନ ବୋଉ କରିପାରୁଥିଲା । ଗଣିତ, ସାହିତ୍ୟ, ଇଂରାଜୀ, ହିନ୍ଦୀ, ରଚନା ଖାତା ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ବୋଉ ବାରି ପାରୁନଥିଲା । ମାତ୍ର ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଖାତା ଚିହ୍ନିପାରୁଥିଲା ଓ କାହାର ଅକ୍ଷର ସରସା ଓ କାହାର ନିରସା ସେ ବିଚାର କରିପାରୁଥିଲା । ଯାହାର ଅକ୍ଷର ନିରସା ତାକୁ ଆକଟ କରୁଥିଲା । ସର୍ବଦା କହୁଥିଲା - “ଗାଁ ପରିମଳ ଧୋବା ତୁଠାରୁ । ପାଠର ମାନମହତ ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଖାତାରୁ । ଦେଖୁନ ତୁମ ବାପାଙ୍କ ଅକ୍ଷର, କେମିତି ମାଛମଞ୍ଜି ଭଳି ଗୋଲା! ତମ ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କର ଅକ୍ଷର ଜଣକର ବି ବାପାଙ୍କ ଅକ୍ଷର ଭଳି ହେଲାନାହିଁ । ତେବେ ତେଷ୍ଟ କଲେ ହେବ । ଜଣେ ହେଲେ ବାପାର ନାଁ ରଖ ।” ବୋଉ ଏକରୁ ଶହେ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ସଂଖ୍ୟା ପଢ଼ିପାରୁଥିଲା । ତେଣୁ ତାରିଖ ବି ପଢ଼ିପାରୁଥିଲା । କେହି ଯଦି ମଝିରେ ଦିନେ ଦିନ ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଖାତାରେ ଗଫଲତି କରିଥାଏ ତେବେ ବୋଉ ଯେଉଁଦିନ ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଖାତା ଯାଞ୍ଚ କରେ ପିଲାମାନେ ହାତେହାତେ ଧରାପଡ଼ନ୍ତି ଓ ବୋଉର ନାଲି ଆଖି ଦେଖିବାକୁ ପଡ଼େ । ଏକାଥରକେ ତିନିଗାରି ପୃଷ୍ଠା ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଲେଖିବାକୁ ପଡ଼େ । ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ଗାଁର ଆଉସବୁ ବୋଉମାନେ ପିଲାଏ ଭଲ ପଢ଼ନ୍ତୁ ବୋଲି ଚାହଁଲେ ବି ପିଲାଙ୍କ ପାଠପଢ଼ା ଉପରେ ସତର୍କ ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ରଖିବା ପାଇଁ ବେଳ ପାଆନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ପିଲାମାନେ ବି ସେକାଳରେ ବୋଉମାନଙ୍କୁ ଭୁଆଁ ବୁଲାଇବାରେ ଓସ୍ତାଦ ଥିଲେ । ତେଣୁ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ଭାଇଭଉଣୀମାନେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଶ୍ରେଣୀରେ ଆସୁଥା ଥିଲେ । ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ବୋଉ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ପାଠ ପ୍ରତି ଧ୍ୟାନ ରଖିଥିବାରୁ ଏଗାର ଭାଇଭଉଣୀ ସମସ୍ତେ ଏକୁ ଆରେକ ବଳି ଉପାର୍ଜନକ୍ଷମ ହେଲେ । ଏବେ ରାଜ୍ୟ ବାହାରେ, ଦେଶ ବାହାରେ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ ହୋଇ ସୁଖରେ ଅଛନ୍ତି । କେବଳ ବୋଉର ସାଧନା ପାଇଁ ହିଁ ସେତେବେଳେ ରମାକାନ୍ତବାବୁଙ୍କ ଏଗାର ପୁଅଅଁଅଙ୍କ ଅକ୍ଷର ସ୍କୁଲରେ ବାରି ହୋଇପଡୁଥିଲା । ପରୀକ୍ଷା ଖାତା ଦେଖିଲେ ହିଁ ମାଷ୍ଟେ ଜାଣିପାରୁଥିଲେ ଯେ ଏଇଟା ରମାକାନ୍ତବାବୁଙ୍କର କୋଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ପିଲାର ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ।

ଏବେ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ ବାପା ହେବା ପରେ ନିଜ ପିଲାମାନେ ପାଠ ପାଖରେ ମନଧ୍ୟାନ ଦେଇ ବସିବା ଦେଖିଲେ ଖୁସି ହୁଅନ୍ତି । ଏକା ସେ ନୁହନ୍ତି, ସବୁ ବାପାମାନେ ଏହା ହିଁ ଚାହାନ୍ତି । ମାତ୍ର ନିଜେ ପିଲାଥିଲା ବେଳେ କୋଉ ପିଲା ବା ପାଠରେ ବକଧ୍ୟାନ ଦେଇ ବସିବା ପାଇଁ ସୁଖ ପାଏ! ଯେଉଁ ପିଲାମାନେ ବାଧ୍ୟରେ ପଢ଼ି ପାଠରେ ମନଯୋଗୀ ହୋଇଥାନ୍ତି ସେହିମାନେ ହିଁ ଭବିଷ୍ୟତରେ ସୁଖରେ ରହନ୍ତି । ତା’ର ପ୍ରମାଣ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ଭାଇଭଉଣୀମାନେ । ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ସାନଭଉଣୀଟା ତୁଙ୍ଗା ଗପିଟାଏ ଥିଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ବୋଉର ନାଲିଆଖିକୁ ଡରି ପାଠ ଘୋଷି ଘୋଷି ଆଜି ନାମକରା ତାଙ୍କୁରାଣୀ ।

ନିଉୟର୍କ ସହରରେ ନିଜ ବିରାଟ ବଙ୍ଗଳାର ପ୍ରଶସ୍ତ ପଢ଼ାଘରେ ବସି ଲାପଟପର ଟର୍ସ୍ତ୍ରନ୍ରେ ଟିପ ଛୁଆଁଇଦେଇ କାମ କରିବା ବେଳେ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କର ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ବୋଉ ଭାରି ମନେପଡ଼େ । ତାଙ୍କ ଅକ୍ଷର ତାଙ୍କ ପୁଅଅଁଅ ଓ ନାତିନାତୁଣୀଙ୍କ ଅକ୍ଷରଠାରୁ ଭଲ ଓ ଚାହା କେବଳ ସମ୍ଭବ ହୋଇଛି ତାଙ୍କ ନିରକ୍ଷରା ବୋଉର ସନ୍ତାନଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ଯତ୍ନଶୀଳତା ଯୋଗୁଁ ବୋଲି କହିବାର ଯୁକ୍ତି ସେ ଖୋଜି ପାଆନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । କାରଣ ତାଙ୍କ ଘରେ ଏଠି ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ହାତରେ ଟର୍ସ୍ତ୍ରନ୍ ଟିପଛୁଆଁ ଅକ୍ଷର - ଏକାପରି ନିଗୋଳ, ସୁନ୍ଦର, ସୁଷ୍ଟ । କୋଉ ପିଲାର ଅକ୍ଷର ବାରି ହେବନି । ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କର ଚାରିବର୍ଷର ସବାସାନ ନାତି ‘ଆଲାର୍ନ’ ଆଲ୍ୟୁବେଟ୍ ଲେଖି ଶିଖିନାହିଁ, ଅଥଚ ଟାବ୍ଲେଟ୍, ଆଇପ୍ୟାଡ୍ରେ ଆଲ୍ୟୁବେଟ୍ ଚିହ୍ନି ଚିହ୍ନି ପଢ଼ିଦିଏ - ‘ଏ’ ଫର୍ ଆପଲ୍, ‘ବି’ ଫର୍ ---- । ଆହୁରି ଅନେକ ଶବ୍ଦ କେବଳ ପଢ଼ିପାରେନି, ଅକ୍ଷରରେ ଟିପ ମାରି ମାରି ଲେଖିଦିଏ ବି । ନିଜର ନାମ ବି ଲେଖିଦିଏ । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ତା’ ନାଁଟି ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ ରଖିଛନ୍ତି ଆଲୋକ । କିନ୍ତୁ ପିଲାଦିନେ ରାତି ନପାହୁଣ୍ଡ ସେ ରଡ଼ିଛାଡ଼ି ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ନିଦ ଭାଙ୍ଗିଦିଏ ବୋଲି ତାକୁ ତା’ ବଡ଼ଭାଇ ନାଁଟା ବଦଳାଇ ‘ଆଲାର୍ନ’ କରିଦେଲା । ସ୍କୁଲରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ତା’ ନାମଟି ଅନନ୍ୟ ଏବଂ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ପ୍ରିୟ ।

ଖଡ଼ି ପେନ୍ସିଲ୍ ଧରି ଶିଖିନଥିବା ନାତିଗୋଟା ଆଲାର୍ନ ଟର୍ସ୍ତ୍ରନ୍ରେ ତମକାର ଚିତ୍ର ବି ଆଙ୍କିଦିଏ । ବେଳେବେଳେ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ ଚିତ୍ରରେ ପଢ଼ିଯାଆନ୍ତି । ଭାବନ୍ତି - କ’ଣ ଲାଭ ହେଲା ତାଙ୍କ ଅମଳର ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କ ଆଙ୍ଗୁଠିକୁ ପିଟି ପିଟି ଯତ୍ନକରି ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଲେଖାଉଥିବାର ଫଳ? ଏବେ ତ ପୃଥିବୀଯାକର ମାତୃଭାଷାର ଅକ୍ଷର ସବୁ ଉଭେଇଯିବ । ଯେଉଁଠି ବା କାଁ ଭାଁ ରହିବ ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷରରେ ନୁହେଁ, ଟର୍ସ୍ତ୍ରନ୍ରେ ଟିପ ମାରିଲେ ସଞ୍ଜବେଳର ଜହ୍ନିଫୁଲ ପରି ତୋରା ହୋଇ ଫୁଟିଉଠିବ ଆଉ ନିମିଷକେ ବି ଉଭେଇଯିବ । ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ପିଲାମାନେ କେହି ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଲେଖିନାହାନ୍ତି । ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଲେଖିବାର ଅର୍ଥ ଏବେକୁ ଅନାବଶ୍ୟକ ଓ ସମୟ ନଷ୍ଟ । ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଜୀବନରେ ଅଭାବର ବି ଅନୁଭବ ନାହିଁ । ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଆକଟ କରିବା ବି ନିଷେଧ । ଘରେ ବିଶୁଦ୍ଧ ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କୁ ଦଣ୍ଡଦେବା ତ ପିତାମାତାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଦଣ୍ଡନୀୟ । ତେଣୁ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ପିଲାମାନେ ତାଙ୍କ ବାପାଙ୍କ ବାଲ୍ୟକାଳର ଅଙ୍ଗେନିଭା କଥାକୁ ସତ ମଣନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ମନଗଢ଼ା କାହାଣୀ ମନେକରନ୍ତି । ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ ଏମିତି ବି ବଡ଼ ହସଖୁସି ମିଜାଜର ବ୍ୟକ୍ତି । ବେଜାଏ ହସନ୍ତି, ହସାନ୍ତି, କହନ୍ତି, କୁହାନ୍ତି ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ଜୀବନର ସେହି ଗୋଟିଏ କୋମଳ, କରୁଣ ଅନୁଭୂତିକୁ କାହାରି ପାଖରେ ସେ କହିନାହାନ୍ତି । କାରଣ ସେ କଥା ଏକାକାର ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ବୁଝାଇ ଦୁଃଖି ଯେ ସେକାଳର ବାପାବୋଉମାନେ କ’ଣ ଥିଲେ । ଅଭାବ ଭିତରେ କେତେ ଭାବ ଥିଲା ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଜୀବନରେ । ତଲାବର କାର୍ପେଟ୍ ଉପରେ ଚାଲୁଥିବା ତାଙ୍କ ପିଲାମାନେ କେବେହେଲେ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ କରିପାରିଲେ ନାହିଁ ଯେ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ ଭଞ୍ଜନିୟରିଂ ପଢ଼ିବା ପାଇଁ

ହଷ୍ଟେଲକୁ ଯିବାବେଳେ ମାସକର ହାତଖର୍ଚ୍ଚ ପାଇଁ ବାପାଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ପଇସା ନଥିବାରୁ ଖଟତଳେ ବନ୍ଧା ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଥିବା ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସ୍ୱଳ୍ପ କଲେଜର ବଳକା ପୁରୁଣା ଖାତାପତ୍ର ବିକ୍ରି କରିବାକୁ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ ଖାତାପତ୍ର ଉପରୁ ଧୂଳି ଝଡ଼ାଝଡ଼ି କରୁଥିଲେ । ଅବଶ୍ୟ ସେତେବେଳକୁ ଯଦି ବୋଉ ବଞ୍ଚିଥାଆନ୍ତା ସେ ସବାସାନ ଗେହ୍ଲାପୁଅ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତର ହାତରେ ଧୂଳିମଳି ଲଗାଇବାକୁ ଦେଇନଥାନ୍ତା । ନିଛୁପର କରି ନିଜ ପଣତକାନିରେ ଝାଡ଼ିଦେଇଥାନ୍ତା ଗୋଟି ଗୋଟି କରି ପିଲାଙ୍କ ଖାତା ଉପରୁ ଧୂଳି । ପିଲାଙ୍କ ମୁହଁରେ ତେଲ, ହଳଦୀ ମାଖିବା ପରି କୋମଳକରି ଆଉଁଶି ଦେଉଥାନ୍ତା କେତେ କଷ୍ଟ କରି ତାଙ୍କ ଗେଲବସର ପିଲାମାନେ ବସେଇ ବସେଇ ସୁନ୍ଦରକରି ଲେଖିଥିବା ଅକ୍ଷରମାନଙ୍କୁ । ଅଭିଯୋଗଭରା ସ୍ୱରରେ ଗଲା ଚାପି ଚାପି ବାପାଙ୍କୁ ଶୁଣାଇ ଶୁଣାଇ କହିଥାନ୍ତା - “ଅଭାବ ଯୋଗୁଁ ସିନା, ନଇଲେ ମୋ ପିଲେ ଏତେ କଷ୍ଟ କରି ଗାଳିମାଡ଼ ଖାଇ ଲେଖିଥିବା ପାଠଗୁଡ଼ା କାଗଜ ଠୋଲା ହେବା ପାଇଁ କ’ଣ ବିକ୍ରି ହୋଇଥାନ୍ତା!”

ବାପା ମୁର୍କି ହସି ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଇଥାନ୍ତେ - “ପାଠଗୁଡ଼ା ସବୁ ତମ ପିଲେ ପିଇଯାଇ କିଏ ତାହୁଣୀ, କିଏ ଇଞ୍ଜିନିୟରିଂ, ଓକିଲାତି ଓ କିଏ ପ୍ରଫେସରୀ ପଢୁଛନ୍ତି । ଆମ୍ଭ ଖାଇସାରିବା ପରେ ପାଠର ଚୋପାଗୁଡ଼ାକ ବିକ୍ରି ନକରି କ’ଣ ଘରଟାକୁ ମାଲ୍‌ଗୋଦାମ୍ କରିଥାନ୍ତା?”

ପିଲାମାନେ ଉଚ୍ଚଶିକ୍ଷା ପାଇ ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ ହେବେ ଆଉ ବୋଉର ଋଣ ଶୁଢ଼ିବେ ଏକଥା ବୋଉମାନେ ପ୍ରାୟ ଆଶା କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ମୋଟ ଉପରେ ବୋଉମାନଙ୍କର ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ଋଣବୋଧ ବୋଲି କିଛି ନଥାଏ । କାରଣ ବୋଉମାନେ ବାସ୍ତବ୍ୟକୁ ପୁଞ୍ଜିଲଗଣା କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ପିଲେ ଭଲରେ ରହିଲେ ସବୁ କଷ୍ଟ ଭୁଲି ହୋଇଯାଏ, ଠିକ୍ ଯେମିତି ପିଲା ପ୍ରସବ ସମୟର ଶୂଳ କଷ୍ଟ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ଦିବ୍ୟ କୁଆଁ ରାବ ଶୁଣିଲେ ଉଭେଇଯାଏ । ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ବୋଉ ସର୍ବଦା କହୁଥିଲେ - “ତୁମେ ସବୁ ଭଲରେ ରହିଲେ ବାପାବୋଉଙ୍କ ଋଣ ଶୁଢ଼ିଯିବ । ଆମର ତୁମ ଉପରେ ଋଣ ଅଛି ବୋଲି ଭାବନା ମନରେ ଆଣିବ ନାହିଁ । ବୟସ ହେଲେ ଆମ ପିଠି ଆଉ ପେଟ ଯେତିକି ଲୋଡ଼ିବ ସେତିକି ତମ ବାପାଙ୍କ ପେନ୍‌ସନ୍ ଟଙ୍କା ଆଉ ଜମିବାଡ଼ିରୁ ମିଳିଯିବା ଆମ ପାଇଁ ଢେର । ପିଲାଙ୍କ ରୋଜଗାର ଭୋଗ କରିବାକୁ କେତେ ବା ଆୟୁଷ ବାକିଥାଏ ଯେ ବାପାମା’ଙ୍କର? ଇଶ୍ୱରଙ୍କ ଗଣିତ ହିସାବ ବଡ଼ ତମକାର । ବୁଢ଼ାବୁଢ଼ୀମାନେ ଯଦି ଚିରକାଳ ବଞ୍ଚନ୍ତେ ତେବେ ପିଲାମାନେ କି ନାରଖାର ଦୁଃଖ ସେକଥା ତୁମେ ସବୁ ଭାବିପାରିବ ନାହିଁ । ତେଣୁ ସେଥିପାଇଁ ମୋର କିଛି ଚିନ୍ତା ନାହିଁ । ବସିଥିବି ଟଳିପଡ଼ିବି ଏତିକି ସବୁଦିନ ଠାକୁରଙ୍କୁ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା କରେ । ଧରେ ଶୂଳ ଖାଇଥିଲି ବୋଲି ଜୀବନସାରା ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ଭୋଗେଇବି ସେକଥା ଯେପରି ମୋ ଭାଗ୍ୟରେ ଲେଖା ନଥାଉ! ତୁମ ପିଲେ ତୁମ ଭଳି କେତେକଥାରୁ ବଞ୍ଚିତ ନହୁଅନ୍ତୁ ବୋଲି ତାଙ୍କରି ପାଇଁ

ଏତେ କଷ୍ଟରେ ପାଠ ପଢ଼ିଛ, ଆମ ପାଇଁ ନୁହେଁ ।” ସତକୁ ସତ ବୋଉ ଯେମିତି ଭବିଷ୍ୟତ ଦେଖିଥିଲା । ବସୁ ବସୁ ଟଳିପଡ଼ିଲା ଆଉ ଅସମୟରେ ଚାଲିଗଲା । ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ ସ୍କୁଲରେ ପଢୁଥିଲେ । ବୋଉକୁ ହରାଇବାର ଶୋକ ବଡ଼ତ୍ର ପିଲାଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ବଡ଼ ପଡ଼ିଲା ଭଳି ଲାଗିଲା ସିନା ଚାକିରିରୁ ଅବସର ନେଇଥିବା ବାପାଙ୍କ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଉପରେ ଆକାଶ ଛିଡ଼ିଗଲା ଭଳି ଲାଗିଥିବ ।

ବାପାବୋଉଙ୍କ ପ୍ରେମ କେମିତି ଥିଲା - କେମିତି ମଧୁର, କେତେ ଗଭୀର, କେତେ ରୋମାଣ୍ଟିକ୍ ପିଲାଏ ତା’ର ଟେର ପାଇନଥିଲେ କେବେ । ଛୁଟି ମିଳିଲେ ବାପା ଆସନ୍ତି, ବୋଉ ବାଟ ଚାହିଁ ବସିଥାଏ । ବାପା ଆସୁଛନ୍ତି, ସଫାସୁତରା ପିନ୍ଧି, ବହିଧରି ବସ ବୋଲି ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ଚାରିଦ୍ କରୁଥାଏ । ପିଲାଏ ମନଦେଇ ପଢୁଛନ୍ତି, ବୋଉର କଥା ମାନୁଛନ୍ତି, ଚଗଲା ହେଉନାହାନ୍ତି, ସଫାସୁତରା ରହୁଛନ୍ତି, ଦେଖିଲେ ବାପା ଖୁସି ହୋଇଯିବେ ବୋଲି ଗୁଣ୍ଡୁଗୁଣ୍ଡୁ ହେଉଥାଏ । ବାପା ଘରକୁ ଆସିଲେ ବାପା ଭଲ ପାଉଥିବା ଖାଦ୍ୟ ରାନ୍ଧିବାଡ଼ି ପରଷିଦେବା ବୋଉର ପ୍ରଥମ କାମ । ପାଖରେ ବସି ବଳେଇ ବଳେଇ ଖୁଆଏ । ଏଡ଼େ କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ଷମ ବାପାଙ୍କ ଗୋଡ଼ ଘରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିବା ମାତ୍ରେ କେଜାଣି କାହିଁକି ଘୋଳେଇ ହୁଏ । ସବୁଦିନ ଖରାବେଳେ, ରାତିରେ ବୋଉ ତାଙ୍କ ଗୋଡ଼ ଘଷୁଥାଏ । ସହରରୁ ଆଣିଥିବା ମଇଳା ଲୁଗାପଟା ସଫାକରି ଯତ୍ନରେ ଚଉତି ବ୍ୟାଗରେ ସଜାଡ଼ିଦିଏ । ବାପାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ରୁଡ଼ାଭଜା, ମୁଢ଼ିମୁଆଁ, ଆରିସା ପିଠା, ଗୁଆଘିଅ ଆଦି ବାନ୍ଧିଦିଏ । ବାପା ସହରକୁ ଫେରିଯିବା ବେଳେ ପ୍ରତିଥର ବାରିପଟ ବାଇଗବା ବାଡ଼ ଆଡ଼େଇ ଏକାଲୟରେ ଚାହିଁଥାଏ ବାପା ବସ୍ ଧରିବାକୁ ଯିବା ରାସ୍ତାରେ ଅତୃଷ୍ଣା ହେବାଯାଏ । ବାସ୍, ଯାକୁ ହିଁ କହନ୍ତି ପ୍ରେମ? ଏ ଯୁଗର ପ୍ରେମର କିଛି ବି ଚିତ୍ରକଳ୍ପ ଦିଶେନାହିଁ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କୁ । ବାପାବୋଉଙ୍କ ଦାମ୍ପତ୍ୟର ମଧୁରତାକୁ ମନେପକାଇଲେ କିଛି ବି ମଧୁ ସେଥିରୁ ଝରିବାର ଅନୁଭବ କରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ । ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କର କେବଳ କୁଚ୍ଛ ସାଧନା ଏଗାର ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ମଣିଷ କରିବା ପାଇଁ । ଏଗାର ପିଲା ଜନ୍ମ କରିବା କ’ଣ ପ୍ରେମ? କେଡ଼େ ଅନ୍ୟାୟ! ବୋଉର ଜନ୍ମଚାରିଖ ଓ ଜନ୍ମତିଥିଟିଏ ଥିଲା ବୋଲି ପିଲାମାନେ କେବେହେଲେ ଭାବିନଥିଲେ । କେବଳ ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ଚାରିଖଟି ମନେରଖିଛନ୍ତି । କାରଣ ବୋଉର ଜନ୍ମଦିନ କେବେହେଲେ ପାଳନ ହୋଇନଥିଲା ତାଙ୍କ ଘରେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ବାପାଙ୍କ ଜନ୍ମଦିନରେ କେତେ କ’ଣ କରେ ଯେ ବୋଉ ପିଲାଏ ବାପାଙ୍କୁ ଈର୍ଷା କରନ୍ତି । ବୋଉର କୌଣସି ସ୍ମରଣୀୟ ଦିନ ଯଥା- ବିବାହବାର୍ଷିକୀ ଆଦିରେ ବାପା କେବେ ବୋଉର ଅଯତ୍ନ ଗଭାରେ ଫୁଲଟିଏ ଖୋସିଦେଇଥିବାର ନଜିର୍ ନାହିଁ ।

କିନ୍ତୁ ବୋଉ ଯିବା ପରେ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ସାମ୍ନାରେ ନିଃସଙ୍ଗୋତରେ ବୋଉର ଓଡ଼ିଆଦିଆ ସୁନ୍ଦର ଫଟୋରେ ପ୍ରତିବର୍ଷ ଶ୍ରାଦ୍ଧଦିବସରେ ଫୁଲମାଳ ପିନ୍ଧାଇ ଦିଅନ୍ତି ବାପା । ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ କହୁଥିଲେ - “ତୁମ ବୋଉ କିଛି ଭୋଗ କରିବାକୁ ଆସିନଥିଲା, ଖାଲି ମୋ ପାଇଁ, ମୋ ପରିବାର ପାଇଁ, ମୋ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଖଟିଖଟି ମରିଯିବା

ପାଇଁ ଜନ୍ମ ହୋଇଥିଲା । ବଡ଼ପୁଅର ବାହାଘରଟା ବି ଦେଖିବା ପାଇଁ ଆୟୁଷ ପାଇନଥିଲା । ବଞ୍ଚିଥିଲେ ତୁମମାନଙ୍କ ପରିପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଘରସଂସାର ଦେଖି କେତେ ଯେ ଖୁସି ହୋଇଥାନ୍ତା । ମୋ ସହ ଦୁଃଖଅଭାବରେ ସହଭାଗିନୀ ହେଲା, ସୁଖରେ ଭାଗ ବସାଇବା ପାଇଁ ରହିଲା ନାହିଁ ।”

ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ ଏବେ ଭାବନ୍ତି ଯାକୁ ହିଁ କ’ଣ କୁହାଯାଏ ପ୍ରେମ! ବଞ୍ଚିଥିବା ବେଳେ ‘ଆଇ ଲଭ୍ ୟୁ’ ‘ଡାର୍ଲିଙ୍ଗ’, ‘ମାଇଁ ସ୍ପ୍ରିଙ୍ଗ୍ ହାର୍ଟ’ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ପ୍ରେମର ସଂଳାପ ବୋଉକୁ କେବେହେଲେ କହିନଥିଲେ ବାପା । କେବେ କେମିତି ବୋଉକୁ ‘କିସ୍’ଟିଏ ଗିଫ୍ଟ ଦେବାର ପିଲାଙ୍କ ଆଖିରେ ପଡ଼ିନାହିଁ । ଅଥଚ ପ୍ରେମ! ପ୍ରେମର ଅର୍ଥ କ’ଣ ଗୋଟିକ ପରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଏଗାର ପିଲା ଓ ଚାରିପାଞ୍ଚୋଟି ଗର୍ଭଭଙ୍ଗ ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଖଟିବା? ହେ ଭଗବାନ! ଏବେ ତ ଝିଅମାନେ କହିଲେଣି - ସେମାନେ ପିଲା ଜନ୍ମ କରିବା ମେସିନ୍ ନୁହନ୍ତି, କେବଳ ପ୍ରେମ କରିବେ, ପିଲାଜନ୍ମ କରିବେ ନାହିଁ । ଅନାଥ ବା ଦରିଦ୍ର ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କୁ ପୋଷ୍ୟସନ୍ତାନ କରି ଆଣିବେ । ପୁରୁଷମାନେ ଉତ୍ତମାନଗରେ ବାପା ହେବେ, ମୋ ପିଲା ବୋଲି ଛାତି ଫୁଲାଇ ଚାଲିବେ ଆଉ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀମାନେ ଗର୍ଭକଷ୍ଟ ସହିବେ! ଗର୍ଭକଷ୍ଟ କାହିଁକି ବା ସହିବେ, ଏବେ ତ ସିନିଆନ୍ ବେବି କୁଆଡ଼େ ବେଶି ବୁଝିମାନ ହୁଅନ୍ତି ବୋଲି ତାଙ୍କୁ କହିଲେଣି । କିନ୍ତୁ ତା’ ସନ୍ତେ ନିଜ ପେଟଟାକୁ ଚିରିବେ କାହିଁକି? ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ ମନେ ମନେ ଭାବନ୍ତି ତାଙ୍କ ସରଳା ଗାଉଁଲି ବୋଉ ଏହି ଜଟିଳ ପ୍ରେମଗଣିତକୁ ବୁଝିପାରିନଥାନ୍ତା । ସେ ତ ଭାବିଥାନ୍ତା - “ପ୍ରେମ କରିବ, ଅଥଚ ଗର୍ଭଧାରଣ କରିବ ନାହିଁ ଏ କିପରି କଥା?” ଗୋଟିଏ ପିଢ଼ିରେ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ଆଖି ସାମ୍ନାରେ ଜୀବନଚିତ୍ର ଓ ପ୍ରେମର ଅଭିଧାନ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ବଦଳିଗଲା । ସ୍ୱାମୀର ଅଜ୍ଞାତରେ ଗର୍ଭଭଙ୍ଗ କରିଦେବାରୁ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗ ବିମ୍ବାଧରର ପୁଅର ବିବାହବିଚ୍ଛେଦ ହୋଇଗଲା । ଆଉସବୁ ସାଙ୍ଗମାନଙ୍କର ପିଲାମାନେ ‘ଲିଭ୍ ଇନ୍ ରିଲେସନ୍ସିପ୍’କୁ ପସନ୍ଦ କରନ୍ତି କିନ୍ତୁ ବିବାହକୁ ଅପସନ୍ଦ କରନ୍ତି । କାରଣ ବିବାହରେ ଅନେକ ଦାୟିତ୍ୱ ଓ ଆଇନଗତ ଝମେଲା । ବିଶେଷକରି ପିଲାଛୁଆଙ୍କ ଜଞ୍ଜାଳ । ଜୀବନସାରା ଗୋଲକପନ୍ଦାରେ ପଡ଼ିବା ଅବସ୍ଥା ।

ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ ଭାବନ୍ତି - ଆରେ ବାବୁ କେହି ଯଦି ପିଲା ପ୍ରସବିବେ ନାହିଁ ତେବେ କାଳକ୍ରମେ ଆଉ ଅନାଥ ପିଲା ମିଳିବେ ନାହିଁ ଯେ - ଶେଷରେ ମଣିଷପ୍ରଜାତିଟି ଲୋପ ପାଇଯିବ - ତା’ପରେ? କରୁଥା ପ୍ରେମ!

ସାଇବର୍ନେଟିକ୍ ଯୁଗରେ ରୋବୋମାନଙ୍କୁ କୁଆଡ଼େ ସନ୍ତାନ ଭାବରେ ଗ୍ରହଣ କରିହେବ । ସେମାନେ ସବୁ କାମ କରିବେ । ବସ୍ତୁତ୍ୱ ହେବେ । କେତେ ବା ଆୟୁଷ ମଣିଷର । ଅସ୍ଥାୟୀ ଜୀବନଟା ପାଇଁ ସ୍ଥାୟୀ ଜଞ୍ଜାଳ ମୁଣ୍ଡାଇ ଅଧ୍ୟାତ୍ମିକତା ଜରାବ୍ୟାପି ଭୋଗିବା ଭଳି ଇତିଯତ୍ ଆଉ ଏ ଯୁଗର ପିଲା ନୁହନ୍ତି । ଏମିତି କଥା ବି ଶୁଣିବା ପାଇଁ ମିଳିଲାଣି । ତେଣୁ

ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ବାପାବୋଉଙ୍କ ସରଳ ପ୍ରେମକଥା ପିଲାଏ ଆଉ ବୁଝିପାରିବେ ନାହିଁ । ଆଉ କିଛି ପିଢ଼ି ପରେ ପିଲେ ଭାବିବେ ସେକାଳର ପିଲାପ୍ରସବକାରୀ ମଣିଷଗୁଡ଼ାକ ମଣିଷପ୍ରଜାତିର ନଥିଲେ । ସେମାନେ ଆଉ କୌଣସି ପ୍ରଜାତିର ଜୀବ ହୋଇଥିବେ ।

ମନେପଡ଼େ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କର - ସେଦିନ ପୁରୁଣା ଖାତାଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଭିତରେ ଏକ ବିରଳ ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଖାତା ଆଖିରେ ପଡ଼ିଲା ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କର । ଏଗାର ଭାଇଭଉଣୀଙ୍କ ଭିତରୁ କାହାରି ଅକ୍ଷର ସେ ନଥିଲା । ବାପାଙ୍କ ପୋଖତ ଅକ୍ଷର ବି ସେ ନଥିଲା । ତେବେ କାହାର ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଖାତା? ଚାରିଖ ପଡ଼ିଥିଲା, ଅ ଠାରୁ କ୍ଷ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଧାଡ଼ି ଧାଡ଼ି ଲେଖା ହୋଇଥିଲା ଅକ୍ଷରଗୁଡ଼ିକ । ଯନ୍ତ୍ରରେ ଲେଖା ହୋଇଥିଲେ ବି ଏତେ ପୋଖତ ଅକ୍ଷର ନଥିଲା । କୋମଳ ଅକ୍ଷରଗୁଡ଼ିଏ ଲାଜ ଲାଜ ହୋଇ ମୁଁ ହସୁଥିଲେ । ପୃଷ୍ଠାଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଓଲଟାଇ ଦେଖୁ ଦେଖୁ ବାପାଙ୍କ ମୁହଁକୁ ବାଉଳା ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରେ ଚାହିଁଲା ସେଦିନ ତରୁଣ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ - ଅର୍ଥାତ୍ ଏଇଟା କାହାର ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଖାତା? ବାପାଙ୍କର ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ଖାତାଟି ଉପରେ ପଡ଼ିବା ମାତ୍ରେ ଚର୍ଚ୍ଚ କରି ଟାଣିନେଲେ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ ହାତରୁ । ଅକ୍ଷରଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଉପରେ ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ପଡ଼ିବା ମାତ୍ରେ ବାପାଙ୍କ ମୁହଁରେ ମୁଗ୍ଧବିଭୋର ଅଥଚ କରୁଣ କୋମଳଗାନ୍ଧାରର ଆରୋହ ଅବରୋହ ଖେଳିଯାଇଥିଲା ସ୍ମୃତିର ଘୋଷାପଦ ସହ । ନିଜର କୁଞ୍ଚିକାନିରେ ଅତି ନରମ କରି ଅକ୍ଷର ଉପରୁ ଜଞ୍ଜାଳଗ୍ରସ୍ତ ଅତୀତର ଧୂଳି ଝାଡୁ ଝାଡୁ ଦରଦୀ ସ୍ୱରରେ ବାପା କହିଲେ - “ଏଇଟା ତୋ ବୋଉର ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଖାତା । ସେ ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ଅ ଠାରୁ କ୍ଷ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ତୁମମାନଙ୍କୁ ଲୁଚାଇ ଲୁଚାଇ ଲେଖୁଥିଲା ।”

“ବୋଉ କାହିଁକି ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଲେଖୁଥିଲା?” ବିସ୍ମୟରେ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ କରିଥିଲା ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ ।

ଉଦାସ ମୁହଁ ଉପରେ କୁଣ୍ଠିତ ମଧୁର ସ୍ମିତ ଫୁଟାଇ ବାପା କହିଲେ - “ତୋ ବୋଉ ମତେ ତୁମମାନଙ୍କ ବିଷୟରେ ଚିଠି ଲେଖିବା ପାଇଁ ଅକ୍ଷରକୁ ସୁନ୍ଦର କରୁଥିଲା । କାରଣ ସେ ଜାଣିଥିଲା ସୁନ୍ଦର ଅକ୍ଷର ପ୍ରତି ମୋର ଅହେତୁକ ଦୁର୍ବଳତା ଥିଲା । ଥରେ ବୋଉ କହିଥିଲା - “ପିଲାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଚିନ୍ତା କରନାହିଁ । ମୁଁ ଅବନୀ ଅକ୍ଷରରେ ଚିଠି ଲେଖି ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କ କଥା ଜଣାଇବି । ତୁମଭଳି ପଣ୍ଡିତ ଲୋକ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଚିଠି ପଢ଼ି ବୁଝିପାରିବ ।”

ମୁଁ ତାକୁ ରସିକତା ଛଳରେ କହିଥିଲି - “ଅବନୀ ଅକ୍ଷର ମୋ ପାଇଁ ସମସ୍ୟା ହେବ ନାହିଁ । ଆଗ ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଲେଖି ସୁନ୍ଦର ଅକ୍ଷର କର, ତା’ପରେ ମତେ ଚିଠି ଲେଖିଲେ ମୁଁ ଖୁସି ହେବି ।” ବାସ୍ତବେ ସେଦିନଠାରୁ ବୋଉର ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଲେଖା ଚାଲିଲା ଯେ ଆଉ ସରିଲାନି । ବଡ଼ ନିଷ୍ଠାରେ ଲେଖୁଥିଲା ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର । ନିଜ ପୁରୁଣାଖାତାଗୁଡ଼ିକ ତୁମ ଖାତାସହ ବିକି ଦେଉଥିଲା । ଏହି ଖଣ୍ଡକ କେମିତି ଭୁଲ୍ରେ ରହିଯାଇଛି କେଜାଣି? ବାପା

ଅକ୍ଷରଗୁଡ଼ିକ ଯାଉଥିଲେ । ଯେମିତି କି ବୋଉକୁ ଆଶ୍ୱାସନା ଦେଉଥିଲେ ଯେ “ତୁମ ଅକ୍ଷର ସୁନ୍ଦର ହୋଇଗଲାଣି । ଏବେ ତୁମେ ମତେ ଚିଠି ଲେଖିପାର ।” ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ କହିଲେ - ବୋଉର ଅକ୍ଷର ତ ବେଶ୍ ଭଲ ବାପା । ଏ ଗାଁରେ କାହାରି ବୋଉର ଅକ୍ଷର ଏପରି ସୁନ୍ଦର ନଥିବ । ଆମ ଶ୍ରେଣୀର କେତେ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ଅକ୍ଷର ତ ବିଲେଇ ମଇଳା । ବୋଉ କ’ଣ ତୁମକୁ ଚିଠି ଲେଖୁଥିଲା? ଆମ ଦୁଷ୍ମାମି କଥା ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଲେଖୁଥିବ । ବୋଉକୁ ବହୁତ ହଇରାଣ କରୁଥିଲୁ ଆମେ । ଆମ ଯତ୍ନ ନେଉ ନେଉ ନିଜର ଯତ୍ନ ନେଲାଣି, ଠିକ୍ ସମୟରେ ଖାଇଲାଣି, ବିଶ୍ରାମ ନେଲାଣି, ରୋଗ ଲୁଟାଇଲା ଓ ଛୁଟକରି ଚାଲିଗଲା । ଏ ସବୁ କଥା ସେ କ’ଣ ଲେଖିଥିଲା ତୁମକୁ? ମୁଁ ତ ବେଶି ହଇରାଣ କରୁଥିଲି ତାକୁ । ସେ ଏତେଶୀଘ୍ର ଚାଲିଯିବ ଜାଣିଥିଲେ ମୁଁ ସୁନାପିଲା ହୋଇ ରହିଥାନ୍ତି ବାପା ।” ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ କଣ୍ଠରୋଧ ହୋଇଥିଲା ସେଦିନ ।

ବାପା ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଖାତାକୁ ଚାହିଁ ପ୍ରେମଭରା ସ୍ୱରରେ କହିଲେ - “ମତେ ଆଉ ଚିଠି ଲେଖିପାରିଲା କୋଉଠୁ? ତା’ ନିଜ ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର କାଳେ ମୋର ମନକୁ ଯିବ ନାହିଁ ବୋଲି ସେ ଜୀବନସାରା ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଲେଖି ଚାଲିଥିଲା । ବେମାର ହେବା ପରେ ସେ ଆଉ ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଲେଖିପାରୁ ନଥିଲା । ହାତ ଥରୁଥିଲା, ଅକ୍ଷର ବଙ୍କାଟଙ୍କା ହୋଇଯାଉଥିଲା । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ସେ ଦୁଃଖ କରୁଥିଲା । ଦେହ ଭଲ ହୋଇଗଲେ ଅକ୍ଷରସାଧନା କରି ମତେ ଘରର ହାଲୁଚାଲୁ ଜଣାଇ ଚିଠି ଲେଖିବ ବୋଲି କଥା ଦେଇଥିଲା । ତା’ ବି ସମ୍ଭବ ହେଲାଣି । ଚିଠି ଲେଖିବା ଆଗରୁ ସେ ଚାଲିଗଲା । ସେ ତ ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଖାତାରେ ଅ ଠାରୁ କ୍ଷ ଯାଏଁ ଅକ୍ଷର ସୁନ୍ଦର କରି ମତେ ହିଁ ଚିଠି ଲେଖୁଥିଲା । ବିଶ୍ୱାସ କର, ତା’ ଅକ୍ଷର ମତେ କେବେହେଲେ ଦେଖାଏ ନାହିଁ । ଅକ୍ଷର ସୁନ୍ଦର ହେଲେ ଦେଖାଇବ ବୋଲି କହିଥିଲା । ଆଜି ତା’ର ସୁନ୍ଦର ଅକ୍ଷର ପ୍ରଥମକରି ଦେଖିଲି । ଆଉ ଅଧିକ କ’ଣ ଲେଖିଥାନ୍ତା କିରେ? ପ୍ରେମ କ’ଣ ଏମିତି ଗୋଟିଏ ଉପରଠାଉରିଆ ଜିନିଷ ଯେ ତାକୁ ଅକ୍ଷରରେ ଲେଖିଦେଇ ଦୁଏ?” ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ ବୋଉର ଅକ୍ଷର ଆଉଥରେ ଦେଖିବା ପାଇଁ ବାପାଙ୍କ ଆଡ଼କୁ ହାତ ବଢ଼ାଇଲା ।

ବାପା ଖାତା ଖଣ୍ଡକ କାଖରେ ଜାକିଦେଇ କହିଲେ - “ଏ ଖାତାଖଣ୍ଡକ ଥାଉ । ଦିନେ ତ ମାତୃଭାଷାର ଅକ୍ଷର ସବୁ ହଜିଯିବ । ତୋ ବୋଉର ଏ ପ୍ରେମପତ୍ର ଖଣ୍ଡକ ମୁ୍ୟଜିୟମ୍‌ରେ ସ୍ଥାନ ପାଇବ । ତୁମ ପିଲାମାନେ ମୁ୍ୟଜିୟମ୍‌ରେ ଯାକୁ ଦେଖିବେ” - ମୁଁ କହିରଖୁଛି । ବାପା ଖାତାଖଣ୍ଡକ ନେଇ ଗୋପନରେ ପ୍ରେମପତ୍ର ପଢ଼ିବାକୁ ଯିବାପରି ଘର ଭିତରକୁ ଚାଲିଗଲେ । ଭିତରୁ କବାଟ ବନ୍ଦ କରିଦେଲେ । ବାପା ଇହଧାମରୁ ବିଦାୟ ନେବା ପରେ ବୋଉର ସେହି ବିରଳ ପ୍ରେମପତ୍ର ଲେଖାଥିବା ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଖାତାକୁ ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତ ରଖିଛନ୍ତି ତାଙ୍କ ଲାଇବ୍ରେରୀରେ । ଭାବିଛନ୍ତି ଏଥର ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଗଲେ ମୁ୍ୟଜିୟମ୍‌ରେ ଦାଖଲ

କରିଦେବେ । ଫଟୋକପି କରି ନିଜ ପାଖରେ ଖଣ୍ଡିଏ ରଖିବେ । “ମା’ ହାତଲେଖା ମାତୃଭାଷା” କ୍ୟାପ୍‌ସନ୍‌ଟି ବେଶ୍ ସୁନ୍ଦର ହେବ । କେଜାଣି ମୁ୍ୟଜିୟମ୍‌ରେ ରଖିବେ କି ନା! ବିଦ୍ୱାନ ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କ ଦ୍ୱାରା ଲିଖିତ କେତେ କେତେ ପୋଥି ତ ଗାଁ ଗାଁରେ ଉଠୁ ଖାଉଛି । ମା’ର ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଖାତାରେ ଜୀବନର କୋଉ ଦର୍ଶନ ବା ଅଛି ଯେ ମୁ୍ୟଜିୟମ୍‌ରେ ତାକୁ ସ୍ଥାନ ମିଳିବ? ବରଂ ଯଦି କ୍ୟାପ୍‌ସନ୍‌ଟି ଦିଆଯାଏ “ହସ୍ତାକ୍ଷର ଖାତାରେ ପ୍ରେମ” ତେବେ ଦୁଏତ ମୁ୍ୟଜିୟମ୍‌ରେ ସ୍ଥାନ ପାଇପାରେ । କାରଣ ଆଜିକାଲି ସବୁ ତ ଅଟକିଛି ସେହି ପ୍ରେମ ଶବ୍ଦ ପାଖରେ । ଜେଜେମା’କୁ ଆଦୌ ଦେଖିନଥିବା ପ୍ରିୟବ୍ରତଙ୍କ ଝିଅ ଅବଶ୍ୟା ଚାଲିମାରି କହିଲା - “କାହାଣୀର ପରିଣତି ଭାରି ସିମ୍ବଲିକ୍‌ ଡାହ । ପୁଣି ତୁମେ କାହାଣୀର ଚମତ୍କାର ଶୀର୍ଷକ ବି ଦେଇପାର । ଏହି ଶୀର୍ଷକ ଯୋଗୁଁ ମୁ୍ୟଜିୟମ୍‌ରେ ଦର୍ଶକଙ୍କ ସଂଖ୍ୟା ବଢ଼ିବ । ଆଜିକାଲି ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ଯେପରି ସିନେମା ହେଉଛି ମୁଁ କହିରଖୁଛି, ଏହି ଶୀର୍ଷକରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ସିନେମାଟିଏ ବି ହେବ । ତୁମ ବାପାବୋଉଙ୍କର ପ୍ରେମ ଅମରଗାଥା ହୋଇଯିବ ।”

ଆଖ୍ୟାୟିକା,
୨୭, ଗଜପତି ନଗର,
ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର



ବାଲ୍ମକନିରେ ଫୁଲକୁଣ୍ଡ

ପାରମିତା ଶତପଥୀ



ଠିକ୍ ଦିନ ଏଗାରଟାବେଳେ ବାଲ୍ମକନି ବାଡ଼ାରେ ଥିବା ଷୋହଳଟା ଫୁଲକୁଣ୍ଡରେ ପାଣିଦିଏ ସେ । ଶୀତଦିନ ସାରା ତିନିଟା ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛା ପିନ୍ଧି, ତା'ଉପରେ ଚଦର ଘୋଡେଇ ହେଇ, ହାତରେ କଳାରଙ୍ଗର ଦସ୍ତାନା ପିନ୍ଧି - କଳା ରଙ୍ଗର - ହୁଁ ତ - କଳା ରଙ୍ଗର । ସାମନା ଫ୍ଲୋର ବାଲ୍ମକନିରୁ ସେ ବାରିପାରେ ରଙ୍ଗ । ଖରାଦିନେ ହଳଦିଆ ପତଳା ବ୍ଲାଉଜ୍ ସହ ମେରୁନ୍ ରଙ୍ଗର ଶାଢ଼ୀରେ ପତଳା ଜରି ଧରି । ଛଅଟା କୁଣ୍ଡରେ ପାଣି ଦେଇ ସାରିଲା ପରେ ମୁଣ୍ଡଟେକେ ସେ । ଜାଣିପାରେ ଲୋକଜଣକ ସାମନା ବାଲ୍ମକନିରୁ ଅନିଷା କରିଛି ତା'କୁ । ଏଗାରଟା ବାଜିବାକୁ ଦଶମିନିଟ୍ ଥାଏ, ସେ ବାଲ୍ମକନିକୁ ଆସେ । ବେତର ତେଆର୍ ଉପରେ ବସିପଡ଼ି ଖବରକାଗଜ ଲମ୍ବେଇ ରଖେ ମୁହଁ ଉପରେ ଆବୁଆଳ କରି, ଆଡେଇ କରି ସାମନା ବାଲ୍ମକନିକୁ ଚାହିଁ ରହେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋକଟି ପାଣିଦେବାକୁ ଆସିବା ଯାଏଁ । ଛଅଟା କୁଣ୍ଡରେ ପାଟିଦେଲା ବେଳେ ଓ ତା'ପର ଦଶଟା କୁଣ୍ଡରେ ପାଣିଦେଲାବେଳେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋକଟି ଜାଣିପାରେ ପୁରୁଷ ଲୋକଟି ତା'କୁ ଚାହୁଁଛି ଖବର କାଗଜ ଆବୁଆଳରୁ । ତା'ର ମୋଟା ଚଷମାରୁ ଟିକିଏ ଦିଶୁଛି । ଚଷମାଟା ମାଟିଆ ରଙ୍ଗର - ସେ ବାରିପାରେ ଓ ସେତିକିବେଳୁ ତା'ମୁହଁରେ ନାଲି ରଙ୍ଗ ଚହଟେ ଦିନ ବି'ପହର ଯାଏଁ ।

ଅଥଚ ସେମାନେ ପରସ୍ପରକୁ ଜାଣନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ । ପରସ୍ପରର ନା' ଜାଣିବା ତ ଦୂରର କଥା । ତିନିଟା ଶୀତ ଗଲାଣି ଏମିତି । ଏଇଟା ତୃତୀୟାଃ । ଦିଲ୍ଲୀରେ ଏମିତିରେ ଖୁବ୍ ଗରମ । ଖରାଦିନ ଯେମିତି ଜାଲି ପୋତିଦିଏ - ଚାତିଲା କଡେଇରେ ମାଛ ଭାଜିଲା ପରି ଛଟପଟ ସମସ୍ତେ । ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋକଟି ତରତର ହେଇ ପାଣିଦିଏ ଫୁଲ କୁଣ୍ଡରେ ଓ ତରତର ହେଇ ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ପକାଏ ସାମନା ବାଲ୍ମକନିକୁ । ପୁରୁଷ ଲୋକଟିକୁ ବି ଭାରି ଗରମ ହେଉଥାଏ । ଭୁ କୁଞ୍ଚେଇ ଖବର କାଗଜ ଆବୁଆଳରୁ ଚାହିଁଥାଏ ସେ ।

ପୁରୁଷ ଲୋକଟି ଅସ୍ଥିର ହେଉଥାଏ । ଖବରକାଗଜଟି ଭାଙ୍ଗି ରଖିଦିଏ । ହଠାତ୍ ଉଠିପଡ଼ି ସାମନା ବାଲ୍ମକନିକୁ ସିଧାସିଧି ଚାହିଁ, ବାଲ୍ମକନି ବାଡ଼ାରେ ଦି'ହାତ ଭରାରିଣି ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋକଟି ଆଡକୁ ମୁହଁକରେ । ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋକଟି ସେତେବେଳକୁ ଦଶମ ଫୁଲକୁଣ୍ଡରେ ପାଣିଦେଉଥାଏ । ମର୍ଦ୍ଦ ସହ ତା' ହାତ ରହିଯାଏ । ସେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସାମନା ବାଲ୍ମକନି ଆଡକୁ ଲୋକଟି ଆଡକୁ ମୁହଁ ବୁଲାଏ । ତା'ପରେ ଗୋଟାଏ ଅଛୁଟ କଥା ହୁଏ । ପୁରୁଷ ଲୋକଟି ଗୋଟିଏ, ଏ-ଟ ଆକାର କାଗଜର ଅଧାଖଣ୍ଡ ଉପରକୁ ଉଠାଇ ଦେଖାଏ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋକଟିକୁ ଓ ବାଲ୍ମକନି ଆଡକୁ ପକାଇଲା ପରି

କରେ । ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋକଟି ଚମକି ପଡେ ଓ କାଗଜଟିକୁ ଯେମିତି ଧରି ପକାଇବ ସେମିତି ମନକୁ ମନ ହାତ ଉଠିଯାଏ ତା'ର । ମର୍ଦ୍ଦଟା ବାଲ୍ମକନିରେ ପଡିଯାଏ । ପୁରୁଷ ଲୋକଟି କାଗଜ ଖଣ୍ଡଟା ପକାଇ ନଥାଏ । ସେମିତି ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋକଟିକୁ ଚାହିଁ ରହି ସେ ଗୁଳାଟେ କରେ, ତା' ଭିତରେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋକଟିକୁ ଦେଖାଇ ଗୋଟିଆ ପଥରଟିଏ ରଖେ ଓ ସାମନା ବାଲ୍ମକନିକୁ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ କରି ଫିଙ୍ଗେ । ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତକରେ ବାଲ୍ମକନିଆଡକୁ ଫିଟିଥିବା କବାଟରେ ବାଜେ କାଗଜଗୁଳାଟା ଓ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋକଟି ବୁଲିପଡି ଦେଖେ ତା'କୁ । ତା' ଛାତି ଧଡ଼ପଡ଼ ହେଉଥାଏ ତେବେ ବି ସେ ଚଞ୍ଚଳ କରି ବୁଲିପଡି କାଗଜଗୁଳାକୁ ଉଠାଏ । ତା'କୁ ଖୋଲିଲାବେଳକୁ ତା' ହାତ ଥରୁଥାଏ ।

-ମୁଁ ସୁଗତୋ ଘୋଷ । ମୋବାଇଲ୍ - ୮୭୯୦୦୨୫୪୩୧ ।
ଦୟାକରି ତୁମ ମୋବାଇଲ୍ ନମ୍ବର ଦିଅ ।

ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋକଟି ମୋତିମାତି ହେଇ ଯାଇଥିବା କାଗଜଖଣ୍ଡକୁ ସାଉଁଲେଇ ସିଧାକରୁଥାଏ ଓ ସାମନା ବାଲ୍ମକନିକୁ ଚାହିଁ ଟିକିଏ ହସିଦିଏ । ସୁଗତୋ ଘୋଷ ସେମିତି ବାଲ୍ମକନି ବାଡ଼ାକୁ ଭରା ଦେଇ ଠିଆହୋଇଥାଏ । ତା'ଆଡକୁ ଟିକିଏ ଚାହିଁ ଓ ମୁହଁ ବୁଲାଇ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋକଟି ଘର ଭିତରକୁ ପଶେ ଓ ପ୍ରାୟ ପାଞ୍ଚ ମିନିଟ୍ ପରେ କାଗଜଖଣ୍ଡରୁ ଚେକାଏ ଶୁଖିଲା ମାଟି ଉଠେଇ କାଗଜ ଗୁଳା ଭିତରେ ରଖେ ଓ ସାମନା ବାଲ୍ମକନିକୁ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ କରି ଫୋପାଡେ । ଉଡୁଥିବା କାଗଜ ଗୁଳାକୁ ଟାକି ରହିଥାଏ ସୁଗତୋ । ନା - କାଗଜଗୁଳା ତା'ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ସ୍ଥଳରେ ପହଞ୍ଚେ ନାହିଁ । ମଝିରେ ଖସିଯାଏ ଓ ପାଞ୍ଚମହଲା ବିଶିଷ୍ଟ ଦୁଇଟି ଫ୍ଲୋର୍ ସମୁଦ୍ଧର ମଝି ସ୍ୱଳ୍ପ ଶୂନ୍ୟସ୍ଥାନରେ ପଡେ । ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋକଟି ନିରାଶ ହୋଇଯାଏ । ପୁରୁଷ ଲୋକଟି ହସିଦିଏ ଟିକିଏ । ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋକଟି ପୁଣି ଘର ଭିତରକୁ ଯାଏ ଓ ଏଥର ଅଧିକ ଶକ୍ତି ଦେଇ ଠିକ୍ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ କରି ସାମନା ବାଲ୍ମକନିକୁ କାଗଜଗୁଳା ପକାଏ । ସାମନା ବାଲ୍ମକନିରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଯାଏ କାଗଜଗୁଳା । ପୁରୁଷ ଲୋକଟି ତରତର ହେଇ ଉଠେଇନିଏ ତା'କୁ ଓ ପଢ଼େ -

ମାଲଥୀ ନାମ୍ନିଆର୍ - ୯୮୧୨୩୫୪୦୪

ମୁଁ ଅଢ଼େଇବର୍ଷ ହେଲା ଏଇଠି ଅଛି - ସୁଗତୋ ଲେଖେ
ଝାଟ୍‌ସଂପର ।

- ମୁଁ ବି ପାଖାପାଖି ସେତିକିବେଳକୁ ଆସିଲି । ସୁଦୂର
କେରଳରୁ । କେରଳରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଜାଗା ଅଛି ଆଲୋପି -

ସେଇଠୁ ।

- ମୁଁ ମଧ୍ୟ କଲିକତାରୁ ଆସିଲି । ଏତେଦିନ ସେଇଠି ରହିଲାପରେ ଜାଣିପାରୁନି ଏଇଠି କେମିତି ଲାଗିବ । ହଁ ଆଲୋପି ବିଷୟରେ ଶୁଣିଛି । ଖୁବ୍ ସୁନ୍ଦର ଜାଗା ଓ ଜଣାଶୁଣା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟଟନ ସ୍ଥଳୀ । ସେଇଠି କଣ ଘର ?
- ହଁ, ବହୁତ ପୁରୁଣା ଘର ସେଇଠି । ଦିଲ୍ଲୀରେ ସତରେ ଅଖାଉଆ ଲାଗୁଛି । କେତେ ଦିନ ଏଠି ରହିବାକୁ ପଡିବ କେଜାଣି ? ମନ ଲାଗୁନାହିଁ ଏଇ ଜାଗାରେ ।
- ମୋ ଅବସ୍ଥା ବି ଏକାପରି । କଲିକତାରେ ଗରିଆହାଟ୍‌ରେ ଘର । ମୋ ବାପାଙ୍କ ଅମଳର । କିଛି କିଛି ମରାମତି ମୁଁ କରିଥିଲି । ଭାବିଥିଲି ସେଇଠି ହିଁ ରହିବି । ହେଲେ . . . ତେବେ ଏଇ ତୁମକୁ ଫୁଲଗଛ କୁଣ୍ଡରେ ପାଣି ଦେଉଥିବା ଦେଖିବା ଦିନଠାରୁ ଲାଗୁଛି କିଛି ଗୋଟାଏ ଉତ୍ସାହ ଜନକ ଘଟଣା ଘଟୁଛି । ଏମିତି ନିରାଶ ହେବାର ନାହିଁ । (ତା'ପରେ ହସନ୍ତ ମୁହଁ-ସ୍ଥାପନ)
- ମୁଁ କିନ୍ତୁ ଫେରିଯିବି ଭାବୁଛି । ସେଇଠି ଆଉ ଭଉଣୀ ଭାଇ ଅଛନ୍ତି । ଏଇଠି ଯେମିତି ଗରମ ସେମିତି ଥଣ୍ଡା । ପାଣି ଦେଲାବେଳେ ତୁମକୁ ଖବରକାଗଜ ପଢୁଥିବା ଦେଖିବା ଅଭ୍ୟାସରେ ପଡିଗଲାଣି । ପଥର ଦିନ ବୋଧହୁଏ ତୁମେ ନଥିଲ । ଠିକ୍ ନା ?
- ହଁ, ହସ୍ତପିଟାଳ ଯାଇଥିଲି । ବାଁ କାନ୍ଧଟା ଭୀଷଣ ବିନ୍ଧୁଛି କିଛି ଦିନ ହେଲା । ଏମିତି ତରତର ହେଇ କେରଳ ଫେରି ଯାଆନା' । ଆସିଛୁ ଯଦି କିଛି ଦିନ ଆଉ ରହି ଦେଖ । ସତରେ ତୁମେ ଚାଲିଗଲେ ମୁଁ ଏକୁଟିଆ ହେଇଯିବି । (ଲୁହ ଝରେଇ କାନ୍ଦୁଥିବା ମୁହଁ)

- ଆରେ ଆରେ ମୁଁ କଣ ସତରେ ଚାଲିଯାଉଛି ଏବେ ? ମୋତେ ଆଜିକାଲି ଆଉ ଏତେ ନିରାଶ ଲାଗୁନାହିଁ । (ହସନ୍ତ ମୁହଁ)
ଝରକା ଦେଇ ଉଠିବି ତାହେଁ ମାଳଥୀ । ସୁଗତୋ ଦିଶୁଛି କି ଘର ଭିତରେ ? ନାଁ, ବାଲୁକନିରୁ ହିଁ ପରସ୍ପରକୁ ଦେଖିପାରନ୍ତି ସେମାନେ । ତେବେ ଯେ ବି କେମିତି ଦେଖାଦେଖି ? ଖାଲି ସୁଗତୋର ଧଳା ପଞ୍ଜାବୀ, ଲମ୍ବା ଚେହେରାକୁ ଦେଖିପାରେ ମାଳଥୀ । ବସମା ମୋଟା ଲେନ୍‌ସର ହେଇଥିବ ବୋଲି ଠଉରାଏ । ସୁଗତୋ ଦେଖେ କଳା ସ୍ପେଟର୍ ଉପରେ ମାଟିଆ ଚାଦର ବା ହଳଦିଆ ଲୁଗାଦି ସହ ମେରୁନ୍ ରଙ୍ଗର ଶାଢ଼ୀ ।

ନା, ସୁଗତୋର ମୁହଁ ଉପରକୁ ଝୁଲିଆସିଥିବା କେରାଏ ଧଳାକେଶକୁ ଦେଖିପାରେ ନାହିଁ ମାଳଥୀ । ମାଳଥୀର ବାଁ ଆଖି ତଳେ ଗୋରା ଗାଲ ଉପରେ ବଡ଼ କଳାଜାଇଟେ । ତା'କୁ ବି

କେମିତି ଦେଖିପାରନ୍ତା ସୁଗତୋ ଏତେ ଦୂରରୁ ?

ରକ୍ଷାବତ୍ତା କରୁଥିବା ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋକଟିକୁ ଟିକିଏ କାଞ୍ଚି କରିବାକୁ କହେ ମାଳଥୀ । ଏତିକିବେଳେ ଘରଯତୀ ସଫି କରୁଥିବା ଝିଅଟି ଆସି ପହଞ୍ଚେ । ତା'ର ଟିକିଏ ହାତ ସଫେଇ ଗୁଣ ଅଛି । ତେଣୁ ତା' ପଛେ ପଛେ ଘର ଭିତରେ ବୁଲିବାକୁ ହୁଏ । ଟିକିଏ ମୁହଁ ଆଡେଇଲେ ଅରାଏ ଜାଗା ନ ପୋଛି ଛାଡିଯାଏ ସେ । ରାତି ରକ୍ଷା ପାଇଁ ପରିବା ଅଛି କି ନାହିଁ ଫ୍ରିଜ୍ ଖୋଲି ପରଖିଦିଏ ମାଳଥୀ । ସମ୍ବର ପାଉଁଶ ସରିଯାଇଛି । ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାବେଳକୁ ଗୋଟାଏ ପ୍ୟାକେଟ୍ ମଗାଇବାକୁ ପଡିବ । ଆଗରୁ ଗୋଟା ମସଲାକୁ ମିଶ୍ଟିରେ ତୁରି ସମ୍ବର ମସଲା ବନାଉଥିଲା ସେ । ଏବେ ଆଉ ପାରୁନାହିଁ । ମନେ ରହୁନାହିଁ ସବୁକଥା । ଲେଖି ରଖିଦେବା ପାଇଁ ଟେବୁଲ ପାଖକୁ ଯାଏ ମାଳଥୀ । ହିଁ ଭିଟାମିନ୍ ଡି-୩ର ପ୍ୟାକେଟ୍ ମଧ୍ୟ ସରିଯାଇଛି ତା'ର ।

ପୋଇ ଶାଗ, ମାଛମୁଣ୍ଡ ଛେଷ୍ଟିତା ଓ ଭାତ ଟେବୁଲ୍ ଉପରେ ରଖାହେଇଛି । ତା'କୁଇ କାତ ପ୍ଲେଟ୍‌ରେ ଢାଳି ମାଇକ୍ରୋୱେଭ୍‌ରେ ଗରମ କରି ଖାଇବା କଥା । ତେବେ ତାଲି ଟିକିଏ ଦରକାର । ଚୋପାବାଲା ଫାଳ ମୁଗ ତାଲି ଥୁଆ ହେଇଛି ଫ୍ରିଜ୍‌ରେ । ଟିକିଏ ଗୋଟାଏ ବାଟିରେ କାଢିଆଣି ଗରମ କରି ଖାଇବା କଥା ଯାହା । ଫ୍ରିଜ୍ ଖୋଲି ଟିଫିନ୍ ଡବାଟା କାଢୁ କାଢୁ ଖୁବ୍ ଜୋର୍‌ରେ ମାରିଦିଏ ବାଁ କାନ୍ଧଟା, ଚିନ୍ ଚିନ୍ ହେଇ ଧରିଉଠେ ବାଁ ହାତ । କମ୍ପୁଥିବା ହାତରୁ ଟିଫିନ୍ ଡବାଟା ତଳେ ପଡିଯାଏ ଓ ଖୋଲିଯାଏ । ବାସ୍, ଫ୍ରିଜ୍ ସାମନାରେ, ଡବାଟା ଉପରେ ଢାଳି ହେଇ ଆଫ୍ରିକା ମାନଚିତ୍ରର ଆକାର ନିଏ ମୁଗତାଲି । ଆଉ ସୁଗତୋ ସେଇଆଡକୁ ଅବିଶ୍ୱାସ୍ୟ ଆଖିରେ ଚାହିଁରହେ । ଏତେବେଳେ ଘରେ କେହି ନଥାନ୍ତି । ରକ୍ଷା ସକାଳୁ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ ହେଇ ରହିଯାଏ । କେବଳ କେତେବେଳେ କେମିତି ଗରମ କରି ଖାଇବା କଥା । ଆଉ ଖାଇବ କଣ ? ଆଗ ଏତକ ପୋଛିବାକୁ ପଡିବ । କୋଉଠୁ କେମିତି କନା ଆଣି ପୋଛିବ ଏୟା' ଭାବି ହୁଏ ସୁଗତୋ । ବଡ଼ ମୁସ୍କିଲ୍ !

-ଉପରବେଳା କ'ଣ କର ? ଆଜିକାଲି ଦିନରେ ତ ନିଦ ହୁଏ ନାହିଁ ।

-କେତେବେଳେ କେମିତି ଏଇ ସାମନା ପାର୍କରେ ବୁଲେ । ନହେଲେ ବହି ପଢ଼େ ।

-କାହା କାହା ବହି ପଢ଼େ ? ପଢ଼ିବା ମୋର ଗୋଟାଏ ଜିନ୍‌ଷୋର୍ ଅଭ୍ୟାସ ମଧ୍ୟ ।

-ମୋତେ ତାକାଝି ଶିବଶଙ୍କର ପିଲାଛଙ୍କ ଉପନ୍ୟାସ ସବୁ ଖୁବ୍ ଭଲ ଲାଗେ । ଯାହା ଯାହା ପଢ଼ି ସାରିଥାଏ ତା'କୁ ଆହୁରି ଥରେ ଥରେ ପଢ଼େ । କମଳା ଦାସ ଓ ସାରା ଜୋସେଫ୍‌ଙ୍କ ଗପ ସବୁ ଭଲ ଲାଗେ । ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋକର ଜୀବନର, ମନର କେତେ କେତେ ଅକୁହା କଥା ସବୁ ଲେଖନ୍ତି ସେମାନେ ! ଏବେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଝିଅ ଲେଖୁଛି କେ.ଆର୍.ମୀରା ବୋଲି- ଭାରି ନୂଆ ନୂଆ କଥା ଓ

ଶୈଳୀ - ଭଲ ଲାଗେ । ପୁଅ ସବୁ ବଢ଼ି ଆଣିଦିଏ । ମାତୁଭୂମି ଆମ ଘରକୁ ଆସେ ବେଳେବେଳେ । ଆଉ ତୁମେ ? ଶୁଣିଛି ବଙ୍ଗଳା ଗଳ୍ପ, ଉପନ୍ୟାସ ଖୁବ୍ ସମୃଦ୍ଧ ।

- ଠିକ୍ କଥା । ମୁଁ ଗଳ୍ପ, ଉପନ୍ୟାସ, କବିତା ସବୁ ପଢ଼େ । କଣ କହିବି, କାହାଠାରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିବି ? ଟାଗୋରଙ୍କ ଠାରୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରି ସୁନୀଲ ଗଙ୍ଗୋପାଧ୍ୟାୟ, ଶଙ୍କର ଘୋଷ, ବିଭୂତି ଭୂଷଣ ବନ୍ଦୋପାଧ୍ୟାୟ, ବିମଲ ମିତ୍ର, ଦିବେନ୍ଦ୍ର ପାଲିତ, କେତେକେତେ ନାଁ, କେତେକେତେ ବହି, ଲେଖିଲେ ଏଇ ଖୁବ୍ ସମୃଦ୍ଧରେ ଦୁଇପୃଷ୍ଠା କି ଆଦୁରୀ ଅଧିକ ହେବ । (ହସନ୍ତ ମୁହଁ) ମୋତେ ଖୁସି ଲାଗୁଛି ଯେ ତୁମେ ମଧ୍ୟ ପଢ଼ିବାକୁ ଭଲ ପାଅ ।
- ଆଉ ଲେଖିକା ? ଲେଖିକାଙ୍କ ନାଁ ନେଇ ନାହିଁ ଯେ ? ମୁଁ କାଁ ଭାଁ ମାତୁଭୂମିରେ ମାଲୟାଲମ୍ ଅନୁବାଦ ହେଇଥିବା ବଙ୍ଗଳା ଗପ କେତେଟା ପଢ଼ିଛି ।
- ବଙ୍ଗଳା ଲେଖିକାମାନେ ମଧ୍ୟ କମ୍ ଶକ୍ତିଶାଳୀ ନୁହଁନ୍ତି । ମହାଶ୍ୱେତା ଦେବୀଙ୍କ ନାଁ ତ ଶୁଣିଥିବ । ଆଶାପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣା ଦେବୀ, ନବନୀତା ଦେବସେନ୍ ଏମିତି କେତେ କିଏ । ତୁମର ମୀରାପରି ଆମର ସଙ୍ଗୀତା ବୋଲି ଝିଅଟିଏ ନୂଆ ଶୈଳୀରେ ଲେଖୁଛି । କେତେବେଳେ ଦେଖାହେଲେ ଆମେ ପଢ଼ିଥିବା ଗପ, ଉପନ୍ୟାସ ବିଷୟରେ କଥା ହେବା ।
- ଆଜି କ'ଣ ଖାଇଲ ?
- ସୁଗତୋ ଲେଖେ ତାଲି ଢାଳିଯିବା କଥା । ମାଳଥୀ ଲେଖେ ବିନା ସମ୍ବର ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ ଖାଇବାର ଅଶ୍ୱସ୍ତି । ମାଳଥୀ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ହୁଏ ସୁଗତୋର ବିଛୁଥିବା କାନ୍ଧ ପାଇଁ । ସୁଗତୋ ଜଣାଏ ମାଳଥୀର ଆଖିର ପାଖୁଡ଼ା ବହୁଥିବା ନେଇ ତାଙ୍କରଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖାଇବାର କଥା ।
- ଦେଖା ହେଲେ ଭଲ ହୁଅନ୍ତା ।
- କେମିତି ?
- ଆଜି କଣ ପାର୍ବକୁ ଆସିବ ?
- ଆସିପାରିବି । ହେଲେ ତୁମର ଫିଜିଓ ଥେରାପି ?
- ସିଏ ଦିନେ ନହେଲେ ଚଳିବ । ବରଂ ଆଜି ଆମର ପାର୍କରେ ଦେଖା ହେଉ ।
- ସାଙ୍ଗେ ପାଞ୍ଚଟା ? ତା' ଆଗରୁ ତ ଖରା ଗରମ ।
- ଠିକ୍ । ମୁଁ ଟିକିଏ ଆଗରୁ ପହଞ୍ଚି ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରିବି । (ହସନ୍ତ ମୁହଁ)
- (ହସନ୍ତ ମୁହଁ)

ସବୁଜ ଗଛପତ୍ର ଭରା ପାର୍କକୁ ବେହେଇ ରହିଛି ଚାରିଦିଗରେ ବହୁତଳ ବିଶିଷ୍ଟ କୋଠା - ସରକାରୀ ଅଫିସରମାନଙ୍କର ବାସସ୍ଥାନ । ରାଜଧାନୀ ଦିଲ୍ଲୀ । ବିଭିନ୍ନ ପ୍ରକାର ସରକାରୀ କର୍ମଚାରୀଙ୍କ ବାସଗୃହ । ଭିନ୍ନ ଭିନ୍ନ ଆକାର ଓ ଭିନ୍ନ ଭିନ୍ନ ପ୍ରକାର । ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଜୀବନ ଓ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଯାତ୍ରା । ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ଘର ସେଇ ବିଭିନ୍ନତାର ସାକ୍ଷୀ । ପାର୍କ ଭିତରେ ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ଗଛ ଶିମିଳୀ, କୃଷ୍ଣଚୂଡ଼ା, ନାଁ ଜାଣିନଥିବା ପତ୍ର ଭରା ଗଛ ସବୁ ।

ଯତ୍ନରେ କଟା ହେଇଥିବା ବୁଦା ବୁଦା ଓ ଘାସ ଲନ୍ ।

ମାଳଥୀ ଆବିଷ୍କାର କରେ ଗଙ୍ଗ ଶିଉଳୀ ଫୁଲ ଗଛ, ହେନା ବୁଦା, ମଲ୍ଲୀ ବୁଦା, କରବୀର ଗଛ, କନିଅର ଗଛ । ଘାସ ଲନ୍ରେ ପାର୍କର ପାତେରୀ କଡେ କଡେ ଏସବୁ । ତା' ପାଖକୁ ଲାଗି ଚାଲିବା ପାଇଁ ପଥର ବିଛା ରାସ୍ତା । ଦିନସାରା ଅଫିସରେ କାମ କରୁଥିବା ଅଧିକାରୀମାନେ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାବେଳେ ବା ସକାଳୁ ଚାଲିବା କଥା । ନିଜ ସ୍ୱାସ୍ଥ୍ୟ ପାଇଁ ଓ ଖୋଲା ପବନ ପାଇଁ ।

କୃଷ୍ଣଚୂଡ଼ା ଗଛମୂଳେ ସିମେଣ୍ଟ ବେଞ୍ଚ ଉପରେ ବସି ମାଳଥୀକୁ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରେ ସୁଗତୋ । ଧୀରେ ଧୀରେ ଚାଲି ତା' ଆଡ଼କୁ ଆଗେଇ ଆସୁଥିବା ମାଳଥୀକୁ ନିରୀକ୍ଷଣ କରେ । ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟାକରେ ଯାହା ଦୂରରୁ ବାଲୁକାନିରୁ ଦିଶେ ନାହିଁ । ମାଳଥୀ ମଧ୍ୟ ଅଳ୍ପ ଅଳ୍ପ ମୁହଁ ଟେକେ ଓ ସୁଗତୋକୁ ଚାହେଁ । ତା' ଧଳା କମିଜ୍ ମାଳଥୀର ଆଖିକୁ ଝଲସାଇଦିଏ, ମୁହଁ ରଙ୍ଗ ପଡ଼ିଯାଏ ତା'ର । ଖୁବ୍ ବେଶୀ ତା' ମୁହଁକୁ ଚାହିଁପରେ ନାହିଁ ମାଳଥୀ । ସୁଗତୋର କୌଣସି ପ୍ରଶ୍ନର ଉତ୍ତର ଦେବାକୁ ଯାଇ ଛେପ ଡୋକେ ମାଳଥୀ । ଟିକିଏ କନ କନ ହେଇ ଏପଟକୁ ସେପଟକୁ ଚାହେଁ । କିଏ ଦେଖୁନାହିଁ ତ ! ତା' ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ଯେଉଁମାନେ ଚାଲନ୍ତି ଆଉ ଟିକିଏ ଡେରିରେ ଆସନ୍ତି ସେମାନେ କେହି ହୁଏତ ଏ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଆସିନଥିବେ । ନିଜ ଘରର ଝରକାରୁ ତା'କୁ ଆଉ ସୁଗତୋ ସହ କଥା ହେବାର ଦେଖୁନାହାନ୍ତି ତ ! ଛେପ ଡୋକେ ସୁଗତୋ । ମାଳଥୀର ହାଲୁକା ନାଲି ପଡ଼ିଆସିଥିବା ଗୋରା ମୁହଁ କେତେ ସୁନ୍ଦର ଦିଶୁଛି । ଆଉ ହୀରାର ଛୋଟ ନାକଫୁଲ ବାଁ ନାକ ପୁଡ଼ାରେ - ତା' ଝଲିରେ ଚମକୁଛି । ଆଜି ନୀଳ ଶାଢ଼ୀ ପିନ୍ଧିଛି ମାଳଥୀ । ସତରେ ସୁନ୍ଦରୀ !

“ଏତେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ହେଇ କଣ ଖୋଜୁଛ କି ଜେଜେମା ? ଛାଡ଼, ମୁଁ ବାହାର କରିଦେବି ।”

“ଏଇ ପୁରୁଣା ଫଟୋ ଆଲବମ ଖୋଜୁଥିଲି ।” ପୁଣି ରଙ୍ଗା ପଡ଼ିଯାଏ ମାଳଥୀର ମୁହଁ । ପୁଅର ଫ୍ଲାଟ୍ରେ ତିନିଟା ଶୋଇବା ଘର । ଗୋଟିଏରେ ପୁଅବୋହୂ ରହନ୍ତି, ଆରଟାରେ ନାତୁଣୀ ମୀନାଣି ଆଉ ତୃତୀୟରେ ସେ । ତା'ଶୋଇବା ଘର ଟିକିଏ ଦୂର । ଗୋଟିଏ ଆଲମାରି ସେଇଥିରେ । ବୋହୂ କିଛି ଜିନିଷପତ୍ର ରଖିଛି ଉପର ଓ ତଳ ଥାକରେ ।

“ଜିନିଷ ଏତେ ବଢ଼ିଗଲାଣି ଯେ ଜାଗା ଧରୁନାହିଁ । ଆପଣଙ୍କୁ ପୁରା ଆଲମାରିଟା ଛାଡ଼ିଦେବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଥିଲେ ବି ହେଇପାରିଲା ନାହିଁ । କିଛି ଆମର ବିଛଣା ଚଦର ହେରିବା ଉପର ଥାକରେ ରଖିଦେଇଛି ଓ ତଳ ଥାକରେ ଫଟୋ ଆଲବମ୍ ସବୁ । ମଝି ଦି'ଟା ଥାକ ଆପଣଙ୍କର । ଏମିତିରେ ଉପର ଥାକକୁ ଆପଣଙ୍କ ହାତ ପାଇବ ନାହିଁ ଓ ତଳ ଥାକରେ ବସି କିଛି ରଖିବା କାଢ଼ିବା କଷ୍ଟ । ଆପଣଙ୍କର ତ ଆଷ୍ଟ୍ର ଯନ୍ତ୍ରଣା !” ବୁଝେଇ କହିଛି ବୋହୂ ।

ବୁଝିଯାଇଛି ମାଳଥୀ ତା' ଦୁନିଆ ବିଷୟରେ । ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଦଶଦ୍ୱାରରେ ବାରଦ୍ୱାର କୋଠରୀ ଆଲମାରିର ମଝି ଦୁଇଥାକ, ଟିକିଏ ଦୂରର ଗାଧୁଆ ଘର, ଯେହେତୁ ତା' କୋଠରୀ ସହ ଗାଧୁଆ ଘର ଲାଗିକି ନାହିଁ ଯେମିତି ଅନ୍ୟଦୁଇଟି କୋଠରୀରେ ଲାଗିଛି । ଏଇଠି ତେଣୁ ବୋହୂର, ନାତୁଣୀର ଓ ତା'ର ଅନ୍ତର୍ଗତ ସଫାକରେ କାମ କରୁଥିବା ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଲୋକଟି ।

ସେଇ ତଳ ଥାକରେ ରଖାଯାଇଥିବା ଆଲବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ସବୁ । ତଳେ ବସିପତି ଘାଣ୍ଟୁଛି ମାଳଥୀ ।

“କା' ଫଟୋ ଖୋଜୁଛ କି ଜେଜେମା ? ମୋର ? ପିଲାଦିନର ?”
ଚତୁରୀ, ଗେହୁୀ ନାତୁଣୀ ଜାଣିଛି ମାଳଥୀ ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ ତା'ର ପିଲାଦିନର ଆଲବର୍ଣ୍ଣ କାଢ଼ିବାକୁ କୁହେ ତା'କୁ ଓ ଜେଜେମା, ନାତୁଣୀ ତା' ଖଟରେ ବସି ବସି ଫଟୋ ଦେଖନ୍ତି । ନାତୁଣୀର ପ୍ରତ୍ୟେକ ବର୍ଷର ଫଟୋସବୁ ଗୋଟିଏ ଗୋଟିଏ ଆଲବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ହେଉଛି ଓ ସେ ଭାରି ଖୁସି ହୁଏ ସେସବୁ ଦେଖିଲେ । ମାଳଥୀ ବି ଖୁସିହୁଏ । ନାତୁଣୀ ପଢୁଛି ଅଷ୍ଟମ ଶ୍ରେଣୀରେ । ଚଉଦଟା ଆଲବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ତା'ର । କୌଣସି ଛୁଟିଦିନରେ ତିନି ଚାରିଟି ଦେଖିପାରନ୍ତି ସେମାନେ ।

“ଉଠ ଉଠ ମୁଁ କାଢ଼ିଦେବି । ଏମିତିରେ ତଳେ ବସିଲେ ତୁମ ଆଖୁ ବିକିବ । ମୋର କେତେ ନମ୍ବର ଆଲବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଦରକାର ତୁମକୁ ?”
ନାତୁଣୀ ବ୍ୟଗ୍ର ହେଇ ପଚାରେ ।

“ନାହିଁଲୋ ମା, ମୋର ଆଲବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଖୋଜୁଥିଲି । ଭାବୁଛି ଏଇଠି ଥିବ । ମୋ ପିଲାଦିନର ଫଟୋ ।” ସତରେ ମାଳଥୀର ଆଖୁ କଟ କଟ କରିବା ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଥିଲା ।

“ତୁମ ଫଟୋ ? ତୁମ ପିଲାଦିନର ଫଟୋ !” ଆକାଶରୁ ପଡେ ନାତୁଣୀ !

“ତୁମର ପିଲାଦିନର ଫଟୋ କଣ ଅଛି ? କେତେଟା ଜନ୍ମଦିନର ଜେଜେମା ?” ନାତୁଣୀ ତେଜ୍ଜି ତେଜ୍ଜି ପଚାରେ । ତା' ଉତ୍ତରକୁ ଅପେକ୍ଷା ନକରି ସେମିତି ତେଜ୍ଜି ହେଜ୍ଜି କୋଠରୀରୁ ବାହାରି ଯାଏ ।

“ମାମା, ମାମା, ଜେଜେମା ତାଙ୍କ ପିଲାଦିନର ଫଟୋ ଖୋଜୁଛନ୍ତି ।” ତା' କଥାରେ କୌତୁକ । ମାଳଥୀର ମୁହଁରୁ ରଙ୍ଗାପଣ ହଟେ ନାହିଁ ।

“ଆଜ୍ଞା ! ତାଙ୍କ ପିଲାଦିନର । ସେସବୁ ଫଟୋ କଣ ଏଠି ଅଛି ? ଘରେ ଥିବ - ଆଲେପିରେ ।” ଅନ୍ୟମନସ୍କ ଉତ୍ତର ଭାସି ଆସେ ବୋହୂଠାରୁ ।

“ପିଲାଦିନର ଫଟୋ କଣ ସେତେବେଳେ ଉଠୁଥିଲା ?” ବୋହୂ କଣ୍ଠରେ ବିଦ୍ରୁପ ।

“ନାହିଁ, ନାହିଁ ସେଇ ପଟିଶ, ଡିରିଶି ବର୍ଷ ତଳର ଫଟୋ । କାଳେ ଥିବ ଭାବୁଥିଲି । କେତେଟା ଉଠିଥିଲା ତୋ' ଜେଜେବାପାଙ୍କ ସହ ତ ।” ଆହୁରି ନାହିଁ ପଡିଯାଏ ମାଳଥୀ । ମନେ ମନେ ବିରକ୍ତ ହୁଏ ନିଜ ଉପରେ ଓ ସୁଗତୋ ଉପରେ । କଣ ଦରକାର ଥିଲା ସୁଗତୋର ତା' ପିଲାଦିନର ମାନେ ତା'କୁ ପଟିଶି ଡିରିଶି ବର୍ଷ ହେଲା ବେଳର ଫଟୋ ମାଗିବା । ଆଉ ସିଏ ବି କେମିତି ଖୋଜୁଛି କେଜାଣି ? ହୁଏ ତ ଆଲେପିରେ ନିଜ ଘରେ ଥାଇପାରେ । ହୁଏତ ଗତଥର ବନ୍ୟାପାଣି ଯୋଉ ମାତି ଯାଇଥିଲା ସେଥିରେ ଖରାପ ହୋଇଯାଇଥାଇପାରେ । ମାଳଥୀ ଦୀର୍ଘଶ୍ୱାସ ଛାଡେ ଓ ଖଟବାତକୁ ଧରି ଉଠି ଠିଆହୁଏ ।

“ଆଜ୍ଞା ଆଜି ତାଙ୍କର ପିଲାଦିନର ଫଟୋ ଖୋଜୁଥିଲେ । ହୁଏତ ଆଜ୍ଞାଙ୍କ ସହ । ମିଳିଲା ନାହିଁ ଏଇଠି ।” ବୋହୂ ଛାଡିଦିଏ ନାହିଁ କଥାକୁ ସେଇଠି । ରାତିରେ ତାଙ୍କନି ଟେବୁଲ୍‌ରେ ବୋହୂରାଏ ଚାପା, ଲୁଚା ପରିହାସ ସହ ।

“ଓଃ! ଆଜ୍ଞା, ପେନସନ୍ ପେପରରେ ତ ଦିଆ ହେଇଯାଇଛି । ସେଇ ଫଟୋ ଖୋଜୁଛ କି ? ଅଳ୍ପଦିନ ଆଉ ଲାଗିବ । ମୁଁ ବୁଝୁଛି ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ ଯେ” - ପୁଅ ଭାତରେ ସମ୍ବର ଗୋଳାଉ ଗୋଳାଉ ଉତ୍ତର ଦିଏ ମାଆକୁ ନ ଚାହିଁ ।

“ପାପା, ଆଜି ଅଜାଙ୍କୁ ଉବରୁ ଆମ୍ଭ ତାଉନଲୋଡ୍ କରାଇଦେଲି । ଅଜାଙ୍କୁ ଜମାରୁ ଆସୁନଥିଲା ।” ବାରବର୍ଷର ନାତି ଗତ ଜିଣିଲା ପରି କହେ ତା' ବାପାକୁ ।

“ଆଜ୍ଞା! ବାବା! ଉବର୍ କାହିଁକି ? ଦରକାର ହେଲେ କହିବେ । ମୁଁ ଅଫିସ୍ ଯାଇ ଗାଡି ପଠେଇଦେବି, ଅବଶ୍ୟ ବେଳେବେଳେ ମଝିରେ ମିନିଷ୍ଟ୍ରୁକୁ ଯିବାକୁ ପଡେ । ଆପଣ ଯେବେ ଚାହିଁବେ ମୁଁ ନହେଲେ ଆଉ କା' ଗାଡିରେ ଚାଲିଯିବି ।” ଜୋର୍ ଭଦ୍ରତା ସହକାରେ କହିଲା ।

“ନାହିଁ ନାହିଁ ! ମୁଁ ଏମିତି କରିଦେଲି । ସୁବିଧାଟା ଥାଉ । କେତେବେଳେ ମୋର କି କାହାର ଦରକାର ହେବ ।” ସୁଗତୋ ତରତର ହେଇ କହିପକାଏ । ଏମିତିରେ ଜ୍ୱାଇଁ ଗୋଟାଏ ଟ୍ୟାକ୍ସି ଲାଗୁଆ କରିଛି - ପ୍ରତିଦିନ ହସ୍ତପିଟାଲ୍ ଯାଇ ଫିଜିଓଥେରାପି କରିବା ପାଇଁ । ସୁଗତୋ ଯଦିଓ ଟ୍ୟାକ୍ସିର ପଇସା ଦେଇଦିଏ । ସେଇ ଟ୍ୟାକ୍ସି ସେତିକି ସମୟ ପାଇଁ ହିଁ ଆସିବ, ତେଣୁ ତା'କୁ ବ୍ୟବହାର କରିବାର ନାହିଁ ।

ମାଳଥୀକୁ ଲାଲ୍‌କିଲ୍ଲା ଦେଖେଇବାକୁ କଥା ଦେଇଛି ସୁଗତୋ । ଉବର୍ ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଠିକ୍ । ଲାଲ୍‌କିଲ୍ଲା ଦେଖିନାହାନ୍ତି ସେମାନେ - ସୁଗତୋ ଓ ମାଳଥୀ । ମାଳଥୀର ପୁଅ, ବୋହୂ ଓ ସୁଗତୋର ଝିଅ, ଜ୍ୱାଇଁ କହିଛନ୍ତି ଅନେକ ଥର ନେଇ ବୁଲେଇ ଦେଖେଇଦେବେ । ସମୟ ହେଇନି ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ । ଏମିତିରେ ଘରେ ତ ଅଛନ୍ତି

ମାଳଥୀ ଓ ସୁଗତୋ । ରହିବେ ବି ଏଇଠି ସେମାନଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ଦିଲ୍ଲୀରେ । କେତେବେଳେ ନେଇ ଦେଖାଇଦେବେ - ତରତର କଣ ଅଛି ? ଘରୁ, କେରଳରୁ ବା କଲିକତାରୁ ଯେମିତି କେହି ଅତିଥି ଆସିଲେ ଏକାସାଙ୍ଗରେ ନେଇ ବୁଲେଇଦେବେ - ଏଇଆ ଭାବିଛନ୍ତି ପୁଅ, ଝିଅ, ଡ୍ଫାଇଁ, ବୋହୂ । କି କଣ ?

ତେଷିଠି ବର୍ଷର ମାଳଥୀ ଓ ପଞ୍ଚଷିଠି ବର୍ଷର ସୁଗତୋ ହାତ ଧରି ଧରି ହେଇ ଲାଲକିଲ୍ଲା ବୁଲି ଦେଖୁଥିଲେ । ଗରମଦିନ - ଝାଳ ବହିପଡୁଛି, ମୁହଁ ପୋତୁଛି କିନ୍ତୁ ଭିତରେ ଭିତରେ ଯେମିତି କଅଁଳ ବାଛୁରୀଟେ କୁଡୁଛି - ମଧୁମାଳତୀ ଫୁଲ ପେନ୍ଥା ମୁଣ୍ଡ ହଲାଇଛି - ଧୀର ପବନରେ । ତିନିବର୍ଷ ତଳେ ଅବସର ନେଇଥିବା, ଅଠତିରିଶ ବର୍ଷ ଧରି କେନ୍ଦ୍ରୀୟ ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ଶିକ୍ଷୟିତ୍ରୀର ଜୀବିକା - ନିଭେଇଥିବା ମାଳଥୀ ମୃଦୁ ମୃଦୁ ହସୁଛି - ପଶ୍ଚିମବଙ୍ଗ ସରକାରଙ୍କର ପାଞ୍ଚବର୍ଷ ତଳେ ଅବସରପ୍ରାପ୍ତ ସଂଯୁକ୍ତ ସଚିବ ସୁଗତୋର ମୁହଁକୁ ଚାହିଁ । ପୁରୁଷଟି ହସରେ, ଆଖିରେ, ଚାହାଣୀରେ, ମୃଦୁ ସ୍ୱର୍ଣ୍ଣରେ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟୁତ୍ତର ଦେଉଛି ନାରୀଟିକୁ ।

ଚାନ୍ଦିନୀ ଚୌକରେ ପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧ ନଲେବି- ଖାଉ ଖାଉ ଟପ୍ ଟପ୍ ଗଳୁଛି ରସ । ମାଳଥୀର ହାତ ଶିରା ବଳବଳ । ଗ୍ଲାସ୍‌ଟେ ମାଗି ପାଣି ଆଣୁଛି ସୁଗତୋ । ହାତଧୁଆ ପତାପାଣିର ଟବ୍‌ଟେ ବୋକାନ କତରେ । ସେଇଠି ହାତ ଧୋଉଛି ମାଳଥୀ, ପାଣି ଅନ୍ଧାତିଦେଉଛି ସୁଗତୋ । ଗ୍ଲାସ୍ ରଖି କମିନ୍ ପକେଟରୁ ଧଳା ରୁମାଲ କାଢି ଦେଉଛି ମାଳଥୀକୁ ହାତ ପୋଛିବାକୁ । ହାତ ପୋଛୁଛି ମାଳଥୀ ।

ପୋଛି ହେଇଯାଉଛି ଅତୀତ - ଲମ୍ବା, ଏକାକୀ, ଗତାନୁଗତିକ ଅତୀତ । ଅକାଳରେ ହୃଦ୍‌ଘାତରେ ସ୍ୱାମୀଙ୍କର ମୃତ୍ୟୁ । ଗୋଟିଏ ପୁଅକୁ କଷ୍ଟରେ ବଢ଼ାଇଥିବା ସମୟ । ଭଲ ମନ୍ଦରେ କଟିଯାଇଥିବା ଶିକ୍ଷୟିତ୍ରୀର ଜୀବନ । ଅବସର ପରଠାରୁ ଭୟଙ୍କର ନିଃସଙ୍ଗତା । ଏଇଠି ପୁଅଘରେ ତଥାପି ଅଶ୍ରୁସ୍ଥିରେ କଟୁଥିବା ସମୟ - ସବୁ ପୋଛି ହୋଇଯାଉଛି । ମାଳଥୀ ହାତ ପୋଛିଲା ପରେ ରୁମାଲକୁ ଚଉତି ପୁଣି ଛାତି ପକେଟରେ ରଖୁଛି ସୁଗତୋ । ଚଉତି ହେଇ ରହିଯାଉଛି ସ୍ମୃତିର ଥାକ ଥାକ କନା । ପତ୍ନୀଙ୍କର କ୍ୟାନସର ସହ ଲଢ଼ିବାର ସମୟ ଓ ଶେଷକୁ ସେମାନେ ହାରିଯିବା । ଏକୁଟିଆ ପୁଅ ଓ ଝିଅଙ୍କ ବାହାଘର କରିବା । ପୁଅକୁ ଆମେରିକା ପଠାଇବାରେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିବା । କଷ୍ଟେ ମଷ୍ଟେ ଉଣ ଶୁଖିବା । ସକାଳ, ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟା ଏକୁଟିଆ ତାଲୁକିଂ ଟେବୁଲ୍‌ରେ ଖାଇବା ଓ ଏଇଠି ଝିଅ ଘରେ ଫ୍ରିଜରୁ ତରକାରୀ କାଢି ଆଣି ମାଇକ୍ରୋୱେଭ୍ ଓଭନରେ ଗରମ କରିବା । ସବୁ ଚଉତି ହେଇ ରହିଗଲା । ସୁଗତୋ ଛାତି ପକେଟରୁ ବୁଝିବା ପରି ସହାନୁଭୂତି ସହ ଆପୁତାଇ ଦେଲା ।

ମାଳଥୀ ମୁହଁଟେକି ସୁଗତୋକୁ ଚାହିଁ ହସିଦେଲା ଟିକିଏ । ପ୍ରତ୍ୟୁତ୍ତରରେ ସୁଗତୋ ତା' ବାଁ ପାପୁଲିକୁ ନିଜ ଡାହାଣ ହାତରେ

ଧରିଲା ଓ ସେମାନେ ରାସ୍ତା ପାରିହେଲେ । ପୁଅ, ବୋହୂ, ଝିଅ ଡ୍ଫାଇଁଙ୍କ ଘର ଅଭିମୁଖେ ଉଦ୍‌ବିଗ୍‌ଧ ଚାଲି ଧରିଲେ ।

“ଭଲ ଲାଗୁନାହିଁ ଏଇଠି । ସେଠି କିଛି ସାଙ୍ଗସାଥୀ ଅଛନ୍ତି । କେତେବେଳେ କେମିତି ଦେଖା ସାକ୍ଷାତ ହୁଏ । ଏଠି ଭାରି ଏକୁଟିଆ ଲାଗୁଛି । ବହୁତ ମିଶ୍ କରୁଛି ମୋ ତାସଖେଳ । ଭାବୁଛି କଲିକତା ଫେରିଯିବି । ଝିଅଘରେ ଆଉ କେତେଦିନ ରହିବି ?” ଦୀର୍ଘଶ୍ୱାସ ଛାଡେ ସୁଗତୋ ଓ ନିଜକୁ ନିଜେ କହିଲା ପରି ଆଗକୁ ଚାହିଁ କହେ ସେ ।

“ମୋର ବି ସେଇକଥା । ଗଛବୃକ୍ଷ ଭଲ ପାଏ ମୁଁ । ସେଇଠି ମୋର ଛୋଟ ବଗିଚା । ଫୁଲ ଫୁଟେଇବାରେ ସମୟ କଟିଯାଏ । ଏଇଠି ଛୋଟିଆ ବାଲୁକାନିରେ କେତେଟା ଫୁଲ କୁଣ୍ଡ । କି ଫୁଲ କେତେ ଫୁଟିବ ? ଆଉ ଯେତେ ହେଲେ ନିଜ ଘର ନିଜର । ପୁଅ ବୋହୂ ଯେତେ ଭଲ ହେଲେ କଣ ହେବ ? ଏଇ ବର୍ଷ ଶୀତ ଦିନେ - ନଭେମ୍ବର ଆଡକୁ ଆଲେପି ଫେରିଯିବି ଭାବୁଛି ।” ଅନ୍ୟମନସ୍କ ଭାବରେ ନିଜ ନଖକୁ ଚାହିଁ ଚାହିଁ ଧୀର ସ୍ୱରରେ କହେ ମାଳଥୀ ।

ସେମାନେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଲାବେଳକୁ ପୁଅ, ବୋହୂ, ଝିଅ, ଡ୍ଫାଇଁ ତ ଫେରିନଥାନ୍ତି ଅତିସବୁ । ମାଳଥୀର ନାଡୁଣୀ ଓ ସୁଗତୋର ନାତି ମଧ୍ୟ ସ୍କୁଲରୁ ଆସିନଥାନ୍ତି ।

“ଆସ୍ତା, ଦଶହରା ପୂଜା ଏଇଠି ଦିଲ୍ଲୀରେ କେତେଟା ଦିନ ଛୁଟି ମିଳେ । ବଡ଼ କଥା ହେଲା ଝିଅର ସ୍କୁଲ ଛୁଟି । ବହୁତ ଦିନରୁ କୁଆଡେ ଯାଇନାହୁଁ । ବୈଭବ ବି କହୁଥିଲେ ଟିକିଏ ବୁଲି ଆସିଲେ ଫ୍ରେସ୍ ଲାଗିବ । ରୋଜ ରୋଜ ଏଇଯୋଉ ଅତିସ କାମ! ଥାଇଲାଣ୍ଡ, ମାଲେସିଆ ଯିବାକୁ ଭାବିଛୁ । ଜମାରୁ ସାତଦିନ ଛଅରାତି । ଆପଣ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ଚାଲନ୍ତୁ ବୋଲି ମୁଁ ବୈଭବଙ୍କୁ କହୁଥିଲି । ସେ କହିଲେ ଆସ୍ତାଙ୍କର ଆଶ୍ଚୁ ଦରଜ । ସେ କଣ ଏତେ ଉଠିପଡି ବୁଲି ପାରିବେ ଆମ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ? ଆଉ ଇଏ ଯୋଉ ତୁରୁ ଅପରେଟର୍ ! ଖାଲି ପକାଉଠା ହିଁ କରିବେ । ବରଂ ଭାରତ ଭିତରେ କୁଆଡେ ଯିବା ଶୀତଦିନେ ଆସ୍ତାଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ ...

ପୁଅର ନାଁ ଭାରି ସରାଗରେ ବୈଭବ ବୋଲି ଦେଇଥିଲା ମାଳଥୀ । ସତରେ ତା' ଜୀବନର ସବୁଠାରୁ ବଡ଼ ସମ୍ପତ୍ତି ତ ପୁଅ ହିଁ । କିଏ ଗୋଟାଏ କହିଥିଲା ନଦୀର ସ୍ରୋତ ସବୁବେଳେ ତଳକୁ । ଝରଣା ବେଳର ମାଟି, ପାହାଡ଼ ଫୁଟେଇ ମାଟି ଆସିବା ତା' ବିକତର ବଣୁଆ ଅଜଣା ଗଛଲତା, ପଶୁପକ୍ଷୀଙ୍କ ସରାଗ - ସିଏ କଣ ଆଉ ମନେରହେ ? ଇଏ ତ ସୃଷ୍ଟିର ନିୟମ !

“ଜେଜେମା, ତୁମେ ଆମ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ଯାଇଥିଲେ ଭଲ ହେଇଥାନ୍ତା । ମୋତେ ନା, ପାପା, ମାମାଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ

ଶୋଇବାକୁ ଭଲ ଲାଗେ ନାହିଁ । ହେଲେ ମାମା କହିଲେ ତୁମେ ଗଲେ ଆହୁରି ଗୋଟାଏ ରୁମ୍ ଦରକାର ହେବ । ଅଧିକ ପଡ଼ିବ । ଏମିତିରେ ଚିନିଜଣ ଗୋଟିଏ ରୁମ୍ରେ ରହିହେବ । ତୁମେ ପାପାଙ୍କୁ କୁହନା ଜେଜେମା, ତୁମକୁ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ନେବାକୁ . . . ” ନାତୁଣୀ ରୁପ୍ ରୁପ୍ କରି ତା’ରୁମ୍କୁ ଆସିକହିଲା ।

ମାଳଥୀ ତା’କୁ କହେ ନାହିଁଯେ ସାନଛୁଆମାନେ ବାପା ମାଆଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ଅଳି କରନ୍ତି । ଜିଦ୍ କରନ୍ତି ବୁଲିବାକୁ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ନେଇଯିବା ପାଇଁ । ବୟସ୍କ ବାପା ମାଆ କହି ପାରନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ ଯେ ମୋତେ ଯେମିତି ହେଲେ ନେ’ - ଇଏ ବି ସୃଷ୍ଟିର ନିୟମ ! ଅଳି ଶବ୍ଦଟି କେବଳ ସନ୍ତାନଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଲାଗୁହୁଏ - ଅଭିଧାନରେ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେଇଆ ଲେଖାହେଇଛି ।

“ବାବା, ଇଏ - ସ୍ୟାଥେକ କହୁଥିଲେ ଏଥର ଶ୍ରୀଲଙ୍କା ଯିବାକୁ । ପୁଅର ଛୁଟି ଅଛି ପୂଜାରେ । ଆହୁରି କହୁଥିଲେ ବାବା ଦୁଏତ କଲିକତା ଯିବାକୁ ପସନ୍ଦ କରିବେ । ଆପଣ କଣ କଲିକତା ଯିବେ ପୂଜାରେ ? ବରଂ ଏଇଠି ରହି ଫିଜିଓଥେରାପି କଲେ ଭଲ ହୁଅନ୍ତା । ଥଣ୍ଡାରେ କଲିକତା ଯାଆନ୍ତେ ।” ଝିଅ ରାତିରେ ଟେବୁଲ୍ ସଜାଇ ସଜାଇ କହେ । ଡ୍ରାଙ୍ଗ୍ ବସି ଥାଏ ଖାଇବା ପାଇଁ । କିଛି କୁହେନା । ମୁହଁ ଉଠାଇ ତା’କୁ ଚାହିଁବାକୁ ସୁଗତୋକୁ ମାତି ମାତି ପଡ଼େ । ଝିଅ ଯେତେହେଲେ ନିଜର । ସେମାନେ ନାତିକୁ ଧରି ଶ୍ରୀଲଙ୍କା ଯିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଛନ୍ତି । ଜଣାଉଛନ୍ତି ଏମିତି ତା’କୁ । ଯାଆନ୍ତୁ । ବଙ୍ଗାଳୀମାନେ ବୁଲିବାକୁ ଭଲ ପାଆନ୍ତି । ଟିକିଏ ଛୁଟି ମିଳିଲେ ମାତିଯାଆନ୍ତି କୁଆଡ଼େ ନା କୁଆଡ଼େ ।

“ଠିକ୍ କହିଛୁ ମା, ମୁଁ ଏବେ ଫିଜିଓଥେରାପି ବନ୍ଦ କରିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁନାହିଁ । ଡିସେମ୍ବରରେ ବରଂ କଲିକତା ଯିବି ।”

- ଏମାନେ ଥାଇଲାଣ୍ଡ, ମାଲେସିଆ ଯିବେ ଦଶହରା ଛୁଟିରେ ।
- ସତ ନା’ କଣ ? ଏମାନେ ବି ଶ୍ରୀଲଙ୍କା ଯିବାକୁ ବାହାରିଛନ୍ତି ପୂଜାରେ ।

ମାଳଥୀ ଓ ସୁଗତୋଙ୍କର ଡ୍ରାଟ୍‌ସଅପ୍ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାରେ ।

- ସ୍ବାମୀ ଅନେକଥର କହୁଥିଲେ ଅବସର ପରେ ଏକାଠି ବୁଲିବାକୁ ଯିବା । କେତେ କଣ କହୁଥିଲେ ଇଆଡେ ଯିବା, ସିଆଡେ ଯିବା, ଏମିତି ଘର କରିବା, ଏମିତି ରହିବା । କୁଆଡେ ପାଣି ପରି ଢାଳି ହୋଇଗଲା ଓ ମାଟିରେ ଭେଦିଗଲା ସେସବୁ କଳ୍ପନା ।

- ଠିକ୍ । ମୋ ସ୍ବାୀ ବି ଭାରି ବୁଲିବାକୁ ଭଲ ପାଉଥିଲା । ତା’ଦେହ ଭଲ ଥିଲାବେଳେ ଆମେ ପାଖ ଆଖକୁ ଯାଉଥିଲୁ । ଲମ୍ବା ଛୁଟି ନଥିଲା । ପୁଣି ପିଲା - ଛୁଆଙ୍କ ଜଂଜାଳ, ପଇସା ବି ବେଶୀ ନଥିଲା । ଅନେକଥର କଥା ହେଇଛି, ମୋର ଅବସର ପରେ

ଏକାଠି ଭାରତ ବାହାରକୁ ଯିବା । କେବେଠାରୁ ସେ ଚାଲିଗଲା - ସବୁକଥା ପବନରେ ଭେଦିଗଲା -

- ତୁମେ ମନ ଖରାପ କରୁଛ କି? ମୁଁ ପରା ଅଛି । ଆମେ ବୁଲିବା ଏଇଠି ପାଖ ଆଖରେ ଓ ମଜା କରିବା । ଏତେ ଦିନ ଲୁଚିଛୁ ଚୁଲୁଥିଲେ - ଏଥର ମଲ୍‌ଯିବା, ସିନେମା ଦେଖିବା ଦଶହରାରେ

- ସୁଗତୋର ଡ୍ରାଟ୍‌ସଅପ୍ ।

- ନାଲ୍ ନାଲ୍ (ହସନ୍ତ ମୁହଁ) ଆହୁରି କେତେ ଜାଗା ରହିଯାଇଛି । ଆମେ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଯିବା । ଆଉଥରେ ଜଳେବି ଖାଇବାକୁ ମନ ହେଉଛି । ଆମର ସେଠି ଭଲ ମିଳେ ନାହିଁ । ଡିସେମ୍ବର ଶୀତରେ ତ ଘରକୁ ଯିବି । ଏଠି ଏତେ ଥଣ୍ଡାରେ ଏଥର ରହି ହେବ ନାହିଁ - ଉତ୍ତର ଲେଖେ ମାଳଥୀ ।

X X X

- “ଛିଃ ! ଛିଃ ! କି ଲାଜ କଥା ! ମୁହଁ ଦେଖେଇ ହେବ ନାହିଁ କାହାକୁ ଏଠି । ଏଇ ଆମେ ଦି’ଦିନ ହେଲା ଫେରିଛୁ । ଘର ଟିକିଏ ସଫାସଫି ବି ହେଇନାହିଁ । ମୁଁ ଭାବୁଥିଲି ବୁଢ଼ୀ କାହିଁକି ମନ ଦେଇନାହାନ୍ତି ଏଥିରେ । ସବୁଦିନେ ତ ସେ କାମକଲା ଝିଅ ସାଙ୍ଗେ ଲାଗିଥାନ୍ତି । ଏଇ ସୁଆଙ୍ଗ ଚାଲିଥିଲା । ଆଉ କେମିତି କିଛି କରନ୍ତେ ।” କମ୍‌ମାନ ହେଉଛି ବୋହୂ । ନିଜ ଫୋନର ଡ୍ରାଟ୍‌ସଅପ୍ ଖୋଲି ତାଙ୍କନି ଟେବୁଲ୍‌ରେ ମୁଣ୍ଡକୁ ଧରି ବସିଛି ପୁଅ ବୈଭବ । ନାତୁଣୀ ମାଳଥୀର ରୁମ୍‌ରେ ତା’ ଖୋଲା ଆଲମାରିର ମଝି ଥାକ ଦି’ଟାକୁ ଆଉଁଷୁଥାଏ- ଲୁହ ଟଳମଳ ଆଖିରେ ।

ଝାଡ଼ି ଚାଲିଛି, ଝାଡ଼ି ଚାଲିଥାଏ ବୋହୂ । ବୈଭବ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଉଠାଏ ଓ କହେ - ନା ଏଇଠୁ ଘର ବଦଳାଇବାକୁ ପଡ଼ିବ ।

“ଆଛା ! ଏତେ ଗୁଣଥିଲା ତୁମ ବାବାଙ୍କର । କାଲି ଜଣା ପଡୁନଥିଲା ତ! ସାଦାସିଧା ଭଦ୍ରଲୋକ ଭଳି ରହୁଥିଲେ । ନହେଲେ ନାଲି କଲିକତା ଚାଲିଯାଇଥାନ୍ତେ । ଏମିତି ଆମର ମୁହଁ କଳା କରିବା କଣ ଭଲ ହେଲା? ମୋର ହିଁ ଭୁଲଥିଲା, ମୁଁ ଯାହା ତାଙ୍କୁ ଡାକିକି ଆଣିଲି । ଏଇଠି ଆମ ବଙ୍ଗାଳୀ ସୋସାଇଟିରେ କଣ କହିବି ?” ସ୍ବାୀ ଆଡକୁ ତୀର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ହାଣିହାଣି କହୁଥାଏ ସ୍ୟାଥେକ । ନାତି ସୁଗତୋ ରୁମ୍‌ରେ ଆଖି ବୁଲାଇଥାଏ ଚାରିଆଡେ, ବିମଳ ମିତ୍ରଙ୍କର ଉପନ୍ୟାସ ରହିଛି ଅଜାଙ୍କ ଟେବୁଲ୍ ଉପରେ ଓ ତା’ ଉପରେ ପରସ୍ତେ ଧୂଳି । ତା’ମାଆ ବସିଥାଏ ସୋଫା ଉପରେ ମୋବାଇଲ୍ ଫୋନ ଧରି ।

- ଆମେ ଯାଉଛୁ । ତୁମେମାନେ ବୁଲି ଆସିଲେ ଭଲ ହେବ -

ଓଡ଼ିଆରେ ଛବି ସଂଳଗ୍ନ ହେଉଛି ଦୁଇଟି ରଜନୀଗନ୍ଧା ଓ ନାଲି ଗୋଲାପର ଫୁଲମାନ ଦି'ନଶଙ୍କ ଗଳାରେ - ସୁଗତୋର ଓ ମାଳସୀର - ମାଳସୀ ସୂକ୍ଷ୍ମରେ ମେଞ୍ଚାଏ ସିନ୍ଦୂର । ଆହୁରି ଛବିଟିଏ ଗୋଟିଏ ଘରର ଦୁଆର । ଲେଖାଯାଇଛି ଉପରେ ମାଳସୀ ନାମ୍ନିଆର ଓ ତା' ତଳକୁ ସୁଗତୋ ଘୋଷ !
 “କି ଅସହ୍ୟ !” ଝିଅ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ହାତ ଦେଇ ବସିଥାଏ ।
 “ବାଃ ! ବୁଢ଼ାକାଳେ ତ ବଡ଼ ରସିକ ତୁମ ବାବା ! ତୁମକୁ କିଛି ଶିଖାଇଛନ୍ତି ନା ନାହିଁ ? ମୁଁ ଭାବୁଥିଲି ବାବା ପୁଅର ପଢ଼ାପଢ଼ି ଟିକିଏ ଦେଖିବେ ଆଉ ଆମ ପାଖରେ ରହିବେ” . . . ଢାଙ୍କି କହୁଥାଏ ।

ଖୁବ୍ ଜୋରରେ ଅନାବ ରୁମରୁ ବାହାରି ଆସେ ନାତି ଓ ସେତିକି ଜୋର ଶବ୍ଦ କରି ଦାଣ୍ଡ କବାଟକୁ ବାଡେଇ ହେଇ ବାହାରିଯାଏ ବାବା ଓ ମାଆଙ୍କୁ ଅବଜ୍ଞାର ଦୃଷ୍ଟି ହାଣି -
 “ମଉନମୁହଁ ବୁଢ଼ୀର ତ ଗୁଣ କିଛି କମ୍ ନୁହେଁ ! ଇଏ କଣ ନାତୁଣୀକୁ ଜଗିବେ କି ଶିକ୍ଷାଦେବେ ? ମୁଁ ଭାବିଥିଲି ରୁମା ପୁଅରୁ ସାରି ହଷ୍ଟେଲ୍ ଯିବାଯାଏଁ ବୁଢ଼ୀ ଏଇଠି ରହିଯିବେ . . .” ବୋହୂ କହି ଚାଲିଥାଏ ।
 “ତୁପକର ମାମା, ଆଉ କୁହନି . . . ନାତୁଣୀ ବାହାରି ଆସେ ନେନେମାର ରୁମରୁ । ତା' ଗୋଟିଏ ଆଖିରୁ ଲୁହଧାର ବହି ଆସିଥାଏ ବାଁ ଗାଲ ଉପରେ - ”



ବୁଦାଏ ଲୁହର ତାଜମହଲ

ସତ୍ୟ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ



ମୁଁ ଡ୍ରାଇଭର ଯିବି । ପାସେଞ୍ଜର ଯିବି ବସିଛି ଅରୁଣ ମିଶ୍ର, ବୋଷ୍ଟନ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟର ବୀମା ବିଜ୍ଞାନର ପ୍ରଫେସର, ଯିବୁ ଏକ ଚତୁର୍ଥାଂଶ ପଛକୁ ଢଳେଇ ଆଖି ବୁଜି ଶୋଇଛି । ମୁଁ କଣେଇ ଚାହିଁଲି । ଚବିଶ ଘଣ୍ଟାର ଉତ୍ତାପାହୁଳ ଯାତ୍ରା ପରେ ଯେମିତି ଥକା ଦେଖାଯିବା କଥା ଯେମିତି ଲାଗୁନି । ତା ମୁହଁରେ ପ୍ରଖାନ୍ତିର ଝଲକ । ପଚାଶ ବର୍ଷ ପରେ ରେଭେନ୍ସା ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରୁ ବିଶେଷ ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ ପାଇ ବୀମା ବିଜ୍ଞାନ ଉପରେ ପ୍ରେଜେଣ୍ଟେସନ୍ ଦେବାକୁ ଯାଇଥିଲା ସେ । ମୋ ମନରେ କିନ୍ତୁ ଅସଂଖ୍ୟ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ । ଏବେ ପଚାରିବାଟା କଣ ଠିକ୍ ହେବ? କାଲେ ଚିଡ଼ିଚିଡ଼ା ଅନୁଭବ କରିବ ସେ ! ମୁଁ କିନ୍ତୁ ନିଜକୁ ରୋକିପାରୁନି । ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ଅସଂଖ୍ୟ ହେଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଗୋଟିଏ ଉତ୍ତର ହିଁ ବାକି ସବୁ ଉତ୍ତରକୁ ବାଟ ଫିଟେଇନେବ, ଏକଥା ମୁଁ ଜାଣେ । ଘରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିବାକୁ ଚାଲିଗଲା ମିନିଟରୁ କମ ଲାଗିବନି । ବୋଷ୍ଟନ ସହରର ଟ୍ରାଫିକ୍ ଆଦି ଟିକେ ଅଧିକା ଲାଗୁଛି । ଫ୍ରିଂସ୍ଟ୍ରେରେ ଟ୍ରାଫିକ୍ ସାଧାରଣତଃ ଅନ୍ୟ ଦିନ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କମ ଥାଏ, ଦୁଃସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଆଗରେ କେଉଁଠି ଆକ୍ସିଡେଣ୍ଟ ହୋଇଥାଇପାରେ । ସେ ଯାହାକି ହେଉ, ମୋର ଡ୍ରାଇଭିଂରେ ଧ୍ୟାନ ଦେବାଟା ହିଁ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନର ପ୍ରାଥମିକତା । ଯେଉଁଠି ତା ନିଦ ଭାଙ୍ଗିବ, ସେଇଠି ପଚାରିବି । ଏବେ ଶୋଇଥାଉ ସେ ।

ପଚାଶ ବର୍ଷ ତଳେ, ମୋର ପି.ଏଚ୍.ଡି ପ୍ରୋଗ୍ରାମର ଶେଷ ବର୍ଷ ଅରୁଣ ମିଶ୍ର ଆସି ବୋଷ୍ଟନ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ପି.ଏଚ୍.ଡି ପ୍ରୋଗ୍ରାମରେ ଯୋଗଦେଲା । ତା ଆସିବା କଥା ମୁଁ ପ୍ରଥମେ ଜାଣିନଥିଲି । ଆମ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଆନ୍ଦୋଳନ ଯେତେବେଳେ କାଁ ଭାଁ କେହି ଭାରତୀୟ ଛାତ୍ର ଦେଖାଯାଉଥିଲେ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟର ଏକମାତ୍ର ଭାରତୀୟ ବଂଶଜ ପ୍ରଫେସର ତଃ ଶୁକ୍ଳାଙ୍କ ଘରେ ଦୀପାବଳି ସମାରୋହରେ ପ୍ରଥମଥର ପାଇଁ ଅରୁଣ ମିଶ୍ର ସହ ଦେଖାହୋଇଥିଲା । ତଃ ଶୁକ୍ଳା ତାଙ୍କଘରେ ପ୍ରତିବର୍ଷ ଦୀପାବଳିରେ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ତଥା ସହରରେ ରହୁଥିବା ପ୍ରାୟ ପଚାଶ ଭାରତୀୟ ବଂଶଜ ପରିବାରଙ୍କୁ ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ କରନ୍ତି । ଅରୁଣ ମିଶ୍ର ନୂଆ ଆସିଥିବାରୁ ତଃ ଶୁକ୍ଳା ତାକୁ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ସାମ୍ନାରେ ମିଳିତ ଭାବେ ପରିଚୟ କରେଇଦେଇଥିଲେ । ପ୍ରଥମେ ମୁଁ ତାକୁ ବିହାରୀ ବୋଲି ଭାବିଥିଲି । ପରେ ତା ସହିତ ସାମ୍ନାସାମ୍ନି କଥା ହୋଇ ଜାଣିଲି ଯେ ସେ ଓଡ଼ିଆ, କଟକ ଜିଲ୍ଲାର ସାଲେପୁର ପାଖ ଚାନ୍ଦୋଳ ଗାଁର ମେଲଣ ପଡ଼ିଆ ସାମ୍ନାରେ ତାଙ୍କ ଘର ।

ଗଣିତରେ ପି.ଏଚ୍.ଡି ଏବଂ ବୀମା ବିଜ୍ଞାନରେ ପୋଷ୍ଟ ଡକ୍ଟରେଟ୍ ପରେ ବୋଷ୍ଟନ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ଆସିଷ୍ଟାଣ୍ଟ ପ୍ରଫେସର ଭାବେ

ଯୋଗଦେଲା ଅରୁଣ ମିଶ୍ର । ଯେତେବେଳେ ମୁଁ ମଧ୍ୟ ପି.ଏଚ୍.ଡି ସାରି ସେଇଠି ଅର୍ଥନୀତି ବିଭାଗରେ ଅଧ୍ୟାପନା କରୁଥାଏ । ଯଦିଓ ମୁଁ ଘରସଂସାର କରି ସାଧାରଣ ପ୍ରଫେସର ଭାବେ ଅଧ୍ୟାପନାରେ ରହିଗଲି, ଅରୁଣ ମିଶ୍ର ତାର ସାରା ଜୀବନ ଅଧ୍ୟାପନା ସହିତ ଗବେଷଣାରେ କଟେଇଲା । ବୀମା ବିଜ୍ଞାନରେ ସେ ପୃଥିବୀର ଶୀର୍ଷ ଗଣିତଜ୍ଞଙ୍କ ଭିତରୁ ଜଣେ ହୋଇ ବାହାରିଲା । ତାର ସିଦ୍ଧାନ୍ତକୁ ଆମେରିକାର ସମସ୍ତ ବୀମା କମ୍ପାନୀ ବୀମା ଶୁଳ୍କ ପରିଗଣନା ପାଇଁ ବ୍ୟବହାର କଲେ । ଆମେରିକାର ରାଜ୍ୟ ତଥା କେନ୍ଦ୍ର ସରକାରଙ୍କ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ପ୍ରୋଜେକ୍ଟରେ ସେ ପରାମର୍ଶଦାତା ଭାବେ ନିଯୁକ୍ତି ପାଇଲା । ଅନେକ ଛାତ୍ର ତା ଅଧୀନରେ ପି.ଏଚ୍.ଡି ତଥା ପୋଷ୍ଟ ଡକ୍ଟରେଟ୍ କଲେ । ଖୁବ କମ ବୟସରେ ସେ ବୋଷ୍ଟନ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟର ବୀମା ବିଜ୍ଞାନ ବିଭାଗରେ ଚେୟାର ପ୍ରଫେସର ରୂପେ ଅବସ୍ଥାପିତ ହେଲା । ନିଜକୁ ସବୁବେଳେ କାମରେ ଦୁବାଇ ରଖିଲା ।

ସର୍ବୋପରି ସେ ଥିଲା ଆମ ପରିବାରର ଜଣେ ସଦସ୍ୟ । ଆମ ଘରରୁ ଦୁଇ ଗଳି ଛାଡ଼ି ସେ ଘର କିଣିଲା, ଗୋଟିଏ କମ୍ୟୁନିଟିରେ । ଫ୍ରିଂସ୍ଟ୍ରେ, ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ ଆମ ଘରେ ହଠାତ ଆସି ପହଞ୍ଚିଯାଏ, କିଛି ସମୟ ବିତାଏ, ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମି କି ତିନରୁ ପରେ ଯାଏ । ତା ଘର କିନ୍ତୁ ଗୋଟେ ଚଳନ୍ତା ଲାଇବ୍ରେରୀ । ବେଡ୍, ଯୋଫା, ତାଲିନିଙ୍ଗ୍ ଟେବୁଲ୍ – ସବୁଆଡେ ବହି, ଖାତା, କାଗଜ, କଲମଙ୍କ ମେଳା । ତା ଛାତ୍ରମାନେ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଲାଇବ୍ରେରୀ ନଯାଇ ଯା ଘରକୁ ଆସି ପଢ଼ନ୍ତି । ଜଣେ ଛାତ୍ରବନ୍ଧୁ ଶିକ୍ଷକ ଭାବେ ସେ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ଜଣାଶୁଣା ଥିଲା । ଏ ସବୁ ଉପଲବ୍ଧି ସମ୍ପ୍ରେ ବି ତାର ହୃଦୟ ଆବେଗଭରା, କୋମଳ, ଗୋଟିଏ ଛୋଟ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ହୃଦୟ ପରି । ଯେତେବେଳେ କୌଣସି କାରଣରୁ ଆଲୋଚନା ଭିତରକୁ ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ଚାଲିଆସେ ସେ ବିଶ୍ୱପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧ ପ୍ରଫେସରରୁ ପଚାଶବର୍ଷ ତଳର କଲେଜ ଛାତ୍ରଟିଏ ହୋଇଯାଏ ।

ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ମହାପାତ୍ର । ରେଭେନ୍ସା କଲେଜରେ ସ୍ନାତକୋତ୍ତର ଗଣିତରେ ତା'ର ସହପାଠୀନି ଥିଲା । କେବଳ ସହପାଠୀନି କହିବାଟା ଉଚିତ୍ ହେବନି । ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ସହିତ ତାର ଏକ ଆବେଶିକ ସମ୍ପର୍କ ଥିଲା । ରେଭେନ୍ସା କଲେଜରେ ତାର ଦୁଇବର୍ଷର ଜୀବନକୁ ନେଇ ସେ ଯେଉଁ ବିବରଣୀ ଗଲା ପଚାଶ ବର୍ଷରେ ମୋତେ ଦେଇଛି, ମୁଁ ନିଶ୍ଚିତ ରୂପେ କହିବି ଯେ ଏ ବୋଧହୁଏ ପ୍ରେମର ସର୍ବୋଚ୍ଚ ଅବବୋଧ ଥିଲା । ପ୍ରେମ ଏଠି ତ୍ୟାଗର ରୂପ ନେଇଥିଲା ।

ତା କହିବା ଅନୁସାରେ, କେବଳ ତାକୁ ଓ ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣାକୁ ଛାଡ଼ିଦେଲେ, କ୍ୟାମ୍ପସରେ ବାକି ସମସ୍ତେ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ମିଳାମିଶାକୁ ପ୍ରେମର ରୂପ ଦେଉଥିଲେ । ଏ ସମ୍ପର୍କକୁ ନେଇ ଦୁଇ ବର୍ଷ କ୍ୟାମ୍ପସ ଜୀବନରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ କେବେ କୌଣସି ପ୍ରକାରର ଔପଚାରିକ ବାର୍ତ୍ତାଳାପ ହୋଇନଥିଲା ।

କ୍ୟାମ୍ପସ କହିଲେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାର ସର୍ବବୃହତ୍ କଲେଜ ରେଭେନ୍ସାର ପଛକୁ ଲାଗିଥିବା ହଷ୍ଟେଲ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ, ଗୋଟିଏ ପଟରୁ ଷ୍ଟେସ୍ ହଷ୍ଟେଲ, ଲେଡିଜ୍ ହଷ୍ଟେଲ, ନ୍ୟୁ ହଷ୍ଟେଲ, ଟି.ଆର୍.ଡବ୍ଲ୍ୟୁ ହଷ୍ଟେଲ, ନ୍ୟୁ ପି.ଜି ହଷ୍ଟେଲରୁ ନେଇ ଆଉ ପଟେ ଇଷ୍ଟ ହଷ୍ଟେଲ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ - ଏକ ଅଣ୍ଟାକାର ଭୌଗଳିକ କ୍ଷେତ୍ର । ମଝିରେ ଖେଳପଡ଼ିଆ । କ୍ଲାସ୍ ସରିଗଲା ପରେ ଏବଂ ଅନ୍ଧାର ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଏହି ଭୁଖଣ୍ଡ ବେଶ୍ ଚଳଚଞ୍ଚଳ ହୋଇଉଠେ, ସାରା ଦିନ କାହା ସହିତ ଦେଖା ନହୋଇଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଏହି ସମୟରେ ପ୍ରାୟ ସମସ୍ତେ ସେଇଠି ମିଳିଯାଇଥାନ୍ତି ।

ଅରୁଣ ମିଶ୍ର ନ୍ୟୁ ହଷ୍ଟେଲର ଛବିଶ ନମ୍ବର ରୁମ୍‌ରେ ରହୁଥିଲା । ହଷ୍ଟେଲରୁ ବାହାରି କ୍ଲାସ୍‌କୁ ଯିବା ସମୟରେ ଠିକ୍ ଲେଡିଜ୍ ହଷ୍ଟେଲ ପାଖାପାଖି ହୋଇଥିବାବେଳେ ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ତା ହଷ୍ଟେଲରୁ ବାହାରେ । କ୍ଲାସ୍ ସରିଲେ ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ତା ସହିତ ଯିବାକୁ ଚାହେଁ । ଯଦି ସେ କ୍ଲାସ୍‌ରୁ ପ୍ରଥମେ ବାହାରି ଆସେ ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ଲମ୍ବା ପାହୁଣ୍ଡ ପକାଇ ତା ପାଖରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଯାଏ । ଯଦି ସେ କେବେ ପଛରେ ରହିଯାଏ ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ପିରେପିରେ ତାଲେ ସେ ଆସି ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ସହିତ ମିଶିବା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ । ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ଚାହେଁ ସେ ହଷ୍ଟେଲ ସାମ୍ନାରେ ଛିଡ଼ା ହୋଇ କିଛି ସମୟ ତା ସହ ସେ ଗପୁ, ଯଦିଓ କେବେ ମୁହଁ ଖୋଲି କହେନା ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା । ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ଗୋରା, ପତଳା, ଲମ୍ବା, ପାହାଡ଼ି ଝରଣା ପରି ଛଳଛଳ, ବନହରିଣୀ ପରି ଚଳଚଞ୍ଚଳ । ସବୁବେଳେ ଶାଢ଼ୀ ପିନ୍ଧେ । ତାକୁ ଲାଗେ ଯେମିତି ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ତା ମନ କଥା ଜାଣିପାରେ ସେ ଝିଅମାନେ ଶାଢ଼ୀରେ ସୁନ୍ଦର ଲାଗନ୍ତି । କିନ୍ତୁ ତା ନୁହେଁ । ଦୁଃସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣାକୁ ଶାଢ଼ୀ ପିନ୍ଧିବାକୁ ଭଲ ଲାଗେ । ଅଥବା ଯେ ଏକ ସଂଯୋଗ ମାତ୍ର । ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ସହ ଚାଲୁଥିବା ସମୟରେ ବେଳେବେଳେ ପବନରେ ଶାଢ଼ୀ କାନି ଆସି ତା ଦେହରେ ଗୁଡେଇ ହୋଇଯାଏ । ତାକୁ ଭଲ ଲାଗେ, ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ଅପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ ହୁଏ ।

ତଥାପି ସେ ଦୁହଁଙ୍କୁ କେବେ ଲାଗିନି ସେ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ପ୍ରେମ ବୋଲି କିଛି ଥିଲା ।

ହଷ୍ଟେଲ ଛାତ୍ର ଆଣ୍ଟିନା ଉପରେ ବସି ସେତେବେଳେ କାଉ ବୋବାଏ, ତା ରୁମ୍ ମେଡ୍ ଜ୍ଞାନ ରଥ କୁହେ, “ହେଇ ଦେଖ, କାଉ ମଧ୍ୟ ତୁମ ପ୍ରେମକାହାଣୀ ଶୁଣେଇଲାଣି, କାହିଁକି ମାନିନେଉନ ତୁମେ?” ଅରେ ଜ୍ଞାନ ରଥ ବାଲୁବଜାର ଯାଇ ବିଭୂତି ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକଙ୍କ ଦୁଇ ଖଣ୍ଡି ଉପନ୍ୟାସ ଆଣି ଯାକୁ ଦେଲା ଏବଂ କହିଲା, “ଏଇ ଦୁଇଖଣ୍ଡି ଉପନ୍ୟାସ ସାରିଦିଅ । ପ୍ରେମ

କରିବା ଶିଖିଯିବ ।” ପୁଣି କେବେକେବେ କୁହେ, “ଅକ୍ଷୟ ମହାନ୍ତି ଗୀତ ଶୁଣ । ଏଇମାନେ ହେଲେ ପ୍ରେମର ରାଜଦୂତ । ଏମାନଙ୍କ ସିଦ୍ଧାନ୍ତ ଅନୁସରଣ କର, ଦେଖିବ କେମିତି ପ୍ରେମକୁ ବୁଝିପାରିବ ।”

କହିବା ବାହୁଲ୍ୟ ଯେ ସେ ଏଯାଏଁ ବିଭୂତି ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକଙ୍କ ଉପନ୍ୟାସ ପଢ଼ିନାହିଁ ।

ଯେଉଁଦିନ ଦୁହଁଙ୍କର କ୍ୟାମ୍ପସରେ ଶେଷ ଦିନ, ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ଅରୁଣକୁ ଅନୁରୋଧ କଲା ତାକୁ ବସ୍ତ୍ରାଣ୍ଡରେ ଛାଡ଼ିବା ପାଇଁ । ସକାଳ ନଅଟାରୁ ଦୁହେଁ ବସ୍ତ୍ରାଣ୍ଡରେ ଛିଡ଼ା ହେଲେ, ଗୋଟାକ ପରେ ଗୋଟେ ବସ୍ ଛାଡ଼ୁଥିଲା, ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା କିନ୍ତୁ ଯାଉନଥିଲା । ତା ମୁହଁରେ ଦୁଃଖର ଛାପ ବେଶ୍ ବାରି ହୋଇପଡ଼ୁଥିଲା । ସେଦିନ ସକାଳୁ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାଯାଏ ଦୁହେଁ ସେମିତି ରୁପଚାପ୍ ଛିଡ଼ା ହୋଇଥିଲେ । ତାକୁ ଅରୁଣ ବାଧ୍ୟ ନକରିଥିଲେ ହୁଏତ ସେ ସେଦିନ ଶେଷ ବସ୍ ବି ଛାଡ଼ିଦେଇଥାନ୍ତା । ବସ୍‌ରେ ବସିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ତା ମୁହଁକୁ ଚାହିଁଲା । ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣାର ଆଖିରୁ କେଇ ବୁନ୍ଦା ଲୁହ ଝରି ଧୂଳିରେ ମିଶିଗଲା । ଶେଷ ବୁନ୍ଦା ଲୁହ ଝରିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ସେ ପାପୁଲି ପଡେଇଦେଲା । ସେଇ ବୁନ୍ଦାଏ ଲୁହରେ ସେ ନିଜର କଳ୍ପନାରେ ତାଜମହଲଟିଏ ଗଢିଲା ।

ଏ ଭିତରେ କାର୍ ଆସି ଅରୁଣର ଡ୍ରାଇଭ୍‌ଫ୍ରେରେ ରହିଲା । ମୁଁ ତାକିଲି, “ଅରୁଣ, ଉଠ, ତୁମ ଘର ଆସିଗଲା ।”

ଲଗେନ୍ ଧରି ଅରୁଣ ତା ଘର ଭିତରକୁ ଗଲା । ମୁଁ ତା ପଛେ ପଛେ ଆସିଲି । ମୋ ମନରେ ଥିବା ପ୍ରଶ୍ନସବୁ ବାହାରକୁ ଆସିବାପାଇଁ ବ୍ୟଗ୍ର ହେଉଥିଲେ । ପଚାରିବି କି ନାହିଁ ଭାବୁ ଭାବୁ ମୁଁ ତା ସୋଫା ଉପରେ ବସିପଡିଲି ଓ ମୋ ମୁହଁରୁ ସ୍ୱତଃସ୍ପୂର୍ତ୍ତ ଭାବେ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନଟି ବାହାରିଆସିଲା, “ତୁମେ ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣାକୁ ଭେଟିଲ?”

ବାସ୍, କେଉଁଠି ଥିଲା ଏତେ ଆବେଗ, ଏତେ କୋହ କେଜାଣି, ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ନାଁ ଶୁଣି ତା ଆଖି ଛଳଛଳ ହୋଇଗଲା, କଣ୍ଠ ବାଷ୍ପରୁଦ୍ଧ ହୋଇଗଲା । ତାକୁ ଏକା ଛାଡ଼ିଦେବାଟା ଉଚିତ ହେବ ବୋଲି ଭାବି, ତିନିର୍ ପାଇଁ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାରେ ଆମ ଘରକୁ ଆସିବାକୁ କହି ମୁଁ ଉଠିଆସିଲି ।

ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାରେ ଆସି ଆମ ଘରେ ପହଞ୍ଚିଲା ସେ । ସକାଳର ମେଘ ଖଣ୍ଡ ବର୍ଷ ଯାଇଥିଲା । ଆକାଶ ଥିଲା ବେଶ୍ ନିର୍ମଳ । ଏକଦମ ଶାନ୍ତ ଲାଗୁଥିଲା ସେ । ମୁଁ ଦୁଇକପ୍ ଚା ଧରି ସୋଫା ଉପରକୁ ଆସିଲି । ଚା କପ୍‌ରେ ପ୍ରଥମ ଦୁଇକା ଦେଇ ସେ କହିଲା, “ଭାଇନା, ମୁଁ ଘିର କରିସାରିଛି, ଓଡ଼ିଶା ଫେରିଯିବି । ଆସନ୍ତାକାଲି ଇସ୍ତଫା ଦେଉଛି । ଚାରି ସପ୍ତାହରେ ସମସ୍ତ ଜିନିଷ ଓ ଘର ବିକ୍ରୀ କରି ସବୁ ଦିନ ପାଇଁ ଫେରିଯିବି ।”

ତା କଥା ଶୁଣି ମୁଁ ଅବାକ୍ ହେଇଗଲି । ଯେ କଣ କହୁଛି ହଠାତ୍ । ତା କଥାରେ ମୋତେ କେମିତି ପ୍ରତିକ୍ରିୟା ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିବାକୁ ହେବ, କିଛି ବୁଝିପାରିଲିନି । ତା ମୁହଁକୁ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନଭରା ଆଖିରେ ଚାହିଁଲି ଏବଂ ପଚାରିଲି, “ସତ କୁହ, ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ ତୁମର ଦୁଇ ସପ୍ତାହ କେମିତି ରହିଲା ? ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ସହିତ ଦେଖା ହେଲା ?”

ସେ ତା କପଡ଼ୁ ଟିପ୍ପଣ ଉପରେ ରଖି କହିବାକୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲା ।

“ମୁଁ ପହଞ୍ଚିବାର ଦୁଇଦିନ ପରେ ମୋର ପ୍ରେକ୍ଷଣ୍ଡେୟନ୍ ଥିଲା । ଗଣିତ ବିଭାଗର ସମସ୍ତ ଛାତ୍ର ଓ ଅଧ୍ୟାପକଙ୍କ ବ୍ୟତୀତ କଲେଜର ଅନେକ ଅଧ୍ୟାପକ ଏହି ପ୍ରେକ୍ଷଣ୍ଡେୟନ୍ରେ ଉପସ୍ଥିତ ଥିଲେ । ପ୍ରେକ୍ଷଣ୍ଡେୟନ୍ ପରେ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନୋତ୍ତର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ ଥିଲା । ଛାତ୍ର ଛାତ୍ରୀମାନେ ପୈର୍ଯ୍ୟାସ ସହ ପ୍ରେକ୍ଷଣ୍ଡେୟନ୍ ଦେଖିବା ପରେ ଅନେକ ମହତ୍ତ୍ୱପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ପଚାରିଲେ । କାର୍ଯ୍ୟକ୍ରମ ସରିଗଲା ପରେ ଗଣିତ ବିଭାଗର ଜଣେ ରିସର୍ଚ୍ଚ ସ୍କଲାର ମୋ ସହିତ କିଛି କଥା ହେବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଛି କହି କଲେଜ ଛକରେ ଥିବା କଫି ସପ୍ଲୁ ମୋତେ ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ କଲା । ବିନା ଦ୍ୱିଧାରେ ମୁଁ ତା ସହିତ କଫି ସପ୍ଲୁ ଗଲି । ମୁଁ ଭାବିଲି ଯେ କ୍ୟାରିଅରକୁ ନେଇ ଦୁଃସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ତାର କିଛି ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ଥାଇପାରେ । କୋଣ ଟେବୁଲରେ ବସି ଦୁଇ କପ୍ କଫି ଅର୍ଡର କଲା ପରେ ସେ କିଛି ନକହି କେବଳ ମୋ ମୁହଁକୁ ଚାହିଁ ରହିଲା । ମୁଁ ଅପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ ଅନୁଭବ କଲି ଓ କିଛି ବୁଝି ପାରିଲିନି । କ୍ୟାରିଅର ନେଇ କିଛି ତାର ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ଅଛିକି ବୋଲି ମୁଁ ତାକୁ ପଚାରିଲି । ସେ ସିଧା ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ କଲା ଯେ ମୁଁ ପଚାରିବାର ବର୍ଷ ତଳେ କାହିଁକି ଦେଶ ଛାଡି ଚାଲି ଯାଇଥିଲି, ଏ ଭିତରେ ଥରଟେ ହେଲେ ବି ମୁଁ କାହିଁକି ଆସିନଥିଲି । ଯେ ମୋର ଏକଦମ୍ ନିଜ କଥା, ଏ ଝିଅକୁ ମୋ ବିଷୟରେ ଏତେ କେମିତି ଜଣା ବୋଲି ମୋର ସନ୍ଦେହ ହେବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲା । ଏ ଝିଅ କିଏ ହୋଇଥାଇପାରେ ବୋଲି ମୁଁ ମନଭିତରେ ସମୀକରଣ କରିବାକୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଦେଲି ।”

ଅରୁଣ ମିଶ୍ର ଗୋଟେ ନିଃଶ୍ୱାସରେ ଏତିକି କହି ରୁପ୍ ହୋଇଗଲା ଓ ତା କପ୍ ଉଠେଇ ଆଉ ଗୋଟେ ରୁପ୍ କୀ ଦେଲା । ଆଗକୁ ଜାଣିବାର ଉତ୍ତର ମୋ ମନରେ ବଢି ଯାଇଥିଲା । ତଥାପି ମୁଁ କହିଲି, “ତା ଟା ଥଣ୍ଡା ହୋଇଯିବଣି । ବିଅ, ଗରମ କରିଦେବି ।”

ମୋ କଥାରେ ବିଶେଷ ଧ୍ୟାନ ନଦେଇ ସେ ତା କଥାକୁ ଆଗକୁ ବଢେଇଲା ।

“ମୋତେ ଅଧିକ ସମୟ ଦ୍ୱିବିଧାରେ ନରଖି ସେ ତାର ପରିଚୟ ଦେଲା । ସେ ଥିଲା ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣାର ଝିଅ । ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ଓ ମୋ’ର ସମ୍ପର୍କ, ଆମର ଦୁଇବର୍ଷର ଜୀବନକୁ ନେଇ ସେ ଛୋଟରୁ ଛୋଟ ଘଟଣା ସବୁ ଜାଣିଥିଲା । ଝିଅଟିର କଥା ଶୁଣି ମୁଁ ସ୍ତମ୍ଭିତ ହୋଇପଡିଲି । ମୋ ସାମ୍ନାରେ କେବଳ ବହଳ ଅନ୍ଧକାର ଥିଲା ।

ମୁଁ ବୋଧହୁଏ ଅନ୍ଧ ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲି । ଝିଅଟି ହଠାତ୍ ମୋତେ ଧରି କଇଁ କଇଁ କାନ୍ଦିଲା । ମୁଁ ଆଖି ଖୋଲି ତାକୁ ଚାହିଁଲି । ତା ଆଖିରୁ ବୁନ୍ଦା ବୁନ୍ଦା ଲୁହ ଝରି ପଡୁଥିଲା, ଠିକ୍ ଯେମିତି ପଚାରିବାର ବର୍ଷ ତଳେ ଝରିଥିଲା ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ଆଖିରୁ । ଶେଷ ବୁନ୍ଦା ଲୁହ ତଳେ ପଡିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ମୁଁ ପାପୁଲି ପଡେଇ ଦେଲି । ମୁଁ ଦେଖୁଥିଲି ପଚାରିବାର ବର୍ଷ ତଳେ ଗଢିଥିବା ବୁନ୍ଦାଏ ଲୁହର ତାଜମହଲ ତରଳି ଯାଉଛି ଏବଂ ପୁଣି ଥରେ ବୁନ୍ଦାଏ ଲୁହ ହୋଇ ମୋ ପାପୁଲିରେ ଅଟକି ଯାଇଛି ।”

ମୋ ପାଟିରୁ ହଠାତ୍ ବାହାରି ଆସିଲା, “ଆଉ ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ?”

“ଦୁଇ ବର୍ଷ ତଳେ ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣାର କ୍ୟାନ୍ସରରେ ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ହୋଇଛି, ତା ଝିଅ କହିଲା । ଶେଷ ସମୟରେ ସେ ମୋତେ ଅନେକ ଖୋଜିଥିଲା କାଲେ । ଏବଂ ତାର ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ଥିଲା ଯେ ମୁଁ ଦିନେ ଫେରିବି ।” ଅରୁଣ କହିଲା । ଅରୁଣର କଥା ଶୁଣି ମୁଁ ଏକଦମ୍ ମୂକ ପାଲଟି ଗଲି । ସେ କିନ୍ତୁ ସାମାନ୍ୟ ଥିଲା ।

ସେ ପୁଣି କହିଲା, “ଆସିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ, ରେଭେନ୍ସା ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ନାଁ ରେ ଗୋଟିଏ ବୀମା ବିଜ୍ଞାନ ଗବେଷଣା କେନ୍ଦ୍ର ଖୋଲିଲି । ମୁଁ ଏଠାରୁ ଗଲେ ସେଇ କେନ୍ଦ୍ରର ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ବିକାଶ କରିବା ହେଲା ମୋର ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ । ଓଡ଼ିଶାରୁ ତଥା ଭାରତର ଅନ୍ୟ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟମାନଙ୍କରୁ ମେଧାବୀ ଛାତ୍ରମାନେ ଏଠାରେ ବୀମା ବିଜ୍ଞାନରେ ଗବେଷଣା କରିବେ । ଏଠାରୁ ଯେଉଁ ପିଲାମାନେ ଡିଗ୍ରୀ ହାସଲ କରି ବାହାରିବେ, ସେମାନେ ବିଶ୍ୱର କୌଣସି ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ଅଧ୍ୟାପନା ତଥା ଅଧିକ ଗବେଷଣା କରିପାରିବେ । ବାକି ଜୀବନ ‘ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ରିସର୍ଚ୍ଚ ସେଣ୍ଟର ଫର୍ ଆକ୍ରୁଆରିଆଲ ସାଇନ୍ସ’କୁ ବିଶ୍ୱର ସର୍ବଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ ବୀମା ଗବେଷଣା କେନ୍ଦ୍ର କରିବା ମୋର ଏକମାତ୍ର ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ।”

ଏତିକି କହି ସେ ତାର ବାକି ତା ପିଇବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲା ।

ଯେହେତୁ ତାର ବୋଷ୍ଟନ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ଛାଡି ଚାଲିଯିବାଟା ମୋତେ ନିଜ ପରିବାରର ଜଣେ ସଦସ୍ୟକୁ ହରାଇଲାପରି ଲାଗିବ, ମୁଁ ତାକୁ ଆଉଥରେ ଏ ନିଷ୍ପତ୍ତିରେ ବିଚାର କରିବାକୁ କହିଲି, କିନ୍ତୁ ସେ ଗଲା ପରେ ମନେ ମନେ ଭାବିଲି, “ସାବାୟ ଅରୁଣ ମିଶ୍ର ! ତୁ ଅନେକ ବର୍ଷ ତଳେ ବୁନ୍ଦାଏ ଲୁହରେ ଯେଉଁ କଲ୍ପନାର ତାଜମହଲ ଗଢିଥିଲୁ ଏବେ ତା ଜନସମ୍ମୁଖରେ ଛିଡା ହେବ ଏବଂ ସମାଜର ହିତରେ ଲାଗିବ - ଅପର୍ଣ୍ଣା ରିସର୍ଚ୍ଚ ସେଣ୍ଟର ଫର୍ ଆକ୍ରୁଆରିଆଲ ସାଇନ୍ସ ।”

୭୪୬୪ ଡ୍ରିଫ୍ଟମ୍ ଲେନ୍
ଭୁବଲିନ୍, ଓଡ଼ିଶା ୭୩୦୧୬
ଯୁକ୍ତରାଷ୍ଟ୍ର ଆମେରିକା

ଦୂର ପର୍ବତ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟସ୍ନାତା ରଥ



“ହେଇଟି ଶୁଣୁଛ.. ଜଳଦି ଉଠମ...ଠଟା ବାଜିଲାଣି । ବାହାରକୁ ଦେଖ ।” ସ୍ବାମୀ ବିନୋଦଙ୍କୁ ଜୋରରେ ହଲେଇ ଦେଇ କହିଲା ମାଳତୀ । “ଓହୋ.. ରବିବାର ଦିନଟାରେ ବି ଟିକେ ଶାନ୍ତିରେ ଶୋଇବାକୁ ଦେଉନାହିଁ । କଣ ଏମିତି ହେଇଯାଇଛି? ପୃଥିବୀ ଫାଟି ଯାଇଛି ନା ଆକାଶ ଖସି ପଡ଼ିଛି?” ବିରକ୍ତ ହେଇ କହିଲେ ବିନୋଦ ।

“ଆମ ଆଗରେ ଯେଉଁ ବଡ଼ ଘରଟା ଖାଲି ପଡ଼ି ନଥିଲା କେବେଠୁ.. ସେଠିକି ନୂଆ ଲୋକମାନେ କିଏ ରହିବାକୁ ଆସିଛନ୍ତି । ଆଜି ସକାଳୁ ଦେଖିଲି ପରା । ବିରାଟ ବଡ଼ ଗୋଟେ କାର୍‌ରୁ ଓହ୍ଲେଇଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ପରିବାର । ଦେଖୁଛ.. ସେଇ ଯଉ ନାଲି କାର୍‌ଟା ଆଗରେ ପାର୍କ୍ ହେଇଛି.. ସେଇଟା । ସ୍ବାମୀ, ସ୍ବାୀ ଆଉ ଝିଅଟିଏ । ବେଶ ଧନୀ ଜଣା ପଡୁଛନ୍ତି ସେମାନେ ।” ଏକ ନିଶ୍ୱାସରେ ଏତିକି କହିଦେଲା । ମାଳତୀ ।

“ଆରେ.. ଏଇ କଥା କହିବା ପାଇଁ ମତେ ଏମିତି ସକାଳୁ ସକାଳୁ କଲିବିଲି କରିବି ଉଠଉଛ? କପେ ତା ପିଏଇଲା ପରେ ବି ତ କହି ପାରିଥାନ୍ତ.. ।” ବିନୋଦଙ୍କୁ ଏତିକି ଶୁଣିଲା ପରେ ସକାଳ ତା ବିଷୟରେ ପୁରାପୁରି ଭୁଲି ଯାଇଥିବା ମାଳତୀ ଝଟପଟ ହେଇ ରୋଷେଇ ଘରକୁ ଚାଲିଗଲା । କିନ୍ତୁ ମନ ତାର ଅଟକି ଯାଇଥିଲା ସେଇ ନୂଆ ପଡୋଶୀଙ୍କ କାର୍ ଆଉ ବେଶ ପୋଷାକରେ ।

ଛୋଟ ପରିବାରଟିଏ ତାଙ୍କର । ବିନୋଦ, ମାଳତୀ ଆଉ ତାଙ୍କର ଛୋଟ ଝିଅଟିଏ । ସାଧାରଣ ଘର ତାଙ୍କର । ଧନର ପ୍ରାଚୁର୍ଯ୍ୟ ନଥିଲେ ବି ଅଭାବ ନାହିଁ । ବିନୋଦଙ୍କ ଯରକାରୀ ଚାକିରିର ସୀମିତ ଆୟ ଭିତରେ ଜୀବନ ତାଙ୍କର ଠିକ୍ ଚାଲେ । ସକାଳୁ ସ୍ବାମୀ ଅଟ୍ଟିଏ ଆଉ ଝିଅ ସ୍କୁଲ ଯିବା ପରେ ମାଳତୀର ଆଉ ବିଶେଷ କାମ ନଥାଏ । କେବେ କିଛି ସିଲେଇ, ବୁଣାବୁଣି କାମ ତ ଆଉ କେବେ ପାଖ ବଜାରରୁ ପରିବା, ସଉଦା ଆଣିବା । ବାସ୍, ଏତିକିରେ ହିଁ ସୀମିତ ସେ ।

ସେଦିନ ଖରାବେଳେ ପରିବା ଆଣିକି ଆସିଲା । ବେଳେ ହଠାତ୍ ପଛରୁ କାହାର “ହେଲୋ” ଶୁଣିକି ଅଟକି ଗଲା ମାଳତୀ । ବୁଲିକି ଦେଖେ ତ କାର୍ ଭିତରୁ ହସି ହସି ହାତ ହଲେଇକି ତାକୁଛନ୍ତି ଜଣେ ଭଦ୍ର ମହିଳା.. ତାର ନୂଆ ପଡୋଶିନୀ । ପାଖରୁ ଦେଖି ତାକୁ ଟିକେ ଚିହ୍ନିଲା ଭଳିଆ ଲାଗିଲା । ତାକୁ ଆଉ ବିଶେଷ ଭାବିବାକୁ ସୁଯୋଗ ନଦେଇ ମହିଳା କହିଲେ “ମାଳତୀ, ଚିହ୍ନି ପାରୁନୁ ମତେ? ମୁଁ ସିପ୍ରା । ତୋ ସ୍କୁଲ ସହପାଠିନୀ ।”

ଆରେ ସତେତ ! ଇଏ ସିପ୍ରା.. କିଛି ବର୍ଷ ସ୍କୁଲରେ ଏକାଠି ଥିଲେ ସେମାନେ । ତା ବାପାଙ୍କର ବଦଳି ହେଇଗଲା ପରଠୁ ଆଉ କେବେ ବି ଦେଖି । ହେଇନି ସେମାନଙ୍କର । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଦୁଃଖ ସେଦିନ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଦୂରରୁ ଦେଖିକି ଚିହ୍ନି ପାରି ନଥିଲା ମାଳତୀ । ବର୍ଷ ତ ଅନେକ ବିତି ଯାଇଛି ଯା ଭିତରେ । ସ୍କୁଲରେ ବେଶ୍ ସାଧାରଣ ଦିଶୁଥିବା ସିପ୍ରା ଆଜି ଦିଶୁଛି ଖୁବ୍ ସୁନ୍ଦରୀ । ଗୋଲାପୀ ରଙ୍ଗର ଦାମୀ ସାଲ୍‌ବର ସୁର୍ ସାଙ୍ଗକୁ ଗଳାରେ ଧଳା ମୋତିହାର ବେଶ୍ ସୁନ୍ଦର ମାନ୍ଦୁଛି ତାକୁ । ଆଉ ଦେହରୁ ଆସୁଛି ଦାମୀ ଅତରର ମହକ ।

“କଣ ଏଯାଏଁ ଜାଣି ପାରିଲୁନି କି ମତେ? ଠିଆ ହେଇଛୁ କଣ? ଗାଡି ଭିତରକୁ ଆ । ଘରେ ଛାଡ଼ିଦେବି ତତେ । ସେଦିନ ତତେ ବାଲୁକୋନୀରେ ଠିଆ ହେଇଥିବାର ଦେଖି ମୁଁ ଠିକ ଚିହ୍ନି ଯାଇଥିଲି । ତୁ ବିଲୁକୁଲ୍ ବଦଳିନୁ । ଏବେ ବି ସେଇ ସାଧାସିଧା ମେଧାବୀ ଛାତ୍ରୀ ଭଳିଆ ଦିଶୁଛୁ ।” ସିପ୍ରାର ଏତିକି କଥା ଶୁଣି ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଆଉ ଖୁସିର କେମିତି ଗୋଟେ ମିଶାମିଶି ଭାବନାରେ ବୁଡି ଯାଇଥିବା ମାଳତୀ ତର ତର ହେଇ କାର୍ ଭିତରେ ପଶିଗଲା । ନିଜର ସୁତା ଶାଢ଼ୀ, ସାଧାରଣ ଚପଲ ଆଉ ଅସଜଡ଼ା କେଶ ବିଷୟରେ ଭାବି ଲଜ୍ଜିତ ହେଇ ପଡୁଥିବା ବେଳେ ମୁହଁରେ ସାମାନ୍ୟ ହସ ଫୁଟାଇ କହିଲା ସେ “ମୁଁ ସତରେ ତତେ ଦୂରରୁ ଚିହ୍ନି ପାରିନଥିଲି । ଏତେ ଦିନ ପରେ ଦେଖିକି ବହୁତ ଖୁସି ଲାଗୁଛି । କେବେ ବେଳ ପାଇଲେ ଘରକୁ ଆସ । ବହୁତ ଗପିବା ଆମେ ।”

ସେଦିନ ପରଠୁ ପ୍ରାୟ ଦେଖା ହୁଏ ଦୁଇ ବାନ୍ଧବୀଙ୍କର । ବହୁତ ପୁରୁଣା ସ୍ମୃତିର ରୋମାନ୍‌ଟିକ କରୁ କରୁ ଖୁବ୍ ହସନ୍ତି ସେମାନେ । ମାଳତୀ ହାତର ଅଦା ଚା ପିଉ ପିଉ ସିପ୍ରା ବଖାଣି ବସେ ତାର ଚାକତକ୍ୟ ଭରା ଜୀବନ ବିଷୟରେ । ବର୍ଷକୁ କେମିତି ସେମାନେ ଅତି କମରେ ଦୁଇ ଥର ଫରେନ୍ ଟ୍ରିପ୍ କରନ୍ତି, ଫାଇଭ୍ ଷ୍ଟାର୍ ହୋଟେଲରେ ରହି ରହି ତାକୁ କେମିତି ବିରକ୍ତ ଲାଗିଲାଣି, ତା ପାଖରେ ଥିବା ଦଶ ବାରଟା ତାଙ୍କମଣ୍ଡ ସେଫର ଡିଜାଇନ୍ ପୁରୁଣା ହେଇଗଲାଣି ବୋଲି କେମିତି ସେଗୁଡା ତାକୁ ଆଉ ଛୁଇଁବାକୁ ବି ଇଚ୍ଛା ହଉନି ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଇତ୍ୟାଦି । ଏସବୁ ଶୁଣି ଶୁଣି ନିଜକୁ ଖୁବ୍ ଛୋଟ ମନେ କରୁଥିଲା ମାଳତୀ । ଘର ଅଗଣାରେ ନୂଆ ନୂଆ ଫୁଟି ଉଠୁଥିବା ଗୋଲାପ, ପାଖ ଗଛରେ ବସା ତିଆରି କରୁଥିବା ସେ କୁନି କଳା ଚଢେଇ, ଟିଭିରେ ନୂଆ ସିରିଏଲ୍ ପରି ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ କଥା ଦେଖି ଖୁସି ହେଇ ଯାଉଥିବା ମାଳତୀକୁ ଆଜି କିଛି ବି ଭଲ ଲାଗୁ ନଥିଲା । କେମିତି ଗୋଟେ ଅଭାବ ବୋଧ ତାକୁ ବ୍ୟତିବ୍ୟସ୍ତ କରି ପକାଉଥିଲା ।

“ଘରେ କଣ ତେଲ ଲୁଣ ସରି ଯାଇଥିଲା? ଆଜି ଛତୁ ବେସରଟା ଏତେ ପାଣିଟିଆ କାହିଁକି ଲାଗୁଛି? ତମ ହାତ ତିଆରି ପରିତ ଲାଗୁନି ।” ବିନୋଦଙ୍କର ଏଇ ସାମାନ୍ୟ କଥାରେ ସେଦିନ ଭୟଙ୍କର ଭାବରେ ରାଗିଯାଇ ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଲା ମାଳତୀ “ଏତେ ଯଦି ସୁଆଡିଆ ଖାଇବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା, ତମ ବସ୍ତୁକୁ ଏଇ ବର୍ଷ ତମର ପ୍ରମୋଦନ କଥା କୁହ । ଆଉ ଶୁଣ... ମୁଁ ତମର ପୁରୁଣା ବାଇକ୍‌ରେ ଆଉ ବସି ପାରିବିନି । ଝିଅ ବଡ଼ ହେଲାଣି ଆମର । ଏଥର ଗୋଟେ କାର୍ ଆଣିବା କଥା ଭାବ । ସେଇ ପୁରୁଣା ରଙ୍ଗ ଛତା ଶାଢ଼ୀ ସବୁ ମୁଁ ଆଉ ପିନ୍ଧି ପାରିବିନି । ଦଶହରା ଆସୁଛି । ମୋ ପାଇଁ ଦଶ ବାରଟା ଡିଜାଇନର ଶାଢ଼ୀ କିଣିକି ଦିଅ । ଆହୁରି ଶୁଣ.. ଏଇ ପୁରୁଣା ବି ବଖରିଆ ଛୋଟ ଘରେ ରହି ରହି ମତେ ଅଣନିଶ୍ୱାସୀ ଲାଗିଲାଣି । ଏଇ ବର୍ଷ ଆମେ ଘରବି ବଦଳେଇବା ।” ନିଜର ସାମାନ୍ୟ ଥଙ୍ଗ ଭରା ଦୁଇଟି ବାକ୍ୟ ବଦଳରେ ମାଳତୀର ଏମିତି ଭାରି ଭାରି ଗୁଡ଼ାଏ ଛୁଞ୍ଚି ଗଲି ଗଲା ପରି କଥା ଶୁଣି ଅପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ ହୋଇ ପଡିଲେ ବିନୋଦ । ସତେ ଯେମିତି ଦଶ ବର୍ଷର ବୈବାହିକ ଜୀବନରେ ଏଇ ପ୍ରଥମ କରି ଭେଟୁଛନ୍ତି ନିଜ ପତ୍ନୀକୁ । ମାସେ ବି ମାସ ହେଲାଣି ତା ଭିତରେ କିଛି ଗୋଟେ ବଦଳୁଛି ବୋଲି ଯଦିଓ ସେ ଠଉରେଇ ନେଇଥିଲେ, କିନ୍ତୁ ତାର ମାତ୍ରା ସେ ଏତେ ଅଧିକ, ସେ ବିଷୟରେ ସେ ପୁରା ଅଜଣା ଥିଲେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ନିଜର ମନର ଭାବନାକୁ ଟିକେ ବି ମୁହଁକୁ ଆସିବାକୁ ନଦେଇ କହିଲେ ସେ “ହଉ ଦେଖିବା; ତମେ ଆଉ ରାଗନି ।”

ଧୀରେ ଧୀରେ ମାଳତୀ ସତରେ ବଦଳିବାରେ ଲାଗିଥିଲା । ଦାମୀ ଜିନିଷ କିଣିବାର ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ବି ତାର ବଢ଼ିବାରେ ଲାଗିଥିଲା । ସେଦିନ ତା ହାତକୁ ଗୋଟେ ଦାମୀ ହାର ବଢ଼େଇ ଦେଉ ଦେଉ କହିଲା ସିପ୍ରା “ଏଇଟା ତୁ ରଖ । ମୁଁ ଗତ ବର୍ଷ ସିଙ୍ଗାପୁରରୁ ଆଣିଥିଲି । ତତେ ବହୁତ ମାନିବ । କାଲି ଆମେ ଗୋଟେ ପାର୍ଟିକୁ ଯିବା । ସହରର ବଡ଼ ବଡ଼ ଲୋକ ମାନଙ୍କର ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ମାନେ ସବୁ ଆସିବେ ସେଠିକି । ଆଉ ଶୁଣ... ଗୋଟେ ଭଲ ଡ୍ରେସ୍ ପିନ୍ଧିବୁ । ଆମେ କାଲି ବହୁତ ମଜା କରିବା ସେଠି ।” ଟିକେ ସଂକୋଚର ସହ ସିପ୍ରାର ହାରକୁ ନେଉ ନେଉ ଭାବୁଥିଲା ମାଳତୀ.. ସେ କଣ ସତରେ ସିପ୍ରାର ବାନ୍ଧବୀ ମାନଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗେ ଖାଦ୍ୟ ଖୁଏଇ ପାରିବ !!

ପରଦିନ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟାରେ ଠିକ୍ ସମୟରେ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ ହେଇଗଲା ସେ । ଆଉ ସିପ୍ରାର କହିବା ମୁତାବକ ସହରର ସବୁଠୁ ଦାମୀ ପାର୍ଲର୍‌ରେ ଯାଇ ପହଞ୍ଚିଲା ସେ । କଥା ଥିଲା ଦୁଇ ଜଣ ଏକାଠି ସେଇଠୁ ବାହାରିବେ ପାର୍ଟିକୁ । କେଶ, ମୁହଁ, ହାତ, ପାଦ ସବୁର ପ୍ରସାଧନ

ସବୁ ସବୁ ପାଖାପାଖି ଦୁଇ ଘଣ୍ଟା ବିତି ଯାଇଥିଲା । ବିନୋଦଙ୍କର କଷ୍ଟ ଅର୍ଜିତ ଦରମାରୁ ଗୋଟେ ମୋଟା ଭାଗ ବଢ଼େଇ ଦେଉ ଦେଉ ଯଦିଓ ତାକୁ ଟିକେ ଖରାପ ଲାଗିଲା, କିନ୍ତୁ ଦର୍ପଣରେ ନିଜର ପରିବର୍ତ୍ତିତ ଚେହେରାକୁ ଦେଖି ସେ ଖୁସିରେ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ କରି ପାରିଲାଣି । କିନ୍ତୁ ଏତେ ସମୟ ହେଲାଣି.. କାହିଁ ସିପ୍ରା? ଫୋନ୍‌ର ଉତ୍ତରବି ଦଉନି । ପାର୍ଟି ହୁଏତ ଯୁ ଭିତରେ ଆରମ୍ଭ ବି ହେଇଯାଇଥିବ । ଏଇଠି ଅପେକ୍ଷା ନକରି ବରଂ ତା ଘରକୁ ଯାଇ ଦେଖିଲେ ହେବ ଭାବି ଭାବି ଯାଇ ଅଟୋରେ ବସିଗଲା ସେ ।

ଖୁବ୍ ଗହଳି ସିପ୍ରା ଘର ଆଗରେ । ଗୋଟେ ଦିନ ପୋଲିସ୍ ଗାଡିବି ଠିଆ ହେଇଛି । ମନରେ ତାର ଟିକେ ଆଶଙ୍କା ହେଲା । କଣ ହେଇଛି ଏଠି ! ହଠାତ ଦେଖିଲା ସେ ସିପ୍ରା ଘରେ କାମ କରୁଥିବା କୁମ୍ଭଦକୁ । ଗହଳି ଆଡେଇ ଯାଇ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ହେଇ ପଚାରିଲା ତାକୁ । ତର ଆଉ କାନ୍ଦ ମିଶା ସ୍ୱରରେ କହିଲା କୁମ୍ଭଦ “ତମେ ଜାଣିନ କି ଭାଉଜ ! ସିପ୍ରା ଦିବିଙ୍କ ପରିବାର ଶେଷ ହେଇ ଯାଇଛି । ପୁରା କରଜରେ ଡୁବିକି ଥିଲେ ସେମାନେ । କେଜାଣି କେବେଠୁ ! ଘରେ ସ୍ୱାମୀ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ସବୁବେଳେ ପାଟି ତୁଣ୍ଡ, ଗାଳିଗୁଲଜ ତାଲୁଥିଲା ପଇସାକୁ ନେଇ । ସବୁବେଳେ ଅଶାନ୍ତି । ଆଜି ବୋଧେ ସେଥିପାଇଁ ରାଗରେ ତାଙ୍କ ସ୍ୱାମୀ ପୁରା ପରିବାରକୁ ଶେଷ କରିଦେଇ ନିଜେ ବି ଆତ୍ମହତ୍ୟା କରିଛନ୍ତି । ପ୍ରାଥମିକ ଅନୁସନ୍ଧାନରୁ ପୋଲିସ୍ ସେଇଆ ହିଁ ଠଉରଉଛି ।”

ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ପାଲଟି ଯାଇଥିଲା ମାଳତୀ । ସତରେ ଏତେ ଅଭାବ ଅସୁବିଧାରେ ଥିଲା ସିପ୍ରା ! କିନ୍ତୁ କେମିତି ଏତେ ଭଲ ଅଭିନୟ କରି ପାରୁଥିଲା? ଧନ, ଆଭିଜାତ୍ୟର ନିଶା କଣ ସତରେ ଏତେ ଅଧିକା ହେଇପାରେ? ନିଜ ଭୁଲ୍ ବିଷୟରେ ଭାବି ଦୁଃଖ ଆଉ ଲାଜରେ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ତାର ନଇଁ ଯାଉଥିଲା । ଅଜାଣତରେ କେମିତି ସେ ଗୋଟେ ମରୀଚିକା ପଛରେ ଧାଇଁବା ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଥିଲା? ପର୍ବତକୁ ଦୂରରୁ ଦେଖି କେମିତି ତାର ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟ ବିଷୟରେ ସେ ଏତେ ନିଶ୍ଚିତ ହେଇଗଲା ? ଧୀରେ ଧୀରେ ପାଦ ପକେଇଲା ସେ ନିଜର ଛୋଟ ଖୁସିର ନୀତି ଆଡକୁ । ଆଉ ଟିକେ ଦୂରରେ ଅନ୍ଧାର ଭିତରେ ମିଶି ଯାଉଥିଲା ତା ହାତରୁ ଖସି ପଡିଥିବା ସେଇ ଦାମୀ ହାରଟା ।

୩୯୦୪ କ୍ରିଷ୍ଣାଲ୍ ସ୍ତ୍ରାଙ୍ଗ୍ ଲେନ୍
ହର୍ମିଟେଜ୍
ଚେନେସି

ଇତିହାସ ପୃଷ୍ଠାରୁ ଡ଼ ସୁଲୋଚନା ଦାସ



କେବଳ ଭାରତୀୟ ନୁହେଁ, ସମଗ୍ର ପୃଥିବୀ ବାସୀଙ୍କ ଦୃଷ୍ଟିରେ ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀ ଥିଲେ ଆଧ୍ୟାତ୍ମିକ ଅଭିପ୍ରେୟ ପ୍ରତୀକ । ବହୁ ଛୋଟ ଛୋଟ ଘଟଣାରେ ବି ଗାନ୍ଧୀଜୀଙ୍କର ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ବର ମହାନତା ପ୍ରକାଶ ପାଇଥାଏ । ସେ ଏପରି ଜଣେ ସତ୍ୟର ନିଷ୍ଠାପର ଉପାସକ ଥିଲେ, ଯାହାଙ୍କୁ ଭାରତବର୍ଷର ମାନବ ସତ୍ତା ପାଇଁ ସର୍ବଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ ଦାନ ବୋଲି ବିଚାର କରାଯାଇଥାଏ । ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀଙ୍କ ସମ୍ପର୍କରେ ସେ ସମୟର ସର୍ବଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ ବୈଜ୍ଞାନିକ ଆଇନ୍‌ଷ୍ଟାଇନ୍ କହିଥିଲେ - ବାସ୍ତବରେ ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀ ଜଣେ ରକ୍ତ ମାଂସ ଦେହଧାରୀ ମଣିଷ ଥିଲେ ଓ ଏ ପୃଥିବୀରେ ଆତ୍ମ ଯାତ ହେଉଥିଲେ - ଏ କଥା ବୋଧହୁଏ ଆଉ କେତୋଟି ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ପରେ ଲୋକମାନେ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ କରିପାରିବେ ନାହିଁ । ଜଣେ ଅସାଧାରଣ ନ ହେଲେ, ସାରା ଜଗତ ତାଙ୍କୁ ‘ମହାତ୍ମା’ ବୋଲି ସମ୍ମାନ ଜଣାଇବେ ନାହିଁ ।

ସ୍ୱରାଜ୍ୟ ମିଳିବାର କିଛି ମାସ ଆଗରୁ ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀ ଅସୁସ୍ଥ ହୋଇ ମୋର୍ସୋରୀ ଆସିଲେ ଦୀର୍ଘ ବିଶ୍ରାମ ପାଇଁ, ମୋର୍ସୋରୀର ବିରଳା ଭବନରେ ତାଙ୍କର ରହିବା ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା ହେଲା । ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀଙ୍କ ପାଖକୁ ଆସୁଥିବା ଲୋକଙ୍କ କଥା ଓ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା ସଭା କଥା ବୁଝା ବୁଝି କରିବା ପାଇଁ ମହାବୀର ତ୍ୟାଗୀ ପ୍ରାୟ ପନ୍ଦର କୋଡିଏ ଜଣ ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛାସେବୀଙ୍କୁ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ନେଇ ପହଞ୍ଚିଲେ । ସମସ୍ତେ ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀଙ୍କ ସେବା କରିବାକୁ ଜୀବନର ପରମ ସୌଭାଗ୍ୟ ବୋଲି ମଣ୍ଡୁଥିଲେ ।

ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟା ବେଳେ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା ସଭା ହେଉଥିଲା । ବାପୁଜୀ ଶ୍ରୀରାମଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଙ୍କୁ ଧ୍ୟାନ ଓ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା କରିବା ପରେ ବିରାଟ ଜନସଭାକୁ କିଛି କହୁଥିଲେ । ଏହି ଅମୃତ ବଚନ ପାନ କରି ଜନତା ମୁଗ୍ଧ ବିଭୋର ହେଉଥିଲେ । ଭିତର ଚାରିପାଖରେ ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛାସେବୀମାନେ ଧଳା ଖଦଡ଼ ପୋଷାକ ପିନ୍ଧି ଭିତ ନିୟନ୍ତ୍ରଣ କରୁଥିଲେ । ବେଣ୍ଟ କର୍ମଠ, ସଜା, ସାବାସିଆ ଓ ନିଷ୍ଠାପର କର୍ମୀ ଥିଲେ ଏମାନେ । ମହାବୀର ତ୍ୟାଗୀ ଥିଲେ ଗାନ୍ଧୀଜୀଙ୍କର ଜଣେ ପରମ ଭକ୍ତ । ଉପାସ୍ୟ ଦେବତା ଭଳି ନିଜ ହୃଦୟର ଭକ୍ତି ଅର୍ଘ୍ୟ ନିବେଦନ କରୁଥିଲେ । ସେ କୋଣସି ସେବା କରିବାକୁ ତ୍ୟାଗୀ ନିଜର ଭାଗ୍ୟ ବୋଲି ମଣ୍ଡୁଥିଲେ । ଏକଥା ତ୍ୟାଗୀଙ୍କର ଜଣେ ବନ୍ଧୁ ସହି ପାରୁ ନଥିଲେ । ସେ ଈର୍ଷାକାତର ହୋଇ ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀଙ୍କୁ କହିଲେ - ମହାବୀର ତ୍ୟାଗୀ ଓ ତାଙ୍କର ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛାସେବୀମାନେ ରିକ୍ତ ବାଲା ଓ କୁଲିମାନଙ୍କୁ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା ସଭାରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେବାକୁ ଅନୁମତି ଦେଉ ନାହାନ୍ତି । କାରଣ ସେମାନେ ମଇଳା ଲୁଗା ପିନ୍ଧିଛନ୍ତି । ଏକଥା ଶୁଣି ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀ ମର୍ମାହତ ହେଲେ । ବାସ୍ତବରେ ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀ ଥିଲେ ଦୀନଦୁଃଖୀଙ୍କର ପ୍ରକୃତ ବଂଧୁ ।

ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀ ସେଦିନ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା ସଭାରେ ମହାବୀର ତ୍ୟାଗୀ ଓ ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛାସେବୀମାନଙ୍କ ସମ୍ପର୍କରେ ଏକଥା କହି ଗଭୀର ଦୁଃଖ ପ୍ରକାଶ କଲେ । ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା ଶେଷ ହେବା ପରେ ମହାବୀର ତ୍ୟାଗୀ ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖା କରି କହିଲେ - ରାମଙ୍କ ମନ୍ଦିରରେ ବସି ଆପଣ ଏପରି ମିଛ କଥା କହିପାରିଲେ କିପରି ? କଥାର ସତ୍ୟାସତ୍ୟ ଅନୁସଂଧାନ ନ କରି ଏପରି ମିଛ କଥା କହି ଆପଣ ମୋ ମୁହଁରେ ଓ ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛାସେବୀମାନଙ୍କ ମୁହଁରେ କାଳି ବୋଲି ଦେଲେ । ଏତେ ଦିନର ସେବା ଓ ନିଷ୍ଠା ମୋର ବୃଥା ହୋଇଗଲା ।

ବିରଳା ଭବନରେ ପହଞ୍ଚି ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀ କଥାର ସତ୍ୟା ସତ୍ୟ ଅନୁସନ୍ଧାନ ପାଇଁ କେତେ ଜଣ ବିଶ୍ୱସ୍ତ ଓ ସତ୍ୟୋତ୍ତମ ଲୋକଙ୍କୁ ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦେଶ ଦେଲେ । ସେମାନେ ସାରାଦିନ ସହରରେ ବୁଲି ବୁଲି ସବୁ ରିକ୍ତବାଲା ଓ କୁଲିଙ୍କୁ ପଚରା ଉତ୍ତର କଲେ । ରିକ୍ତବାଲା ମାନେ କହିଲେ - ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀଙ୍କ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା ସଭାରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେବାକୁ ବହୁ ସଂଖ୍ୟାରେ ଲୋକ ରିକ୍ତରେ ଆସିଥିଲେ । ଆତ୍ମମାନଙ୍କୁ ମୁହଁରେ ବିଶ୍ରାମ ମିଳିନଥିଲା । ଆମେ ରୋଜଗାରରେ ଲାଗିଥିଲୁ, ଆମର ସମୟ କେଉଁଠି ଥିଲା ଯେ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା ସଭାକୁ ଆସିଥାନ୍ତୁ ।

ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀଙ୍କୁ ସତ କଥା କୁହାଗଲା । ଏକଥା ଶୁଣି ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀ ଦୁଃଖରେ ଭାଗିପଡିଲେ । ସେଦିନ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା ସଭାରେ କହିଲେ - ଆଜି ମୁଁ ପ୍ରାୟଶ୍ଚିତ କରିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଛି । ତ୍ୟାଗୀଜୀଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ମୁଁ ଯେଉଁ ଅକ୍ଷମଣୀୟ ଅପରାଧ କରିଛି ସେଥିପାଇଁ ସେ ମୋ ଉପରେ ରାଗ ଦୂରରେ ଛିଡା ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି । ମୁଁ ନ ଜାଣି ନ ଶୁଣି, ଅନୁସନ୍ଧାନ ନ କରି, ବିଚାର ନ କରି ତ୍ୟାଗୀଜୀ ଓ ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛାସେବୀମାନଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ମିଥ୍ୟା ରୋପ କରିଛି । ଏଥିପାଇଁ ମୁଁ ପ୍ରାୟଶ୍ଚିତ କରିବି ।

ଜନତାଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ଚହଲ ପଡିଗଲା । ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀ କଣ ଅସୁସ୍ଥତା ଭିତରେ ପ୍ରାୟଶ୍ଚିତ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ଅନଶନ କରିବେ ? ଜନତା ଭିତରୁ ଚାପା ଶୁତିରଣ ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହେଲା । ତ୍ୟାଗୀଜୀଙ୍କ ପିଣ୍ଡରୁ ସତେକି ପ୍ରାଣ ଛାଡିଗଲା । ସେ ଧାଇଁ ଆସି କାନ୍ଦି କାନ୍ଦି ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀଙ୍କ ପାଦ ତଳେ ଲୋଟି ପଡିଲେ । ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀ କହିଲେ - ଆପଣଙ୍କର ପାପକୁ କଣ କ୍ଷମା କରିଦେଲେ । ମୁଁ ସେଇ ପାପୀ । ମହାବୀର ତ୍ୟାଗୀ କାନ୍ଦି କାନ୍ଦି କହିଲେ - ମୁଁ ଆପଣଙ୍କୁ କଷ୍ଟଦେଲି । ଆପଣ ମତେ କ୍ଷମା କରିଦିଅନ୍ତୁ ।

ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀଙ୍କ ତିନି ମାଙ୍କଡ଼ କଥା ଅଳ୍ପେ ବହୁତେ ସମୟେ ଜାଣନ୍ତି ।

ସେହି ଦିନ ପ୍ରଥମେ ଏହି ତିନି ମାଙ୍କତ କଥା ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା ସଭାରେ ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀ କହିଥିଲେ । ଗୁରୁତ୍ୱପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ସିଦ୍ଧାନ୍ତ ଶୁଣାଇ ସେ କହିଥିଲେ - ଭାଇ ଓ ଭଉଣୀମାନେ ସମସ୍ତେ ଆଖିବନ୍ଦ କରି ଶ୍ରୀରାମଙ୍କୁ ଧ୍ୟାନ କରନ୍ତୁ ଓ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା କରନ୍ତୁ । କାହାରି ଖରାପ କଥା ଆଖିରେ ପଡିଲେ ଯେପରି ଆଖି ବନ୍ଦ ହୋଇଯାଉ । କାନରେ ପଡିଲେ କାନ ବନ୍ଦ ହୋଇ ଯାଉ । ନ ବୁଝି ନ ଶୁଝି କାହା କଥାରେ ଭାସିଯିବା ଉଚିତ ନୁହେଁ । ଖରାପ କଥା ଦେଖିବା ପାଇଁ ଆଖି ବନ୍ଦ ହୋଇଯାଉ । ଖରାପ କଥା କହିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ପାଟି ବନ୍ଦ ହୋଇଯାଉ ।

ତିନୋଟି ମାଙ୍କତର ପ୍ରତୀକ ରୂପରେ ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀଙ୍କର ଏହି ବାର୍ତ୍ତାକୁ ଏବେ ବି ସ୍ମରଣ କରାଯାଇଥାଏ । ଗୋଟିଏ ମାଙ୍କତ ପାଟିରେ ହାତ ଦେଇଛି । ପାଟି ବନ୍ଦ । ଗୋଟିଏ ମାଙ୍କତ ଆଖିରେ ହାତ ଦେଇ ଆଖି ବନ୍ଦ କରିଛି । ଆଉ ଗୋଟେ ମାଙ୍କତ ଦୁଇ କାନରେ ହାତ ଦେଇ କାନ ବନ୍ଦ କରିଛି । ଏହାର ଅର୍ଥ ଖରାପ କଥା କହିବି ନାହିଁ । ଖରାପ କଥା ଦେଖିବି ନାହିଁ । ଖରାପ କଥା ଶୁଣିବି ନାହିଁ । ଆଜି କିନ୍ତୁ ପରିସ୍ଥିତି ବହୁତ ବଦଳି ଯାଇଛି । ଉଚ୍ଚାରଣ ଓ ଆଚରଣରେ ସମତା ରହୁନାହିଁ । ଅନ୍ୟକୁ ଉପଦେଶ ଦେବା ସହଜ, କିନ୍ତୁ ନିଜେ ସେ ଆଚରଣରେ ସିଦ୍ଧ କରିବା କଠିନ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀ ଯାହା କହୁଥିଲେ, ତାକୁ କାୟୋପନୋବାକ୍ୟରେ ଅକ୍ଷରେ ଅକ୍ଷରେ ପାଳନ କରୁଥିଲେ । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ସେ ମହାତ୍ମା ।

ଗାନ୍ଧିଜୀଙ୍କ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱରେ ଗଭୀର ଭାବରେ ପ୍ରଭାବିତ ହୋଇଥିଲେ ସର୍ଦ୍ଦାର ବଲ୍ଲଭଭାଇ ପଟେଲ୍ । ଲୋକେ କହୁଥିଲେ ଲୌହମାନବ । ଯିଏ ଦୃଢ଼ ସଂକଳ୍ପ, ନୀତିନିଷ୍ଠ ଆଦର୍ଶ, ଅମିତ ପ୍ରତିଭା, କର୍ମପ୍ରବଣତାର ଥିଲେ ସାକାର ପ୍ରତିଭା । ତାଙ୍କ ହୃଦୟ କିନ୍ତୁ ଥିଲା ଶିଶୁ ପରି କୋମଳ, ଚଞ୍ଚଳ, ସ୍ନେହ ପ୍ରବଣ ଓ ନିଷ୍ଠାପ । ତାଙ୍କ କନ୍ୟା ମଣିବେନ୍ ମଧ୍ୟ ଥିଲେ ସେହି ପରି ଯୋଗ୍ୟ ପିତାଙ୍କର ଯୋଗ୍ୟା କନ୍ୟା । ନିଜ ପୁଅ ପରି ସର୍ଦ୍ଦାର ପଟେଲ୍‌ଙ୍କର ବେଶ୍ ଅନୁଗତ ଓ ଅନ୍ତରଙ୍ଗ ଥିଲେ ମହାବୀର ତ୍ୟାଗୀ ।

ଥରେ ପଟେଲ୍‌ଙ୍କ ଘରକୁ ଆସିଥାନ୍ତି ମହାବୀର ତ୍ୟାଗୀ । ଆଖିରେ ପଡିଲା ମଣିବେନ୍ ପିନ୍ଧିଥିବା ଲୁଗାରେ ଗୋଟେ ତାଳି ପଡିଛି । ତ୍ୟାଗିନୀ ପାଟିକରି କହିଲେ - ମଣିବେନ୍, ତୁମେ ତ ଏତେବଡ଼ ବାପର ଝିଅ । ଯେଉଁ ବାପ ବର୍ଷକ ଭିତରେ ଚକ୍ରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ସମ୍ରାଟ ପରି ଗତ ଜାତ ମିଶ୍ରଣ କରି ସମଗ୍ର ଭାରତ ବର୍ଷକୁ ଏକ କରିପାରିଛନ୍ତି, ଯାହା ଶ୍ରୀରାମଚନ୍ଦ୍ର, ଶ୍ରୀକୃଷ୍ଣ, ବିକ୍ରମାଦିତ୍ୟ, ଚନ୍ଦ୍ରଗୁପ୍ତ ମୋର୍ଯ୍ୟ, ଅଶୋକ, ଆକବର କିମ୍ବା ଇଂରେଜ ମାନଙ୍କ ସମୟରେ ସମ୍ଭବ ହୋଇପାରିନଥିଲା, ତାହା ସେ କରିପାରିଛନ୍ତି । ରାଜା ମହାରାଜା ତାଙ୍କୁ ସର୍ଦ୍ଦାର ଭାବେ ସମ୍ମାନ କରନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କରି ଝିଅ ହୋଇ ତୁମେ

ଚିରା ସିଲେଇ କରା ଲୁଗା ପିନ୍ଧିଛ । ଲଜ୍ଜା ଲାଗୁନି ? ଭିକାରୁଣୀ ପରି ଏମିତି ଲୁଗା ପିନ୍ଧିବା ଏତେ ବଡ଼ ବାପର ଝିଅକୁ ଶୋଭା ପାଉନି । ଟିକେ ହସିଦେଇ ମଣିବେନ୍ କହିଲେ - ଯେଉଁମାନେ ମିଛ କୁହନ୍ତି, ଭ୍ରଷ୍ଟାଚାର କରନ୍ତି, ଦେଶ ସହିତ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ଘାତକତା କରନ୍ତି, ଚୋରି କରନ୍ତି, ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଲଜ୍ଜା ହେବା କଥା । ମୋତେ କାହିଁକି ହେବ ? ମୋ ବ୍ୟକ୍ତିତ୍ୱ କଣ ଏଇ ଲୁଗାଖଣ୍ଡକରେ ସୀମାବଦ୍ଧ ?

ଏ ଉଭୟଙ୍କ କଥା ଶୁଣୁଥିଲେ ସର୍ଦ୍ଦାର ପଟେଲ୍ ଓ ଡଃ. ସୁଶୀଳା ନାୟାର । ସର୍ଦ୍ଦାର ପଟେଲ୍ ହୋ ହୋ ହୋଇ ହସି କହିଲେ - ଗରିବ ଲୋକର ଝିଅ । ଭଲ ଲୁଗା କାହୁଁ ପାଇବ ? ତା ବାପର କି ରୋଜଗାର ଅଛି । ଏଇ ଦେଖ ମୋ ଚକ୍ଷମା ଖୋଲକୁ । ଏଇଟି କୋଡିଏ ବର୍ଷ ତଳର । ମୋ ହାତ ଘଡିଟା ତିରିଶ ବର୍ଷ ତଳର । ସେ ମୋ ଝିଅ ତ । ଆଉ ଅଧିକା କଣ କରନ୍ତା ? ଭାରତବର୍ଷର ଜଣେ ମହାନ ନେତ୍ରୀ, ପ୍ରଖ୍ୟାତ ରାଷ୍ଟ୍ରନୀତିଜ୍ଞ ଡକ୍ଟର ସୁଶୀଳା ନାୟାର କହିଲେ - ତ୍ୟାଗିନୀ ଆପଣଙ୍କୁ କଣ ଜଣା ନାହିଁ ମଣିବେନ୍ ଦିନସାରା ସର୍ଦ୍ଦାର ସାହେବଙ୍କର ସେବା କରନ୍ତି । ତାହାରୀ ଲେଖନ୍ତି, ଚରଖାରେ ସୂତା କାଟନ୍ତି, ଲେଖାପଢ଼ା କରନ୍ତି ଓ ଘରର ଅନ୍ୟକାମ କରନ୍ତି । ସେ କାଟୁଥିବା ସୂତାରୁ ପଟେଲ୍‌ଙ୍କର କୁର୍ତ୍ତା ଓ ଧୋତି ତିଆରି ହୁଏ । ସର୍ଦ୍ଦାରଙ୍କର କୁର୍ତ୍ତା ଚିରି ଗଲେ ତାକୁ କାଟି ସିଲେଇ କରି ମଣିବେନ୍ ନିଜ ଭାଉଜ କରି ପିନ୍ଧନ୍ତି । ଆପଣଙ୍କ ପରି ବଜାରରୁ କିଣି ପିନ୍ଧନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ ।

ତ୍ୟାଗିନୀ ଲଜ୍ଜିତ ହେଲେ । ବାସ୍ତବରେ ସର୍ଦ୍ଦାର ପଟେଲ୍ ଓ ତାଙ୍କ କନ୍ୟା ମଣିବେନ୍ ଥିଲେ ମହାନ ଆଦର୍ଶର ଗୋଟିଏ ଗୋଟିଏ ଅନିର୍ବାଣ ଜ୍ୟୋତି । ଏସବୁ ଦେଖିବା ସ୍ୱାଧୀନ କରିଥିବା ମହାନ ତ୍ୟାଗୀ ନେତାମାନଙ୍କର ଜୀବନଚର୍ଯ୍ୟାର ଝଲକ ମାତ୍ର । ଏସବୁ କଥା ଶୁଣିଲେ ଏବେ ଲୋକେ ସହଜରେ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ କରିବେନି । ଏହାକୁ ମନ ଗଢ଼ା, କପୋଳ କଳ୍ପିତ, ମିଥ୍ୟା କାହାଣୀ ବୋଲି ଭାବିବେ, କିନ୍ତୁ ଏହା ଇତିହାସ ସମର୍ପିତ ସତ୍ୟ । ଭାରତବର୍ଷକୁ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନ କରିଥିବା ବହୁ ବହୁ ତ୍ୟାଗୀ ପୁରୁଷଙ୍କ ଆତ୍ମ ବଳିଦାନର ଗାଥା ସ୍ୱାଧୀନତାର ସମାପି ତଳେ ଲୁକ୍କାୟିତ ହୋଇ ରହିଛି । ଏକ ସ୍ୱର୍ଣ୍ଣମ ଭାରତବର୍ଷ ଗଠନ ପାଇଁ ପୁଣି ଥରେ ଇତିହାସର ସେ ପୃଷ୍ଠାକୁ ପଢିବା ଆବଶ୍ୟକ । ସମୟର ସମାପି ତଳୁ ନୂଆ କରି ଆବିଷ୍କାର କରିବା ଦରକାର ।

ସୁଲୋଚନା ଦାସ କଟକରେ ତାଙ୍କ ପରିବାରଙ୍କ ସହିତ ବସବାସ କରନ୍ତି । ସେ ଅବସର ପ୍ରାପ୍ତ ଅଧ୍ୟାପିକା । ସେ ଜଣେ ଲେଖିକା, ଗାଳ୍ପିକା, ଉପନ୍ୟାସିକା ଓ ସମାଜ ସେବିକା ।

ଶେଷ ସିଦ୍ଧାନ୍ତ

ସୁଲୋଚନା ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ



ମେରୀଲାଣ୍ଡର ଏଲକ୍ସିନ୍ ସହରର ପଶ୍ଚିମ ଦିଗରେ ଥିବା ଡକେଟସ ଲେନ୍‌ର ଶେଷ ଘରଟି ଏବେ ବିକ୍ରୀ ହୋଇଛି । ପାଖାପାଖି ପ୍ରାୟ ପଚାଶଟି ଘର ସେଠି ଅଛି । ଆମେରିକାବାସୀଙ୍କ ସହ ଭାରତ, ପାକିସ୍ତାନ, ଉପତ୍ତମାନ, ଚାଇନା, ବାଙ୍ଗଲାଦେଶ ଆଦି ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଦେଶରୁ ଏଠି ଲୋକମାନେ ବାସ କରନ୍ତି । ଏଲକ୍ସିନ୍, ହାଉଆର୍ଡ କାର୍ଡ୍‌ସ୍ଟ୍ରୋ ଏକ ଛୋଟ ସହର । ଘର ଗୁଡିକ କଲମ୍ବିଆ ଓ ଏଲକ୍ସିନ୍‌ସିଟି ଠାରୁ ଅପେକ୍ଷାକୃତ ଦାମ୍‌ରେ କମ । ଉଚ୍ଚ ସ୍ତରର ନାମ ଥିବା ବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟ ପାଇଁ ସହରଟି ପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧ । ବିଶେଷତଃ ଭାରତ ଓ ଚାଇନାରୁ ଆସୁଥିବା ପିଲାମାନେ ଭଲ ପଢୁଥିବା ହେତୁ ବାପା ମାଆ ମାନେ ଏଇ ସହରଟିକୁ ପସନ୍ଦ କରିଥାନ୍ତି । ହାଇସ୍କୁଲ୍ ପରେ ଭଲ ଭଲ କଲେଜ ଯିବାର ଯୋଜନା ଓ ପିଲାମାନେ ଭଲ ଚାକିରି କରିବାର ଆଶା ସବୁ ପିତା ମାତାଙ୍କର ଥାଏ । ଲୋକେ କୁହନ୍ତି ଘରର ଦାମ୍ ଜାଗା ଉପରେ ନିର୍ଭର କରେ । ଏ ସବୁର କାରଣ ହେତୁ ଏ ସହରଟିରେ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ଜାତୀୟ ଲୋକ ଏକାଠି ବାସ କରନ୍ତି ।

ଗଦାଧର ଦାସ କିନ୍ତୁ ଏ ସବୁ କାରଣ ନେଇ ଏଠି ଘର କିଣି ନଥିଲେ । କନେକ୍ଟିକଟ୍‌ରେ ପ୍ରାୟ ପଚାଶ ବର୍ଷ ରହିବା ପରେ ଅବସର ପ୍ରାପ୍ତି ନେଇ କେଉଁଠିକୁ ଯିବେ ବୋଲି ବହୁତ ଚିନ୍ତା କରିଥିଲେ । ଏହା ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଯେ ତାଉନ୍ସାଇଡ୍ କରିବାର ବେଳ ଆସି ଯାଇଥିଲା । ସହଜେ ପିଲାମାନେ ଚାକିରି କରି ବିଭିନ୍ନ ପ୍ରଦେଶରେ ଘର କିଣି ରହିବା ପରେ ଆଉ ବଡ଼ ଘରେ, ବଡ଼ ସହରରେ ରହିବାର କାରଣ ନଥିଲା । ସ୍ୱାମୀ, ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଦୁଇ ପ୍ରାଣୀ ଘରକୁ ତାଉନ୍ସାଇଡ୍ କରିବା ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବରେ ରାଜି ହୋଇ ୨୦୦୫ ଡକେଟସ ଲେନ୍‌ର ଘରଟି କିଣିଥିଲେ । ତଥାପି ପିଲାଏ କାଳେ ତାଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ସମୟ କଟାଇବା ପାଇଁ ଆସିବେ ବୋଲି ଭାବି ତିନୋଟି ଶୋଇବା ଘର ସହ ତିନୋଟି ଗାଧୁଆ ଘର ଥିବା ଘରଟିଏ ବାଛିଥିଲେ । ନୂଆ ନୂଆ କନେକ୍ଟିକଟ୍‌ରୁ ଆସିଛନ୍ତି । ସାଙ୍ଗ ସାଥୀଙ୍କୁ ଛାଡି ଆସିବା କିଛି ସହଜ କଥା ନୁହେଁ, ସେଥିରେ ପୁଣି ପଚାଶ ବର୍ଷର ଘର ! ପ୍ରଥମରୁ ଖରାପ ଲାଗିଥିଲେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଗଦାଧର ଦାସ ଆଉ ପତ୍ନୀ କନକ ମିଶ୍ରଙ୍କର ଆସ୍ତେ ଦେହ ସୁହା ହୋଇଗଲାଣି । ପ୍ରଥମେ ଆସିଲାବେଳେ, ଦାସବାବୁଙ୍କ ଭାଷାରେ “ଛୋଟ ଘରଟା କେମିତି ‘କୋଡି କୋଡି’ ଲାଗୁଥିଲା” ବୋଲି ସିଏ କହୁଥିଲେ । ଅବସର ଜୀବନରେ ଅଳ୍ପରେ ସନ୍ତୁଷ୍ଟ ହେବା ମଧ୍ୟ ଅଭ୍ୟାସରେ ପଡିଗଲାଣି । ତା ଛଡା ଯେଲ୍ ବିଶ୍ୱବିଦ୍ୟାଳୟରେ ଚାକିରି ସରିଯାଇଛି ଏବଂ ରିସର୍ଚ୍ଚ ସାଇଣ୍ଟିଷ୍ଟ କାମ ମଧ୍ୟ ନାହିଁ । ସେଠି କାମକୁ ଦଶ ମିନିଟ୍‌ରେ ଚାଲିକି ଯିବାଭଳି ରାସ୍ତାରେ ସିଏ ଘର କିଣିଥିଲେ । ଇଚ୍ଛା ଅନୁସାରେ, ପାଗ ଅନୁସାରେ, କାମକୁ ଚାଲିକରି ଅବା ଗାଡି ନେଇ

ଯାଉଥିଲେ । ଏବେ ସେ ସବୁର ଆବଶ୍ୟକତା ନାହିଁ ।

ସେଠି ଘରଟିକୁ ଉତ୍ତାରେ ଦେଇ ଏଲକ୍ସିନ୍‌କୁ ଆସିବା ପରେ ଘର ବିକା ବିକି କଥା ଚିନ୍ତା କରିବେ ଭାବିଥିଲେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ପଡୋଶୀ ରିଡାଙ୍କର ପରାମର୍ଶ ଅନୁସାରେ ରେମାଙ୍କୁ ରିଏଲ୍‌ଟର୍ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ ଘରକୁ ବିକିବାକୁ ପକାଇ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଚାହିଁଲେ । ଖୁବ୍ ସହଜରେ ଦେଖଣ୍ଡ ହଜାରରୁ ଅଧିକା ଦରରେ ଘରଟି ସପ୍ତାହକ ମଧ୍ୟରେ ବିକ୍ରୀ ହୋଇଗଲା । ଭଗବାନଙ୍କର ଦୟା ନେଇ ସବୁ ହେଉଛି ଭାବି ସିଏ ବାଧ୍ୟ ହୋଇ ଶୀଘ୍ର ନୂଆ ଘର ନୂଆ ଯାଗାର ସନ୍ତାନରେ ବାହାରିଲେ । ଭାଗ୍ୟକୁ ଗଦାଧର ବାବୁଙ୍କ ସାନ ଭଉଣୀ ଗୀତା, ସିଏ ଏଲକ୍ସିନ୍‌ରେ ରୁହେ, ତାରି ପରାମର୍ଶ ଅନୁସାରେ ଏଲକ୍ସିନ୍‌ରେ ଘର କିଣିବାକୁ ସ୍ଥିର କଲେ । ସାନ ଭାଇ ଗାଁରୁ ବାସ୍ତୁ ଗଣନା କରି ୨୦୦୫ ନମ୍ବର ଘରଟି ଠିକ୍ ହେବ କହିବାରୁ ଘର କିଣିବା ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବରେ ସିଏ ଆଗେଇଲେ । ପାଖାପାଖି ଭାଇ ଭଉଣୀ ରହିଲେ ପରସ୍ପରକୁ ଦରକାର ବେଳେ ସାହାଯ୍ୟ କରିପାରିବେ । ବାର୍ଦ୍ଧକ୍ୟରେ ଏବଂ ଅବସର ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ଜୀବନ, ଭଉଣୀ ସହିତ ଏକା ସହରରେ କଟାଇବାର ସୁଖ ଆଉ କେଉଁଠି ମିଳିବନି ଏବଂ ଏହାହିଁ ଉତ୍ତମ ସୁଯୋଗ ବୋଲି ଦୁହେଁ ଭାବିଲେ । ରିଏଲ୍‌ଟର୍ ଏଜେଣ୍ଟ ଆଉ ଏକ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଦେଇଥିଲା । ଗାମ୍‌ରେ ନୂଆ ହୋଇ ଗଢିଥିବା ହାଉସିଙ୍ଗ କମ୍ପ୍ଲେକ୍ସରେ ପଞ୍ଚାବନ ବର୍ଷରୁ ଉର୍ଦ୍ଧ୍ୱ ନାଗରୀକ ଏବଂ ଅବସର ପ୍ରାପ୍ତ ସଂପ୍ରଦାୟଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ହୋଇଥିବା ଘରକୁ ଯିବା ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବକୁ ସିଏ ରଦ୍ଦ କରିଥିଲେ । ନଶନଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ରହିବାକୁ କନକ ବେଶୀ ଆଗ୍ରହ ଥିଲେ । ତା'ଛଡା ଦୁଇ ପିଲାଙ୍କଠାରୁ ବିଶେଷ ଦୂରରେ ନ ରହିବାକୁ ସେମାନେ ଚାହୁଁଥିଲେ । ଭାବୁଥିଲେ, ପାଖରେ ରହିଲେ ପିଲାମାନେ ଥରକୁ ଦୁଇଥର ଆସିପାରିବେ ! ମନ ଖୁସି ଥିଲା । ସୁନେଲି ଜୀବନର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ବି ଥିଲା । ନାତି ନାତୁଣୀଙ୍କ ସାଙ୍ଗରେ ସମୟ କଟାଇବାର ଆଶା ବି ଥିଲା । ପୁଅ ଅମର ଓ ଝିଅ ଅମିତା ଏ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବରେ ରାଜିଥିଲେ । ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ବିଚାରକୁ ନେଇ ଏଲକ୍ସିନ୍ ସହରର ୨୦୦୫ ନମ୍ବର ଘର ଠିକ୍ ହେବ ଭାବି ସେମାନେ ଘରଟିକୁ କିଣିନେଲେ ।

ଘର କିଣିବାର ପ୍ରଥମ ବର୍ଷ ପୁଅ ଅମର ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କୁ ନେଇ କ୍ରିଷ୍ଣମାସ୍ କଟାଇବାକୁ ଆସିଥିଲା । ଯିବାବେଳେ କହିଲା, “ବାପା ଆପଣ ଏଠି ଘର କିଣିଲେ ସିନା, ଏଠି ସମୟ କଟାଇବା ପାଇଁ ଅଛି କଅଣ ? ଛୋଟ ସହର, ଗାଁଟିଏ ପରି ମନେ ହେଉଛି ।” ବାପା କିଛି ସମୟ ରୁପ୍ ହୋଇ ଗଲେ । ତାପରେ କହିଲେ, “ଏଠୁ ତିସି ଯିବା ପାଇଁ କୌଣସି ଅସୁବିଧା ନାହିଁ । ତିସିରେ ସ୍ୱେପ୍ ମିଉଜିଅମ୍, ଆର୍ଟ ମିଉଜିଅମ୍, ପିଲାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ହାଇଲ୍

ହାଉସ୍, ଚିଡ଼ିଆଖାନା, ଆଉ ବଲ୍‌ଟିମୋରର ଇନର୍ ହାଉସ୍‌ର ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଅନେକ ଦର୍ଶନୀୟ ସ୍ଥାନ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଅଛି । ପିଲାଙ୍କୁ ଏ ଦେଶର ରାଜ ଉଆସ, ଲିଙ୍ଗନ୍ ମେମୋରିଆଲ୍ ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ସ୍ଥାନ ଦେଖାଇନେଲେ ମୁଁ ଜାଣେ ସେମାନେ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଖୁସି ହେବେ । ଏଠି ଅଛି ଦେଶର ଇତିହାସ, ଏଠି ଅଛି ମନଲୋଭା ନଦୀ, ହ୍ରଦ ଓ ସମୁଦ୍ର ! ଦେଖିଲେ ସରିବନି” ... ଏମିତି ଅନେକ ବଖାଣିବା ପରେ ଗଦାଧର ବାବୁ ଖୁସି ଜଣାପଡ଼ିଥିଲେ । ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ କନକ କଥା ଯୋଡ଼ି ଦେଇ କହିଲେ - ଘର କିଣିଲାବେଳେ ଆମେ ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଆଖିରେ ରଖି ଏଠିକୁ ଆସିବାକୁ ସ୍ଥିର କରିଥିଲୁ । ଦେଖୁ ଦେଖୁ ଏ ଭିତରେ ପାଞ୍ଚ ବର୍ଷ କଟିଗଲାଣି । କଲମ୍ବିଆର ପାଟୁକେଣ୍ଟ ନଦୀ, ଖରାଦିନର ମଲୟ ପବନ, ପତୋଶୀମାନଙ୍କ ସହିତ ସକାଳେ ଚାଲିବାକୁ ଯିବା, ସବୁ ଆସ୍ତେ ଆସ୍ତେ ଭଲ ଲାଗିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲାଣି । ସମୟ ତାର ପ୍ରଭାବ ପକାଇବାକୁ ହେଲା କରିନାହିଁ । ଭଲ ପାଇବା ତା’ର ହାତ ବିସ୍ତାର କରି ପରସ୍ପରକୁ ଏକାଠି କରିବାକୁ ଭୁଲିନାହିଁ । ଗଦାଧର ଓ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ କନକ ମଧ୍ୟ ପରସ୍ପରର ନିକଟତର ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି । ପତୋଶୀମାନେ ଜଣାଶୁଣାଠାରୁ, ବନ୍ଧୁ, ପୁଣି ବନ୍ଧୁତ୍ବରୁ ପରିବାର ପରି ସଂପର୍କ ଗଢିଲେଣି । ଜୀବନ ଏକ ନୂଆ କୋମଳ ମଧୁର ଗୀତ ଗାଉଛି । ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କର ଆସିବା ନ ଆସିବାର ଗୁରୁତ୍ବ ସେମାନେ ଆଡେଇ ଦେବାକୁ ବାଧ୍ୟ ହେଲେଣି । ପରକୁ ଆପଣାର କରିବା ଆପେ ଆପେ ହୋଇ ନୂଆ ପରିବାର ଗଢି ହେଲାଣି ।

ସେଦିନ ଶନିବାର ହୋଇଥାଏ । ନୂଆ ହୋଇ ଆସିଥିବା ପରିବାରଙ୍କୁ କନକ ଖାଇବାକୁ ଡାକିଥାନ୍ତି । ସଂଧ୍ୟା ଛଅଟା ବାଜିଥାଏ । ବିପାଶା ଓ ବିନୋଦ ହୋତା, ତାଙ୍କ ଝିଅ ସହ ଆସି ପହଞ୍ଚିଲେଣି । ପାଖ ପଡିଶା ଗିରୀଜା ବାବୁ ଏକୁଟିଆ ଆସିଥାନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କର ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଓଡିଶା ଯାଇଛନ୍ତି । ଘରର ପଛ ପଟେ ରହୁଥିବା ରୋଷନ ଲାଲ୍ ଓ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଇନାୟା ଆସି ପହଞ୍ଚିଗଲେଣି । ଗଦାଧର ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ଡାକି ଲିଭିଂ ରୁମରେ ବସାଇ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ପାନୀୟ ଅର୍ପଣର ବ୍ୟବସ୍ଥା କରୁଥାନ୍ତି । ହଇସ୍ସି, ବିଅର୍, ପ୍ଲାଜନ୍, କୋକରୁ ପାଣି ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ କିଏ କଅଣ ପିଇବାକୁ ବରାଦ ଦେଇ ଗପ ସପ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରୁଥାନ୍ତି । ଗଦାଧର କନକଙ୍କଠାରୁ ଟ୍ରେଟିଏ ମାଗି ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କର ପାନୀୟ ଧରି ଲିଭିଂ ରୁମକୁ ନେଲେ । ବିରେଶ ବାବୁଙ୍କ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ସୁନନ୍ଦା ରୋଷେଇ ଘରେ କନକଙ୍କ ସହ ମିଶି ଶେଷ ବ୍ୟାନ୍ଦର ପକୋଡାକୁ ଦୁଇଟି ପ୍ଲେଟରେ ଚିଲି ସସ୍ ସହ ନେଇ ଟେବୁଲ୍ ଉପରେ ରଖିଲେ । ସମସ୍ତେ ମନ ଖୁସିରେ ଖାଇବା ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲେ । ଡିଙ୍କିଶାଳରୁ ଡେଙ୍କାନାଳ ନହେଲେ ବି ସମସ୍ତେ ଗପସପରେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ । ସେଇ ଏକାକଥା, କାହା ପୁଅ, କାହା ନାତି କଅଣ କରୁଛନ୍ତି, କାହା ଝିଅ ଆମେରିକାନ୍‌ଟିଏ ବାହା ହେବ ଠିକ୍ କରିଛି, ଏହିପରି ଅନେକ କଥା । ପାର୍ଟିରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେଇଥିବା ସମସ୍ତ ପରିବାର ଗୋଟିଏ ବଡ଼ ପରିବାର ପରି ମନେ ହେଉଥାନ୍ତି । ସାଧାରଣ ଚାହା ପିଇବା ପାଇଁ ଏକାଠି ହେବାଠାରୁ ଏକାଠି ସଂଜ ବିତାଇବାର ଖୁସିରେ ସମସ୍ତେ ପରସ୍ପରର କେତେବେଳେ ନିକଟତର ହୋଇଗଲେଣି ଜାଣି ହୋଇନି । ଜାଣିବାକୁ ଚାହିଁ ନାହିଁ ମଧ୍ୟ ।

ପରବର୍ତ୍ତୀ ସଂଧ୍ୟାରେ ସୁନନ୍ଦାର ଫୋନ୍‌କଲ୍‌ଟିଏ ପାଇଥିଲେ

କନକ । କାଲି ରାତିର ପାର୍ଟି ପାଇଁ ଧନ୍ୟବାଦ କହିବାକୁ ଡାକିଥିବ ବୋଲି କନକ ଭାବିଲେ । ଗଦାଧର ଫୋନ୍‌ ଉଠାଇ କିଛି ସମୟ କଥା ହୋଇ କହିଲେ “ସୁନନ୍ଦା ଖାଇବାକୁ ଡାକିଛି ବୁଧବାର ଡିନର୍‌କୁ । କହୁଥିଲା ମୁଁ କଙ୍କଡା ଭଲ ପାଏ ବୋଲି ଯିଏ କଙ୍କଡା ଝୋଳ କରିବ । ଲାଇବ୍‌ବେରୀ ପାଖର ଠେଲା ଗାଡିରୁ ଅଧ ବୁଣେଲ କଙ୍କଡା ଆଣିଥିଲେ ବିରେଶବାବୁ । ଦୁଇ ଜଣ ଲୋକ କେତେ ବା ଖାଇବେ ? ସେଇଥିପାଇଁ ଆମ ସହ ଆଉ ୪/୫ଟି ପରିବାରକୁ ମଧ୍ୟ ଖାଇବାକୁ ଡାକିଛନ୍ତି !” ବୁଧବାର ସଂଧ୍ୟାରେ ସମସ୍ତେ ମନ ଖୁସିରେ ହାତରେ କାମୁଡି କାମୁଡି ଆନନ୍ଦରେ କଙ୍କଡା ଝୋଳ ଖାଇ ଘରକୁ ଫେରିଲେ । କନକ ଫେରିଲାବେଳେ ବାଟରେ ଗଦାଧରଙ୍କୁ କହିଲା, “ସତରେ ସୁନନ୍ଦା ଭାରି ଭଲ ମଣିଷଟିଏ । ସମସ୍ତଙ୍କ ମନ ନେଇ ରାନ୍ଧିଥିଲା । ଏମିତିକି ତୁମର ଡାଇବେଟିସ୍ ଅଛି ବୋଲି ଇକୁଆଲ୍ ପକାଇ ଖିରି କରିଥିଲା, ସେଥିରେ ତୁମ ପାଇଁ ଚାରିପଟ ଗୁଡି ବି କରିବାକୁ ଭୁଲି ନଥିଲା । କହିଥିଲେ ପଟ୍‌ଲକ୍ କରି ସମସ୍ତେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଗୋଟିଏ ଖାଇବା ଆଇଟମ୍ ନେଇ ଆସିଥାନ୍ତେ, କାହାକୁ ବି ବାଧି ନ ଥାନ୍ତା । ମୁଁ କିନ୍ତୁ ଡାକିଲେ ପଟ୍‌ଲକ୍ ହିଁ କରିବି । ଯିଏ ଯାହା ଭାବିଲେ ଭାବୁ” । ଗଦାଧର କିଛି କହିଲେ ନାହିଁ । ଭାବୁଥାନ୍ତି, କହିଲେ କିଛି ଲାଭ ହେଲା ପରି ମନେ ହେଉନି । ତାଛଡା ଯିଏ ଜାଣିଛନ୍ତି ପରସ୍ପାକୁ ପ୍ରଶଂସା କଲେ କାହାକୁ ଭଲ ଲାଗିବନି । ଗୋଟିଏ କଥାରୁ ଛଅଟା କଥା ବାହାରିବ । ଯିଏ କିଛି ନକହି ତୁପ୍ ରହିଲେ । କନକ କିନ୍ତୁ ଛାଡିବାର ଲୋକ ନୁହନ୍ତି । କହିଲେ, “କଅଣ କିଛି କହିଲନି ଯେ ? ଆରାମରେ ଏତେ ସବୁ ଖାଇ ଦେଇ ଆସିଲ, ପାଟିରୁ ଧନ୍ୟବାଦଟିଏ ବି ବାହାରିଲାନି” ? ଗଦାଧର କହିଲେ, “ହିଁ ତୁମକୁ କହିବାକୁ ମୁଁ ଭୁଲି ଯାଇଛି, ଶନିବାର ଦିନ ବିରେଶ ବାବୁଙ୍କୁ ମୁଁ ଏଆରପୋର୍ଟରେ ଛାଡି ଦେଇ ଆସିବାକୁ କଥା ଦେଇଛି । ଏଥର ଯିଏ ଏକୁଟିଆ ଓଡିଶା ଯିବାର ଅଛି । ଆଣିବାକୁ ଗଲାବେଳେ ସୁନନ୍ଦାଙ୍କୁ ଧନ୍ୟବାଦ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ କହିଦେବି, ତୁମେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ହୁଅନି” । କନକ ଶୁଣିଲେ, କିନ୍ତୁ ଖୁସି ହେଲା ପରି ଜଣାଗଲାନି । କହିଲେ “ସୁନନ୍ଦା ତ କାଲି କିଛି କହୁ ନଥିଲା ! ହେଲେ ବିରେଶ ବାବୁ ଏକୁଟିଆ କାହିଁକି ଯାଉଛନ୍ତି ? କଅଣ ଜରୁରୀ କାମ ଅଛି କି ?” ଗଦାଧର କହିଲେ, “ତାଙ୍କର କଅଣ ଜମିବାଡି ବିକା ବିକି କରିବାର ଅଛି । ଆସୁ ଆସୁ ଦୁଇ ଡିନି ମାସ ଲାଗିଯିବ । ତାଛଡା ସୁନନ୍ଦା ଏତେ ଦିନ ଶଶୁରଘରେ ରହିବାକୁ ଭଲ ପାଆନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ, ସହଜରେ ଘରେ ବୟାଅଣୀ ବର୍ଷର ଶାଶୁ ବୁଢୀ ବି ଅଛନ୍ତି । ତେବେ ଯାହା ହେଉ ଶାଶୁଙ୍କୁ ସିନା ସିଏ ଭଲ ପାଆନ୍ତି ନାହିଁ, କିନ୍ତୁ ସାଙ୍ଗ ମାନଙ୍କର ମନ ଜାଣି ରାନ୍ଧିବାକୁ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଭଲ ପାଆନ୍ତି । ଦେଖୁନ, ମୋ ପାଇଁ ଅଧିକା ଗୁଡି ବିଇଟା କେମିତି କରିଥିଲେ !” କନକ ଏକ ଶୁଖିଲା “ହିଁ” କହି ତୁପ୍ ରହିବାକୁ ଶ୍ରେୟ ମଣିଲେ ।

ବିରେଶ ବାବୁ ଓଡିଶା ଯିବାର ଏ ଭିତରେ ଦୁଇ ସପ୍ତାହ କଟିଗଲାଣି । ଏକୁଟିଆ ଅଛନ୍ତି ବୋଲି ସାହିରେ, ପାଖଆଖରେ ସମସ୍ତେ ସୁନନ୍ଦାଙ୍କୁ ଖାଇବାକୁ ଡାକିଥାଆନ୍ତି । କନକ ବି ସୁନନ୍ଦା ସହ ସମୟ କଟାଇବା ପାଇଁ ଥରେ ଯାଇ ବୁଲି ଆସିଲେଣି ।

ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ ସକାଳ ଜଳଖିଆ ପରେ ଫୋନ୍‌ରେ କିଛି ସମୟ କଥା କହି ସମୟ କଟାନ୍ତି । ସେଦିନ ରାତି ଆଠଟା ହୋଇଥାଏ । ସୁନନ୍ଦା ଫୋନ୍‌କରି ଗଦାଧର ବାବୁଙ୍କୁ ପଚାରିଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ଘରେ ଲଲେକ୍ତ୍ରିକ୍ କଟିଯାଇଛି, ଟିକିଏ ଆସି ଯଦି ଦେଖି ଯିବେ କି ? କନକଙ୍କୁ ଖରାପ ଲାଗିଲା । ଏକ୍ସଟିଆ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଲୋକଟିଏ କେମିତି ରାତିରେ ଏଲେକ୍ତ୍ରିସିଆନ୍‌କୁ ଡାକିବ ? ଗଦାଧର ବାବୁଙ୍କୁ ଯାଇ ଦେଖି ଆସିବାକୁ ସିଏ ଅନୁରୋଧ କଲା । ଗଦାଧର ଧୃତ ପତ ହୋଇ ଜାମା ଖଣ୍ଡେ ଗଳାଇ ବାହାରିଗଲେ । କନକ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରିଥାଏ । ରାତି ଆଠଟାରୁ ଦଶଟା ହେଲାଣି । ଏ ଯାଏଁ ଗଦାଧର ଫେରି ନାହାନ୍ତି । ଟେକ୍ସଟ୍‌ର ବି କିଛି ଉତ୍ତର ନାହିଁ । ସେଦିନ ଫେରୁ ଫେରୁ ଏଗାରଟା ବାଜିଗଲା । କନକ କିଛି ନକହି ତୁପ ରହିଲା । ଗଦାଧର ବି କୌଣସି ବ୍ୟାଖ୍ୟା କଲେ ନାହିଁ । ଦୁହେଁ ସେ ରାତି ତୁପ୍ ତାପ୍ କଟାଇଲେ । ପର ଦିନ ସକାଳୁ ସୁନନ୍ଦା ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ଚାହା ପାଇଁ ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ କରିଥିଲା । କନକ କାମ ଅଛି କହି ଯାଇ ନଥିଲା । ଗଦାଧର କହିଲେ, “ନ ଗଲେ ସୁନନ୍ଦା ଦୁଃଖ ଖରାପ ଭାବିବେ । ମୁଁ ଯାଇ ଅଧ ଘଣ୍ଟାରେ ଚାଲି ଆସିବି” । କନକ କିଛି କହିଲା ନାହିଁ । ମନଟା କେମିତି ଅଶାନ୍ତି ହୋଇଗଲା । ପୁଣି ମନକୁ ବୁଝାଇ କହିଲା, “ଗଦାଧରଙ୍କ ବୟସ ଷାଠିଏ ଟପିଲାଣି । ମୁଁ ଏ ପାପ କଥାଟା ଭାବୁଛି କେମିତି ? ସେଦିନ ଗଦାଧର ବାବୁ ଚାହା ପିଇ ଅଧଘଣ୍ଟାରେ ଫେରିଲେ ନାହିଁ, କନକକୁ ଟେକ୍ସଟ୍ କରି ଜଣାଇଦେଲେ - ସୁନନ୍ଦା ବାଧ୍ୟ କରୁଛନ୍ତି ଲକ୍ଷ କରି ଆସିବି । ତାକୁ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରିବାକୁ ମନା କଲେ । କନକ ଆସିବାକୁ ମନା କରିବାରୁ ସିଏ ବାଧ୍ୟ ହୋଇ ଯାଇଛନ୍ତି ବୋଲି ମଧ୍ୟ ସଫା କଲେ । କନକର କଥା କହିବା ପାଇଁ ବା କିଛି ଭାବିବା ପାଇଁ ଆଉ କିଛି ନ ଥିଲା । ସେଦିନ ରାତିରେ ଗଦାଧର କେତେବେଳେ ଫେରିଲେ ସିଏ ଆଉ ଜାଣିନି । ସୁନନ୍ଦା ଘରୁ ସିଏ ଆଉ କୁଆଡେ ଗଲେ ବୋଲି ସିଏ ପଚାରିନି । ଖାଇ ପିଇ ଲାଲ୍ ବନ୍ଦ କରି ସିଏ ଶୋଇଗଲା । ପରଦିନ ସକାଳୁ ଦେଖିଲା, ଖାଇବା ଟେବୁଲ୍ ଉପରେ ଦୁଇଟି ଛୋଟ ଡବାରେ ମାଂସ ତରକାରୀ ଓ କିଛି କୋବି ଭଜା ଅଛି । ସିଏ ବୋଧେ ଭୁଲି ଯାଇଛନ୍ତି ଫ୍ରିଜ୍ ଭିତରେ ରଖିବା ପାଇଁ । ମନେ ମନେ ଭାବିଲା, ସମୟର ଗତି ଆଉ ସଂପର୍କର ସୁଅ ବିପରୀତ ଦିଗରେ ଗତିକଲାଣି । ଗଦାଧର ବାବୁ ଓ ସୁନନ୍ଦା ପରସ୍ପରର ନିକଟତର ହେଲେଣି । କନକ ମନରେ ଅନେକ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନବାଚୀ । କିନ୍ତୁ ହାତରେ କିଛି କରିବାକୁ ନାହିଁ ।

ଏବେ ଅବସର ସମୟର ପ୍ରାର୍ଥ୍ୟ ଗଦାଧରଙ୍କୁ ଛଟପଟ କରୁଛି । ଘରେ ରହିବାକୁ ମନ କହୁନି । ଆଳ କରି ସୁନନ୍ଦା ଏକ୍ସଟିଆ ଥିବେ ଅବା କେଉଁଦିନ ତାଙ୍କର ପରିବା ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ଦରକାର କହି ସିଏ ପ୍ରତି ଦୁଇ ତିନି ଦିନରେ ଥରେ ତାଙ୍କ ଘର ଆଡେ ଯାଉଛନ୍ତି । କନକ କଣ କରିବ ଅବା କଅଣ ପଚାରିବ ଭାବି ପାରୁନି । ଗଦାଧରଙ୍କ ଚାଲିଚଳନରେ ସିଏ କିଶୋର ବାଳକର ହାବଭାବ ଦେଖୁଛନ୍ତି । କିଛି କଥାର ବାହାନା କରି ସିଏ ସୁନନ୍ଦାକୁ ଦେଖି ନ ଆସିଲେ ରହି ପାରୁନାହାନ୍ତି । ମନଟା ଛଟପଟ ଲାଗୁଛି ।

ସେଥିପାଇଁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ମିଛର ବାହାନା କରିବାକୁ ପଡୁଛି । କାହିଁକି ଏମିତି ହେଉଛି, କାହିଁକି ସିଏ ବାଟବଣା ହେଉଛନ୍ତି ସିଏ ନିଜେ ମଧ୍ୟ ତାର ଉତ୍ତର ଖୋଜି ପାଉନାହାନ୍ତି ।

ଗୁରୁବାର ରାତି ଦଶଟା ହେଲାଣି । ଗଦାଧରଙ୍କର ଶୋଇବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା ନାହିଁ, ନିଦର ବି ଦେଖା ନାହିଁ । ବାହାର ତେଜ୍ ଉପରେ ଦୁଇଟା ବେତ ଚଉକି ପଡିଛି । ଏପ୍ରିଲ ମାସର ନରମ ଖରା କୁଆଡେ ଗଲାଣି । କିନ୍ତୁ ନରମ ପବନ ରାତିକୁ ମୁଲ୍ଲାଏମ୍ କରିଛି । ଏକ୍ସଟିଆ ବିଅର୍ ବୋତଲଟିଏ ଧରି ଗଦାଧର ବାବୁ ଚିତ୍ରାରେ ବସିଛନ୍ତି । ଉପରେ ନୀଳରଙ୍ଗର ଛତାଟି ଚଉକି ସବୁକୁ ଘୋଡାଇ ରଖିଛି, ବୋଧେ ବର୍ଷା ଓ ଖରା ତାପକୁ ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ରକ୍ଷା କରୁଛି । ଆଉ ଦୁଇଟି ଚଉକି କାନ୍ଥକୁ ଆଉଁଳି ଠିଆ ହୋଇ ରହିଛନ୍ତି । ଚାରିଆଡ ନିଶ୍ଚନ୍ଦ । ହଠାତ୍ କାହାର ପାଦ ଶବ୍ଦ ଶୁଣି ସିଏ ଚମକି ପଡିଲେ । ଦେଖିଲେ କନକ ଠିଆ ହୋଇଛନ୍ତି । ସିଏ ବି ତୁପ୍‌ତାପ୍ ଗଦାଧର ବାବୁ ପଚାରିଲେ, “କଅଣ କହିବକି କନକ ?” କନକ ଆସ୍ତେ କହିବାକୁ ଆରମ୍ଭ କଲେ, “ମତେ ତୁମକୁ କହିବାକୁ ଖରାପ ଲାଗୁଛି । କିନ୍ତୁ ତୁମ ସହ ଡିରିଣ୍ଡ ବର୍ଷ ଏକାଠି କଟାଇଯାରିବା ପରେ ତୁମକୁ ମୋ’ ମନ କଥାକୁ ମୁଁ ଲୁଚାଇବାକୁ ପସନ୍ଦ କରୁନି । ଭାବୁଛି ମୋ’ କଥା ଶୁଣିବା ପରେ ତୁମେ ମତେ କ୍ଷମା କରିଦେବ” । କନକର ଗୋତ ଶିଥିଳ ହୋଇ ଆସୁଥାଏ, ସିଏ ଚଉକିଟିଏ ଟାଣି ବସିଗଲା । ଆଖି ତାର ଟେବୁଲ୍‌ର ଗୋଟିଏ କଣରୁ ସତେ କିଛି ଖୋଜୁଥାଏ । ସେତେବେଳକୁ ଅନ୍ଧାର ରାତିର ପଣତ ଲମ୍ବି ଯାଇ ବାହାରେ ଘଟୁଥିବା ଘଟଣାକୁ, ମଣିଷ ମନଗହାରର କଥାକୁ ଘୋଡାଇବାର ପ୍ରୟାସ କରୁଥାଏ - ଗଦାଧର ବାବୁଙ୍କର ପାପ ମନ ଅବା କନକର ଦୁଃଖୀ ହୃଦୟର ସ୍ୱପ୍ନନ ! ବିଜୁଳିବତି ଜଳାଇ ତେଜ୍‌କୁ ଆଲୋକିତ କରିବାକୁ କାହାର ସାହାଯ୍ୟ ନୁହେଁ ନଥାଏ । ଆଲୋକର କ୍ଷୀଣ ରୋଷଣିରେ ନିଜ ମୁଁହର ଭାବ କାଳେ ପଡି ହୋଇଯିବ ସେ ଡର ବି ପରିସ୍ଥିତିକୁ ଉଦ୍‌ବେଗମୟ କରିଥାଏ । ଆନ୍ଦୋଳିତ ମନକୁ ତୁପ୍ କରିବାର ପ୍ରଚେଷ୍ଟା ବ୍ୟର୍ଥ ମନେ ହେଉଥାଏ ଦୁହିଁଙ୍କର । ଗଦାଧର ବାବୁ ଶେଷରେ ଆଉ ରହିପାରିଲେନି, ଧୀମା ସ୍ୱରରେ କହିଲେ, “କନକ, ତୁମ ପାଇଁ ଥିବା ଡିରିଣ୍ଡ ବର୍ଷର ଭଲ ପାଇବା ମୋର କେଉଁଠି ଉଭେଇ ଯାଇଛି । ମୁଁ କହିବାକୁ ଦୁଃଖିତ ଯେ - ମୁଁ ତୁମକୁ ଆଉ ଭଲ ପାଉନାହିଁ” । କନକ ନ ରାଗି, କଥା କହିବାକୁ ସମସ୍ତ ବଳ ସଂତପ୍ତ କରି କହିଲେ, “ମୁଁ ଜାଣେ । ତୁମେ ତୁମର ବାକି ଜୀବନକୁ କେମିତି କଟାଇବାକୁ ଚାହଁ - ତାର ସିଦ୍ଧାନ୍ତ ତୁମକୁ ନେବାକୁ ହେବ । ମୋର କିଛି କହିବାର ନାହିଁ । ଆଉ ତୁମେ ଯଦି ଭାବୁଥାଅ ପିଲାଙ୍କ କଥା - ସେ କଥାକୁ ଭାବ ନାହିଁ । ଆମ ପିଲା ଆମେରିକାର ପ୍ରଗତିଶୀଳ ବାତାବରଣରେ ବଢିଛନ୍ତି । ସେମାନେ ବୁଝି ପାରିବେ । ମିଛ ଭଲ ପାଇବାର ବାହାନା ନେଇ ଏକାଠି ରହିବାର କିଛି ଅର୍ଥ ହୁଏନା । ତୁମର ଶେଷ ସିଦ୍ଧାନ୍ତ ଯାହା ହେଉନା କାହିଁକି ସେଥିରେ ମୁଁ ସହମତ” । ଏକା ନିଃଶ୍ୱାସରେ ସେତିକି କହି ଦେଇ ହାତ ବଢାଇଲେ ଗଦାଧରଙ୍କ ଆଡକୁ । ଗଦାଧର ତଳକୁ ମୁହଁ ପୋତି ପାଦକୁ ଅନାଇ ବସିଥାନ୍ତି । କନକ

ତାଙ୍କ କାନ୍ଧରେ ହାତ ରଖି କହିଲେ, “ଆଜି ମୁଁ ତୁମକୁ ଆମ ବିବାହ
ବନ୍ଧନରୁ ମୁକ୍ତ କରିଦେଲି । ତୁମେ ଇଚ୍ଛା ମୁତାବକ ଭବିଷ୍ୟତକୁ ନୂଆ
କରି ଗଢ଼ିବାର ଶେଷ ସିଦ୍ଧାନ୍ତ ନିଅ” ।

୨୩୮୭ ଭବିଷ୍ୟାତ୍ମ ଫରେଷ୍ଟ ଡ୍ରାଇଭ୍
ଏଲକ୍ରିଭ୍, ମେରାଲାଣ୍ଡ



ପୁଣି ବସନ୍ତ ଲେଉଟିଲା

ବିଜ୍ଞାନୀ ଦାସ



ବାହାରେ ଜହ୍ନର ଢେଙ୍କନା ଅଜାତି ହୋଇ ପଡ଼ିଛି । ଶୁଭୁଛି କାରବିଆନ୍ ସାଗରର ସ୍ୱର । ପରଦା ଖୋଲିଦେଲେ ଦିଶୁଛି ସମୁଦ୍ର ପାଣି ଭିତରେ ଜହ୍ନର ପ୍ରତିବିମ୍ବ । “ମୁନ୍ ପ୍ୟାଲେସ୍” ରିଜୋର୍ଟର ଚତୁର୍ଥ ମହଲାରେ ରୁମ୍ ଭିତରେ ମଧୁରାତିରେ ମସ୍ତୁଲ୍ ହୋଇ ହସୁଛନ୍ତି ଦୁଇ ପ୍ରେମୀଯୁଗଳ । କେତେବେଳେ ଗୀତ ଗାଉଛନ୍ତି ତ କେତେବେଳେ ଗପ କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ପୁଣି କେତେବେଳେ ନିଜନିଜକୁ ସମ୍ବେଦ ସ୍ୱର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଦେଇ ଆବିଷ୍କାର କରୁଛନ୍ତି । କୋଠରୀ ସଜା ହୋଇଛି କେତେ ରକମର, କେତେ ରଙ୍ଗର ଫୁଲରେ, ଠିକ୍ ଯେଉଁଭଳି ବରାଦ କରିଥିଲେ ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା । ମଲ୍ଲୀଫୁଲରେ ସଜା ହୋଇଛି ପଲଙ୍କର ଚାରିପାର୍ଶ୍ୱ, ରକ୍ତ ଗୋଲାପର ପାଖୁଡାରେ ଭରିଛି ବିଛଣା, ଧୀମାଧୀମା ନାଲି ଓ ନେଲି ଆଲୁଅ ବିଛାଡ଼ି ହୋଇପଡ଼ିଛି କୋଠରୀ ସାରା । ଧୀମାଧୀମା ଗଜଲର ତାନ ମନକୁ ଭାବପ୍ରବଣ କରୁଛି । ଇଭେଣ୍ଟୁ କୋଅର୍ଡିନେଟର୍ ସରୋଜ ସବୁ ସେମିତି କରିଛି, ସେମିତି ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା ବରାଦ କରିଥିଲେ । ତାର ତ ହାତରୁ ପଡୁନି; ଏସବୁ ଯୋଗାଡ କରିବା ପାଇଁ ପ୍ରଚୁର ଅର୍ଥ ଯିଏ ନେଇଛି ।

ବରଂ ବିତିଯାଇଥାଉ ବୟସ । ବରଂ ମଉଳିଯାଇଥାଉ ଯୌବନ । ଷାଠିଏ ପରର ଚର୍ମରେ ବରଂ ପଡ଼ିଯାଇଥାଉ ଗାର । ଏମିତି ଏକ ରୋମାଣ୍ଟିକ୍ ମଧୁସାଗରୀ ବିତେଇବାକୁ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ମନ ତ ମରିଯାଇନି; ବରଂ ଏତେ ବର୍ଷର ବିଚ୍ଛେଦ ପରେ ଶୋଇଯାଇଥିବା କାମନା ପୁଣି ଚେଇଁ ଉଠିଛି । ଜୀବନରେ କେତେ ବର୍ଷ ତ ସେମାନେ ହରାଇସାରିଛନ୍ତି । ଆଉ ଏବେ ଯେତିକି ଦିନ ସେମାନଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ଅଛି, ସେମାନେ ସେସବୁ ଦିନକୁ ମନଭରି, ପ୍ରେମ ଭରି ଉପଭୋଗ କରିବେ ।

ଏମିତି କେବେ ହୋଇପାରିବ ବୋଲି ସେମାନେ କେବେ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ କରିନଥିଲେ । କିନ୍ତୁ ସେମିତି ହେଲା । ଦୀର୍ଘ ପତିଶି ବର୍ଷର ଦୂରତା ପରେ ଜୀବନର ଷଷ୍ଠ ଦଶକରେ ସେମାନେ ପୁଣି ବନ୍ଧୁ ହୋଇଗଲେ, ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ଓ ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା, ଆଉ ସେ ନୁଆ ସଂପର୍କ ଏମିତି ଏତେ ଶୀଘ୍ର ଜୋଡ଼ିଗଲା ଯେ, ଆଜି ସେମାନେ ମଧୁଚନ୍ଦ୍ରିକା ବିତାଇବାକୁ ଆସିଛନ୍ତି କାନ୍ଦୁକନ୍ ।

ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନାଙ୍କୁ ପାଖକୁ ଜଡାଇ ଆଣି ତାଙ୍କ ଗାଲରେ ରୁମ୍ପୁନ ଆଙ୍କିଦେଲେ । ଧୀର କଣ୍ଠରେ କହିଲେ, “ମୁଁ ତୁମକୁ ବହୁତ ଭଲପାଏ ଆନି” । ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନାଙ୍କୁ ଶେରୁରେ “ଆନି” ବୋଲି ଡାକନ୍ତି ସିଏ ।

ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା ମଧ୍ୟ ସେମିତି ଜତିଯାଇ ଆଦିତ୍ୟଙ୍କ ଛାତିରେ ମୁହଁ

ଗୁଞ୍ଜିଦେଲେ ଓ “ମୁଁ ମଧ୍ୟ ତମକୁ ବହୁତ ଭଲପାଏ” କହିଲେ । କାହିଁ କେତେବର୍ଷ ତଳର ସେ ମଧୁରାତିର ସ୍ମୃତି ମନଭିତରକୁ ପଶି ଆସୁଥିଲା । ସେଠି ଦୀପତିଏ ଜଳୁଥିଲା, ଛୋଟିଆ କୋଠରୀ ଭିତରେ ଛୋଟିଆ ଖଟ ଉପରେ ଅବଗୁଣ୍ଡନମତୀ ସାଜି ବୋହୂ ବେଶରେ ବସି ରହିଥିଲେ ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା, ଆଦିତ୍ୟଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତୀକ୍ଷାରେ । ଜୀବନରେ ସେତେବେଳେ ତାଙ୍କର ନିଜସ୍ୱ ପରିଚୟର କିଛି ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ନଥିଲା । କେବଳ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ ଥିଲା, ଆଦିତ୍ୟଙ୍କର ସାନ୍ନିଧ୍ୟ, ତାଙ୍କର ପ୍ରେମ, ଆଉ କୌଣସି ପରିଚୟ ବି ନୁହେଁ ।

ଉଭୟ କେତେ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ନେଇ, ଜୀବନ ଗତିବାକୁ ଆମେରିକା ଆସିଥିଲେ ।

ପ୍ରଥମ କିଛି ବର୍ଷ ଖୁବ୍ ଭଲରେ କଟିଲା । ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ଗୋଟିଏ ଭଲ କଂପାନୀରେ ଚାକିରି ପାଇଥିଲେ । ଆଗରୁ ଯିଏ ଆମେରିକାରେ କେମିକାଲ୍ ଇଞ୍ଜିନିୟରିଙ୍ଗରେ ‘ଏ’ ଗ୍ରେଡ୍ ରଖି ମାଷ୍ଟରସ୍ ସାରିଥିଲେ । ତାଙ୍କୁ ଅନେକ ଚାକିରିର ଅଫର୍ ଆସିଥିଲା । ହେଲେ, ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟିୟାନ ଡିସି, ରାଜଧାନୀ ପାଖରେ ରହିବାର ପ୍ରବଳ ଅଭିପ୍ରାୟ ପାଇଁ ଯିଏ ମେରୀଲାଣ୍ଡରେ ରହିବାକୁ ସ୍ଥିର କଲେ । ବାହାଘରର ତିନି ବର୍ଷ ଭିତରେ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଗୋଟିଏ ପୁଅ ଓ ଗୋଟିଏ ଝିଅ ବି ଜନ୍ମ ହୋଇସାରିଥିଲେ । ଜୀବନ ଠିକ୍‌ଠାକ୍ ଚାଲିଥିଲା । ଆଦିତ୍ୟଙ୍କର ପଢ଼ୀ ଓ ଟୁନା, ରୁନାଙ୍କ ମା’ର ପରିଚୟରେ ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନାଙ୍କ ଜୀବନ ବେଶ୍ ଭଲରେ ଚାଲୁଥିଲା ।

ହେଲେ ସବୁ ବଦଳି ଗଲା । ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା ଆମେରିକା ଆସିବା ପରେ ନିଜେ ବି ବଦଳି ଯାଇଥିଲେ । ଚାହୁଁଥିଲେ ଏକ ନିଆରା ପରିଚୟ, ଯେଉଁଟାକି ତାଙ୍କ ନିଜର ଆତ୍ମା ପରିଚୟ । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ସେ ପି.ଏଚ୍.ଡି. କଲେ, କଲେଜର ପ୍ରଫେସର ହୋଇ ଯୋଗ ଦେଲେ, ଆଉ ନିଜେ ନିଜର ପରିଚୟ ପାଇଲେ । ନିଜେ ନିଜର ପରିଚୟ ପାଇଯିବା ପରେ, ଆଉ ସହିପାରିନଥିଲେ ଆଦିତ୍ୟଙ୍କର ସ୍ୱେଚ୍ଛାଚାର, ବେଳକାଳ ବିଚାର ନକରି ଯେ କୌଣସି ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତରେ ଅତକିତ ଭାବେ ବନ୍ଧୁମାନଙ୍କୁ ଘରକୁ ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ କରିବା, ଓଡ଼ିଶାରୁ ଆସୁଥିବା ଲୋକମାନଙ୍କୁ ନିଜଘରେ ରଖିବା, ମଦ୍ୟପାନ କରିବା ଇତ୍ୟାଦି କେତେକ ଅଭ୍ୟାସ ଯେଉଁଟା ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନାଙ୍କର ଦେହସୁହା ହୋଇଯାଇଥିଲା, ଏବେ ସେସବୁ ଅସହ୍ୟ ହେଲା । ଧୀରେଧୀରେ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହୋଇଥିଲା ପ୍ରତିବାଦ, ତାପରେ ସେ ପ୍ରତିବାଦ ଧାରଣ କରିଥିଲା କଠୋର ରୂପ, ଝଗଡ଼ା, ମରାମତି, ହାତାହାତି ଓ ଶେଷରେ ଛାଡପତ୍ର ।

ମନେ ପଡ଼ିଯାଉଛି ବିଗତ ଦିନର ସେ ଛୋଟଛୋଟ ଘଟଣା ସବୁ ।

ଛୋଟଛୋଟ ଭୁଲ୍ ବୁଝାମଣା, ଅବିଶ୍ୱାସ କେମିତି ସେମାନଙ୍କୁ ପହଞ୍ଚାଇଦେଇଥିଲା ଅସାମାଜିକତାର ଚରମସୀମାରେ । ପରସ୍ପର ଭୁଲିଯାଇଥିଲେ ନିଜର ଶିକ୍ଷାବୀକ୍ଷା, ପ୍ରେମ, ପରିବାର, ସବୁ କିଛି । ଟିକେଟିକେ କଥାରେ ଜଣେ ଅନ୍ୟଜଣକୁ ତଳେଇ କରି ଆକ୍ଷେପ କରୁଥିଲା, ଅସମ୍ମାନ କରୁଥିଲା, ଭର୍ତ୍ସନା କରୁଥିଲା । ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ଦିନ ସେ ଝଗଡ଼ା ପହଞ୍ଚିଥିଲା ଶୀର୍ଷରେ ।

ସେବର୍ଷ ତୁମାର ହାଇସ୍କୁଲର ଶେଷବର୍ଷ । ପୁଅକୁ ହାର୍ଡ଼ରୁ ଆଡ଼ମ୍ବର ଖବର ଆସିଲା । ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ମେକ୍ସିକୋରେ ଥିଲେ । ପୁଅ ଅତି ଖୁସିରେ ବାପାଙ୍କୁ ଖବର ଜଣେଇବା ପାଇଁ ଫୋନ୍ କଲା । ଆଉ ଜଣେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଲୋକ ଫୋନ୍ ଧରିଲା । ତୁମା ପଚାରିଲା, “ଏଇଟା ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ରଥଙ୍କ ଫୋନ୍ ତ ?”

“ହଁ”, ସେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଲୋକ ଜଣକ କହିଲା ।

“ତାଙ୍କୁ ଟିକେ ଡାକିଦେବେ । ମୁଁ ତାଙ୍କ ପୁଅ ତୁମା ଫୋନ୍ କରିଛି ।”

“ମୁଁ ଭାଲେରିଆ, ତାଙ୍କର ବନ୍ଧୁ । ସିଏ ଏବେ ଶୋଇଛନ୍ତି । ଏଇ ଅଧଘଣ୍ଟାଏ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଶୋଇବାକୁ ଗଲେ । ସିଏ ଉଠିଲେ ମୁଁ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଜଣେଇବି ।”

ତୁମା ତ ସେ ସମୟରେ କିଛି କହିଲାନି । ତେବେ ତା’ ଭଉଣୀ ସହିତ କଥାହେବାରେ ଶୁଣିଲେ ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା ।

“ମତେ ଲାଗୁଛି ବାବାଙ୍କର ମେକ୍ସିକୋରେ କିଛି ଆଫେୟାର୍ ଚାଲୁଛି । ନହେଲେ ତାଙ୍କ ବେଡ଼ରୁମ୍ ଭିତରେ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଲୋକଟିଏ ଏମିତି ମହଜୁଦ୍ ଥାଆନ୍ତା କାହିଁକି ?” - ତୁମା କହୁଥିଲା ।

“ତାହେଲେ ତ ବହୁତ ଖରାପ କଥା । ମୁଁ ବି ସେଇଆ ସନ୍ଦେହ କରୁଥିଲି । ବାବା ବାରମ୍ବାର କଣପାଇଁ ମେକ୍ସିକୋ ଯାଉଛନ୍ତି ?” କାହିଁକି କେଜାଣି ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା ଜଳିଗଲେ । ତାଙ୍କ ହୃଦୟ ଥରିଉଠିଲା । ଆମ୍ବା ଟିକ୍କାର କରିଉଠିଲା । ନାରୀ ସବୁ ସହିପାରେ, ହେଲେ ତା ନିଜ ମନର ମଣିଷ ଆଉ କାହାର ହେଉ, ସେକଥା ସହିହୁଏନି । ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ସେଥର ଫେରିବା ପରେ ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା କଥା ବଙ୍କେଇ ପଚାରିଲେ, “ଏବେ କଣ ସେ ମେକ୍ସିକୋ ପ୍ଲାଣ୍ଟ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଭାବେ ରେଡି ହୋଇନି ? ତମେ ତ ବର୍ଷେ ହେଲାଣି ସେଠିକାର କର୍ମଚାରୀ ମାନଙ୍କୁ ତାଲିମ କରିବାକୁ ମେକ୍ସିକୋ ଯାଉଛ । ଆହୁରି କେତେଦିନ ଏମିତି ସିବାକୁ ପଡିବ ?”

“ସେ ନେଇ ତମେ କାହିଁକି ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଖୋଳାଉଛ ? ସେ ପ୍ଲାଣ୍ଟ ରେଡି ହେବାକୁ ଆହୁରି କିଛିମାସ ଲାଗିବ । କଣ ମତେ ମିସ୍ କରୁଛ ? ସେ କଥାତ ନୁହେଁ । ତମର ଡିପ୍ଲୋମା, ବାମାଜି, ପୁଣି କେତେକେତେ ସହକର୍ମୀ ସବୁ ଅଛନ୍ତି । କେତେବେଳେ କନ୍ଫରେନ୍ସ ଅର୍ଗାନାଇଜ୍ କରିବା ଆଳରେ ତ କେତେବେଳେ ଇଣ୍ଡିଆନ୍ ସୋ କରିବା ଆଳରେ ତମକୁ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ ରଖୁଛନ୍ତି ।”

“ଆଉ ତମେ ସେଠି ସେ ଭାଲେରିଆ ସହିତ କଣ କରୁଛ ? ବିଲେଇ ଲୁଚିଲୁଚି ଦୁଧ ପିଉଛି । ଭାବୁଛି କେହି ଦେଖୁନାହାନ୍ତି ।”

“କୋଉ ଭାଲେରିଆ କଥା କହୁଛ ? କଣ ମୋ ପଛରେ ଗୁପ୍ତଚର ଲଗେଇଛ ? ମୁଁ କୁଆଡେ ଯାଉଛି, କଣ କରୁଛି, ସେକଥା ଜାଣିବା ପାଇଁ ତମର ଏତେ ଆଗ୍ରହ କାହିଁକି ? ନିଜ ଗୁଣ ତ ସେଇଆ । ଅନ୍ୟକୁ ବି ସେଇ ଫର୍ମୁଲାରେ ପକେଇଦେଇଛ ।”

“ଆଉ ଭଲେଇ ଦେଖେଇଦୁଅନି । କଣନା ଲୁଚିଛି, ନା ଗୋଡ଼ ଦିଇଟା ଦିଶୁଛି ।”

ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ ରାଗିଗଲେ । ତାଙ୍କ ହାତ ଉଠିଗଲା । “ବଦମାସ୍ ମାଇକିନା, କଣ ଗୋଟିଏ ଚାକିରି କରି ପକେଇଲା ଯେ, ସେଇଦିନରୁ ମୋ ଉପରେ ଦାବାରିରି ଦେଖେଇ ହେଉଛି । ମୁଁ କଣ କଲି, କଣ ନକଲି, ତୋର ସେଥିରେ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ପୁରେଇବାର କଣ ଅଛି ?”

ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା ବି ତମକିପଡିଲେ । “ଏଇ କଣ ତାଙ୍କ ସ୍ୱାମୀ ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ? ପୁଣି ଏତେ ହୀନ ଆଚରଣ ? ‘ତମେ’ ରୁ ‘ତୁ’ କହିଲେ କହିଲେ, ପୁଣି ଏମିତି ଶୟା ଭାଷା ବ୍ୟବହାର କଲେ, କଟକ ତେଲେଙ୍ଗାବଜାରର ରାସ୍ତାରେ ମଦପିଇ ମାତାଲ ହୋଇ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀକୁ ପିଟି ଗାଳି ଦେଉଥିବା ରିକ୍ସାବାଲା ତୁଳନାରେ ବି ହୀନ ଇଏ ।”

ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା ଆଦିତ୍ୟଙ୍କ ମୁହଁକୁ ଛେପ ପକେଇ କହିଲେ, “ଧନ୍ୟ ହେ ମିଷ୍ଟର୍ ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ରଥ, କଂପାନୀ ମ୍ୟାନେଜର୍ ନା ଛେନା । ତମେ ସେ ତେଲେଙ୍ଗା ରିକ୍ସାବାଲା ରାମୁଲ୍ଲର ପୁଅ ଭଳି ବ୍ୟବହାର କରୁଛ । ତାରି ରକ୍ତ ବୋଧହୁଏ ତମ ଦେହରେ ବହୁଛି ।”

ଆଦିତ୍ୟଙ୍କ ହାତ ପୁଣି ଉଠିଗଲା । “ତୋର ଏତେ ସାହସ ? ତୁ ମୋ ବାପା, ମା’ଙ୍କୁ ଏମିତି ଅପମାନିତ କରିବୁ । ଏଇ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତରେ ଏ ଘରୁ ବାହାରେ କହୁଛି, ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ମିନିଟ୍ ବି ରହିଲେ ମୁଁ ତତେ ମାରିଦେବି ।”

ଆଦିତ୍ୟଙ୍କର ନାଲି ଆଖି ଦେଖି ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା ବି ଡରିଗଲେ । କ୍ରୋଧ ଅବସ୍ଥାରେ କିଛି ବି ସମ୍ଭବ । ସେତେବେଳେ ପିଲାମାନେ ଘରେ ନଥିଲେ । ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା ଗାଡି ନେଇ ଘରୁ ବାହାରିଗଲେ । କିଛି ସମୟ ଯାଇ ସେଣ୍ଟେନିଆଲ୍ ପାର୍କରେ ବସିଲେ । ପୁଅ, ଝିଅ ଦୁଇଜଣଙ୍କୁ ଆଜି ସ୍କୁଲରୁ ପାଞ୍ଚଟା ବେଳେ ପିକ୍‌ଅପ୍ କରିବାର ଥିଲା । ପୁଅର “ସାଇନ୍ସ ଟିମ୍”ର ମିଟିଙ୍ଗ୍ ଥିଲା ଓ ଝିଅର “ଡ୍ୟାନ୍ସ ଟିମ୍”ର ପ୍ରାକ୍ଟିସ୍ ଥିଲା । ପୁଅ, ଝିଅ ଦୁଇଜଣଙ୍କୁ ପିକ୍‌ଅପ୍ କରି ସିଏ ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟା ଯାଏ ବେଳକୁ ଘରକୁ ଫେରିଲେ । ସେତେବେଳକୁ ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ବି ଘରେ ନଥିଲେ । କୁଆଡେ ଯାଇଥିଲେ କେଜାଣି ? କିନ୍ତୁ କିଛି ଘଟି ନଥିବାର ଅଭିନୟ କରି ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା ରୋଷେଇବାସ କଲେ, ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କୁ ଖୁଆଇଲେ । ପିଲାମାନଙ୍କୁ ତାଙ୍କର ରିସର୍ଟ

ପେପର୍ ଲେଖିବାର ଅଛି କହି ସିଏ ନିଜ ଅଫିସ୍ ରୁମ୍ ଭିତରେ ପଶିଲେ ଓ ସେଇଠି ଶୋଇପଡ଼ିଲେ । ଦୁଇଦିନ ପରେ ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ପୁଣି ମେକ୍ସିକୋ ଚାଲିଗଲେ ।

ଏମିତି କିଛିଦିନ ଚାଲିଗଲା । ଟୁନାର ହାର୍ଭର୍ଟ୍ ଯୁନିଭର୍ସିଟିରେ ଆଡମିନିଷ୍ଟ୍ରେଟିଭ୍ ହୋଇଗଲା । ଟୁନାର ଦଶମ କ୍ଲାସ୍ ଆରମ୍ଭ ହେଉଥିଲା । ଟୁନା ସେଫ୍ଟ୍ ହୋଇଯିବା ପରେ, ଅର୍ଜନା ଓକିଲଙ୍କ ଜରିଆରେ ଆଦିତ୍ୟଙ୍କୁ ଛାତ୍ରପତ୍ର ଦେବାପାଇଁ କାଗଜ ପଠେଇଲେ । ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ମଧ୍ୟ ସେଥିରେ ଦସ୍ତଖତ କରିଦେଲେ । ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଆଉ ଗୋଟିଏ ଟାଉନ୍‌ହାଉସ୍ ଥିଲା । ସେଇଟା ପଡ଼ିଲା ଆଦିତ୍ୟଙ୍କ ଭାଗ୍ୟରେ । ଟୁନାର ସ୍କୁଲ୍ ପାଇଁ ଓ ସିଏ ମା' ପାଖରେ ରହିବାର ସିଦ୍ଧାନ୍ତ ହୋଇଯିବା ପରେ, ଏକକ ପରିବାର ଘରଟି ପଡ଼ିଥିଲା ଅର୍ଜନାଙ୍କ ଭାଗ୍ୟରେ ।

ସିଏ କାହିଁ କେତେ ବର୍ଷ ହୋଇଗଲାଣି । ୧୯୯୧ ମସିହାର କଥା ସିଏ । ଏବେ ସେ ଘଟଣାର ପଚାଶ ବର୍ଷ ପୁରି ଛବିଶି ବର୍ଷ ପଶିଲାଣି । ୨୦୦୦ ମସିହାରୁ ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ଚାକିରି ବଦଳେଇ କାଲିଫର୍ଣ୍ଣିଆ ଚାଲିଯାଇଥିଲେ । ଅର୍ଜନା ତାଙ୍କର ଖବର ରଖୁଥିଲେ, ଯଦିଓ ପ୍ରତି ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତରେ ତାଙ୍କର ଆଦିତ୍ୟଙ୍କର ସେ ଭୟଙ୍କର ରୂପ ସାମନାକୁ ଆସିବା ମାତ୍ରେ ସିଏ ଘୁଣାରେ ମୁହଁ ବୁଲେଇଦିଅନ୍ତି । ଦୁଇ ପିଲାଙ୍କର ବାହାଘର ହେଲା । ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ଆସିନଥିଲେ । ପ୍ରକୃତରେ ପିଲାମାନେ ବି ସେକଥା ଚାହିଁ ନଥିଲେ । ବାହାଘର ପରେ ସେମାନେ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ଭାବେ ଯାଇ ବାବାଙ୍କୁ ଭେଟି ତାଙ୍କ ଆଶୀର୍ବାଦ ନେଇଥିଲେ ।

ଅର୍ଜନା କିନ୍ତୁ ସେଇ ଏକା କଲେଜରେ ଅଧ୍ୟାପିକା ରହିଆସିଛନ୍ତି । ପାହାଚ ଉପରେ ପାହାଚ ଚଢ଼ି ସିଏ ଆଗେଇଲେ । ଆସିଷ୍ଟାଣ୍ଟ ପ୍ରଫେସର୍‌ରୁ ପ୍ରଫେସର୍ ହେଲେ । ପୁଣି ହେଲେ ଡିନ । ଦେଶବିଦେଶ ଯାଇ କନ୍‌ଫରେନ୍ସ୍ ଆଟେଣ୍ଡ୍ କଲେ । ବେଳେବେଳେ ସାବାରିକାଲ୍ ନେଇ ଅନ୍ୟ ଦେଶମାନଙ୍କରେ ବି ପଡେଇଆସିଲେ । ଏବେ ସତରେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଭଲ ଲାଗୁଥିଲା । ସିଏ ଯେ ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ସ୍ୱାଧୀନ । କିଏ ତାଙ୍କୁ ରୋକିବାକୁ ନାହିଁ । କିଏ ତାଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ଆଦେଶ ଜାହିର କରିବାକୁ ନାହିଁ । ସିଏ ଏବେ ନିଜ ପରିଚୟରେ ଉଜ୍ଜ୍ୱଳ, ଉଦ୍‌ଭାସିତ । ପିଲାମାନେ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଆଦର୍ଶ ବୋଲି ମାନନ୍ତି । ତାଙ୍କ ବୋହୂ ସୋସିଆଲୋଜିର ପ୍ରଫେସର୍ । ସିଏ କହେ, “ମା, ଆପଣ ବହୁତ ଭଲ କଲେ । ଯଦିଓ ବାବାଙ୍କୁ ଆପଣଙ୍କ ପିଲାମାନେ ଭଲ ପାଆନ୍ତି ଓ ମୁଁ ସମ୍ମାନ କରେ, ହେଲେ ଆପଣଙ୍କ ପ୍ରତି ତାଙ୍କର ସେମିତି ବ୍ୟବହାର ଭିତ୍ତି ନଥିଲା । ସାଉଥ୍‌ଏସିଆନ୍ ପରିବାର ମାନଙ୍କରେ ଏମିତି ସବୁ ଚାଲିଆସୁଛି, ଆଉ ଏହାର ପ୍ରତିକାର ତ ନିହାତି ଦରକାର ।”

ଏବେ କିନ୍ତୁ ଅର୍ଜନାଙ୍କର ଆଦିତ୍ୟଙ୍କ ଉପରେ ଆଉ ସେମିତି ରାଗ ଅନୁଭବ ଦୁଃଖନାହିଁ । ମନଦୁଃଖ, ଏବେ ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ତାଙ୍କ ପାଖରେ ଥାଆନ୍ତେ କି ? ସେ ଦୁଇଜଣ ମିଶି ପୃଥିବୀ ବୁଲନ୍ତେ । ସେମିତି

ଥରେ ହେଲା । ଏପ୍ରିଲ୍ ମାସ, ୨୦୧୮ । ଭିଏନାରେ ଗୋଟିଏ କନ୍‌ଫରେନ୍ସ୍ ଆଟେଣ୍ଡ୍ କରିବାକୁ ଯାଇଥାଆନ୍ତି ସିଏ । କନ୍‌ଫରେନ୍ସ୍ ପରେ ପ୍ରାଗ୍ ଟୁର୍ କରିବାକୁ ଯିବାକୁ ସିଏ ବସ୍ ଭିତରେ ବସିଥାନ୍ତି । ହଠାତ୍ ସେଇ ବସ୍ ଭିତରେ ଡ୍ରୁଟିଗଲେ ଆଦିତ୍ୟ । ନିଜ ଆଖିକୁ ବି ବିଶ୍ୱାସ କରିପାରିଲେନି ଅର୍ଜନା । କଣ କେମିତି ବ୍ୟବହାର କରିବେ ବୁଝିପାରିଲେନି । ନିଜ ତରଫରୁ ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ଆସି ବନ୍ଧୁତା ଦେଖେଇଲେ, “ତମେ ଏଠି ?”

“ହଁ, ମୁଁ କନ୍‌ଫରେନ୍ସ୍‌ରେ ଯୋଗ ଦେବାପାଇଁ ଆସିଥିଲି । ଆଜି ଏ ଟୁର୍ ପାଇଁ ଆସିଗଲି ।”

“ରିଟାୟାର୍ଡ୍ କେବେ କରୁଛୁ ?” – ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ପଚାରିଲେ ।

“ଏଇ ମେ’ ମାସରେ । ଏଇଟା ମୋର ଶେଷ କନ୍‌ଫରେନ୍ସ୍ ।” – ଅର୍ଜନା କହିଲେ ।

“ମୋର ତ ରିଟାୟାର୍ଡ୍ କରିବା ତିନିବର୍ଷ ହେଲାଣି । ଏବେ ଭାରି ଡିପ୍ରେସ୍‌ଡ୍ ଲାଗୁଛି । ଯଦିଓ କିଛି କନ୍‌ସଲ୍‌ଟାନ୍ସ୍ କରୁଛି, ତେବେ ଜୀବନଟା ବୋରିଙ୍ଗ୍ ।”

ସେମାନେ ପ୍ରାଗ୍ ସହରରେ ସାଙ୍ଗ ହୋଇ ବୁଲିଲେ । ଯାତ୍ରୀମାନଙ୍କ ଭିତରେ ସେମାନେ ଦୁଇଜଣ ହିଁ ଭାରତୀୟ ଥିଲେ । ତେଣୁ ଖାଇବା ପାଇଁ ଓ ବୁଲି ଦେଖିବା ପାଇଁ ଯେତେବେଳେ ଟୁର୍ ଗାଇଡ୍ ଦେଉଥିଲା ସେମାନେ ଦୁଇଜଣ ସାଙ୍ଗ ହୋଇ ଦୋକାନ, ବଜାର ଯାଇ ସବୁ ଜିନିଷ ଦେଖିଲେ ଓ ଖାଇବା ପାଇଁ ବି ଗୋଟିଏ ଭାରତୀୟ ଭୋଜନାଳୟରେ ପଶିଗଲେ ।

ଖାଉଖାଉ ଆଦିତ୍ୟ କହିଲେ, “ମୁଁ ତମ ପ୍ରତି ବହୁତ ନିଷ୍ଠୁର ହୋଇଛି । ଗୋଟିଏ ବୟସରେ ସେମିତି ରାଗ, କ୍ରୋଧ କାହିଁକି ଆସେ କେଜାଣି, ଏବେ ମୁଁ ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଅନୁତପ୍ତ । ତମେ ମତେ କ୍ଷମା କରିଦେବ ବୋଲି ଆଶା କରୁଛି ।”

ଅର୍ଜନାଙ୍କ ହୃଦୟ ବିଗଳିତ ହୋଇଉଠିଲା । ଏଇ ସାମନାରେ ତାଙ୍କର ପ୍ରିୟ ମଣିଷ । ଏମିତି କି ଛାତ୍ରପତ୍ର ହେବାପରେ ବି ସିଏ ତାଙ୍କୁ ଭୁଲିନାହାନ୍ତି । ସିଏ ସ୍ଥିତ ହସି କହିଲେ, “ଆଉ କାହିଁକି ସେ କଥା ? ସମୟ ତ କାହାକୁ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରେନି । ସେମିତି ସମୟ ଆମକୁ କେତେବର୍ଷ ଏମିତି ଦୂର କରି ରଖିଲା । ଆଉ ଆକସ୍ମିକ ଭାବେ ଆଜି ପୁଣି ଆମର ସାକ୍ଷାତ ହୋଇଗଲା ।”

ତେବେ ଅର୍ଜନା ଅନୁଭବ କରୁଥିଲେ, “ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ଆଜି ଜଣେ ଭିନ୍ନ ମଣିଷ ।”

ଆଦିତ୍ୟ କହିଲେ, “ହଁ, ଦିନ ଥିଲା, ଅହଙ୍ଗାରରେ ମନ ପୂରି ରହିଥିଲା । ମୋ ରେଜଗାର, ମୋ ସଂପତ୍ତି, ମୋ ଆସିପତ୍ୟ,

ସବୁ ମୋ'ର ସେଇ ଯେଉଁ ଅହଂଭାବ, ଆଜି ଭାବିଲେ ମୁଁ ଲଜ୍ଜିତ ଅନୁଭବ କରୁଛି । କିନ୍ତୁ ସତ କହୁଛି ଆଜି, ଆଜି ବି ମୁଁ କେବଳ ତମକୁ ଭଲପାଏ । ଏବେ ତମ କଥା କାହିଁକି ବେଶି ମନେପଡୁଥିଲା ।”

ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା କଣ କହିବେ ବୁଝିପାରିଲେନି । ଇଚ୍ଛା ତ ହେଉଥିଲା ସିଏ ଆଦିତ୍ୟଙ୍କ ଛାତିରେ ଯାଇ ଜାକି ହୋଇଯାନ୍ତେ, ତାଙ୍କଠାରୁ ତୁମାଟିଏ ପାଇବା ପାଇଁ ଗାଲ ଦେଖେଇଦିଅନ୍ତେ, କିନ୍ତୁ ସେମିତି ସିଏ କିଛି କଲେନି । କେବଳ ହସି କହିଲେ, “ହଁ, ଆମେ ତ ଇଶ୍ଵରଙ୍କ ଖେଳର ତରିତ୍ର କେବଳ । ଯାହା ହେବାର ଥିଲା, ହେଲା । ନିଜ ନିଜର ଭାଗ୍ୟ ।”

ଏମିତି ଧୀରେଧୀରେ ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ଓ ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନାଙ୍କର ବନ୍ଧୁତା ବଢିଲା । ତାପରେ ସେମାନେ ସାଙ୍ଗ ହୋଇ ଅଗଷ୍ଟ ମାସରେ କୁଜରେ ଆଲାପ୍ପା ଯିବାର ଯୋଜନା କଲେ । ସେଇଟା ଆଦିତ୍ୟଙ୍କ ତରଫରୁ ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନାଙ୍କ ପାଇଁ ରିଟାୟାର୍ଡ ହେବାର ଉପହାର ।

ସେ କୁଜରେ ସଂପର୍କ ଆହୁରି ବଢିଲା । ସାଙ୍ଗ ହୋଇ ଦୁଃଖସୁଖ ହେବାର ସୁଯୋଗ ମିଳିଲା । ଯଦିଓ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଅଲଗାଅଲଗା ରୁମ୍ ଥିଲା ଓ ସେମାନେ ସ୍ଵାଧୀନ ଥିଲେ, ତଥାପି ଏତେଦିନରୁ ବନ୍ଧ ରହିଥିବା ହୃଦୟର ପ୍ରେମ ସତେ ଯେମିତି ବାଧାନମାନି ବହିଯିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଥିଲା । ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନା ମଧ୍ୟ ନିଜ ଭୁଲ୍ ସ୍ଵୀକାର କଲେ । “ମୁଁ ବି ଅନେକଟା ରୁଷତା ପ୍ରକାଶ କରିଛି ଓ ତମକୁ ଅସମ୍ମାନିତ କରିଛି । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ମତେ କ୍ଷମା କରିଦେବ ।”

ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ପ୍ରସ୍ତାବ ଦେଲେ, “ମୁଁ ଭାବୁଥିଲି, କାଲିଫର୍ଣ୍ଣିଆ ଘର ବିକି ଦେଇ ମେରୀଲାଣ୍ଡ ଚାଲିଯିବି ।”

“ତାହେଲେ ତ ବହୁତ ଭଲ ହେବ । ତମ ଘର ତମକୁ ତ ଆଜି ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରି ରହିଛି ।” - ଏମିତି ହଠାତ୍ ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନାଙ୍କ ପାଟିରୁ ବାହାରି ଆସିଲା । ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ବିହ୍ୱଳ ହୋଇଗଲେ । “ତମେ ସତ କହୁଛ ଆଜି ?”

ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନାଙ୍କ ଦୁଇଆଖିରୁ ଲୁହ ଝରିବାରେ ଲାଗିଲା । ତାଙ୍କୁ ଆଲିଙ୍ଗନ କରି ଆଦିତ୍ୟ କହିଲେ, “ହଁ ଆଜି, ଆମର ଏ ପୃଥିବୀରେ ଆଉ

ପୃଥିବୀରେ ଆଉ କେତେଦିନ ଜୀବନ ଅଛି, ମୁଁ ଜାଣିନି । ମୋର ସାଙ୍ଗମାନେ ଗୋଟିଏ ଗୋଟିଏ କରି ଖସିଲେଣି । ଅନ୍ତତଃ ଯେତିକି ଦିନ ଆମ ଜୀବନ ବାକି ରହିଛି, ସେତେଦିନ ଯାକ ଆମେ କଣ ସାଙ୍ଗ ହୋଇ ବନ୍ଧୁ ଭାବେ ଜୀବନ ବିତେଇ ପାରିବାନି ?”

“ତମେ ମୋ ମନ କଥା କହିଲ । ବୟସର ଅଭିଜ୍ଞତା ଆମକୁ ପରିପକ୍ୱତା ଦେଇଛି । ଆମେ ନିଜନିଜର ଭୁଲ୍ କୁ ବୁଝିଛୁ । ମୁଁ ତମ କଥାରେ ରାଜି ।”

ଆଉ ତାପରେ ପ୍ରେମର ସୁଅ ଏମିତି ଛୁଟିଲା ଯେ ତା ଉପରେ ବାତବତା ପଡିପାରିଲାନି । ଆଦିତ୍ୟ କାଲିଫର୍ଣ୍ଣିଆର ଘର ବିକିଦେଲେ । ମେରୀଲାଣ୍ଡରେ, ନିଜ ଘରେ, ନିଜ ପତ୍ନୀ, ମାନେ ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନାଙ୍କ ସହିତ ରହିଲେ । ପିଲାମାନେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଖୁସି ହେଲେ । ତେବେ ସେମାନେ ଘୂର କଲେ ସେମାନଙ୍କର ଏ ନୂଆ ପ୍ରେମକୁ ସେମାନେ ସୁନ୍ଦର ଭାବେ ସେଲିବ୍ରେଟ୍ କରିବେ । ଜୀବନର ୨୬ ବର୍ଷ ସେମାନେ ହରେଇଦେଇଛନ୍ତି । ଯେତିକି ସମୟ ଅଛି, ସେସବୁ ସମୟ ଅତି ମୂଲ୍ୟବାନ । ସେ ଛବିଶ ବର୍ଷର ଅପ୍ରକାଶିତ ପ୍ରେମ, ଅକୁହା ଆବେଗକୁ ସେମାନେ ପୁଣି ଅନୁଭବ କରିବେ । ସେଥିପାଇଁ ଗୋଟିଏ ବାହାଘର ଏଜେଣ୍ଟ ମାଧ୍ୟମରେ କାନୁକୁନ୍‌ର ଏ ‘ମୁନ୍ ପ୍ୟାଲେସ୍’ ବୁକ୍ କଲେ । ଇଣ୍ଡିଆନ୍ ଏଜେଣ୍ଟ । ସିଏ ଏ ହୋଟେଲ୍‌ରେ ବହୁତ ଭାରତୀୟ ମାନଙ୍କର ବାହାଘର କରାଏ । ସିଏ ବି ଏମାନଙ୍କର ଏ ରୋମାଣ୍ଟିକ୍ ପ୍ଲାନିଙ୍ଗ୍ ଦେଖି ବଡ଼ ଉପଭୋଗ କରୁଥିଲା । କହିଲା, “ଆଣ୍ଟି, ଅଙ୍କଲ୍, ଆପଣମାନେ ହେଲେ ମୋର ଆଦର୍ଶ ଦଂପତି । ଆପଣଙ୍କର ହନିମୁନ୍ ପାଇଁ ଆମେ ସବୁ ଯୋଗାଡ଼ କରିଦେବୁ ।”

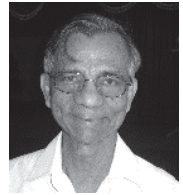
ସତରେ ସବୁକିଛି ଯୋଗାଡ଼ ହୋଇଗଲା । ଓସ୍ତୁଭିତ୍ତ ରୁମ୍, ନାଲି, ନେଲି ଆଲୁଅ, ଗୋଲାପ ଓ ମଲ୍ଲୀ ଫୁଲ ।

ଆଦିତ୍ୟ ଓ ଅର୍ଚ୍ଚନାଙ୍କ ଜୀବନରେ ପୁଣି ବସନ୍ତ ଲେଉଟିଥିଲା ।

୪୫୨୫ ରବିବାର ଫେବୃଆରୀ

ଡେଟ୍, ମେରୀଲାଣ୍ଡ

ପୁଅ କାନ୍ଦୁଥିବ ଶ୍ରୀ ଗୋପାଳ ମହାନ୍ତି



ହୋଟେଲ୍ କୋଠାରେ ତା' ଖୋଲିଲାବେଳେ ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦକୁ ପଛରୁ ଖୁବ ନିକଟରେ ଶୁଣିଲା ପରି ଲାଗିଲା, ‘ସାର୍ ଆପଣଙ୍କ ସହିତ କେହି ଝିଅ...’ । ଠିକ୍ ବୁଝି ନ ପାରି ସେ ଫେରି ଚାହିଁ ଦେଖେ ତ ହୋଟେଲ୍‌ରେ କାମ କରୁଥିବା ବେହେରା ଭିତରୁ ଜଣେ । ‘ସାର୍, ଆପଣଙ୍କର ଝିଅ ଦରକାର’ – ତପା ଗଳାରେ ବେହେରା ଜୋର ଦେଇ ଅତରକ୍ଷରେ କହି ପକାଉଛି । ଜାଣି ସାରିଛି ସେ ତାର ପହିଲି କହିବା ବୁଝା ଯାଇ ନାହିଁ ତା ଇଂରାଜୀ ବିକୃତ ଥିଲା ବୋଲି । କଣେଇ ହସି ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦ ମୁହଁକୁ ଅନାଇ ରହିଛି ଚହଟିଲା ଆଖିରେ । ଏବେ କାନ ଠିଆ କରି ଶୁଣିବା ପରେ ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦର ଚେତା ପଶିଲା ବେହେରାର ଚେହେରାକୁ ଦେଖି ପକାଇ ।

ହଂକରେ ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦ । ସହରର ରାତି ଜୀବନର ସ୍ବାଦୁ ଚାଖିବାକୁ ସେ ପଶି ଯାଇଥିଲା ଗୋଟିଏ ନାଇଟ୍ କ୍ଲବ୍‌ରେ । ପଶିବା ମାତ୍ରେ ଧୀର ସୁମଧୁର ସଂଗୀତ ଓ ରଙ୍ଗୀନ ବତୀର ଚୋରା ନଜର ତଳେ ସେ ଦେଖୁଛି ରଙ୍ଗମଞ୍ଚରେ ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧନଗ୍ନ ଯୁବତୀର ବାସନା ଜଗାଇବାର ତରଙ୍ଗାୟିତ ଭଙ୍ଗୀକୁ ଶୋଷି ନେଉଛନ୍ତି ସଭିଏଁ । ତାକୁ ପାଛୋଟି ନେଇଥିଲା ବସନଫୁଟା ଦେହରେ କାହାରି କୁହୁକିନୀ ଭାଷାର ମିଠା ପଦଟିଏ ‘ଗୁଡ୍ ଇଭିନିଂ’ । ସେ ବସିବା ପରେ ହାତକୁ ବଢାଇ ଦେଇଥିଲା ବୁଲୁଥିବା ବିଅର୍ । ଥିଲା ତା’ର ହୃଦୟରେ ବିପ୍ଳବ କରିବା ଭଳି ତୀର୍ଥ୍ୟକ ଭୂଛଟା । ତା’ର ସ୍ବମତ୍ତ ଆଖିର ପଲକ ନିବେଦନ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥୀ ଓ ଲିପ୍ଟାକ୍ସର ଲାଲବୋଳା ଓଠ ଯେମିତି ସଦ୍ୟ ଅଳି । ବିଳାସିତାର ଛିନ୍ନଛତର କାରବାର ସେଠାରେ । ସହରର ଗହଳି ଓ କାନଫଟା କର୍କଶ ଚିହିତାରୁ ମୁକ୍ତି ପାଇବାର ଇଚ୍ଛା, ଭଙ୍ଗା ହୃଦୟର ନିର୍ଦ୍ଦୟ ଶାସ୍ତ୍ରରୁ ଢୋକେ ପିଇ ଦଣ୍ଡେ ନିଜର ପନ୍ଥା, ରସିକତାର ସ୍ବାଦୁ – ଯାହା କିଛି ହେଉ ନା କାହିଁକି, କେତେଗୁଡିଏ ଅତ୍ମତ ଓ ଅସାମାନ୍ୟତା ଜୀବର ସମୟ ବିତାଇବାର ଏକପ୍ରକାର ସ୍ଥାନ । କିନ୍ତୁ ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦକୁ ଲାଗିଲା କେମିତି ନୀରସ ଓ ନିୟୁତ । କ୍ଳାନ୍ତ ଓ ଅବସନ୍ନଭାବ ଦେହକୁ ଗୋଟାଇ ସେ ଫେରିଥିଲା ହୋଟେଲ୍‌ର କୋଠାକୁ ।

ଉପୁତା କୌତୁହଳର ବଶ ହୋଇ ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦ ଦରଜା ଖୋଲି ଅଧା ଆଉଜାଇ ଦେଉଛି । ବେହେରା ସାହସ ପାଇଲା ଯେମିତି – ‘ନିହାତି ଟୋକୀ, ଘଣ୍ଟାକୁ ୧୦୦ ଡଲାର । ସାର୍, କହିଲେ ଏବେ ହାଜର କରାଇ ଦିଅନ୍ତି’ – ।

କିଛି ନ କହି ତା ମୁହଁକୁ ଚାହିଁ ରହିଛି ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦ । ବଲ୍‌ବଲ୍ କରି ଦିଗିଟି ମୁହଁ ପରସ୍ପରକୁ ନିରୀକ୍ଷଣ କରୁଛନ୍ତି । ସନ୍ଦେହ ଜମାଟ ବାନ୍ଧି ଆସୁଛି ବୋଧହୁଏ । ଆଖି ଝାପ୍‌ସା ମାରିଯିବ ଦଣ୍ଡକେ ।

ଏହାରି ଭିତରେ ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦ ତଉଲାଇ ନେଉଛି ନିଜକୁ ଓ ନିଜର ନୈତିକତାକୁ । ବେଶ୍ୟାବୃତ୍ତିକୁ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନୟ ଦେବା, ନାରୀତ୍ବର ସଉଦା କରିବା ଓ ହୀନତାର ଆଶ୍ରୟ ଲୋଡିବା ଇତ୍ୟାଦି ବିରୁଦ୍ଧରେ ବିବେକ ତୁମ୍ବଳ ସଂଗ୍ରାମ ରାତି ଛାଡିଛି । ସେ ଶୁଣୁଛି ଓ ବେହେରାକୁ ଶୁଣାଇବାକୁ ଇଚ୍ଛା କରୁଛି । କେତେବେଳେ ଏମିତି ଅନାଇ ରହିଥିବ ସେ ? ନିର୍ବୋଧ, ଅଭଦ୍ର ଓ ଭୀରୁ ବୋଲି ବେହେରା ଠଉରାଇ ନେଲାଣି ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ।

ଝରକା ଆଡକୁ ମୁହଁ ବୁଲାଇ କହିଲା, ‘ଆଜ୍ଞା ସେ ଇଂରାଜୀ ଜାଣେ ?’

ଏପରି ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ବେହେରା ପକ୍ଷରେ ଅବୋଧ୍ୟ ହେଲେ ବି ସେ ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଇଛି, ‘ଅଳ୍ପ, କିନ୍ତୁ ଭାରୀ ସୁନ୍ଦର, ଦେଖିଲେ – ।’

‘କେତେ ସମୟ ଲାଗିବ ?’

‘ଏଇ ପନ୍ଦର ମିନିଟ୍ ପ୍ରାୟ ।’ ବେହେରା ବୁଝି ଗଲାଣି ଯେ ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦର ଷୋହଳପଣ ଇଚ୍ଛା ଅଛି ହଁ ଭରିବାକୁ ।

ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦ ପୁଣି ଅରେ ତା’କୁ ଦେଖିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଥିଲା । ବେହେରା କାମ କରେ । ରାତି ବେଉସାରେ ରୋଜଗାର ବେଶୀ । ସେ ଜାଣେ ଭ୍ରମଣକାରୀ ହଂକ ଆସେ କାହିଁକି । ବୋଧହୁଏ ବିରକ୍ତି ବୋଧ କଲାଣି ତାର ଏ ଖାପଛତା ନୀରବତାକୁ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟ କରି ।

ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦ ନାଁ କରି ପାରି ନ ଥିଲା । ଯୁବତୀର ସଙ୍ଗ ଉପଭୋଗ କରିବାକୁ ନା ବେହେରାର ଅଳି ଏଡାଇ ନ ପାରିବାକୁ ଅବା କୌତୁହଳର ରଙ୍ଗ ଦେଖିବାକୁ । ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଠିକ୍ ନ ଥିଲା । କବାଟ ଆଉଜାଇ ବେହେରା କହି ଯାଉଛି, ‘ଏଇ ମୁଁ ଫେରି ଆସୁଛି – ।’ ଆବେଗତାରେ ସେ ଅଧା ପାଗଳ ।

ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦ ବିଛଣାରେ ଧସ୍ କରି ପଡିଯାଇଛି । ଶୁଭୁଛି କେବଳ ବିଜୁଳି ପଙ୍ଖାର ଖର୍ବରଖର୍ବର ଶବ୍ଦ ।

ସେ ଦିନରେ ହଂକ ବୁଲି ଯାଇଥିଲା । ହଂକ ଦ୍ବୀପଟିର ମଧ୍ୟାଞ୍ଚଳ ପାହାଡ ପର୍ବତରେ ଭରା, ଯେମିତି ସମୁଦ୍ରର ଅତରକ୍ଷ ଆକ୍ରମଣରୁ ବର୍ତ୍ତିବାକୁ ଯାଇ ସୁଲଭାଗ ଚାରିପାଖରୁ ଧାଇଁ ପଳାଇ ଯାଇଛି ମଝିକୁ । ବସ୍ ଉପରକୁ ଉଠି ଅଟକିଲା ବେଳେ ଗାଈତ୍ବ ତଳକୁ ଦେଖାଇ କହୁଥାଏ, ‘ସାମନାରେ ଓୟାଞ୍ଚାଲ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ – ଯୁକୁ ସୁଖି ଓୟାଞ୍ଚାଲ କୁହାଯାଏ । ବହୁତ ପୁରୁଣା, ‘ଦି ଖାଲ୍‌ଡ୍’

ଅଫ୍ ସୁଜି ଓଜ୍ ଚଳଚ୍ଚିତ୍ରରେ ନାୟିକା ସୁଶି ଷ୍ଟୁଟ୍ ଗାର୍ଲ ହେଲେ ବି ଦେଖାଇଥିଲା ଭଲ ପାଇବାର ଆଦର୍ଶ ।”

କବାଟ କେଁ କରୁଛି । ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦ ଅବଶରେ ଘାରି ଯାଇଥାଏ ସତ, କିନ୍ତୁ କାହିଁକି କେଜାଣି ଏକ ଆଶଙ୍କାମିଶ୍ର କାମନାରେ ତାତି ଉଠିଥିଲା ସେହି ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତରେ । ମନରେ କଳ୍ପନା କାହିଁରେ କଣ । ଟାଇଗର୍ ବାମ୍ ଗାର୍ଡନ୍ - ତାର ପୂର୍ବ ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟର ଗାରିମାକୁ ଚପାଇ ଦିଆ ଯାଇଛି ଆଗରୁ ଥିବା ପ୍ରସାରକୁ କୁଞ୍ଚିତ ଦିଆ ଯାଇ । ପାଖରେ ପଥୁରିଆ ଅଞ୍ଚଳରେ ଅସୁମାରୀ କୁଡିଆ ଭରି ଯାଇଛି - ଗାଈଡ଼ କହିବା ଅନୁସାରେ ସେଠାରେ ସୁଖର ବାସ ସ୍ଥାନ ଥିଲା ।

ବସରୁ ଓହ୍ଲାଇବାବେଳେ ଝିଅଟିଏ ଆଗକୁ ବଢି ଆସିଲା, ‘ସାର୍, ପଞ୍ଜା ନେବେ ? ବେଶି ଦାମ ନୁହେଁ ।’ ପିଠିରେ ବାନ୍ଧି ହୋଇଛି କୁନି ପିଲାଟିଏ - ଭାଇ କି ଭଉଣୀ ହେବ ପରା । ପୁଣି କହି ଚାଲୁଥାଏ, ‘ହଂକର ଫଟୋ, ପୁରା ସେଟକୁ ଦଶ ତଲାର । ଏ ବାରୁ ।’ ବିନତି ଅନ୍ଧାତି ହୋଇ ପଡୁଛି । ମଳିନତାର ପତଳା ଡାଙ୍ଗୁଣୀ ତଳୁ ଆଶାଭରା ଶୁଖିଲା ଚାହାଣି । ଭ୍ରମଣକାରୀର କ୍ୟାମେରା ଶବ୍ଦ କଲା - କ୍ଲିକ୍ । କୁନି ପିଲାର ଡୁଲୁଡୁଲିଆ ଆଖି ଉଦାସ । ସେ ଝିଅ ପାଖରୁ ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦ କିଣିଥିଲା ମନ ବଳେଇ ।

ବସ୍ ଅଙ୍ଗାବଙ୍ଗା ରାସ୍ତା ଦେଇ ବଢି ଚାଲିଛି ଆଗକୁ ।

ଠକଠକ - ଦରଜା ଖୋଲିବ । ବେହେରା ହାଜର କରିବ ଅତିଥି ଝିଅଟିଏ । ସେ ଚାଲି ଯିବଣି । ତାପରେ - ।

ଏବେର୍ଡିନ୍ରେ ଭସାଣିଆ ରେଷୁରେଷୁ । ପାଖକୁ ଲାଗି କେଉଟ ବସ୍ତି - ଅଗଣିତ ନୌକା । କେଉଟର ଜନ୍ମ, ଜୀବିକା ନିର୍ବାହ, ସଂସାର, ମରଣ, ସବୁ ସେଇ ନୌକା ଭିତରେ । ପ୍ରିୟାପ୍ରୀତି, ଆତ୍ମୀୟବନ୍ଧୁ, ଦୟା, କ୍ଷମା -କାହାରି ଉଣା ନ ଥାଏ । ପଛପଟ ନୌକାଟିରେ ଛୋଟ ପିଲାଟିଏ ତଳେ ଗଡୁଛି । ବୟସ୍କା ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ ଜଣେ ରାନ୍ଧିବାରେ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତ - ମା ହେବ । ସାମନାକୁ ଆଉଜି ଝିଅଟିଏ । ଖିଲିଖିଲି ହସ - କାହା ପାଇଁ ... ?

‘ଗୁଡ଼ ଇଭିନି’ ଶବ୍ଦରେ ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦ ଉଠି ବସୁଛି । ମୁଖସ୍ତ କଲାପରି ଭାଷା । ବେହେରା ଚାଲି ଗଲାଣି ପରା ।

ନିର୍ଜନ କୋଠରୀ ଭିତରେ ଦିଓଟି ଜୀବ - ପୁରୁଷ ଓ ସ୍ତ୍ରୀ । ଲଏ ସେ ଏବେର୍ଡିନ୍ରେ ଝିଅ ନୁହେଁ ତ । ଖିଲିଖିଲି ହସ ବଦଳରେ ଓଠଟିରା ପତଳା ମନ୍ଦହସ । ଦରମୁଦିଲା ଆଖି ପଲକରେ ମନମତାଣିଆ କୁହୁକ । ସାଧାରଣ ପୋଷାକ ବଦଳରେ ଲାଲ୍ ଚାଉନା ସିଲ୍ବର, ସାରା ଅଙ୍ଗ ଜାବୁଡି ଧରିଲାର ପୋଷାକ । ସେତେବେଳର ଅଲଗା ବାଳ ଏବେ ସୁସଜ୍ଜିତ । ଆଖିକୁ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ହେଉ ନ ଥାଏ । ନାଇଟ୍ କ୍ଲବ୍ ତରୁଣୀର କୁଡିମ ଆକର୍ଷଣଠାରୁ ଭିନ୍ନ ।

ସେ କେତେବେଳୁ ଛିଡା ହେଇଛି, ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦର କିଛି କହିବା

ଉଚିତ ଥିଲା । କିଛି ଭାବି ନ ପାରି ‘ହେଲୋ, ଗୁଡ଼ ଇଭିନି’ କହି ନ ସାରୁଣ୍ଡ ସେ ଟେବୁଲ୍ ଆଡକୁ ପାଦ ପକାଇ ଆଗେଇଲାଣି । ଧୀର ଗତିରେ ଅଙ୍ଗ ଦୋହଲି ଉଠୁଛି । ଦୁଇପାଖ କଟା ସ୍ପାର୍ଟ ଅମାନିଆ ହୋଇ ଉଠୁଥାଏ । ସେ ଟେବୁଲ୍ ପାଖରେ ।

ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦ ଅସ୍ତବ୍ୟସ୍ତରେ ଆରମ୍ଭ କରିଛି, ‘ନାମ ଜାଣି ପାରେ କି?’ - ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ କି ନୀରସ ଓ ନିରର୍ଥକ ।

‘ନାମ ଜାଣିବା କଣ ନିହାତି ଦରକାର ? ଯଦି ଆଗୁହ ଦେଖାଇଛନ୍ତି - ମୋ ନାଁ ହେଉଛି ଏମି ଟାଙ୍ଗ୍ ।’ ଦରଖଣ୍ଡିଆ ଇଂରାଜୀରେ ସେ ଛନ୍ଦି ହେଇ ଯାଉଥାଏ । ଲାଜେଇ ଗଲା ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦ । ଠିକ୍ କଲା ଏମିକୁ ଗୁଡାଏ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ ପଚାରିବ ନାହିଁ । ତେବେ କରିବ କଣ ।

‘ବାଃ, ବେଶ୍ ସୁନ୍ଦର ନାମଟି ତ ।’

‘ଧନ୍ୟବାଦ ।’

‘ଟିକିଏ ଡ୍ରାଇନ୍ ଦେଇ ପାରେ କି ?’

‘ନିଶ୍ଚୟ’ - ଓଠ ଓ ଆଖିର ଅଣସତାଇଲାର ଭାଷା ।

ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦ ଡ୍ରାଇନ୍ ଡାଳି ଆଣିବା ଭିତରେ ଟଙ୍ଗା ହୋଇଥିବା ନୂଆ ସୁଟ୍‌ଟାକୁ ଏମି ତନଖି ସାରିଲାଣି ।

‘ସାର୍, ଆପଣଙ୍କର ପସନ୍ଦ ଖୁବ ଭଲ ।’ ଏମି କହି ପକାଇଥିଲା ଡଟକା ଲିଫ୍ଟ୍‌ସ୍କିକ୍ ବୋଲା ଓଠରେ ଡ୍ରାଇନ୍‌ରୁ ଟିକିଏ ଛୁଇଁ ।

‘ସତେ !’ ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦ ନିଜେ ଗର୍ବ ଅନୁଭବ କରିବ ପ୍ରାୟ ।

ଏମି ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ତା ସାମନାରେ । ତପଳ ଚାହାଣିରେ ଚଞ୍ଚଳତାର ଏକ ଝଲକ ତା ନଜରକୁ ଏତାଇ ପାରି ନ ଥିଲା । ପର୍ଯ୍ୟୁମ୍‌ର ନରମିଆ ମହକ ।

ଦି’ଜଣ ଡ୍ରାଇନ୍‌ରୁ ଟିକିଏ ପିଇଲେ । ଏମିତି ସମୟ ଗଡୁଥାଏ, ପୁଣି ଆଉ ଡୋକେ । ପରସ୍ପର ତନଖି ନେଉଥାଆନ୍ତି ପର ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତର ଅପେକ୍ଷାରେ ।

ଏମିରି ମା ତାକୁ ବାଟ ବଳେଇ ଦେବାକୁ ଆସିଥିବ - ‘ଝଅଟ ଫେରି ଆସିବୁ ।’

‘ହଁ, ତୁ ଘର ଭିତରକୁ ଯା । ପୁଅ କାନ୍ଦୁଥିବ ।’

ରାସ୍ତା ଉପରେ ଏମି । ବତୀଖୁଣ୍ଟ ପାଖରେ ହାତବ୍ୟାଗରୁ ଅଇନା ବାହାର କରି ରୂପର ତର୍ଜମା କରି ନେଇଥିବ ଶେଷ ଥର ପାଇଁ ।

ଦିନରେ ଛୋଟ ଭାଇକୁ ନେଇ ବୁଲିଯାଏ ବୋଧହୁଏ । କିନ୍ତୁ ମନ ତାକେ ଚାଇନା ସିଲ୍ଲି ପିନ୍ଧି ବୁଲୁଥାଆନ୍ତା, ବେଶ ହୋଇ ଅଣ୍ଟା ହଲାଇ ଚାଲୁଥାଆନ୍ତା । ହେ ଏମି - ଦୁନିଆ ରୋକି ଦେଉଛି ତାକୁ

ପୁଅ କାନ୍ଦିବଣି, ମା ବୋଧ ଦେଉଥିବ ଏମି ଫେରିବାଯାଏଁ ।

ହଠାତ୍ ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦ ହାତ ବଢାଉଛି ଏମିର କର୍ମଳ ପାପୁଲି ଆଡକୁ ।

‘ସାର୍, ଆପଣ ଅବଶ ।’ ତା ହାତ ପାପୁଲି ମାନି ନେଇଛି ଇସାରାକୁ । ବିଛଣାରେ ସେ ବସି ପଡିଛି । ସେ ଯେମିତି ନିଜର । ‘ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଟିପି ଦେବି ?’ ଏମିର ଏ ପଦକ ଶୁଣିବାକୁ ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦ ନିଶ୍ଚୟ ଅପ୍ରତିଭ ଥିଲା । କିଛି କହିବା ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଏମିର ଆଙ୍ଗୁଳି କେଇଟା ତା କପାଳରେ । ସେ ଅନୁଭବ କରୁଥାଏ ପରଶର କାର୍ଯ୍ୟର କାଠିର ଗୁଣ । ଧୀରେ ଧୀରେ କହିବାକୁ ଲାଗିଲା, ‘ମୋତେ ସାମ୍ ବୋଲି ତାକି ପାର ।’ ସେ ଏମିର ଛୋଟ ଆଙ୍ଗୁଳି ଭିତରେ ଛନ୍ଦି ଯିବାକୁ ଚାହୁଁଛି ।

ଏମି ତା ମୁହଁକୁ ଅନାଇଥାଏ ଏକ ଧ୍ୟାନରେ । କିଛି କହିବ ବୋଧହୁଏ - ।

‘ସାର୍, ନା ସାମ୍, ଆପଣ ଆମେରିକାନ୍ ।’ ଏମିର କି ଧାରଣା, ବେହେରା ତାକୁ କଣ ମିଛସତ କହିଥିବ ।

ବାହାର କୋଳାହଳ ନରମି ଆସିଲେ ରାତିର ବେଉସା ଜମି ଉଠେ କାହାଜର ନାବିକ ଘେରାଉ କରେ ମଦ ଖଟିକୁ । ଭାରି ଖଟଣିରୁ ସେ ମୁକୁଳିଛି । ବେପରୁଆ ହୋଇ ସେ ବାହାରି ପଡେ ହଂକଂର ଏକ ଗଳି ମଝିକୁ । ନିଶାରେ ଟଳମଳ ହେବାରେ ଏକ ଅପୂର୍ବ ଆନନ୍ଦ, କେହି ସୁନ୍ଦରୀର ଅତିଥି ହେବା ଉଦ୍ଦେଶ୍ୟରେ ।

ସମୟ ଚାଲି ଯାଉଛି ଧାଁଧାଁ ହୋଇ । ଆଉ ଦଣ୍ଡକୁ ଏମି ଚାଲିଯିବା ସେ ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦର ଅତି ନିକଟରେ । କୌଣସି ଆଗ୍ରହ ଦେଖାଉନାହିଁ କି ଦୂରେଇ ଯିବାକୁ ପ୍ରସ୍ତୁତ ଖୋଜୁ ନାହିଁ ।

ଏମି ମା ରାସ୍ତାକୁ ଦେଖି ଫେରି ଯିବଣି । ଝିଅ ଫେରିଲେ ଲାଲ୍ ସିଲ୍ଲି- ପୋଷାକକୁ ଭାଙ୍ଗି ରଖି ଦେବାକୁ ପଡିବ । ଛୋଟ ପୁଅକୁ ଥାପୁଡାଇ ନିଜେ ଶୋଇବାକୁ ଚେଷ୍ଟା କରୁଥିବ ।

ଏମିର ହାତ ଅଟକି ଯାଇଛି । ସେ ପେଟ ଉପରେ ଭରା ଦେଇ ପଡିଗଲାଣି । ହାତରେ ସ୍ପାର୍ଟ ଫୋନ୍‌ଟାକୁ ଧରି ଖେଳି ଚାଲିଛି । ଗୋଡ ଦୁଇଟି ଉପରତଳ ହେଉଛି ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦର ବଢାଇଲା ହାତକୁ ବେଖାତିର୍ କରି ।

‘ହଂକଂ ଆସିବା କଣ ପ୍ରଥମ ଥର ?’ କାହାକୁ ନ କହିଲା ପରି ପ୍ରଶ୍ନ କରିଥିଲା ଏମି ।

‘ହୁଁ, କାହିଁକି ?’

ଏମି କିଛି ନ କହି ହାତ ବଢାଇ ଦେଇଥିଲା ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦର କୋଳକୁ । ଟିକି ପାପୁଲିଟିଏ । ସରୁ ଆଙ୍ଗୁଳିର ମୁନେଇଲା ନଖ ରଙ୍ଗ କରାଯାଇଛି । ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଭାଙ୍ଗି ଫୁଟାଇଛି ଏକ ଅପ୍ରକାଶ୍ୟ ଚାହାଣି । ଇଏ କଣ ତାର ଅବ୍ୟକ୍ତ ଠାର । ଏମି ଫୋନ୍ ଥୋଇଦେଲା । ଅପେକ୍ଷା କରିବାକୁ ପଡିଲାଣି । ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦ ଭିତି ଆଣିଥିଲା ପାଖକୁ । ଆଖିର ଅଣଲେଉଟା ପଲକର ଗୋଟିଏ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତ । ଏମି ତାକୁ ବାନ୍ଧି ରଖିବ ସତେ ।

କାଲି ଏମି ଥିଲା ଅନ୍ୟ ଜଣକ କୋଳରେ । ଆଉ ଦୁଇଟି ଆଖିର ଲୋଭେଇଲା ନଜର । ଚାପିଲା ଅଙ୍ଗ ଭିତରେ ବନ୍ଦିନୀ । କ୍ଷଣକ ପାଇଁ ଅନ୍ତର ଦେଇ ଭଲ ପାଇ ବସିଥିବ । ସମୟ ଚାଲି ଗଲାଣି । ଗାଢ ବନ୍ଧନ କୋହଳ ହେଲାଣି ।

ପୁଅ କାନ୍ଦୁଥିବ । ମା ଅସ୍ଥିର ହେବଣି ।

ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦ ବ୍ୟସ୍ତତାରେ କଂପୁଟ୍ରି ବୋଲି ଏମି ଜାଣି ପାରୁଛି ବୋଧହୁଏ । ଆଖିବୁଜି ସେ ଧରି ରଖିଛି ଏମିକୁ । ଉଷୁମ ପରଶରେ ମିଳାଇ ଯିବ ସତେ । ଏମି ଦୂରେଇ ଯାଇ ପାରିବନି । ବନ୍ଧନ ଅତି ଦୃଢ ଦୁଇ ଜଣଙ୍କର - ଚିରନ୍ତନ । ଏମି ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦର ସବୁ କିଛି । ହାତ କୋହଳ ହେଲା ଏମିର -

ପୁଅ କାନ୍ଦୁଥିବ -

କବାଟରେ ହାତ ମାରିବାର ଶବ୍ଦ । ଶ୍ୟାମାନନ୍ଦ ଚମକି ଉଠିଛି ।

ଆଜ୍ଞାଷ୍ଟର୍, କାନାଡା

କାବ୍ୟ ନାୟିକା
ପ୍ରତିଭା ଶତପଥୀ



ସତ୍ୟର ମାରାତ୍ମକପଣକୁ ଭୋଗିଚାଲିଥିଲା ବେଳେ

ସ୍ୱପ୍ନର ମରାଳକୁ ଛାତିରେ ଜାକି ଧରିବା

କେତେ କଷ୍ଟକର ଜାଣ!

ତାରାମାନଙ୍କୁ ବି ଅଗଣିତ

ଅକ୍ଷରରେ, ଶବ୍ଦରେ, ହୃଦୟରେ

ତୁମେ ଉଜାରିତ ବାର ବାର

ବିପୁଳତା ତୁମେ ବ୍ରହ୍ମାଣ୍ଡର,

ମଧୁର ତିଳ ଚିହ୍ନର,

ଖାଣିତ ଅବାଧ୍ୟପଣ କଳ୍ପନାର-

କେତେବାର ମରିତ ତୁମେ, ବୁଡି ମରିତ

ମୁଣ୍ଡ କୋଡି ମରିତ, ହଁ ହଁ କରି ମରିତ

ଗଜାହେଇତ, ଭାଙ୍ଗି ଯାଇତ

ଜୀର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଉଠିତ ଅଜରାମର ।

କଲମ, ତୁଳୀ, ନିହାଣ, ମୁଗୁର, ବାଦ୍ୟଯନ୍ତ୍ର

ତୁମେ ପାଦ ଦେଇତ ସେଇଠି

ଲାଗିତ ବି ଖସିଗଲା ଭଳି ସେଇଠୁ ଅନ୍ୟତ୍ର ।

ସାଇତିବ ତୁମେ ହିଁ

ତିପେ ଆଶାକୁ ଜଳାଇ ରଖିବାର ଦୀପତି ।

ମୂର୍ତ୍ତି ହେବାରେ ଯାତନା ଅଛି

ତେଜ୍ଜି ଯିବାରେ ଅଛି ନୂଆପଣ

କିନ୍ତୁ ଯାତନାକୁ, ନୂଆପଣକୁ

ତୁମେ ଅକାମୀ କରିଦେଇ ପାରିନ କଦାପି ଏ କଥା ବି ଜାଣ ।

ପ୍ରେମପରି କ୍ଷଣ ସ୍ଥାୟୀ

ସେ କବିତାର କାନକୁହା,

ଚିତ୍ରର ସଚଳତା, ନିହାଣ ଚୋଟ

ଶବ୍ଦର, ତୁଳୀର ଲାଖ

ହାର ମାନିଚି ତୁମଠି

ଉତୁରି ପଡିତ ତୁମେ ଅନବରତ ।

ଜୁଡ଼ାରେ ଖୋଷିଦେଇ ସାରିତ

ପ୍ରେମିକକୁ, ସମୁଦ୍ରକୁ, ବନ୍ୟାକୁ, ତାରାକୁ

ଗୁମ୍ଫାକୁ, ଗହ୍ୱରକୁ

ଆଉ ଖାତିର୍ କାହାକୁ?

କାଦୁଅରେ ପଡି ମଞ୍ଜିପରି, ପଟିବ ନାହିଁ ତୁମେ,

ଫିଟି ପଡିବ ଆଲୁଅ ଦିଗକୁ

ଉଠିଯିବ ଗଛ ହେଇକି-

କିନ୍ତୁ ପ୍ରତିଟି ଥର ତୁମେ ନୂଆ

ତନ୍ମୁରେ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟୋଦୟର ଆଭା

ଲାଜରେ ଲାଲ୍ ପଡିଯାଏ ଧଳା କାଠଟଙ୍କା ।

ତୁମ ସିଂହାସନ ଚାରିପାଖେ ଅପ୍ସରୀଙ୍କ ଭିତ

ତୁମ ପାଦତଳେ ଲକ୍ଷେ ମଲା ଭର୍ଷିର ।

କୋଟିଏ ହୃଦୟର ଗୃତତା

ଲେଖା ରହିଚି ତୁମଠି

ଅଥଚ, କେହି ଆଦରିବାକୁ ଗଲେ

ତୁମେ ଅକୁଳାନ

ଯେତିକି ନିକଟ, ସେତିକି ଦୂର ।

କଳା ଠାକୁର ପରାଶର ମିଶ୍ର



କିଏ ତାକେ ଆପଣଙ୍କୁ ଜଗାକାଳିଆତ'
କିଏ ତାକେ କଳା ହାତୀ, କିଏ ତାକେ
କଳା ଠାକୁର ତ'
କିଏ ପୁଣି ତାକେ କଳା ଶ୍ରୀମୁଖ,
ସବୁ କଳାକୁ ଏକାକାର କରି
କଳା ସାଆନ୍ତେ ଆମର
ବିଶ୍ୱର ସର୍ବଶ୍ରେଷ୍ଠ କଳାକାର ।

କଳା ଠାକୁରଙ୍କ କଳା କୁଶଳତାର
ପଟ୍ଟାନ୍ତର ନାହିଁ,
କଳା, କଳା ଗୋଲ ଆଖି ଦୁଇଟାରେ
ସାରା ବିଶ୍ୱବ୍ରହ୍ମାଣ୍ଡକୁ ଦେଖୁଥାନ୍ତି
କାନ ନଥାଇ ସବୁ ଆର୍ତ୍ତଙ୍କ
ଗୁହାରି ଶୁଣୁଥାନ୍ତି
ଅଧାଗଢା ପାଦ ଦୁଇଟାରେ
ସାରା ବିଶ୍ୱବ୍ରହ୍ମାଣ୍ଡ ଭ୍ରମିଥାନ୍ତି ଆଉପୁଣି
ଅଧାଗଢା ହାତ ଦୁଇଟା ବଢାଇ
ପ୍ରିୟ ଭକ୍ତଙ୍କୁ ସ୍ନେହ, ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧାରେ
ଆଲିଙ୍ଗନ କରିଥାନ୍ତି ।

ଜଗତର ନାଥ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କ ରଙ୍ଗମଞ୍ଚର
ଆଦି ନାହିଁ, ଅନ୍ତ ନାହିଁ,
କଳା ଠାକୁରଙ୍କ ଦାଣ୍ଡ ବଡ଼ଦାଣ୍ଡ
ଦେଉଳ ବଡ଼ଦେଉଳ
ପ୍ରସାଦ ମହାପ୍ରସାଦ, ବେଦି ମହାବେଦି
ବଡ଼ ଠାକୁରଙ୍କ
ସବୁକିଛି ବଡ଼, ସବୁକିଛି ମହାନ ।

ନୀଳଗିରି କାଳିଆ,
କଳା ଠାକୁରଙ୍କ ଲୀଳା ମଧୁର,
ଗୁଣ ମଧୁର, ଆଚରଣ ମଧୁର
ବଡ଼ ଛଇଲା, ରସିକ ଶେଖର
ପୀତବାସଙ୍କ ରୂପ ମଧୁର ।
ଶ୍ରୀରାମ ନବମୀରେ
ଶ୍ରୀରାମଙ୍କ ରୂପରେ
ନନ୍ଦଉସବରେ କୃଷ୍ଣ ରୂପରେ
ସ୍ନାନ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣିମାରେ ଗଣେଶଙ୍କ ରୂପରେ
ବାର ମାସରେ ତେର ଯାତ୍ରା କରାଇ

ମହାପ୍ରଭୁ ରତ୍ନ ସିଂହାସନରୁ
ଓହ୍ଲାଇ ଆସନ୍ତି ରଥକୁ
ବଡ଼ଦାଣ୍ଡରେ ବଡ଼ଯାତ୍ରା ରଥଯାତ୍ରା ।

ରଥରେ ଥରେ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖିଲେ
ଆତ୍ମା ପରମାତ୍ମାର ମିଳନ ହେଇଥାଏ
ଭକ୍ତର କୁଆଡ଼େ ପୁର୍ନଜନ୍ମ ନହୋଇ
ମୋକ୍ଷ ପ୍ରାପ୍ତି ହୋଇଥାଏ ବୋଲି
ଭକ୍ତର ଅତୁଟ ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ଥାଏ ।

ପୁର୍ନଜନ୍ମ ହେଉକି ନହେଉ
ମୋକ୍ଷ ପ୍ରାପ୍ତି ମିଳୁ କି ନମିଳୁ
ଏଇ ଜନ୍ମରେ, ଏଇ ଜୀବନରେ
କିନ୍ତୁ କାହିଁକି ଦେଖୁଛି ମୁଁ
କଳା-ଧଳାର ଭେଦ ଭାବ
ଜାତି, ଭାଷା ଓ ଆଚଳିକତାର ଆଳରେ
ରାଜନୀତିକୁ ବ୍ୟବସାୟ କରି
ମଣିଷର ଗୁଳିଗୋଳାରେ ରକ୍ତର ହୋରିଖେଳ
ଧର୍ମ ନାମରେ ଧର୍ମର ସଭଦା କରି ନରହତ୍ୟା,
ନର ସଂହାର, ସଂହାରଲୀଳା ?
ପତିତଙ୍କ ପାବନ ପାଇଁ
ପତିତପାବନ ଜଗାକାଳିଆ

କେବେ ତେବେ ବାହାରିବେ ମନ୍ଦିରବେଢାରୁ
ଭାଇ ବଳଭଦ୍ରଙ୍କ ସହ
କଳା, ଧଳା ଘୋଡ଼ାତଢି, ହାତରେ ଖଣ୍ଡା ଧରି
ମଣିଷ ତିଆରି ଏ ସମାଜରେ
ଅନ୍ୟାୟ, ଅନୀତି, ହିଂସା, ଦ୍ୱେଷ,
ହାଣ-କାଟର ଲଢେଇ ବନ୍ଦ କରିବାକୁ ??

ଚରୋଣ୍ଡୋ,
କାନାଡା

ଫାଇଲ୍ ସେକଣ୍ଡସ୍
ଦେବରାଜ ସାହୁ



ଅଗଷ୍ଟ ୨୧, ୨୦୧୭
ସ୍ମରଣୀୟ ଦିବସ
ସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ସୁଯୋଗରାଗର
ଲୋଭ, ଆଶା, ଉତ୍ସାହ

ଆକର୍ଷଣ କରେ ରୁମ୍ବକ ପରି
କାର୍ବନ୍-ଡେଲର ସାଲୁକି ଷ୍ଟାଡ଼ିୟମ୍ କୁ
ସହସ୍ରାଧିକ ନର ନାରାୟଣ
ଦୁନ୍ଦୁ, ଦ୍ଵିଧା, ଅନିଶ୍ଚିତତା ଭିତରେ

ଶହେ କୋଡ଼ିଏ ସେକେଣ୍ଡ
ଶହେ କୋଡ଼ିଏ ସେକେଣ୍ଡ
ସୃଷ୍ଟି ହେବ
ଅନ୍ଧକାରାବୃତ୍ତ, ଯାଦୁକରର କୁହୁକରେ
ଆଦିତ୍ୟ - ତୁମ ଜ୍ୟୋତି
ବିଲୁପ୍ତ ହେବ
ଶଶାଙ୍କ ଆଭରଣରେ
ବିଚିତ୍ର ଏ କି ଲୀଳା

ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ - ତୁମେ ଗ୍ରାସ ହେବ
କେତୁଙ୍କ ଉଦରରେ
ଅଥବା ରାହୁଙ୍କ ଗର୍ଭରେ
ଦିବା ଅନ୍ଧକାର - ଏ କି ପ୍ରହେଳିକା ?

ହିରଣ୍ୟଗର୍ଭା - ତୁମ ସୃଷ୍ଟି ବଞ୍ଚିବ କିପରି ?
ସୃଷ୍ଟି ନିଜେ ବିଲୁପ୍ତ ହେଲେ
ମତିଭ୍ରମ କର ବସ୍ତାର

ଅସମୟେ ଗୃହାଭିମୁଖି କାହିଁକି ?
ଅର୍କ - ତୁମ ରଶ୍ମି କାହିଁ ?
ପ୍ରହେଳିକା ପରି

ଇନ୍ଦ୍ରଜାଲ ବିଛାଇ
ଏ କି କୁହୁକ ସଂଭାର ?
ଭାନ୍ସୁ - ତୁମ ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟ

କିଏ ଉପଭୋଗ କରିବ
ଲୁପ୍ତ ବ୍ରହ୍ମାଣ୍ଡର
ନିବିଡ଼ ନିୟନ୍ତ୍ର ଅନ୍ଧକାରେ ?

କାଶ୍ୟପେୟ - ତୁମେ ପ୍ରତିଶ୍ରୁତି ଦେଲ
ଅଷ୍ଟୋତ୍ତର ଶତ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତର ସମ୍ଭାର
ବିଶ୍ଵରୂପ କରିବ ପ୍ରକାଶ
କାର୍ବନ୍-ଡେଲର ସାଲୁକି ଷ୍ଟାଡ଼ିୟମରେ

ଦିବାକର ଏ କି ମାୟା କଲ ସୃଷ୍ଟି
ଜୀମୁତଙ୍କୁ ସମ୍ବୁଧାସନ କରି
ଶଶାଙ୍କକୁ ଲଜ୍ୟା ଦେଇ
ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନାର ଲୋଭ ପାଇଁ

ପ୍ରଭାକର - ଅଷ୍ଟୋତ୍ତର ଶତ ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତ
ହେଲା ବିଲୀନ
ନୀରବଙ୍କ କପଟ କ୍ରୀଡ଼ାରେ
ପାଞ୍ଚଟି ମୁହୂର୍ତ୍ତ କେବଳ - ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ତବ ଲୀଳା !
ଗଣ ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା
ଥିଲା ତୁମ ଦାବୀ
ପାଇଲ ତାହା
ଆଶା ଦେଲ ନର ନାରାୟଣଙ୍କୁ !

ନର୍ଥ ପଟୋମାକ, ମେରିଲାଣ୍ଡ

ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ପରେ ଝିନ୍ଦୁ ଛୋଟରାୟ



ଦେଖିଛ କି କିଏ ଦେଖିଛ କେଉଁଠି
ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନୀୟ ଖେଳା
କଳି ଆଗମନେ
ରାଜାଙ୍କୁ ସପନେ
ନିର୍ଦ୍ଧାରିଲେ ବାସ
ନୀଳାଚଳ ଧାମେ
ତକା ଆଖି ତକା ଡୋଳା ।

ଜାଣିଛ କିଏ ଜାଣିଛ କେଉଁଠି
ବାର ବରଷର ପିଲା
ରଖିଥିଲା ସିଏ
ପିତାର ମର୍ଯ୍ୟାଦା
କୋଣାର୍କର ମୁଣ୍ଡି
ମାରି ଦେଇ ସାରି
ସାଗରରେ ଝାସ ଦେଲା ।

ଛୁଇଁଛ କି କିଏ ଅନ୍ୟତ୍ର କେଉଁଠି
ଏ ପବିତ୍ର ବସୁନ୍ଧରା
ଜନ୍ମ ଲଭିଛନ୍ତି
କେତେ ଯୁଗ ଜନ୍ମ
ସାଧୁ, ସନ୍ଥ, ଋଷି
କବି, ବୀରାଙ୍ଗନା
ପଦ ରଢ଼େ ଭୂମି ବୋଲା ।

ଉପଭୋଗ କେବେ କରିଛ କେଉଁଠି
ଏ ଭଳି ସଂସ୍କୃତି, କଳା
ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ, ଛଉ ଓ
ସମ୍ବଲପୁରୀ ନୃତ୍ୟ
ଓଡ଼ିଶୀ, ଜଣାଣ,
ଚଂପୁ, ଛାନ୍ଦ ଗୀତ,
ବାସକାଠିଆ ଓ ପାଲା ।

ଶୁଣିଛ କି କେବେ ଶୁଣିଛ କେଉଁଠି
ବିଭିନ୍ନ ପରବ ପ୍ରଥା
କୁଆଁର ପୁନେଇଁ,
ପୋରୁହାଁ ଅଷ୍ଟମୀ,
ବୋଇତ ବନ୍ଦାଣ,
ରଜ, ଖୁବୁରୁକୁଣୀ,
ସାବିତ୍ରୀ ଓ ବାଲିଯାତ୍ରା ।

ଚାଖିଛ କି କେବେ ଚାଖିଛ କେଉଁଠି
ସୁସ୍ୱାଦୁ ବିଭିନ୍ନ ପିଠା
ନାନା ରଙ୍ଗେ ଗଢ଼ା
କରଞ୍ଜି, କାକରା,
ଚିତଉ, ଚକ୍ବଳି,
ଛୁଞ୍ଚିପତ୍ର, ମଣ୍ଡା,
ଆରିଷା ଓ ପୋଡ଼ପିଠା ।

ପାଇଛ କି କେବେ ଓଡ଼ିଶାକୁ ଛାଡ଼ି
ପଖାଳ ଖିଆର ମଜ୍ଜା
ତା ସାଙ୍ଗେ ସନ୍ତୁଳା,
ସୋରିଷ ପତୁଆ,
ବଡ଼ିଚୁରା, ଶାଗ,
ଇଲିଶି ଶୁଖୁଆ,
କଖାରୁ ଫୁଲର ଭଜା ।

ଦେଖି, ଜାଣି, ଶୁଣି ଯଦିବା ଭୁଲିଛ
ଅଜଣାବି ଥାଅ ତମେ
ବିଦେଶରେ ରହି
ପୁଣିବି ଦେଶରେ
ହଜିଯିବ ତମେ
ଟିକି ଓଡ଼ିଶାରେ
ପଡ଼ିଯିବ ସବୁ ମନେ ।

ସ୍ମରଣୀୟ ହେବ ସୁବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଜୟନ୍ତୀ
ପ୍ରତିଶ୍ରୁତି ଆମ ଜାଣ
ନ୍ୟାୟ ବନ୍ଧୁ
ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣକାରୀ
ଶ୍ରଦ୍ଧାରେ ତାକଡ଼ି
ସ୍ୱହସ୍ତ ପ୍ରସାରୀ
ଗୁଆ ନିମନ୍ତ୍ରଣ ଆମ ।

ଆସ ଦେଖିଯିବ ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ସମ୍ମିଳନୀ
ଆଶ୍ୱିନାଶ୍ୱିନ୍ ସିଟି ଠାରେ
ଶିଶୁରୁ ଯୁବକ
ଯୁବକରୁ ପ୍ରୌଢ଼
କ୍ରମେ ବିକଶିତ
ସୁଦୃଢ଼ ବୃହତ୍
ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ପରେ ।

୨୪୪୮ ମସିହା କୋର୍ଟ, ସେଣ୍ଟରଭିଲ୍, ଭର୍ଜିନିଆ

କଳିଙ୍ଗ, ଉତ୍କଳ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଶା
ସୁମିତ୍ରା ପାଠୀ



ଶୁଣ ଶୁଣ ସଭାଜନେ ଦେଇ ମନ କର୍ଣ୍ଣ
କଳିଙ୍ଗ, ଉତ୍କଳ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ନାମର ଗୁମର ଶୁଣ

ଆଜକୁ ପତିଶ ଶହ ବରଷ ତଳେ
ଉତ୍କଳ ଓ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ରାଜ୍ୟର ନାମ ନଥିଲା ତ ଭଲେ

କପା, ସୂତା କୁ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ବୋଲୁଥିଲେ ତାମିଲି ଭାଷାରେ
ଉର୍ବର ଭୂମିକୁ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ବା କଳନ୍ଦ କହୁଥିଲେ ପ୍ରାଚୀନ କାଳରେ

ପୂର୍ବ ଉପକୂଳ ବିଶାଳ ଭୂଖଣ୍ଡ ଥିଲା ଅତି ଉର୍ବର
କପା, ସୂତା ସଙ୍ଗେ ଅନ୍ୟ ଫସଲ ହେଉଥିଲା ଅପାର

ବହୁ ପ୍ରାଚୀନ କାଳୁ ସେ ରାଜ୍ୟ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ନାମେ ହୁଏ ନାମିତ
ବୁଦ୍ଧ ଓ ମହାବୀର ଙ୍କ ବହୁ ପୂର୍ବରୁ ଏହି ରାଜ୍ୟ ସ୍ୱତନ୍ତ୍ର ପ୍ରତିଷ୍ଠିତ

କଳିଙ୍ଗ ରାଜ୍ୟ ମେଦିନପୁର ଠାରୁ ଗୋଦାବରୀ ଯାଏଁ ଥିଲା ବିସ୍ତୃତ
ସ୍ଥାନେ ସ୍ଥାନେ କୃଷ୍ଣା ନଦୀ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ମଧ୍ୟ ଥିଲା ବ୍ୟାପ୍ତ

ଏକୋଇଶ ଶହ ବରଷ ତଳେ କଳିଙ୍ଗର ରାଜା ଥିଲେ ତ୍ରିକଳିଙ୍ଗାଧିପତି
ଶାସନ ର ସୁବିଧା ପାଇଁ ରାଜ୍ୟକୁ ତିନି ଭାଗରେ କଲେ ବିଭକ୍ତି

ଗଙ୍ଗା କୁଳ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ ଗାଙ୍ଗାରିତ ବା ଗାଙ୍ଗେୟ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ବୋଲାଉଲା
ଅନ୍ୟ ଦୁଇ ରାଜ୍ୟ ମୂଖ୍ୟ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ଓ ମଧ୍ୟ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ନାମେ ବିରାଜିଲା

କଳିଙ୍ଗ ର ପଶ୍ଚିମ ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ପଟେ ଉତ୍କଳ ଶୋଭା ପାଆଇ
ଉତ୍କଳ ବା ଉତ୍କଳ ନାମେ ମଧ୍ୟ ଏ ରାଜ୍ୟ ପରିଚିତ ହୁଅଇ

ବଙ୍ଗୋପ ସାଗର ଠାରୁ ଗୟା ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ଉତ୍କଳ ଥିଲା ବିସ୍ତୃତ
ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ପଶ୍ଚିମ ସୋନପୁର ରାଜ୍ୟ ଥିଲା ଏହାର ଅନ୍ତର୍ଗତ

ଉଷିକୁଲ୍ୟା ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ତଟର ସୀମା ପାର୍ବତ୍ୟ ଅଞ୍ଚଳ କୋଦଙ୍ଗ ବୋଲାଏ
କାଳକ୍ରମେ କୋଦଙ୍ଗ ଉଡ୍ର ରାଜ୍ୟ ନାମରେ ପରିଚିତ ହୁଏ

ଉଡ୍ର, କଳିଙ୍ଗ ଓ ଉତ୍କଳର ଅଧିବାସୀ ଥିଲେ ସମ ଭାଷାଭାଷୀ
ସମୟ ର ସ୍ରୋତେ ଉଡ୍ର ଓ ଉତ୍କଳ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ସହିତ ଗଲେ ମିଶି

ଖ୍ରୀଷ୍ଟପୂର୍ବ ତୃତୀୟ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ପର୍ଯ୍ୟନ୍ତ ବିଶାଳ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ଥିଲା ସ୍ୱାଧୀନ
ମଗଧ ସମ୍ରାଟ ଅଶୋକ ଙ୍କ ଯୋଗେ ଏହା ହୋଇଲା ପରାଧୀନ

ଉତ୍ତମ : ୨୦୧୯ ସୁବର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଜୟନ୍ତୀ - ଓସା ସୋଭେନିଟ୍

ଶହେ ବରଷ ସଂଗ୍ରାମ କରି କଳିଙ୍ଗ ପୁଣି ହେଲା ବଳଶାଳୀ
ଚୈତ୍ର ବଂଶର ରାଜା ଖାରବେଳଙ୍କ ଯୋଗେ ହେଲା ଶକ୍ତିଶାଳୀ

ପଞ୍ଚମ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀରେ କେଶରୀ ବଂଶ ମେକଳ ବା ମହାକୋଶଳରୁ ଆସିଲେ
କଳିଙ୍ଗ ବା ଉତ୍କଳ ର ଶାସକ ହୋଇ କୋଶଳ କୁ ଏ ରାଜ୍ୟ ମିଶାଇଲେ

ଉତ୍କଳ କ୍ରମେ କୋଶଳ ବା ତୋଷଳ ନାମ ଧରିଲା
କେଶରୀ ବଂଶ ପରେ ସେ ନାମ ଲୋପ ପାଇଲା

ତ୍ରୟୋଦଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ଗଙ୍ଗ ବଂଶ ହାତରେ ପଡିଲା ଉତ୍କଳ ର ଶାସନ ଭାର
ସେ ସମୟ କଳିଙ୍ଗ ନାମ ଲୁଚି ଉତ୍କଳ ବା ଓଡିଶା ନାମେ ହେଲା ପ୍ରଚାର

ଅନଙ୍ଗଭୀମ, କପିଳେନ୍ଦ୍ର ଓ ପୁରୁଷୋତ୍ତମ ଆଦି ବଳୀୟାନ ରାଜା ରାଜୁତି କଲେ
ବଙ୍ଗ ଓ ମାଳବର ସୁଲତାନ କୁ ପରାସ୍ତ କରି ଗଙ୍ଗା ଠାରୁ କାବେରୀ ଯାଏ ଓଡିଶାରେ ମିଶାଇଲେ

ଷୋଡଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ବେଳ କୁ ଶ୍ରୀଚୈତନ୍ୟ ବଙ୍ଗ ଦେଶୁ ଆସି ବୈଷ୍ଣବ ଧର୍ମର କଲେ ପ୍ରଚାର
ଓଡିଆ ସୈନ୍ୟ ମାନେ ତରବାରୀ ତ୍ୟାଗ କରି ମାଳା ଜପି ହୋଇଲେ ଦୁର୍ବଳ

ଶୋଡଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ଶେଷ କୁ ଗୋଲକୁଣ୍ଡାର ଇବ୍ରାହିମ କଲେ ଦକ୍ଷିଣ ଓଡିଶା ହସ୍ତଗତ
ମଧ୍ୟ ଓଡିଶା ର କେତେକାଞ୍ଚଳ ମରହଟ୍ଟା କୁ ଦ୍ଵାରା ହେଉଥିଲା ଶାସିତ

ଉନ୍ନବିଂଶ ଶତାବ୍ଦୀ ର ଆରମ୍ଭ ରେ ଓଡିଶା କୁ ଇଂରେଜ କଲେ ଅଧିକାର
ଓଡିଶା ଖଣ୍ଡ ବିଖଣ୍ଡ ହୋଇ ଅଂଶ ହେଲା ବିଭିନ୍ନ ପ୍ରଦେଶର

ବଙ୍ଗ, ବିହାର ଓ ମାନ୍ଦ୍ରାଜ ସଂଗେ ମିଶି ଓଡିଶା ସ୍ଵତନ୍ତ୍ରତା ହରାଇଲା
ଓଡିଆ ଭାଷା ଓ ସଂସ୍କୃତି ଉପରେ ବାରମ୍ବାର ଆକ୍ରମଣ ହେଲା

ଜାଗିଲେ ଫକୀର, ଜାଗିଲେ ମେହର, ଜାଗିଲେ କେତେ ସୁଧୀଜନ ତାଙ୍କ ଲେଖନୀ ତୋଳି
ମଧୁସୂଦନ, ଗୋପବନ୍ଧୁ , ନୀଳକଣ୍ଠ ଆଦି ଲଢିଲେ ଶତ ମସାଲ ଜାଳି

୧୯୩୬ ଏପ୍ରେଲ ପହିଲା ରେ ଓଡିଶା ସ୍ଵତନ୍ତ୍ର ହୋଇଲା
ଦେଶପ୍ରେମୀ ଓଡିଆ କୁ ନାମ କାଳ କାଳ କୁ ରହିଲା

ବଲ୍ଲଭଦ୍ର, କାନାଡ଼ା

‘ମି ଠୁ’ ଅଭିଯାନ

ଡ. ଶଶଧର ମହାପାତ୍ର



କୁଆଁରୀ ମନଟା ଏତିକି ଅବୁଝା
ମାନେ ନାହିଁ ବନ୍ଧ ବାଡ଼
ବଧୂଲି ଓଠରୁ ଝରୁଥାଏ ହସ
ହୃଦୟରୁ ଉଠେ ଝଡ଼

ଆଖିରେ ଭରିଛି ହଜାରେ ସପନ
ଆଖି କହୁଥାଏ କଥା
କଥାରେ ରହିଛି ଅବିଶ୍ୱାସ ଭରି
ଦିଏ ବେଦନା ଓ ବ୍ୟଥା

ଯିଏ ଯେତେ ଆଜି ଦେହ ଦେଖାଉଛି
ସେ’ ସେତେ ଶିକ୍ଷିତା ଝିଅ
ହାତ ଠାରି ବିପଦକୁ ଡାକିଆଣେ
ନିଆଁରେ ଭାଳିକି ଘିଅ
ଶାଢ଼ୀରେ ତାହାର ଭରିଅଛି ରଙ୍ଗ
କାନୀ ଉଡେ ଫରଫର
କଥା କହିଲେ ସେ ଅଭିନୟ ଲାଗେ
ସବୁବେଳେ ତରବର

ଛିଣ୍ଡା ଜିନ୍ ସଙ୍ଗେ ମିନି ସ୍କର୍ଟ ପରା
ଆଜିର ଫେସନ ହେଲା
କହିଲେ କୁହନ୍ତି ଟୋକାଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖେଇ
ନା, ତମର କ’ଣ ଗଲା ?

ପ୍ରେମ କରିବାରେ ନିପୁଣ ସେମାନେ
ନାହିଁ ତାଙ୍କ ଡର ଭୟ
ନିନ୍ଦା, ଅପବାଦ ଖାତିରି ନଥାଏ
ହେଉ ନୟ, ପରାଜୟ

ଅତି ଆଧୁନିକ ବୋଲାଉ ଅଛନ୍ତି
ଏ’ କଳି କାଳରେ ଭାଇ
ଏକତରଫିଆ ପ୍ରେମ କରୁଛନ୍ତି
“ନା” କହିଲେ ବି ନାହିଁ

ପ୍ରେମ କେତେବେଳେ ସଜ ଫୁଟାଫୁଲ
କେତେବେଳେ ହୁଏ ବାସି
କେତେବେଳେ କରେ ମନକୁ ତ ଖୁସି
କେତେବେଳେ ଦିଏ ଦଂଶନ

ଭେକ ଦେଖେଇକି ଭିକ ମାଗୁଛନ୍ତି
ଫିଲ୍ମରେ ରୋଲ୍ ପାଇଁ
ତୁମେ ଭଉଣୀ ଭଲଭାବେ ଜାଣ
ମାଂସଲୋଭୀ ଅଛି ତାହିଁ

ତାଆଣା କୁକୁର ଭାରୀ ତୀକ୍ଷଣ ବାନ୍ତ
ଚିରି ତୁମ ଲୁଗାପଟା
ଜୀଅନ୍ତା ଖାଇବେ, ରକ୍ତ ପିଇିଯିବେ
କରିଦେବେ ହଟାପଟା

ବିଦେଶୀ ମଦର ନିଶାରେ ଆଜିକା
ଯୁବକଙ୍କ ବଡ଼ ପ୍ରୀତି
ଭୁଲି ଯାଉଛନ୍ତି ତାଙ୍କପାଇଁ ଦିନେ
ଅତିରୁ ହୋଇବ ଇତି

କିଏ ଶୋଉଅଛି ନର୍ଦ୍ଦମାରେ ପତି
କୁକୁର ମୁହଁକୁ ଚାଟେ
ପ୍ରେମିକା ନିକଟେ ପ୍ରେମ ଭିକ୍ଷା କଲେ
ପ୍ରେମ ଯାଏ ବାଟେ ବାଟେ

ମନ ମୋହିନୀଙ୍କ ମାୟାରେ କେବେ
ବାଇଆ ହୁଅନି ଥରେ
ଅନ୍ଧ ଭଳିଆ ବାତି ଖୋଜୁଥବ
ଦୁଃଖ ଦେବ ଜୀବନରେ

ଆକାଶ କଇଁଆ ଚିଲିକାର ମାଛ
ଯିଏ ଭାବେ ରାନ୍ଧିବାକୁ
ତା’ଭାଗ୍ୟରେ ଅଛି ଲେଖା ଜାଣିଥାଅ
ଅମାରାତି ଘୋଡ଼ିବାକୁ

ଅତି ଆଶାବାଦୀ ପୁଅମାନେ ଆଜି
ଝିଅ କେହି କମ୍ ନୁହେଁ
ଠେଲିପେଲି ହେଉ ସର୍ବକର୍ଷ ହେଉ
ଉପରକୁ ଯିବା ଚାହେଁ

ଭ୍ରାତୃ ଧାରଣା ବସା ବାନ୍ଧିଅଛି
 ଯୁବ ପିତୃଙ୍କ ମନରେ
 ମାୟା ମରୀଚିକା ପଛେ ଧାଉଁଛନ୍ତି
 ଅର୍ଥ, କ୍ଷମତା ଲୋଭରେ

ଦୂର କର ଏ' ରୁଗ୍‌ଣ ମାନସିକତା
 ଭ୍ରାତୃ ଧାରଣା ଏବେ
 ହସି ଉଠିବ ତୁମରି ଦୁନିଆ
 କାନପାତି ଶୁଣ ଯବେ

ଯିଏ ଯେତେ ଶୀଘ୍ର ଉପରକୁ ଉଠେ
 ସିଏ ସେତେ ଶୀଘ୍ର ଖସେ
 ତ୍ୟାଗ, ସାଧନା ବିନା ପହଞ୍ଚିଲେ
 ଏ' ଦୁନିଆ ଦେଖୁ ହସେ

ବୁଦ୍ଧି, ବିଚାର, ଦକ୍ଷତାକୁ ନେଇ
 ଟାଣିଲେ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମଣ ଗାର
 ମିଳିଯିବ ରାମ, ମିଳିଯିବ ପ୍ରେମ
 ଏ' କଥା ସଂସାରେ ସାର

"ମି ଠୁ' ଅଭିଯାନ ଦେଖ ଚାଲିଅଛି
 ଦେଶ ବିଦେଶରେ ଆଜି
 ସବୁ ନାରୀ ନୁହେଁ ସତୀ, ସାବିତ୍ରୀ,
 ସବୁ ପୁରୁଷ ପାଣି

୨୧୦୫ ହିତେନ୍ ଭାଲି ଲେନ୍
 ସିଲ୍‌ଭର୍ ଟ୍ରିଙ୍ଗର୍, ମେରୀଲ୍ୟାଣ୍ଡ,
 ଯୁକ୍ତରାଷ୍ଟ୍ର ଆମେରିକା - ୨୦୯୦୪



ଉଦାସ ଯାତ୍ରୀ ସ୍ନେହ ମହାନ୍ତି

ଅଳସ ବେଳାର ଏ, ମଧୁର ସୁରେ ସୁରେ
 ପ୍ରବାସୀ ଆଜି ମୁହିଁ, ମନ ଅତୀତେ ଫେରେ ।
 ପଲ୍ଲୀ ଉପବନ, ଶ୍ୟାମଳ ଧରାତଳେ
 ମନର ପକ୍ଷୀ ମୋର ନିରତେ ଘୁରିବୁଲେ ।
 ବକୁଳ ଶାଖା ତଳେ ନିବିଡ଼ ନିକୁଞ୍ଜରେ
 କୋମଳ କିଶଳୟ ଗହଳେ ଲୁଚି ଝୁରେ ।
 ପଞ୍ଚମ ସୁର ଖୋଲି ଗାଇଲା ଦୂରେ ପିକ
 ଭରିଲା ସପନ ସେ ଲଗାଇଲା କୁହୁକ ଓ ।
 ସେ ଦିନ ଉପବନେ ସରସୀ କୁଳଧାରେ
 ବାଲ୍ୟକାଳ ବିତିଲା, ଲୁଚକାଳୀ ଖେଳରେ ।
 ଗୋଟିକ ପରେ କେତେ ଫଗୁଣ ଗଲାବହି
 ବାଲ୍ୟ ଚପଳତା ଉଭେଇ ଗଲା କାହିଁ ।
 ଆସିଲା କେଶୋର ମୋ ପାହିଲା କେତେ ନିଶି
 କବିତା ମୋ ଜୀବନ, କବିତାର ମୁଁ ପିୟାସୀ ।
 ସପନ ଦେଖୁଥିଲି, ଗାଇବାର ନିଶାରେ
 ବ୍ୟର୍ଥ ଅଭିଳାଷ, ନୀରବେ ଲୁହ ଝରେ ।
 ହେଲି ମୁଁ ଗୃହିଣୀ ଯେ ସୁଦୂର ପ୍ରବାସରେ,
 ରୁଡ଼ି ରହିଲି ମୁଁ ଯେ ଅନେକ ଜଞ୍ଜାଳରେ ।
 ଅତୀତ ଗଲା କାହିଁ ଧୂସର ମନପ୍ରାଣ
 ଜୀବନ ସୋପାନର, ଶେଷ ଅଧ୍ୟାୟ ଜାଣ ।
 ଆଜି ଏ ପ୍ରବାସରେ ଅଦୂରେ କୁହୁତାନ
 ଶୁଭିଲା ନାହିଁ ଆଉ, ନିସ୍ତେଜ ମନ ପ୍ରାଣ ।
 ଅନ୍ତିମ ବେଳାର ଏ, ଶେଷ ଦୀର୍ଘଶ୍ୱାସ
 ପ୍ରଣତି ବାଜଇ ମୁଁ ଦେବତା ପାଦେ ଶେଷ ।

୧୮୩୬୨ ପ୍ରିଙ୍କଟାଇମ ଲେନ୍
 ହଷ୍ଟିଙ୍ଗଟନ ବିଟ, କାଲିଫର୍ଣ୍ଣିଆ, ୯୨୬୪୭

ପରମାତ୍ମା
ସୁନା ନିଶି ପଣ୍ଡା



ପ୍ରିୟ ସଖା ମୋର
ଦେଖ ଦୂରେ
ପୁନେଇଁ ତାହା ଧୀରେ
ଆକାଶ ବୁଲୁରେ ଦେଖା ଦେଲାଣି
ପାହାଡ଼ ଆଉ ପାରୁ
ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟା ନଇଁଆସେ
ସୂରୁକ ମାଗି ନିଏ ମେଲାଣି ।

ମୋ ମନର କେତେ ଆଶା
ଆପଣା ଛାଉଁ ମରେ
କିନ୍ତୁ
ହେ ମୋର ହରତା କରତା (ପରମାତ୍ମା)
ତୁମେକି ବୁଝି ପାର
ଆଜିର ଏ ଦୁନିଆର ରୀତିନୀତି
ସଭ୍ୟତା ଖୋଳ ତଳେ ପଶୁଡ଼ୁ ଲୁଚିଥାଏ
କେବଳ
ସାପଟା ଖାଲି କାତି ଛାଡ଼େ ।

ଜୀବନ ଆମର ଖଣ୍ଡା ଧାରେ ଛିଡ଼ା
ବନ୍ଧୁକ ଗୁଳିରେ ମରଇ
ମଣିଷ ବୁଝେନାହିଁ ମଣିଷ ମନଭାବ
ଜୀବନ ନେଇ ଖେଳ ଖେଳଇ ।

ସତ୍ୟ ଓ ପ୍ରେମର କଥା ତୁମେ କୁହ ,
ମିଥ୍ୟାର ଝଲକ ଝଲସୁଛି ଅହରହ
ଭୁଲିଛି ଦୁନିଆ ତାର ନିଜ ରୂପ ,
ଝରୁଛି ଗର୍ବ, ହିଂସା ଓ
ଅହଂକାରର ଝରଣା,

ସତେ ଏ କଣ କଳି ଯୁଗର ପ୍ରାରମ୍ଭ (?)
ତଥାପି ବୟସ ଭୁଲୁନି ତାର ରୂପ (ମୋହ)
ପ୍ରେମ ଓ ପ୍ରଣୟର ନିଶାରେ ମସଗୁଲ ,
ପୁଅ, ଝିଅ, ବଡ଼ ଓ ସାନର (ବୟସ)
ନାହିଁ ଭେଦଭାବ,
ପ୍ରେୟସୀ ବୁକେ, ମଥା ଥାମି ରତେ ଅଭିସାର
ସତେ
ବାନ୍ଧନୀ ରାତି ଭଳି ଲାଗେ ଦିବାନିଶି ।

ହେ ସଖା
ଏସବୁ ପ୍ରହେଳିକା ଦିନକ ପାଇଁ ଗଢ଼ା
ସତ୍ୟର ଦୁନିଆରେ (ଦିନେ ହେବ)
ମାନବ ହେବ ଅସ୍ଥି, ଚର୍ମ ଛଡ଼ା
ରୂପ ବି ଲୁଚିବ, ଧନ ବୌଲତର
ଗର୍ବ ବି ବୁରମାର ହେବ ।

ହେ ପରମାତ୍ମା !
ପ୍ରିୟ ସଖା ମୋର,
ଶେଷ ରେ କେବଳ ମୋ;
ଏତିକି ମାଗୁଣି -
ସୁଖକାଳେ ଦୂର କରି ଅନ୍ଧକାର
ଗର୍ବ ଓ ଅହଂକାରର
ଭରିଦିଅ ମନରେ ମୋ;
ଦୁଃଖ କାଳେ ଭଜନ ଆଲୋକ
ସୀମା ହୀନ ଧୀରତା ଓ ସ୍ଥିରତାର ।

ଚରୋଶ୍ଵେ, କାନାଡ଼ା

ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର: ୨୦୧୭

କନକ ହୋତା



ଏ ସହର ଦରତିହା ମୁହଁ
ହାଉଯାଉ ଲୋକବାକ, ଗାତିଯୋଡ଼ା, ବେପାର ବଣିଜ ।
ଝାପଯା ଆଲୁଅରେ ସନ୍ତର୍ପଣେ ଶାଲ ଢାଙ୍କି, କେଉଁଠି ଯେ ଲୁଚିଯାଏ,
ନରମ ପିଲାଦିନ - ଭେଳାଏ ମେଘପରି, ସୁନ୍ଦର ପାହୁନ୍ତା ସପନ ।
ନହକା ଆତ୍ମଗଛ , ପିନ୍ଧୁଳି ବାସନା, କାନ୍ଥରେ ଢଳେଇ ଶୋଇଛି ଖଜରା ପଣସ ।
ଛବିଳ ମନ୍ଦିର ଦେହେ ପ୍ରଖର ନିଃଶ୍ୱାସ ପ୍ରଶ୍ନାସ, ଅନେକ ପୁରୁଣା ।
ଅବେଳରେ ଧୀରୁକାକା, ବିରୁପାକ୍ଷ ଅଜା ।
କିଛିଦିନ ପଡ଼ିରହେ ଦାଣ୍ଡରେ ପୁରୁଣିଆଁ ଧୂଳୀଲଗା ଜୋତା ।
ପଣତ ମୁଣ୍ଡରେ ଟାଣି ପୁଣି ଥରେ ରୋଷେଇରେ ମନଦିଏ ବୋଉ,
ଏମିତି ଅତୀତକ ଖବର ନଥିବା ଓ ଚରଚାର ହକଦାର୍ କୁଣିଆଁଙ୍କୁ ଦେଖି
ମୁହଁତାର ଫୁଲିଯାଏ, ବାକିକିଛି କହେନାହିଁ ଆଉ ।
ଲୁଚକାଳି, ତିଆଁକୁଦା, ପଡ଼ିଉଠି ନୂଆନୂଆ ସାଇକଲ ଶିଖା ।
ବେଣୀବନ୍ଧା, ଫୁଲତୋଳା, ହାଲକା ପବନର ସନ୍ଧ୍ୟା ।
ପିଠିଫଟା ଜାମାଦେଖି ପାନଖାଇ ଆଇଙ୍କ ଆକଟ ଚାରିବା ।
ଏବେ ଘର ବଦଳି ଗଲାଣି । ଖେଳିବାକୁ ଜାଗା ନାହିଁ ।
ଗଛନାହିଁ ଛାଇତଳେ ଘୋଡେଇ ଦେବାକୁ ମୁଣ୍ଡ ଚାତିଗଲେ ।
ଆଇ ମାନେ ଆସନ୍ତିନି ସେ ସମୟ ପରି । ଝିଅବିତ ଯାଏନାହିଁ
ଜହ୍ନ ସାଙ୍ଗେ ଚାଲିବାକୁ ଏକା ଏକା ନିରୋଳା ରାସ୍ତାରେ ।
ଏ ସହର ବଦଳି ଗଲାଣି ଅନେକ, ନାଟକର ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ପରି ସଂପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ନିଆରା ।
ସଜାହେଇ ଥାକ ଥାକ ଉଜା ଉଜା ଘର, ଆଖିପାଏ ନାହିଁ ।
ଚାରିଆଡେ ଲମ୍ବା ଲମ୍ବା ଇସ୍ତାହାର, ଟ୍ରଫିଧାରୀ ପିଲାଙ୍କ ପୋଷ୍ଟର ।
ଖୋଜ ନାହିଁ ବୁଢ଼ା ବରଗଛ; ନଈବାଙ୍କ ମୁହାଣର ପିଲାଦିନ ସାଧାରଣ ଘର ।
ଧୂଳିଆ ସଡକର ନିଛାଟିଆ ପୋଲତଳେ
ବାସୁଥିବା ଶ୍ୟାମଳ ଜାଇ ଫୁଲ ପରି କେଉଁଠି ଯେ ଚହଟୁଛି
ଭୁବନେଶ୍ୱର, ପିଲାଦିନ କୁହୁକ ସହର!

ନେପର୍ଭିଲ୍, ଚିକାଗୋ

ନାଉଁରୀ ରୁ ନାଏଗ୍ରା ମିତାଲି ବାସ



୧

କାନଡା ଦେଶର ସେ ତ ବାରୁ ଅଳଙ୍କାର
ଉତ୍ତର ଆମେରିକାର ଅଟେ ଶୋଭାର ଭଣ୍ଡାର
ଅଜ୍ଞାତ ରହସ୍ୟମୟ ହୋଇ ରହିଥିଲା କାହିଁ
ଚକିତ ହୁଷ୍ଟି ମାନବର ପତିଲା ଯହିଁ
ବିଖ୍ୟାତ ହୋଇଲା ସେତେ ଦେଶ ବିଦେଶରେ
ରହିଗଲା ନାମ ତାର ଭୁଗୋଳ ପୋଥିରେ
ଉତ୍ତର ଆମେରିକାରେ ଏହାର ଉତ୍ପତ୍ତି
ବୃହତ ଆକାର ନେଇ ଇତିହାସ ବଖାଣୁଛି ଗୀତି
ଗୁରୁଙ୍କୁ ଶୁଣିଥିଲି ଭୁଗୋଳରୁ ଜାଣିଥିଲି
ଯେବେ ମୁଁ ଛୋଟ ହୋଇ ସ୍କୁଲରେ ପଢୁଥିଲି ତ

୨

ବିତିଗଲା ଦିନ ବିତିଲା ସମୟ ବରଷ ପରେ ବରଷ
ଜନ୍ମଭୂମି ଛାଡି କର୍ମଭୂମି କରି ଆସିଲୁ କାନାଡା ଦେଶ
ସୁପ୍ତ ରହିଥିଲା ମନର କୋଣରେ ଦେଖିବାର ନେଇ ଆଶା
ଜାଗ୍ରତ ହୋଇଲା ଆଗମନେ ଏହି ଦେଖିବାର ଅଭିଳାଷ
ବଢିଲା ଉତ୍ସାହ ନ କରି ଉଛୁର ଦେଖିବା ପାଇଁ ତାହାକୁ
ମାନସ ପଟରେ ଆଜି ହୋଇ ଗଲା ରୂପ ଛବି ତାର ସବୁ
ଚାଳିଶି କୋଣ ଦୂରେ ଥିଲା ଆମ ବାସସ୍ଥାନ
କିପରି ମୁଁ ଯାଇ ଦେଖିବି ଏହାକୁ ହୋଇଲା ମନ ଉଛୁନ୍ନ
ବାହାରିଲୁ ଦିନେ ଉତ୍ସାହର ସହ ହୋଇ ଭାବ ପ୍ରବଣ
ଦେଖି ତାର ରୂପ ହୋଇଲୁ ଚକିତ ଆମେ ଚାରିଜଣ ।

୩

ପ୍ରକୃତିର ଅଙ୍ଗେ ଅଙ୍ଗେ ସୁଷମା ଯାଇଅଛି ସଜ୍ଜି
ବିମୁଗ୍ଧ ହୋଇଲା ନୟନ ଦେଖି ତାର ରୂପରାଜି

ବହୁ ଦୂରରୁ ନଦୀ ନାଏଗ୍ରାରୁ ଆସି ଅଛି ଏହା ବୋହି
ଲେକ୍ ଏରି ଓ ଅଣ୍ଟାରିଓ ଗର୍ଭେ ମିଶି ଯାଇଅଛି ସେହି
ଧରି ଅଛି ନୀଳ ଅଙ୍ଗେ ତାର ଚିତ୍ର ଅନ୍ତରାଳେ
ନାଭି, ଲୁନା, ସିଡର, ଗୋଟ ଆଉ ଗ୍ରାଣ୍ଡ ହ୍ରୀଦମାଳେ
ବ୍ରାହ୍ମତଳ ଭେଲ, ଆମେରିକାନ ହର୍ଷସ୍ତ୍ର ଝରଣୀ
ଗୋଟିଏ ମା'ର ଭିନ୍ନ ନାମେ ସେ ତିନିହେଁ ଭଉଣୀ
ଧଳା ଧଳା ଫେଶ ତୋ ନୀଳ ଅଙ୍ଗେ ଭାସେ
ବିଶଇ ଛାୟା ପଥ ଯେହ୍ନେ ଶରଦ ଆକାଶେ
ଭାସେ କେତେ ଯେ ବୋଇତ ବିମାନ ଆକାରେ
ବିହାର କରନ୍ତି ଦେଖିବାକୁ ସୋନ୍‌ମୟୀ ତାହାର
ବିନ୍ଦୁ ବିନ୍ଦୁ ଜଳରାଶି ଆସି ପଡଇ ଚର୍ତୁଦିଗେ

ପବନର ସାଥେ ମିଶି ଉଡି ବୁଲଇ ଆକାଶେ
ଝଲମଲ ଇନ୍ଦ୍ର ଧନୁ ସୂରୁଜ କିରଣର ପଥେ
ଖେଳେ ଲୁଚକାଳି ରହି ବାଦଲର ସାଥେ
ଗଗନ ଦୁଃ ମୁଖରିତ ପକ୍ଷୀର ମଧୁର ସଙ୍ଗୀତେ
ଆଗମନେ ଉତୁରାଜ ବସନ୍ତର ସ୍ବାଗତେ
ଯେତେ ଦେଖିଲେ ତା ଦୃଶ୍ୟ ମନ ନ ଭରଇ
ପ୍ରତିଥର ତାର ରୂପ ନୂତନ ବିଶଇ
ପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧ ହୋଇଲୁ ତୁ ଦେଶ ବିଦେଶରେ
ବିଖ୍ୟାତ ହୋଇଲୁ ତୁ ନାଏଗ୍ରା ନାମରେ
ନାଏଗ୍ରା ଅଟଇ ଏକ ଆଶ୍ଚର୍ଯ୍ୟ ପ୍ରକୃତିର
ଚିତ୍ରକାର ଚିତ୍ର ଆଜି ଏହା କରିଲା ପ୍ରଚାର
ବିବାହିତା ଦମ୍ପତିଙ୍କର ଏ ସ୍ଥାନ ହେଲା ଲକ୍ଷ୍ୟସ୍ଥଳ
'ହନିମୁନ' ନାମରେ ନାଏଗ୍ରା ହୋଇଲା ପ୍ରଚାର
ନାଉଁରୀ ଗ୍ରାମରୁ ଆସି ଦେଖିଲି ନାଏଗ୍ରା
ଏହା ଥିଲା ମୋର ଏକ ଅବିସ୍ମରଣୀୟ ଯାତ୍ରା ।

ପ୍ରତିଧ୍ବନିର ସ୍ବରଲିପି

ମନୋଜ ପଣ୍ଡା



ଲୋଡା ନାହିଁ ଧନ ମାନ ସନମାନ
ନେଇ ଯାଅ ପଛେ ମୋର ଯଉବନ
ଫେରାଇ ଦିଅ ମୋ ବାଳୁତ ଜୀବନ
ସେ କାଗଜ ନାବ, ବରଷା ଶ୍ରାବଣ । (୧)

ଗ୍ରାମର ସବୁଠୁ ପୁରୁଣା ଚିହ୍ନରା
ପିଲା ସୁବାଙ୍କର ଆଇମା ତାକରା
ପରୀ ରାଇଜର ତା ଗପ ପସରା
ପରିଣତ ମୁହଁ କହେ ଯୁଗ ଧାରା
ଭୁଲିବା ପଣକୁ ନ ପାରେ ମୁଁ ଆଣି
ଛୋଟ ରାତିର ସେ ଲମ୍ବା କାହାଣୀ । (୨)

ବାହାରର ବୁଲା ଟାଙ୍ଗିଟାଙ୍ଗି ଖରା
ବଣି, ପ୍ରଜାପତି ଚଟିଆର ଧରା
କଣ୍ଢେଇ ବିବାହ କଳି ତକରାଳ
ଦୋଳି ଝୁଲିବା ଓ ପତିବାର ବେଳ
କଣା ପଇସାର ଅଭୁଲା ଯେ ଭେଟି
ଭଙ୍ଗା ତୁଟିର ସେ ବେଶ ପରିପାଟୀ । (୩)

ଆମ୍ଭ କାନନର ସୁଶୀତଳ ଛାୟା
ପୁଷ୍ପିତ ଗୁଚ୍ଛରେ ସୁସଜ୍ଜିତ କାୟା
ଝରା ବଉଳ ଓ ତରାଟ ତମାଳ
ଯେଣେ ଦେଖ ତେଣେ ଦିଶେ ମାଳ ମାଳ
କୁମ୍ଭାରୁଆ କୋକିଳ ଶୁଆସାରୀ ଗୀତ
ଦୁଃଖଭରା ଦିନେ ମୋହି ନିଏ ଚିତ୍ତ । (୪)

ବାଲି ପାହାଡର ଚଢ଼ିବାର ମଜା
ଖେଳଘର କରି ଭାଙ୍ଗିବାର ସଜା
ସରଳ ମନ ଓ ଆଖିର ଝଲକ
ସପନ ଖେଳନାର ନିଛକ ପୁଲକ । (୫)

ସଂସାର ଚିହ୍ନା, ପରିଜନ ଜନ୍ମା
ନଥିଲା ଏସବୁର କିଛି ବି ହିନସ୍ତା
ବିଗତ ଦିନର ସେ ହଜିଗଲା ସ୍ମୃତି
ପ୍ରସିଦ୍ଧ ଦୁନିଆରେ କେତେ ଅନୁଭୂତି । (୬)

କ୍ଷଣର ବସତି ଅପରୂପ ଶାନ୍ତି
ଅତୀତ ବର୍ତ୍ତମାନ ଜଗାଏ ଯେ ଭୀତି
କର୍ମ ଜ୍ଞାନ ଭକ୍ତି ସାଧୁ ସଙ୍ଗ ଭୁକ୍ତି
ଭବ ବନ୍ଧନରୁ କରାଏ ଯେ ମୁକ୍ତି । (୭)

ସମୟ ପ୍ରୋତସ୍ନିନୀ ବହି ଚାଲୁଅଛି
ଜୀବନଚକ୍ରର ଖେଳ ଖେଳୁଅଛି
ବାଳୁତ, ଶୈଶବ ଯଉବନ ପ୍ରୌଢ
ବୃଦ୍ଧ କ୍ରମାନ୍ୱୟ ଫୁଟିଚାଲେ କଡ
ମୃତ୍ୟୁ କୁସୁମିତ ଯେବେ ପୁଣି
ସତ୍ୟର ଅର୍ଥଟି ବୁଝିବୁ ଲାଣି । (୮)

ଏପ୍ରିଲ ୧୩, ୨୦୧୯
ଶ୍ରୀରାମ ନବମୀ
ଗେଥର୍ସବର୍ସ, ମେରୀଲାଣ୍ଡ

ପ୍ରବାସୀ ଓଡ଼ିଆ

ଆଶୁତୋଷ ଜ୍ୟୋତିଃସୀ

ବାହାରକୁ ଦିଶେ ଖଣ୍ଡିତ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପ୍ରବାସେ ରହିଥାଇ

'OSA' ସମ୍ମିଳନୀ ଦେଲା ସୂଚେଇ,

ଜାଗ୍ରତ ଏକକ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ପ୍ରୀତି

ହର୍ଷ ଭଲ୍ଲାସେ ଚାଲିଛି ଓଡ଼ିଆ, ତା ଜାତି, ତା ଭାଷା,

ମାଟିର ସୁଗନ୍ଧ ବୋହି.

ତୁମେ କୁପାସିନ୍ଦୁ -ଜୀବନ, ଜ୍ଞାନ, ନମୋ, ଥୟର

ବୀଜ ଓଡ଼ିଆ ହୃଦୟେ ଥୋଇ.

ଆସିଲା ବିଦେଶେ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ବାନା ଉଡାଇ ଉଡାଇ.

ଆନନ୍ଦେ ମୋହିତ ମୁ ଓ ମୋ ପରିବାର ଉପସ୍ଥିତ ରହି

'ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଅଗ୍ନିତା' ଚିରସ୍ଥାୟୀ ରହୁ କୃତଜ୍ଞ ହୁଏ

ସମ୍ମିଳନୀ କୁ ଶୁଭେଚ୍ଛା ଜଣାଇ”

॥ ଜୟ ଜଗନ୍ନାଥ ॥



ଆତଙ୍କ
ସତ୍ୟଜିତ୍ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ

ଆତଙ୍କବାଦୀର ଗରଜେ କମାଣ
ବରଷାଏ ଗୋଳା ତୁହା କୁ ତୁହା,
ରକତ ର ହୋରି ଖେଳୁଛି, ଭୀଷଣ
ଆତଙ୍କ ଯେ ମେଲି ଆପଣା ବାହା । ୧୧ ।

ସହସ୍ର ମରଣ କାରଣ ବନିଛ
ରତାଇଛ ମୃତ୍ୟୁ ତାଣ୍ଡବ ଲୀଳା,
ଦେଶ, ଗ୍ରାମ, ବସ୍ତି ଜଳାଇ କରିଛ
ଶୁଶାନ, ଧୂଂସ ପ୍ରୟୋଗ ଶାଳା । ୧୨ ।

ଜନନୀ ର କୋଳ ଭଜାନ୍ତି ଦେଇଛ
ଅନାଥ କରିଛ ଅବୋଧ ଶିଶୁ,
ଧର୍ମ ନାମ ରେ ଧରମ-ଅନ୍ଧକୁ
ବନାଇ ଦେଇଛ ବର୍ବର ପଶୁ । ୧୩ ।

ଜନମ ମାଟିର ଅଭିଶାପ ବନି
ରୋପଣ କରୁଛ ଆତଙ୍କବାଦ,
'ଜିହାଦ୍' ନାମରେ ଲୁଣ୍ଠିତା ମେଦିନୀ
ମସ୍ତକ ହରାଏ ମାନବ-ବାଦ । ୧୪ ।

ସରଳ, ନିଷ୍ଠାପ କିଶୋର ହୃଦର
ବିଶ୍ୱାସ ଲୁଟି ଭରିଛ ହିଂସା ଦୃଷ୍ଟ,
ଜଳିଯିବ ଦିନେ ତୁମେ ଭସ୍ମାୟୁର
ଜଳାଇବ ସେହି ହଳାହଳ ବିଷ । ୧୫ ।

ଦୁନିଆଁ ଯେ ଆଜି ଆତଙ୍କିତ ଅତି,
ବର୍ବରତାର ନିଷ୍ଠୁର ସାକ୍ଷୀ,
ମାନବ ରୂପରେ ଦାନବ ର ଭାତି
ନିବନ୍ଧ ରଖିଛି ଲୋଲୁପ ଆଖି । ୧୬ ।

ସତେ ଯଦି ଅଟ ଅମୃତ ସନ୍ତାନ,
ପ୍ରେମ ଶୃଙ୍ଖା ସହ କର ଯେ ଲଗନ,
ଜୀବନକୁ ଦେଇ ବଂଚାଅ ଜୀବନ,
ତେବେ ଯାଇ ପାଇବ ଅମୃତ ସନ୍ତାନ । ୧୭ ।

୧୪୩୨ କାଟାଲ୍ଲା ରୋଡ୍
ମିଶିଯାଗା, କାନାଡ଼ା



ଜଗାର ସମୟ ଶସ୍ତ୍ର
ଡା. ଅନିଲ ପଟ୍ଟନାୟକ

କାଗଜ ଫୁଲ ର ବାୟା କାହିଁ
ଯେତେ ପ୍ରତ୍ୟକ୍ଷ ଦିଶିଲେ ବି,
ଗୋଲାପ ବାୟା ମହକି ଦିଅଇ
କେତେ ଟୁକୁଡ଼ା କଲେ ବି ।

ବିଶାଳ ଦୁନିଆ ଦିଶଇ ନାହିଁ
କେତେ ଶକ୍ତି ର ବଲ୍ଲ ଥିଲେଭି,
ଅନ୍ଧକାର କୁ ପାରିବ କି ଲୁଚାଇ
ଗୋଟେ ସୂର୍ଯ୍ୟ ଠାରୁ ଦୁରେଇ ?

ଅହଂ ର ରଙ୍ଗୀନ ଚଷମା ବନ୍ଧୁ
ଦେଖାଏ ଏମିତି ନକଲି ଦୁନିଆ,
ଅସତ୍ୟ ଲାଗଇ ସତ୍ୟ ଏମିତି ବନ୍ଧୁ
ଯେମିତି ସୃଷ୍ଟି ର ପ୍ରକାଶ ମିଥ୍ୟା ।

ଚଷମା ବାହାର କର ସାଙ୍ଗ
ଭୋଗ କର ସୁନ୍ଦରତା ପ୍ରକାଶର,
ସତ ତେଷ୍ଟ କଲେ କଣ ମିଥ୍ୟାର ବଲ୍ଲ
ଲୁଚାଇ ପାରିବ ଶକ୍ତି ପ୍ରକାଶର ?

ଜଗା ପରା ତଳାଉଛି ସୃଷ୍ଟିକୁ
ନେଇ ତାର ସମୟ ଶସ୍ତ୍ର,
ସତ ଫୁଲ କୁ ମହକାଇବାକୁ
ଦୁରେଇବାକୁ ମିଥ୍ୟା ର ଅନ୍ଧାର ।

ତେବେନ, ଓହ୍ଲାଇଓ





ଆଉ ଲେଖିପାରୁନି ବିଜୟ ଲକ୍ଷ୍ମୀ ନନ୍ଦ

ହୁତ ହୁତ ଜଳୁଥିବା ମେ' ମାସ ଓଡ଼ିଶା ମଧ୍ୟାହ୍ନରେ
ବିଜୁଳି କଟିଗଲା ପରେ,
କିଲୋମିଟରଟିଏ ଦୂରରୁ
ଅଣା ପାଣି ଭାଲେ ପିଇ -
ନିଗିତି ପଡୁଥିବା ଝାଳକୁ ପୋଛୁ ପୋଛୁ,
ସ୍ୱପ୍ନ ରାଜ୍ୟ ପରୀର ଜାକଜମକ
ପଲଙ୍କର କାହାଣୀ ଆଉ ଲେଖିପାରୁନି !

ଖବରକାଗଜରେ ଅଣାନ୍ତିର ହିଁ ଖବର ।
ଏଠି ମାଓବାଦୀ, ସେଠି ପୋଲିସ ଦୁର୍ନୀତି ଆଉ ପୁଣି କେଉଁଠି
ଧାରଣାରେ ବସିଥିବା ଅସନ୍ନ କର୍ମଚାରୀ !
ବର୍ଷାଦିନିଆଁ ପାଗରେ,
ସକାଳୁ ସକାଳୁ ବେଲାଏ ମୁଣ୍ଡି ଆଉ କପେ ତା ଧରି,
ଶାନ୍ତିର ନିଃଶ୍ୱାସଟିଏ ମାରି କଲମ ତଳାଇପାରୁନି ।
ଦୁନିଆଁର ଅଶାନ୍ତ ଖବରକୁ ଭୁଲେଇ
ପାରିଲା ଭଳି ମିଥ୍ୟା ଆଶ୍ୱାସନାର
ବାଣୀ ଶୁଣାଇ ପାରୁନି,
ପାଠକଙ୍କୁ ମନମତାଣିଆ ପାଗର ସୁନ୍ଦର
ବର୍ଣ୍ଣନା ରୀତିମତ ଦୁଃଖର ଖବର ବ୍ୟୁତ୍ପନ୍ନ
ଦେଖାଇପାରୁନି, ଆଉ ଲେଖିପାରୁନି !

ଅଜ୍ଞତା ଅନ୍ଧକାରରେ ଭାଗ୍ୟ ଓ ଭଗବାନଙ୍କ
ଉପରେ ଦୋଷ ଲଦି, ନେତାଙ୍କ ମିଛ ସତ କଥାରେ ଭଣ୍ଡି,
ଭଲ ଦିନ ଆସିବ... ଭୋଟ ଦେଇ ମୋର କାମସାରିଛି
ଏମିତି ଭାବନାରେ ନିଜକୁ ସାନ୍ତୁନା ଦେଇ,
କଲମକୁ ଅଭାବନୀୟ ସୁନ୍ଦର
କଲ୍ପନାର ଆଦେଶ ଦେଇପାରୁନି ।
ଆଉ ଲେଖିପାରୁନି !

ଦୁନିଆଁରେ 'ଆପଣା ହସ୍ତେ ଡିହା ଛେଦି'ର
ନାନାପ୍ରକାର ଉଦାହରଣ ଦେଖିଲା ପରେ,
କେବଳ ଅଭିଯୋଗର ପତକା ବାନ୍ଧି
ତକାପକେଇ ଘରର ଉଷ୍ମ ମୋଟାରେ ବସି
କୁକର୍ମ ଅପେକ୍ଷା ନିଷ୍ପର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଭଲ ବୋଲି -
ମୋର ବିପ୍ଳବୀ ମନକୁ ବୁଝାଇପାରୁନି ।
କୋଳାହଳଶୂନ୍ୟ ଶାନ୍ତ ପରିବେଶରେ
ମଧ୍ୟମନକୁ ଆହ୍ୱାନିତ କରିପାରୁନି ।
କେବଳ ଲେଖିଦେଲେ ମୋର କାମ ସରିଲା,
ଏମିତି ଭାବି ପାରୁନି -
ତେଣୁ ଆଜିକାଲି ଆଉ ମୁଁ ଲେଖିପାରୁନି !
ଝେଷ୍ଟ ଗେଟ୍ ଡ୍ରାଇଭ, ଏଡିସନ ନ୍ୟୁ ଜର୍ସି



ଜନ୍ମ ସୀମା ମହାପାତ୍ର

ନିରନ୍ତର ଜଳାଇ ଆଶାର ପ୍ରଦୀପ
ଭରିଦିଅ ମନେ ସାହିତ୍ୟ ଭାବ ଅତ୍ୟନ୍ତ
ଅନ୍ଧକାରେ ଦିଅ ଆଲୋକ ର ସଂକେତ
ତୁମ୍ଭରି ଜ୍ୟୋତ୍ସ୍ନା ଭରିଦିଏ ସନ୍ତୋଷ ଅନେକ

ତୁମେ ହିଁ ସେ ନିରାକାର
ଧାରଣା କରେ ଯିଏ ଆକାର ଭିନ୍ନ ପରମ୍ପରାର
କେବେ ତୁମେ ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ
କେବେ ଯେ ଅର୍ଦ୍ଧ
କେବେ ପୁଣି ସଂକୀର୍ଣ୍ଣ ଆକୃତି ବିଶିଷ୍ଟ

ପୃଷ୍ଠଭୂମି ତୁମେ କୁଆଁରି ସ୍ୱପ୍ନର
ଦର୍ଶନ କରାଅ ତାକୁ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ରାଇଜର ରାଜକୁମାର
ନାରୀ ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟର ତୁମେ ଯେ ପ୍ରତୀକ
ତୁମ ଲାବଣ୍ୟତାର ବାଖ୍ୟା ଅପର୍ଯ୍ୟାପ୍ତ

ଆକାଶ ପରି ଉଦାର ତୁମେ
ସମସ୍ତ ଜନର ମାମୁଁ ବି ତୁମେ
ହୃଦୟେ ଝରାଇ ଭାବନା ପ୍ରେମର
ଆନନ୍ଦେ ହୁଏ ମୋ ମନ ଯେ ବିଭୋର

ସବୁ ଧର୍ମ ଦିଏ ତୁମକୁ ଆନନ୍ଦ
ଶୋଭା ତୁମେ କୁଆଁରପୁନେଇ ରୂପା ଥାଳିର
ପୁଣି ଭାତୁଭାବ ବଢ଼ାଇ ଥାଅ ହୋଇ ଚାନ୍ଦ ଇନ୍ଦ୍ର

ଚିଲିକାରେ ଯେବେ ଦେଖେ ତୁମ ପ୍ରତିବିମ୍ବ
ଚିତ୍ତ ରେ ଜାତ ହୁଏ ଅଦଭୂତ ଆବେଗ
ନୟନ ହୋଇଯାଏ ବିସ୍ମୟକର
ଏ କି ଚିତ୍ତାକର୍ଷକ ସୃଷ୍ଟି ସଂସାରର

ଅବର୍ଣ୍ଣନୀୟ ସୌନ୍ଦର୍ଯ୍ୟ ତୁମର
ଅସମ୍ପୂର୍ଣ୍ଣ ତୁମ ବିନା ସ୍ରୋତ ଜୀବନର !

ଖରା ଓ ଶୀତ
ତଃ ତନ୍ମୟ ପଣ୍ଡା



ଓଡ଼ିଆ ଖରା ଓ ଶୀତ
ଦୁଇ ସଂଗୀତ
ବସି ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ଦିର ବେଢ଼ାରେ
ଲାଗି ଗଲେ ଗପ କରିବାରେ । ୧ ।

କେତେ ହେଲେ ଦୁଃଖ ସୁଖ
ପାଶୋରୀ ସବୁ ଶୋକ
ଲାଗିଲା ଯତେ ଯେମିତି
ଦୁହେଁ ଦୁହିଁକ ପାଇଁ । ୨ ।

ଜଣେ କହେ ବସି ନିଜ କାହାଣୀ
ଅନ୍ୟ ଜଣକ ଶୁଣେ ତୁମ୍ଭ ରହି ପୁଣି
ଯେତେ ଯେତେ ସମୟ ଗତିଲା
ଧିରେ ଧିରେ କଥା ବଢ଼ିଲା । ୩ ।

କହୁ କହୁ ନିଜ କାହାଣୀ
ବଢ଼ି ଗଲା ଫୁଟାଣୀ
ସ୍ନେହ ସୌହାର୍ଦ୍ଦ୍ୟ କୁ ମାଟିରେ ପୋତି
ଆମ୍ଭ ବଢ଼ିମାରେ ରହିଲେ ମାଟି । ୪ ।

ଖରା କହେ ...
ଆ ଦୂର କରିବି ତୋର ଭ୍ରମ
ଶୁଣ ମୋର କେତେ ପରାକ୍ରମ । ୫ ।

ଭରା ନଈ ଶୁଖି ମରୁଭୂମି ହେଲାଣି
ଗଛ ସବୁ ଶୁଖି କାଠ ହେଲାଣି
ମାଟି ଫାଟି ଆଁ କଲାଣି
ଲୋକେ ଡ୍ରାହି ଡ୍ରାହି ତାକ ଛାଡ଼ିଲେଣି । ୬ ।

ଗରମ ଝାଳରେ ଲୋକେ ହେଲେଣି ଅତିଷ୍ଠ
ବଡ଼ ଦୟା ଲାଗେ ଦେଖି ତାଙ୍କ କଷ୍ଟ
ଘରେ ଘରେ ଏଆର୍ କଂଡ଼ିସନର କୁଲର
ନ ଥିଲେ ବଢ଼ୁଛି ଲୋକଙ୍କ ବୁଦ୍ଧ ପ୍ରେସର । ୭ ।
ବିଜୁଳି ନାହିଁ ପାଣିର ଅଭାବ
ଇନଭର୍ଟର ଜେନେରେଟର ର ବଡ଼ ପ୍ରଭାବ

ସବୁ ସମୟ ଯାଏ ମୋ ଚିନ୍ତାରେ
ଆରେ ଶୀତ ତତେ କିଏ ପଚାରେ ? । ୮ ।

ଖରା ଛିଗୁଲେଇଲା ଯାରେ
ଶୀତ ତୋର କିବା ଭାଉ
ଶୀତ ଉତ୍ତର ଦେଲା -
ଆ କାନାଡା, ଦେଖିବୁ ମୋ ଡାଉ । ୯ ।

ଶୀତ କହେ ...
ଯମା ରହନା ତୁ ସେ ଭ୍ରମରେ
ତୋ ପରାକ୍ରମ ଦେଶରେ ହେଲେ
ମୋର ବିଦେଶରେ । ୧୦ ।

ଭାରତ ବର୍ଷରୁ ତିନି ଗୁଣା ବଡ଼ ଦେଶ
ଲାଗେ ଯତେ ଯେମିତି ନିର୍ଜୀବ ନିଃଶେଷ
ବିଧବା ନାରୀର ଧଳା ଶାଢ଼ି ପରି
ବରଫରେ ଭାଙ୍ଗି ରହେ ମାସ ମାସ ଧରି । ୧୧ ।

ବରଫ ବର୍ଷାରେ ତାଳ ଭାଙ୍ଗେ ଗଛର
ବିଜୁଳି ବିନା ଅନ୍ଧାର ପାଲଟେ ସହର
ଅଣ୍ଟାରେ ପାଣି ପାଇପ ସବୁ ଯାଏ ଫାଟି
ବରଫ କାଢ଼ି ଦରଜ ଦୁଏ ଅଣ୍ଟାପିଠି । ୧୨ ।

ନାଏଗ୍ରା ଜଳ ପ୍ରପାତ, ହୁଏ ଓ ଗାଡ଼ିଆ
ପାଲଟନ୍ତି ଧଳା ବରଫର ପଡ଼ିଆ
ପିନ୍ଧି ବାହାରେ ଜାକେଟ ଭିତରେ ଇନର
ଲୋକେ ହୁଅନ୍ତି ବଡ଼ ଅସ୍ଥିର । ୧୩ ।

ମୋ ପ୍ରକୋପ କେହି ସମ୍ଭାଳି ନ ପାରନ୍ତି
କେବେ ବସନ୍ତ ଆସିବ ଭାଲି ହୁଅନ୍ତି
ଆରେ ଖରା ତୁ ଆଉ ଦେଖାନା ଫୁଟାଣୀ
ତୁ ଏଠି ରଜା ତ ମୁଁ ସେଠି ରାଣୀ । ୧୪ ।

ଚରୋଷ୍ଟୋ, କାନାଡା

ଭ୍ରାନ୍ତି
ଗଗନ ପାଣିଗ୍ରାହୀ



କ୍ଷୀଣାଙ୍କ ଭିଖାରୀ ଭିକ୍ଷା ଥାଳ ଧରି
ଭିକ୍ଷା ମାଗିବାର ପାଇଁ,
ବଡ଼ି ସକାଳରୁ ବାହାରି ପଡ଼ିଲା
ପ୍ରଭୁଙ୍କର ନାମ ଗାଇ ।

ଭିକ୍ଷାଥାଳ ଥୋଇ ପହିଲୁ ବସିଲା
ଗୀର୍ଜା ସମ୍ମୁଖରେ ଯାଇ,
ପ୍ରାର୍ଥନା ଶେଷରେ ଜନତା ଫେରିଲେ
ସେହି ବାଟେ ଚାହିଁ ଚାହିଁ ।

ମନେ ଆଶା ବହି ଭିକାରୀ ବାପୁଡ଼ା
ଥାଳ ଟେକି ଦୁଇ ହାତେ,
ମଝିରେ ମଝିରେ ଚାହିଁ ଦେଉଥାଏ
ମିଳିଲାକି କିଛି ସତେ ।

ଜଣ ପରେ ଜଣେ ଫେରିଲେ ସଭିଏଁ
ସେହି ଚଲାପଥ ଦେଇ,
ଦାନ ଦୂର କଥା ନଜର ବୁଲାଇ
କେହି ଚାହିଁଲେ ବି ନାହିଁ ।

ସେଠୁ ଯାଇ ପୁଣି ପହଞ୍ଚିଲା ସିଏ
ମସଜିଦ୍ ସାମନାରେ,
ଧଳା ଟୋପି ଟିଏ ମଥା ପରେ ଥୋଇ
ବସିଲା ଏକ ଲମ୍ବରେ ।

ନମାଜ ପଢ଼ିବା ଶେଷେ ଧର୍ମୀ ଜନେ
ଲେଉଟିଲେ ନିଜ ଘରେ,
ସେଠାରେ ବି ସିଏ ହେଲା ଅସଫଳ
ବୁଥାଗଲା ଅପେକ୍ଷାରେ ।

ଆଶା ବହି ଶେଷେ ଗଲା ମନ୍ଦିରକୁ
ଶୂନ୍ୟ ଭିକ୍ଷାଥାଳ ଧରି,
କାଳେ କିଏ ଯଦି କେଉଁ ମନ ନେଇ
ଦାନ ଦେବ ଦୟା କରି ।

ହେଲେ ସେଠାରେ ବି ନୋହିଲା ସଫଳ
ସୂରୁଜ ନଇଁଲେ ଶେଷେ,
କ୍ଳାନ୍ତ ଶ୍ରାନ୍ତ ହୋଇ ଆଶା ତେଜି ସଞ୍ଜେ
ଗଲା ମଦ ଭାଟି ପାଶେ ।

ଦେଖିଲା ମାତାଲି ଫେରନ୍ତି ଭାଟିରୁ
ସେଇ ପଥେ ମଦ ପିଇ,
ବସିଲା ତା ଆଗେ ଶୂନ୍ୟ ଥାଳ ଧରି
ନୀରବେ କାକୁସୁ ହୋଇ ।

ଆସିଲେ ମାତାଲି ଟଳମଳ ହୋଇ
ପକେଟୁଁ ଖୁରୁବା କାଢ଼ି,
ଥୁଆ ହୋଇଥିବା ବୁଦ୍ଧ ଭିକାରୀର
ଥାଳୀ ପରେ ଦେଲେ ଝାଡ଼ି ।

ନିମିଷେକେ ଶୂନ୍ୟ ଥାଳି ଗଲା ଭରି
ହେଲାନି ଜମା ବିଶ୍ୱାସ,
ଉପରକୁ ଚାହିଁ ଭିକାରୀ ବାପୁଡ଼ା
ମାରିଲା ଦୀର୍ଘ ନିଃଶ୍ୱାସ ।

କହିଲା, ପ୍ରଭୁହେ! ଲାଗେ ଆତମ୍ବିତ
ଭାବି ବୁଦ୍ଧି ଦୁଏ ବଣା,
ରହୁଛ ଗୋଟିଏ ଜାଗାରେ, ଦେଉଛ
ଅନ୍ୟ ଜାଗାର ଠିକଣା ।

ଚରୋଣ୍ଡା, କାନାଡ଼ା

Silence : The language of the soul

Arjun Purohit



During a discourse, a Bhikshu approached Buddha and asked, "Wise one, you always talk about Nirvana. Can you please describe what exactly Nirvana is? Buddha lifted a flower and looked at intently. There were no words spoken. His countenance was filled with utter peacefulness and there was palpable joyfulness. His body became even more resplendent. After a while, the Bhikshu asked, "Wise one, why do not you describe Nirvana?" Buddha smiled and said, "I was explaining Nirvana but you did not understand". Only elder Kashyapa the senior monk understood and smiled knowingly.

How does one describe the Nirvana, the peak spiritual experience which is so unique and has no known physical or conceptual referents? Words we use to communicate to others are different sound bites which have reference to something and the hearer interprets the sound bites with his own referents. Miscommunication occurs when communicator and listener do not share the same referents. It is the same when Upanishads describe nature of Brahma Neti Neti, not this not this. It is Anirbachaniya. Beyond words. Jatra vArtA na vartante. Where words do not reach. And to realize that state of being, silence is necessary first step to enter into the inner world. Buddha calls it Noble silence and describes it as thus: "But what is Noble silence? Then the thought occurred to me, 'There is the case where a monk, with stilling of directed thoughts and evaluations, enter and remains in the second Jhana, rapture and pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought and evaluation- internal assurance. This is called

noble silence'". Jhana state, as mentioned here are different stages of Dhyana. Theravada school of Buddhism recognises eight states of Jhanas.

Silence does not mean just refraining from overt verbal intercourse with others; it includes absence of internal chatters which occupy our consciousness. Buddha always discouraged useless chatter (JalpanA) as well as pointless arguments. Buddha does not discuss philosophy or exoteric stuff. Unlike other spiritual leaders, he refrains from discussing theology because such stuff has no relevance in getting rid of Dukkha or suffering. While he was always willing to answer any serious questions put to him, he remained silent when fourteen questions put to him. His reason?

"And why are they undeclared by me ? Because they are not connected with the goal, are not fundamental to the holy life. They do not lead to disenchantment, dispassion, cessation, calming, direct knowledge, self-awakening, unbinding. That is why they are undeclared by me."

And what are the fourteen questions?

"I" or the "self" and the universe (1) are eternal (2) not eternal (3) both eternal and not eternal) (4) neither. Are "I" or "selves" or universe (5) finite, (6) infinite (7) both (8) neither? Does the "I" or the "self" of a Buddha (9) continues to exist after death, (10) not continue after death, (11) both, (12) neither? Are body and life force (13) same entity or (14) totally separate and different entity?

Importance of silence has been discovered by

several other faith groups. Christian, Jewish, Buddhist, Jaina and Sanatani monks have retired to caves for days and often years to observe silence and emerge with brilliant insights or revelations. Only in silence and silenced inbuilt tendencies can truth is revealed. Gandhi used to observe Mauna Brata for one day a week. Ramana Maharshi remained Mauna for years and emerged as one of the most revered philosophers of the last century. Chittamatin or mind-only school of Buddhism consider mind or consciousness as the only reality, everything else is just projections of mind. So when one is not silent, one is simply engaged in the projections consciousness and thus is not aware of the essential reality. Though philosophical traditions have different names of the essential reality, they all accept that essential reality is different from phenomenal world. And it is essential to observe silence to be on path to be in touch with that reality. As is aptly put by Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, a modern Indian saint, "Silence is the language of the soul, love is the language of the heart and KaLaha (quarrelsomeness, argumentativeness) is the language of Samsara. Our own Odishan poet says Tarke na milanti Hari.

My favourite legend is of fifth century Buddhist monk Bodhidharma of Chittamatin school who went to China without taking any scriptures because he did not want to be influenced by any teaching, even that of Buddha. After reaching China, he sat in front of the wall staring at it in silence for seven years purging his consciousness of acquired and innate fabrications. It is said that he cut his eyelids lest he would lose concentration by drowsiness. He was the originator of Chan (Sans. Dayana) school of Buddhism which migrated to Japan as Zen school.

This little essay on silence is inadequate to cover entire epistemology on the beautiful concept. My own personal experience with

silence happened about thirty five years ago when I entered into a retreat in a Tibetan Buddhist monastery. We sat in meditation from 5 AM till 4PM in complete silence watching our breath. Breakfast and lunch were brought for us and dishes

were taken away by volunteers. In the beginning it was excruciatingly boring. Every 30 minutes, a gong would sound, and we would change from sitting to walking or lying down so that our knees would not be stiff. "This is sheer waste of time." "I will go crazy if I keep on doing it for two whole weeks." "Let me give the Lama some excuse to get out of this ordeal." But I was too stubborn to admit defeat and stayed in the retreat. Lama Jampa met me in evening and said with a knowing smile "Isn't it excruciatingly boring, Dr.Purohit?" "Yes it was". Next day the same thing happened. "Still boring?" asked Lama and I nodded yes. But towards the end of the third day, something new happened. There was a palpable flooding of peace throughout my body and mind, which was quite pleasant. No more chatter. Not even any questions. Everything seems to be alright. Lama Jampa was smiling and said "Feels great, isn't it?"

And I gratefully acknowledged it. But he added, "Do not think that this is the final outcome of meditation. If you remain at this level, you are denying yourself from deeper experiences which you have never experienced before."....

But one does not have to engage in formal meditation to enjoy the benefit of practicing silence. Remember Buddha's own words,"....., rapture and pleasure born of concentration, unification of awareness free from directed thought and evaluation-internal assurance". Key instruction is watching something silently "free from directed thought". No judgement. No evaluation. And then the full glory of silence

will pervade you. Recently a friend asked me how I practice silence. This is what I do. During nights I sit in my balcony overlooking Lake Ontario watching with complete silence vast expanse of sky beyond the horizon. Sometimes there is a moon and its reflection on the lake. Sometimes moon plays hide and seek with clouds. The other favourites are sunsets. Whole sky becomes a large canvass for the nature to paint. Every day it is a different painting. Then I feel a touch of peace and rapture I experienced in the monastery thirty five years ago. So I am enclosing herewith a poem about my love affair with silence I wrote some time ago. I hope you will enjoy.

To Silence With Love

***Softly the golden sun descends
behind the distant hill
Smudges of clouds turn red to pink
to dark in the autumn sky
Blushing maple leaves fall gently
Undulating caressed by the silky breeze***

***Birds have returned to the
comfort of their nests
Only a lost crane flying
across the moon
Boatmen have returned***

***home with their catch
Boats tethered on the
bank gently rolling in the lake***

***Like a mother after dinner done
Dishes washed and laundry made
Kisses the baby good night in the crib
Covers the baby gently in silence***

***Night descends slowly on earth
under the starry sky
Silently covers it with
a dark velvet blanket
Caressing with love,
hovering over it
To watch her beloved
go to sleep***

***God, you must be a woman
Such grace, such love,
such mystery and magic
So soothing, so wonderfully good
But why no words, just silence?***

***Hush, my love, She said
If you cannot understand my silence
How can you understand my words ?***

I am silence among all secrets.
Bhagwat Gita, 10.3



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mobile: 770.232.7447 | 404.260.1673 | fax: 404.260.1773 | arun_misra@glic.com

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“The Road Not Taken” - In the Journey of Life

Dharitri Misra

Prologue

I came to the USA alone in 1967, a newly married naïve young woman with an MSc. degree from Ravenshaw college, Cuttack, with the ambitious goal of pursuing a Ph. D. in Physics at the University of Maryland. My husband was supposed to join me a year later, with a study leave, so that he could earn a Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering and return to his old job at India’s Atomic Energy Commission – as a safeguard against being “*bekar*” with a foreign degree. (However, he resigned from his job and came the following semester, as it was difficult for an engineer to get open-ended study leave.)

In the following years, we traveled the bumpy path of the *unknown* with our equally clue-less fellow graduate students from different parts of India, without any prior knowledge of this foreign land called the United States, and without guides or trailblazers to show us the right way. Yet our mission was clear: “to complete our education and return to India right after!” Later on, in our journey in the USA, we were joined by others, especially by many Odia friends, who were also new here. We forged close friendships with them and provided one another the much needed emotional and physical support. However, even though we all shared many a common experience, each person also had their own measure of special circumstances, individual struggles, and personal approaches. The landscape, therefore, was not uniform or monotonous but was dotted with each person’s unique perspective – giving it beauty and making it interesting.

So, it is imperative that at the 50th (Golden) Jubilee celebration of OSA, I say a few words

about our own experiences of those yester years in this foreign land; our optimistic feelings that were interspersed with a sense of loss and desolation. I hope it would provide glimpses of our lives in those seemingly medieval days with no Internet, no Social Media, and no WhatsApp; when we could not *instantly* share with our friends and families even the moments of our greatest joy like births of our children, significant achievements in our careers, or the flowering of rose buds in our first little garden.

Our Early Life in the United States

Interestingly, life was not all that gloomy for us those days even though we missed India. This country and the environment were very different then; and most people in Maryland (as always) were quite liberal, welcoming and helpful toward foreigners. It was not difficult for us to integrate with the American society at large, without sacrificing our own culture or individuality. Most educated Americans kept their prejudices, if any, to themselves, and showed high respect for their Indian colleagues for their intelligence and dedication. In my experience, many Americans at that time carried negative impression about India, formed from the pictures conveyed by the British Raj, and aided by the mostly anti-Indian mainstream USA media. In spite of that, they were cordial to Indians here, and we tried to dispel their negative views to the best of our abilities.

There are many positive incidents of those days in my memory, which gave me the courage and determination to help navigate ourselves and our children in this country to

become good, responsible citizens. Bitter experiences, if any, were easily pushed back, which helped me not to be resentful and judgmental.

Our Student Life

Early student life was really difficult, both physically and financially, in addition to the constant worries of exams, grades, financial aid, Ph. D. qualifying etc. During the first semester I could not follow the accents of my professors and could not sleep at nights due to anxiety that if there would be one person getting C in their classes, it would be me! It would result in my losing the assistantship and end of my academic aspiration!

We had many nightmares in our student lives, especially after our daughter was born – which many young people these days would not be able to comprehend. Taking care of an infant and working as fulltime graduate assistant was not easy for any young parent. Dr. Spock's *Baby and Childcare* book was our only guide in dealing with her standard ailments. Baby-sitting, childcare, bottled food etc., taken for granted now, were psychologically detestable then; and relatively quite expensive. Moreover, one could not get any help from India due to government restrictions. That is why we applied for immigration, which was easy those days for science/ engineering degree holders, as the US Government had just increased such quota for India. No, it was not to settle in the USA, but for us to work outside legally, if need be, and help support the family since our assistantships were not guaranteed!

Afterwards, when we passed Ph. D. qualifying exams and started research, life followed an easier pattern. The university campus was quite peaceful. Life was uneventful, except for during the India-Pakistan war of 1971. We felt very patriotic then, and on behalf of our Indian Students' Association, enthusiastically joined fund raising efforts to support India!

Seeing the Beautiful Country

My husband is an outdoor person who liked to visit scenic places, go hiking, camping and picnicking. It suited him very well that in those student days we did not have money to fly, or stay in hotels, even the inexpensive ones. So, with our young daughter, we often went sightseeing and camping, occasionally with some friends, and spent the nights in our small, two-person tent. We visited Shenandoah Park, Smokey Mountains, and Thousand Islands; also, the Cadillac Mountains and Nova-Scotia, camping all the way and enjoying the beautiful landscapes with pebbled beaches, high mountains and deep blue lakes. (He also wanted to go to the West Coast, but I was not crazy for a month-long camping trip!)

Once, while camping in the Smokey Mountains, we went to see a waterfall four miles away - hiking up two miles on a steep, rocky trail. We were very tired after the difficult hike, so went to the nearby town for a comfortable dinner and returned to the campground after 9 pm. To our dismay, we found that our neighboring campers were so concerned about us not returning before dark that they had informed the ranger, organized a search party and were checking for us all around the campsite, especially because of wild bears. (We felt too embarrassed to tell them of our dinner trip to the nearby town!)

Professional Environment

I got my first job with General Electric Space Division to work at NASA in Greenbelt, Maryland, and wore sarees to office daily without hesitation. I did not want to spend a lot of money on formal western clothes, which were expensive; I never wore them as a graduate student; and thinking that I would not need them when we go back to India in

near future! I never felt discriminated or singled-out for it, though most people thought sarees were so beautiful! I even went to receive awards from General Electric as well as from NASA (and had group pictures taken), in my pretty sarees. Although discrimination was there in subtle forms, I was lucky enough to work with a very liberal group of professionals who were not only my mentors, but also evaluated me only on technical abilities.

However, my colleagues, and even my doctor, were always apprehensive of my driving a stick-shift car in my “flowing” sarees. I stopped wearing sarees later – as professional women’s attires became quite casual, and I felt too dressed-up in sarees.

Our Neighbors and the *Home Makers Club*

In the late 1970s, we lived in a small enclave of houses near the University of Maryland, where most men were professionals who worked at NASA, University of Maryland, FDA and so on. The wives mostly stayed at home, and had established a “Home Makers Club,” to keep abreast of a number of legal and political issues affecting women, while also discussing recipes and arranging family outings and entertainments. They met at least once every month. Even though I worked full-time, the ladies persuaded me to join the club as it would expose me to many useful things that I was not aware of – being from a foreign country. They helped me in many different ways to acquire practical skills and settle in the USA. Our neighbor volunteered to babysit our daughter after school, initially even refusing any payment. We received and happily accepted delicious Christmas treats from them, and joyfully celebrated both Christmas and Thanksgiving ourselves.

The *Odia* Identity

Language is a great uniter. When we came here,

there were very few Odia families in Maryland, so social interaction with Odias was somewhat limited. But starting from the early 1970’s, with the arrival of many new Odia families here, the scenario changed rapidly. Our friendships blossomed very fast, and we forged strong bonds in no time. We met often, and soon started to *feel at home*. Not surprisingly, we developed a conscious identity as “Odias,” rather than simply thinking ourselves as “Indians.”

The first, one-day OSA convention in Washington DC area was held in 1974 in a church only a block from our apartment, with little formal planning, but with great zeal and enthusiasm. Local families hosted out-of-town guests and food was cooked at our homes! Many of my friends took part in the impromptu cultural events; and my four-year old daughter cried because I was not amongst them to be honored with clapping!

There was a funny incident once: we met an Odia gentleman from another state who spoke to us only in English, saying that “being in the USA for 10 years, I cannot manage Odia anymore!”, and my husband replied: “But I have to speak in Odia; I have been in the USA for 20 years, but still cannot manage English!”

Raising Children in Dual Culture

The most difficult part of being a parent was raising your children in a foreign country - teaching them the best of both cultures, making them fit-in properly while educating them about their ancestry. Our infrequent trips to Odisha and the visit of the grandparents to the USA somewhat helped – but unfortunately was not enough to enforce an Odia identity. We never enforced things one way or another, did not try to impose undue constraints, but tried to provide good role models. By mid 1980s, like most of our

contemporaries, we had made the definitive decision to stay in the USA permanently. First: we got used to the professional environment, work ethics, efficiency and general honesty of the people here, and more importantly: we were not sure how it would affect our school-age children.

Epilogue

Half a century has passed since I landed, all alone, at the Kennedy Airport in New York, and somehow managed to take a bus to the LaGuardia Airport and catch my flight to Washington D.C. For over 20 years, I did not take US citizenship, thinking that would make it easier to go back to India - when the time comes. Odisha is still the dearest place for me on earth; I always feel the power of poet Gangadhar Meher's emotive lines:

ମାତୃଭୂମି ମାତୃଭାଷାର ମମତା ଯା ହୃଦେ ଜନନି ନାହିଁ,
ତାକୁ ଯଦି ଜ୍ଞାନଗଣରେ ଗଣିବା, ଅଜ୍ଞାନ ରହିବେ କାହିଁ ।

We decided to stay here after some contemplation, believing that it was the better choice; yet occasionally I wonder if we made the right decision! What would have happened otherwise? Would we have been happier, felt more connected; could we have fitted in properly in India, since we seem "frozen in time" compared to people there? Would our children have stayed in India, or would they have come back to the USA – to *their* motherland? And,

above all, would life have been more comfortable for us in India at this stage, had we not come here in the first place?

When such questions and misgivings overwhelm me, I turn to Robert Frost's famous poem "The Road Not taken," which so beautifully allegorizes our thoughts and dilemmas, doubts and acceptances! This poem (first published in 1916) reflects the poet's deliberation when he comes across two diverging roads, explores the one that looks less traveled, thinking wishfully that maybe he would come back to the other one later to see where it leads. But he also doubts that in reality, if that day would ever arrive!

*Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.
So, in conclusion the poet says:
I shall be telling this with a sigh,
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.*

I feel comforted by the poem, knowing that when you are at a crossroad, choose a path that seems right to you, and don't look back. There is no assurance that one path is better than the other. The path you ultimately take, makes you what you are!



Social Media: The Digital Cage

Anshu Roy Patra



Social Media is an invention of the late 2000's. Many have embraced it and feel it has added much value to their lives. However, as it increases its impact researchers aren't so sure anymore. Social Media has led to cases of severe depression in teens and adults. A study done a few years ago from Swansea University found that people experienced the psychological symptoms of withdrawal when they stopped using internet (this went for all internet use, not just social media.) Many road accidents are caused because of a person is distracted by social media. One out of every four car accidents in the United States is caused by texting and driving. Social media also creates grounds for criminal activities including identity theft or catfishing. According to Gale Encyclopedia, social media has an upside; however, which is often overshadowed by its negative impacts. Social Media is negatively affecting our society because it often leads to mental health issues; it can lead to driving accidents, and it has created scope for criminal activities.

In 2017, Forbes published an article describing how social media affects mental health. Social Media has been shown to worsen the mental health by inducing envy, increasing loneliness, and many other negative feelings. The American Academy of Pediatrics has warned about the potential for negative effects of social media in young kids and teens, including cyber-bullying and "Facebook depression." When teens go on social media they are exposed to fake bragging from other teens about their accomplishments, possessions or other good aspects of their life. Many times, this makes young teens feel depressed and envious. However, studies have confirmed that

social media can make people happy and distracted for short times so people tend to undergo a kind of withdrawal when they stop, as found in the aforementioned study from Swansea University ("6 Ways Social Media Affects Our Mental Health".) Withdrawal often leads to loneliness which can make a person feel depressed. When they feel depressed, they go back to social media to make them feel better. A bit like a new 'high', much like a drug; however, going back to social media only makes them feel worse. One study, a few years ago, found that Facebook use was linked to both less moment-to-moment happiness and less life satisfaction. The more people used Facebook per day, the more these two variables dropped off. Authors of this paper suggest that this might have to do with the fact that Facebook conjures up a perception of social isolation, in a way that other solitary activities don't. The authors write, "On the surface, Facebook provides an invaluable resource for fulfilling such needs by allowing people to instantly connect." Instead of enhancing well-being, as frequent interactions with supportive 'offline' social networks do, the current research demonstrates that interacting with Facebook may produce the opposite result for young adults—it may undermine it. Another troubling area of concern is the dangerous practice of cyberbullying. Teens often have low self-esteem, and acts such as cyberbullying only worsen these emotions. All ages can be affected by social media. Social Media can make people *feel* socially isolated (even though they may not actually be) by the comparison factor (Facebook.) The comparison factor in social media leads to

jealousy—most people will admit that seeing other people's tropical vacations and perfectly behaved kids is envy-inducing. People in general are affected by what is online. It seems positive to make new friends and sustain old ones, but studies have proved that virtual friends are not the same as real friends. Spending time with virtual friends doesn't have the same therapeutic effect as spending time with real ones.

Criminal activity is becoming more common as more of the world logs on. Some may argue that it connects people from all over the world. You can meet new friends through social media apps. Reconnecting with long-lost friends or meeting new people can happen on social media. I can see why this seems like a positive impact; however, crimes such as catfishing, identity theft, etc. occur on social media platforms. In 2017, Facebook had an estimated two percent of its active monthly users constituted of fake accounts and ten percent of its active monthly users were duplicate accounts or an account that a person used in addition to his or her primary account. That same year, Twitter reported that 5 to 8.5 percent of its active accounts were fake; though a study from the University of Southern California and Indiana University determined that up to 15 percent of Twitter accounts were fake.

These fake accounts could be bases for illegal activity and influences like what occurred before the 2016 elections.

One out of every four car accidents in the United States is caused by texting and driving. This can lead to injuries even death. The National Safety Council (NSC) reports that social media use while driving leads to 1.6 million crashes each year. Over 390,000 crashes result in injuries each year. This is a high number that needs to be lowered. People are put in danger due to the distracted driving every day. In daylight hours, approximately 4 million drivers are using cell phones. Cell phone usage while driving leads to them becoming unfocused. While they are

unfocused a number of different things can happen that they are not aware of. This makes them a danger to themselves and others. Distracted driving creates dangerous conditions and puts pedestrians and other drivers in harm's way.

All this is not to say that social media is evil; however it needs to be used with extreme caution. Social Media has many outlets - Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, etc. All these sites have their good sides but nothing is completely good about it. Social Media should be used in moderation, as too much of it can hurt. People of all ages can be affected by what is online; whether it is good or bad. Needless to say, caution should be practiced when using social media.

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13728 Valley Oak Circle
Rockville, MD-20850

**Marionettes
and Master Manipulator:**
Balaram Das's *Lakhmi Puran* versus
Sabyasachi Mohapatra's *Jai Jagannath*
Suchitra G. Das



Being able to manipulate art to entertain, to reform, or to teach is an art that storytellers indulge in. Interpretation of literary classics has always been a fascinating adventure for critics, translators and movie makers. The success of a story depends upon its enduring quality, where it can be viewed from multiple perspectives and yet hold its own. Film is one such genre that takes its audience from the beauty of word to awe-inspiring cinematography. The acoustic, cinematic, and melodramatic components, all converge to orchestrate an unforgettable visual experience. It is also a perspective from a third person's point of view – that of the movie director or the producer. The tone, the voice, and the projection of characters and incidences indicate a studied bias, or neutrality. Similarly, as a writer, I know what it means to narrate a story and hold the life of a character in my hands. The compulsion to narrate governs a storyteller's purpose. Balaram Das told a story; of Goddess Lakshmi in the *Lakhmi Puran*. Sabyasachi Mohapatra retold the same story on celluloid. What Balaram Das wrote in *Lakhmi Puran* and Mohapatra filmed in *Jai Jagannath* are a reader's minefield and a devotee's paradise, respectively. Writers and movie directors are master manipulators; characters are marionettes. I will substantiate my point with the example of Balaram Das's *Lakhmi Puran* and Mohapatra's *Jai Jagannath*, its interpretation on the big screen, and a comparative analysis.

Balaram Das's *Lakhmi Puran* and Mohapatra's *Jai Jagannath* narrate the story of Goddess Lakshmi, but Mohapatra departs from the story in his interpretation of Lakshmi's role in the story. Both send the message of equality and

egalitarianism. Both do so in strikingly paradoxical manners: one sows the first seeds of feminism, the other reinstates male hegemony surreptitiously wrapped in divinity. Therein lays the irony. An ancient story with a radical message is undermined so thoroughly in a 21st century movie. The titles unequivocally bear evidence of the creators' leanings. There is a point of single reference though, where both creators have stayed within their boundaries; Balaram Das, a 15th century Odia poet, within the confines of patriarchy and Mohapatra, a 21st century filmmaker, within the confines of box office profits and viewers' expectation. Then, of course, as a 21st century reader, I obviously have to have a say in this. My interpretation of the story is at a polar end: it should be treated more as a treatise on gender equality and less on how women should behave socially and acceptably.

First, let me start with a few words on the importance of the *Lakhmi Puran* in the Odia community. The *Lakhmi Puran* written by the late 15th century Odia poet, Balaram Das of the *Panchasakha* Age, is a sacred text for the people of Odisha, and is linked to one of the most important festivals of the community, *Manabasa Gurubar Osa* (roughly translated as *Festival of Thursday Harvest*.) It is dedicated to the worship of Goddess Lakshmi. The wellbeing of a family, in particular, and the society, in general, is at the heart of this auspicious celebration. *Lakhmi Puran* also doubles up as a guideline for the familial and personal duties of women. For four consecutive Thursdays, in

the month of Margashira, thousands of married Odia women, faithfully practice the rituals of worship to ensure the wellbeing of their family.

As an Odia, I grew up hearing the *Brata Katha* associated with the festival. I particularly remember my grandmother grinding rice into a liquid consistency.

She would then either paint, or splatter this rice paste on to the walls of the *dhinkisaali* (an area where an implement to pound rice is installed) with a brush made from threshed stalks of paddy, transforming mud plastered or mortar walls and doorways into pieces of art with floral and geometric designs. The entrance to the prayer room was led by a row of exquisitely drawn tiny feet and lotuses by hand that culminated in a beautifully decorated *jhoti ghara*. In the middle of it would be a decorated *mana* (bamboo basket of 4 measures) which was filled with freshly harvested paddy. After a lamp was lit and offerings of *poda pitha* (rice cake) was made, we would all listen to the *Lakhmi Puran*. It was a delightful story which would trigger uncontrollable bouts of suppressed giggling. The trials and tribulations of Lord Jagannath and his big brother Lord Balabhadra arising out of their unjust behavior towards Goddess Lakshmi, were the high points in the story. I felt that it served them right for being so oblique and close-minded. How much I loved Goddess Lakshmi! In the story she was a proud and strong-willed woman. Now, I realize that this story was one of the earliest voices of dissent against a discriminatory society.

A few months ago, I watched the movie, *Jai Jagannath* directed by Sabyasachi Mohapatra. As the title suggests, I thought the story would be about Lord Jagannath. I was surprised to see the movie was **actually the story of Lakshmi as narrated in the *Lakhmi Puran*** by Balaram Das. The protagonist of Mohapatra's film is Lord Jagannath, not Goddess Lakshmi. Interestingly, Lakshmi is portrayed in a different

light in the movie, a far cry from Balaram Das's fiery Lakshmi. And that, I feel is the PROBLEM. I didn't feel that the movie was narrated from a shifting point of view or perspective. It felt like an appropriation of the original text.

Balaram Das was a pioneer in questioning authority in a society steeped in prejudice and bigotry. The condition of women in the 15th century was deplorable as was the lower classes of caste ridden Hindu society. Therefore, *Lakhmi Puran* was a means of protest against a society riddled with gender and social inequality. In those days, such radical thoughts could not only be punishable by ostracizing, but also by death. The 15th century was a time when social discrimination and gender inequality was rife, but so was the acceptance of Lord Jagannath as a divinity of Equality. This emerging trend walked a fine line between carefully structured ancient traditions and surreptitious whispers of social discontent. The precariousness of prevailing social norms and beliefs forced Balaram Das to be cautious. Therefore, within the confines of social acceptability, he makes a case for women and their basic right to freedom. His heroines, Lakshmi and Shriya, represent the highest and lowest of positions of women, respectively, in a patriarchal society. The setting is in Puri. Goddess Lakshmi resides in the Sri Mandir along with her husband, Lord Jagannath and his elder brother, Sri Balabhadra. Shriya is a *chandaluni* (low caste woman.) Even though Lakshmi is a divinity, she doesn't have her personal space or freedom. Shriya doesn't have the right to dream of a better life because of her lowly birth, but she is bold enough to try. Society prohibits such aspirations. Both women are prisoners of their society and customs.

The purpose of the story, as narrated by Sage Parashara to Sage Narada, is to extol the

virtues of observing *Manabasa Gurubar Osa*. The story begins with Goddess Lakshmi, making preparations to take her annual trip to see what her devotees are up to during the cold winter months of *Margashira*. After finishing her household duties, she sets out roaming the lanes and by-lanes of cities, towns and villages. She is pleased to see many households freshly cleaned and prepared for her arrival. She avoids homes that are in disarray. Just about to exit one village, she spots a small hut on its outskirts. It belonged to a woman of low caste. Even though it was in the early hours before dawn, the walls of the mud hut lit up with *jhoti*. She enters and steps on the pristine footprints and lotuses leading up to the entrance of the hut. An image of herself was covered with red lotuses surrounded by beautiful designs on the floor.

A young woman was prostrated in front a *mana*. Pleased with such devotion, she merges into the image and blesses Shriya with wealth and children. Upon her return to the Sri Mandir, she is surprised to find the doors closed and her entry blocked. She is aghast to learn that her husband has thrown her out of their home at the behest of his elder brother, who found it to be offensive that she should visit the home of a low caste. Offended and outraged at this injustice, Lakshmi curses the brothers to suffer for twelve years: they would neither have food, clothing nor shelter until they repent their actions towards her and change their attitudes. The story follows the brothers experiencing great difficulty in surviving day to day life. It ends with the starving brothers, eating food cooked (unknown to them) by Lakshmi. Lord Jagannath realizes that a home is empty without a woman and promises to fulfill all her demands and treat everyone with equality. That is why, even today at the Sri Mandir, in Ananda Bazaar, everyone irrespective of caste, class or community can eat together.

Jai Jagannath, the movie, starts with Shriya, a *chandaluni*, sweeping a

by-lane in the pilgrimage town, Puri. By mistake, she crosses the path of a learned pundit who abuses her and humiliates her publicly. From the Sri Mandir, Lord Jagannath and Goddess Lakshmi are pained at her plight. Lord Jagannath consults with Sage Narada on how to teach puny mortals to show respect to women. Let it be noted that in the *Lakhmi Puran*, Narada hears the story from Sage Parashara as he wonders what kind of festival both the upper and lower caste women of Puri are celebrating. As the movie proceeds, Lord Jagannath and Narada hatch a plan to bring about justice and equality in the land. What follows is a carefully orchestrated chain of events, *using* Lakshmi, to achieve this noble end. The foil to this high-end melodrama is the story of a merchant's wife who silently suffers mental and physical abuse by her husband. She observes the *osa* and her problems are resolved. It ends with the desperate divine brothers are eating from the hand of a low caste woman, who is actually Lakshmi. Pretending to realize their mistake, Lord Jagannath promises to fulfill all her wishes. But there's more: Lord Jagannath reveals to Lakshmi that it was all his *leela*, and she was the catalyst. In one master stroke, Mohapatra has undermined the power that Balaram Das had vested Lakshmi with in the *Lakhmi Puran*. Even a Goddess has been reduced to a puppet in the hands of Lord Jagannath. The cover credits states:

"Later through Narad it is revealed that Lord Jagannath had himself set up these series of events, to end casteism and discrimination on earth.

-

(*Jai Jagannath* DVD 2007)

The problem is, not many know of the *Lakhmi Puran*, but millions of people have viewed this movie, because it has been

dubbed in fifteen languages of India. The altered version will perhaps endear it to people who oppose gender equality. Mohapatra has managed to woo the masses by taming a revolutionary idea. On the contrary, in the *Lakhmi Puran*, Lakshmi is a woman in her own right. She defies authority and does as she thinks fit for her devotees. She is fierce, independent, and proud. She understands her own boundaries, but she will not let anyone toy with her freedom of thought and action. Lord Jagannath doesn't intrude with his omnipresence, as the movie suggests. Instead, Lord Jagannath is the recipient of Lakshmi's righteous wrath. Her only 'fault' was that she had blessed a devotee who was of a 'lowly' status. He submits to her anger because he has treated her with unfairness.

In conclusion, Balaram Das's *Lakhmi Puran* is a statement against patriarchy and bigotry. His intent was to bring to light the plight and practices of discrimination, against women and the marginalized in the society of his times. Mohapatra's tongue-in-cheek movie follows a similar path but takes away Lakshmi's credibility. Exercising one's creative license is one thing, but taking an age-old story and subverting its true meaning and intents borders on arrogance. *Lakhmi Puran* is exclusively about Lakshmi and her actions; it is not about what Lord Jagannath can or can't do. He was the recipient of the action not the doer. Either way, both Balaram Das and Mohapatra have pulled their strings at will in their respective narratives and have made their marionettes dance to their tunes.



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RATHA JATRA AT PARMA, OHIO

Dr. Debendra Kumar Das



Introduction

Ratha Jatra, also known as the Car or Chariot Festival is an ancient festival of Orissa. It is celebrated in a grand scale in the holy city of Puri, Odisha, from where it possibly originated centuries ago. With the strong faith and hard work of the Odia diaspora, this festival has already spread to other cities in India and abroad including the United States. This festival is generally celebrated in temples, which house Hindu deities; Sri Balabhadra (also known as Baladeva), Sri Jagannath and Srimati Subhadra. According to the Hindu calendar, this festival generally falls in June or July. In June 2018, I went to the Cleveland Clinic (CC) for my heart checkup. Although, it is a long way from my home in Alaska, I have been going to the CC since 2010 because of their superb level of heart treatment. As luck would have it, during my 2018 visit to the CC, the Ratha Jatra was taking place around the same time. The festival took place at the Greater Cleveland Shiva Vishnu (SV) Temple, located in Parma, Ohio, which is about 15 miles from the CC, where I was staying. I got the opportunity to attend the Ratha Jatra, which I had not seen for 22 years. It was a very pleasant experience for me. Therefore, I decided to share this experience with our readers.

The last time I had seen Ratha Jatra was in Puri in July 1996. And before that, I had observed Ratha Jatra in my hometown of Kendrapara around 1968, 50 years ago. So, one can imagine my excitement, when I got the opportunity to see the Ratha Jatra again, and that too in Cleveland, USA! Kendrapara has a big presence of Lord Baladevjiu and every year Ratha Jatra is celebrated there with a great pomp and ceremony. However, there they use only one chariot, whereas in Puri, they use three chariots

one for each deity. In the SV temple in Parma they also use one chariot.

About the Festival

Ratha Jatra is celebrated in two parts. In the first part, the deities are brought in the chariot to Sri Gundicha temple (also known as Mausima Mandira), where they were born. This part of the journey is usually called the Gundicha Jatra. The deities stay at the Gundicha Mandira for nine days. In the second part, they return to their original abode. The return part of the journey to their own temple is called the Bahuda Jatra. I attended the Bahuda Jatra in Puri in 1996 and also in Parma in 2018.

Grateful to Friends

Three friends helped me to attend this festival. They are: Dr. Birendra Jena, Dr. Santosh Misra and Dr. Vamshi Avadhanula. Drs. Jena and Dr. Misra are alumni of my alma mater, National Institute of Technology, Rourkela (NITR) and Dr. Avadhanula is my former MS and Ph.D. student from the University of Alaska. Dr. Jena and his wife Mrs. Kalyani Jena are long-time residents of Cortland, Ohio and have always visited me at the CC hotel on campus, whenever I come there for health checkups. Dr. Jena is a 1973 graduate of NITR, whom I knew closely during our student days. His father and my maternal uncle were friends and freedom fighters during the Indian independence movement and spent time closely at the Gunanidhi Bhavan in Cuttack, which was the center of abode for freedom fighters. Dr. Misra, the ex-Dean of Cleveland State

University, also a long-time resident of Stow, Ohio, was a close friend of my cousin brother, Madhu Sudan Das. They were roommates for about 3 years, while studying engineering at Rourkela at our alma mater and graduated in 1968. Although, Dr. Misra was four years senior to me, I remember meeting him with my cousin Madhu Sudan during the year 1967-68 at the hostel of our engineering college. Thereafter, in every visit to India, my cousin Madhu Sudan would always inquire “how is Santosh doing?”

Both Santosh Babu and Birendra Babu had suggested to me last year that, since my visit to CC coincides with the Ratha Jatra at the SV temple, I must plan to attend. Both of them were going to participate as they have been volunteering at this temple for many years. My former student, Dr. Avadhanula who works and lives near Akron, is ever obedient to his teachers and never misses to visit me at the CC hotel on campus, with his wife Ms. Roshini Chavali and son Nirgun during my earlier trips. Vamshi, a compassionate person, is always willing to help me. He assured me that he would come and pick me up from the hotel and take me to the SV temple. I am grateful to these three friends who made it possible for me to attend the festival, which was on a Sunday on June 10, 2018.

About the Temple

On that day, Vamshi and his family picked me up from the hotel on the campus of the CC and brought me to the temple around 11 am. On the first look, I was greatly impressed with the temple and its surroundings. The temple sits on a 22 acre site, filled with lush green trees. I was told that there are some wetlands also on this property. The temple originally started in 1985 in a closed restaurant rented as the temple space. Subsequently the present site was bought and the construction of the temple was completed at the present location in September 1989. Due to the surrounding

woods, the location is very peaceful, serene and soothing to the mind. This is a good place to relax outside the temple and immerse in quiet contemplation.

Inside the temple, there are separate sub-temples for different deities. I noticed sub-temples for Shiva and Vishnu. There is a sub-temple for Sri Baladev, Srimati Subhadra and Sri Jagannath, which was empty as the deities were in the Gundicha temple. But this sub-temple was being decorated for the arrival, Puja (worshipping) and reinstallation of the deities at the conclusion of the Bahuda Jatra. I recognized that there were also sub-temples of Goddess Laxmi, Goddess Durga and Lord Ganesha. There were also other deities inside this temple.

I was looking for the Gundicha (or Mausima) temple within the premises. Then I discovered a small building a few hundred yards away from the main temple. This small building was being used as the Gundicha temple. Inside that building, I noticed the three deities placed on the altar. In front of that building a wooden chariot was being decorated on which the deities will be carried to their main temple. The chariot had a square base of about, say 5 feet by 5 feet and an altar in the center. It was about 10 to 12 feet tall and was covered with colorful cloth. The chariot had a thick rope in the front for the devotees to pull and it rested on a series of wheels, which made the chariot move easily.

Meeting New Friends

On arrival, we were greeted by Birendra Babu and Mrs. Kalyani and Santosh Babu. I was also pleasantly surprised to see my Rourkela engineering college classmate, Dr. Mahesh Pati, who had come from Connecticut with his wife Mrs. Nibedita Pati. I used to visit

Mahesh and his family at his home in South Glastonbury, which was close to the house of my in-laws who lived in Wallingford, Connecticut. Mahesh introduced me to his brother in law, Dr. Surendra Dash, a senior physician and his sister, Mrs. Nandita Dash. They have been in Cleveland for a long time. I had heard several years ago from Dr. Kishore Kar, mechanical engineer from Michigan that Surendra Babu was his elder brother and both Kishore Babu and Mahesh Babu had done their graduate studies at the Case Western University; Dr. and Mrs. Surendra Dash lived near that campus.

Dr. Birendra Jena introduced me to Dr. Ajaya Mishra, a 1974 graduate of NITR. I also had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Surya Patnaik, a graduate of IIT, Bombay as I recall. Dr. Patnaik had held responsible position at NASA and Dr. Mishra was continuing with NASA at the Glenn Research Center. I met Dr. Dasarathi Ram, another senior physician of Cleveland area, whom I had met in prior Orissa Society of Americas annual conventions. So, attending this Ratha Jatra gave me an opportunity to get reconnected with former acquaintances. They were all volunteering for the Ratha Jatra. There were many volunteers performing various duties at the festival, and I did not want to interrupt them by asking questions. In addition to the Odia volunteers there were also many volunteers working in the temple who came from other parts of India.

The Festival

The festival started inside the Mausima temple around noon time. The devotees assembled inside this building to witness the religious rituals. The worshiping (Puja) with flowers, offerings, homas (small fire with ghee), chanting of Sanskrit verses were conducted by the temple priest. I observed Dr. Prasant Raj, a local physician had taken the leading role. He was dressed in a ceremonial robe and wore a turban. He explained to the devotees sitting in the audience the story of brothers Lord Baladeva,



Pulling of the chariot by devotees from the Gundicha temple to the main temple

Lord Jagannath and sister Devi Subhadra and the significance of Gundicha and Bahuda Jatra and the role of Goddess Laxmi in this festival.

When the Puja was over in Gundicha temple, the three deities were brought out and placed in the chariot. There were chanting by devotees, beating of drums, cymbals and blowing of conch shells. Then the chariot was pulled by the devotees amid excitement and joy, down a road gently sloping as shown in the attached photo. We reached the bottom of the slope ending in a parking lot to rest for a while. Temple snacks and fruit drinks were being served by volunteers, Dr. Surendra Dash, Dr. Dasarathi Ram and others in that parking lot. Then the chariot was turned around and it was pulled up the slope to the entrance of the main temple. During the pulling of the chariot, Dr. Birendra Jena and others were chanting prayers (Sankirtan); "Harekrishna Hareram", "Hari Bol" and "Jai Jagannath." We, the devotees who were pulling the chariot were repeating the prayers after them. We enjoyed the chariot pulling immensely and I noticed that Vamshi's son, Nirgun, who did this for the first time, was ecstatic with the experience. Some Americans also took part in the chariot pulling. Since the chariot was small, we

covered the distance quickly and arrived at the entrance to the main temple promptly. Again special rituals were performed at the main temple with the supervision and guidance of Dr. Prasant Raj and priests to move the deities out of the chariot to their altar in the main temple. After the deities were reinstalled on their altar, there was a final Puja followed by Pranam from all. Then we went downstairs to the dining hall of the main temple. A delicious vegetarian meal called Prasad was served.

My Thanks:

As an Odia I am proud that we have preserved our religious and spiritual culture, even in a far off land. My niece Ms. Lara Das with her husband Saroj Mohanty has been conducting Ratha Jatra, in a small temple in Kalamazoo,

Michigan for several years. I convey my heartfelt thanks to all the volunteers, who give their time unhesitatingly to make this festival celebrated outside of Odisha year after year. I have a granddaughter 9 years old, Supriya Shanti Das who has not seen this festival. Therefore, it is my dream to bring her to this festival to pull the chariot with her and tell her everything about Ratha Jatra someday.

Dr. Debendra Kumar Das, Professor of Mechanical Engineering, Emeritus & Past Chairperson, University of Alaska, Fairbanks, AK 99775, USA



Geeta Govinda Festival

Ipsita Satpathy

The purpose of classical art in India is to bring both performer and audience closer to the divine. Odissi, from our beloved state of Odisha, does that with its movement and music. It combines the traditions of temple worship and performance and brings out the best of spirituality, sculpture, and mythology. The *Geeta Govinda Festival* is a journey of rediscovering the eternal appeal of Jayadeva's lyrical epic *Sri GeetaGovinda*, the well-known Sanskrit classic composed in the twelfth century as a musical offering to Jagannatha, the presiding deity of *Srimandira* at *Srikshetra Puri*. This dedicated dance festival presents GeetaGovinda through fresh interpretations in music and dance. It offers the audience a complete aesthetic experience of *Jayadeva's Geetagovinda* through *sangeeta* in its holistic connotation of *geeta*, *vadya* and *nritya*.

The 12th century magnum opus of poet Sri Jayadeva Geeta Govinda, is a favorite of many dancers. The twenty-four ashtapadis, have been providing generations of rasikas a divine experience. It is not surprising that the poem rapidly spread around India soon after it was completed, reaching even Kerala where it is sung in the *Sopanam* style till date at the famous *Guruvaayur* temple of Krishna. In the South, it is sung as *Krishna Naama Sankirtana*. Poetry and paintings of Rajasthan and Gujrat are influenced by this masterpiece. Dance and music in Manipur embraces the Geeta Govinda's melodies. Several noted poet saints of the south like *Annamacharya* have acknowledged being influenced by this composition. Geeta Govinda was written in the early part of the 12th century by Poet *Sri Jayadeva*. Jayadeva was born in the village of Kendubilwa on the banks of the river Prachi, in Puri region. It is said that he became a Sanskrit scholar at a very early age. By divine interference he married Padmavati, the daughter

of a south Indian family. It is also said that there he wrote the Geeta Govinda. Although the dance form has moved to a secular stage, the eight-hundred-year-old text's popularity continues to be relevant in our times, in exploring the relationship between Krishna and Radha, the allegory of the human aspiration towards the Divine is understood. The 2019 festival held in March brought out the love, longing and lyricism in Sri Jayadeva's masterpiece of Bhakti Shringar.

The first of its kind in the United States, the Geeta Govinda festival attempts to showcase traditional and new choreography of the twenty-four songs of Geetagovinda and few of its slokas. The festival presents dance interpretation of the songs primarily in the solo format but duets and group items are also included. The Festival endeavors to popularize this masterpiece from Odisha to new audiences in the United States through discourse and presentation. Now in its 3rd year, The Geeta Govinda Festival of Dance and Music featuring traditional and new choreography of Sri Jayadeva's Geeta Govinda in the Chicago area has received a resounding reception. For the last few years, it has been a free annual event hosted by Utkalaa Center for Odissi Dance, based in the Chicago suburbs. Through creative collaboration with artists belonging to various classical dance and music disciplines, it has become a coveted event for artists as well as art lovers in the region. Musicologists and Scholars along with Artistic Directors of premier dance institutions in the Chicago area have participated at the event in the past years. *Odissi, Carnatic, and Hindustani music, ChhendaMelam, Sopanam music, Manipuri, Bharatanatyam, MohiniAttam,*

Kuchipudi, Kathak and Odissi dance have been presented in solo, duet and group formats showcasing the artistic expressions of various styles of dance and temple traditions from different regions in India. A highlight of the event are new choreographies presented by the artists and choreographers for an entirely new audience. The organizing team is composed of Artistic Directors of various dance institutions in the area and is a labor of love for the teachers. The rich imageries and emotions, interpreted in truly collaborative presentations have been the highlight of the festival.



Utkalaa Center for Odissi dance is a premier dance institution in the Chicago area dedicated to Odissi Classical dance under director Smt. Ipsita Satpathy. Utkalaa, the sole institution in the Chicago area dedicated to preservation, and propagation of the ancient art form of Odissi. Ipsita has over two decades of performance and teaching experience and is a well-known artist and supporter of Indian

Classical dance and allied arts in the area. She continuously strives for new and effective ways to communicate the beauty of Odissi to new and diverse audiences through vibrant and creative choreography. Her dedication to teaching this age-old tradition has earned her recognition including Master Artist Award from State of Illinois and other national and international recognitions as well as Kalashree award from the Odisha Society. She continues to volunteer her time to a career in teaching and performing Odissi while pursuing a career as an executive in corporate strategy.



Smt. Ipsita Satpathy lives in Naperville, IL with her husband Sushant Satpathy and two sons Rishi and Dev Satpathy.

Beautiful sites in Odisha

Tanisha Senapati



Orissa is state with natural beauty. It is home to exotic beaches along with significant shrines, amazing forts, vibrant ethnicity; and almost everything is colorful. A radiant flaunt of heritage and history is found in the monuments of Orissa like the Udayagiri and Khandagiri caves. Owing to varying landforms, Orissa possesses sparkling waterfalls and indeed carries a sprawling biodiversity. There is so much to see and do in Odisha, which is why we all can be proud to call it our home. Here are some of Odisha's best sites, temples and more.

Odisha is unique. With its people, geography, climate, food, music, dress, customs and traditions, it is a magically traditional and incredible state of India that comes alive with a rich cultural heritage. Our temples, our musical tradition and our paintings show how important and wonderful the Odisha culture is to be a part of.

Puri

Besides the renowned Jagannath Puri Temple, Puri is brimming with many other spectacular locations; like the beach. This is often referred to as the Golden Beach of Puri, because of the sparkling golden sand. There are several other religious places to visit in Puri like Shree Lokanath Temple, Bedi Hanuman Temple, Shree Gundicha Temple, Chakra Teertha Temple and Mausima Temple. Puri is one of the destinations of the most revered Char Dham Yatra.

Jagannath Temple

This temple of Lord Jagannath (Shree Krishna) dates back to 12th century and is among the most important temples of Odisha. The temple is popular in other parts of India too for its Ratha

Yatra festival. Jagannath Puri is an important Hindu pilgrimage center of India, mainly because of the fact that this temple happens to be one of the four destinations for Char Dham Yatra. Char Dham Yatra circuit is considered to have major significance in a Hindu's life. Other than Puri, Badrinath, Rameswaram, and Dwarka are also included in the holy circuit. It is located on the coast of the Bay of Bengal and is venerated by the followers of Vaishnavas. As per the legend, the King who made this temple had a vision in his dream of Lord Jagannath. In the dream, the Lord asked the king if could build a temple, and so the king did.

Sun Temple

Sun Temple of Konark (Odisha) is popular in India, owing to its striking design. This temple is dedicated to Lord Surya (Sun God) and has been listed as a World Heritage Site. That's not it; the temple has also been featured in the list of Seven Wonders of India. The temple was built in 13th century, by King Narsimhadeva I. The temple looks like a chariot, which is ornamented and is believed to belong to the Sun God. The entrance faces east. This was done so that the first rays of the sun would strike its main entrance. Some of the structures of the temple fell sometime around 1837, and a collection of the same has been put into Konark Archeological Museum.

Nandan Kanan Zoological Park

Covering about 990 acres of land, Nandankanan Zoological Park has expansive wildlife, with botanical garden and a lake too. Some part of Nandankanan Zoological Park

has been declared a sanctuary. The park is mainly known for its white-tigers, Asiatic lions and Indian Crocodiles. The zoo also has an aquarium which houses a variety of fresh-water fish. Nandankanan Zoological Park also promotes the idea of animal adoption and manages breeding programs for white tigers and crocodiles.

Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves

Carved by nature and men, Udayagiri and Khandagiri Caves are situated on two hills. About 35 caves were excavated from both the hills. Hathigumpha, Ganeshagumpha and Rani Ka Naur are known for their exceptionally brilliant engravings. The Ananta Cave has carved figures of elephants, athletes, women and geese. Besides the fine exhibition of craftsmanship, you can savor the beautiful view of the vicinity from the summit of Khandagiri Hill. Udatagiti and Khandagiri Caves are popular caves in Orissa.

Barabati Fort

Close to Barabati Stadium, Barabati Fort is datable to 14th century. Its moat, gate and earthen mound paint a picture of the past. It narrates the tale of Ganga Dynasty and overlooks the splendid view of the Mahanadi River. Originally it covered about 102 acres of land and used to be a nine-storied structure. This has lost its charm, however; but today it can be listed as a popular fort in Orissa.

Bhubaneswar

The capital of Orissa, Bhubaneswar has a rich

history datable to three thousand years back. The name of the city has been derived from the word Tribhuneswar (Lord Shiva), which literally means Lord of Three Worlds. Also regarded as The Temple City of India, Bhubaneswar merges with Puri and Konark to a venerated pilgrimage circuit creating The Golden Triangle of Orissa.

Waterfalls

Most of Orissa is covered with hills and plateaus and this makes it a state with beautiful waterfalls. Highest waterfall of Orissa is Barehipani Waterfall, which is 399 meters tall. This is a two-tiered waterfall located in Simlipal National Park. The area is peaceful and enchanting. Other popular waterfalls of Odisha are Putudi Falls, Khandadhar Falls and Harishankar Falls.

Tribal Villages

To experience the austerity of an urban township, visit the villages of Orissa. Orissa alone is home to about 62 types of tribes. Some of the most popular tribal villages for the tourists in Orissa are Rayagada and Onukadelli. Rayagada is known for its wall paintings and its market and Onukadelli is renowned for its markets.

Tanisha Senapati is a 12-year old, who lives with her parents, Rabindra and Bijayalaxmi Senapati at Lakeville, Minnesota. Her hobbies include swimming, math, ice-skating, and science.

Odisha and USA: A Few Contrasting Differences

Aditya Patnaik

Last December, we went to Odisha to meet our extended family. We had a wonderful time there and, also, we got to see many historic places and heritage sites such as Dhauli, Konark, and Puri. During the trip, I noticed quite a few differences between the USA and Odisha, which I thought of expressing here.

It was fascinating to observe that there were extraordinary differences in structures in the monuments. There were many originality and uniqueness in each of the monuments in Odisha, which are rare here in America. For example, when we went to the Puri temple, we saw beautiful artworks outside the Jagannath temple. Afterwards when we went to the Konark temple, the images carved on the temple were exceptionally beautiful, and the sun dial on the wheels were just amazing. But when I compared the carvings to those on the Puri temple, the images were so different from each other, though they were beautiful in their own way. In America, the historical carving and designs have been mostly derived from Roman art and architecture, or some contemporary architectures. There isn't as much originality in monument structures and designs compared to those in Odisha.

The population density is high in Odisha, so usually people have many friends. In our Bhubaneswar neighborhoods, we quickly became friends with many families. One good thing was I got to play cricket there, which I just love. From 4 pm to 6 pm, kids played outside together. Even though I haven't been to Odisha for a long time, I still made friends and played with all of them almost every day. In America, on the other hand, houses are so spread apart in a neighborhood that there aren't many people to play with. Also, for half of the year, it is too cold to play outside,

we are forced to stay indoors. Also, that makes it hard to meet new people and make friends with new neighbors. Finally, because US kids have so many video game consoles and electronics that they don't come outside to play.

Another big difference that I noticed in Odisha was the sides of roads were badly littered, unlike the clean sidewalks maintained in US. Also, it seemed, the roads weren't paved very well, whereas, very clearly paved roads in US help the traffic move safely and efficiently. I noticed in India that traffic laws weren't very well implemented and followed. For example, some people would just walk on roads with their animals, some other would just turn their vehicles wherever they wanted, and some would even drive on the wrong side of the road. I feel that if there were more police and stricter laws, the road littering and undisciplined traffic problems could be solved, and the roads could become cleaner and safer. Also, after seeing the difficult living conditions for some population in Odisha, I really want to do a project to help the poor and the needy kids. I am hoping that next time when I will go to Odisha, I can assist organizations or create a fundraiser myself to help the needy people.

All in all, Odisha and America have huge differences in culture, infrastructure and dynamics, which I really loved seeing and contrasting. I can't wait to go back to Odisha again!

Dayton, Ohio

Loving Oriya and Odisha

Sweta Dash



I really can't remember when I first started loving Oriya and Odisha. But I clearly remember the day I felt intense pain of separation from it. It was the day I left Odisha to come to Toronto, Canada for the first time in 1975. I was young and lived a completely protected life up to that time - always stayed in Odisha with my parents even when I went to college. This was a complete new experience for me. I was newly married. I left my family, my country and travelled 10,000 miles to be with my husband in a completely foreign land. There was a feeling of excitement, wonder and fear all mixed together within me. For the first time I realized how much I loved my parents, my family and home in Odisha. And how much I missed listening to familiar voices and sounds in Oriya. Feelings of separation helps us to realize what we truly value.

International telephone connections were not very good at that time. There were no Internet, no smart phones, WhatsApp, FaceTime or any other video calls. In fact we had to book an international person-to-person telephone call with an operator to connect to Odisha. Operator used to call us back after many hours, sometimes in the middle of the night whenever they could get the connection. Costs of those telephone calls were expensive - about \$30 per call. I remember the first time I was able to connect with my mother by telephone from Toronto; my heart was pounding with excitement. I was planning to say many things to her: all about the place, things I have seen and my new life. But the second I heard her voice calling my name from other end, tears came rolling down my eyes and in my broken choking voice all I could utter was "Maa". Then there was silence from both sides; none of us

could speak a word. We could only hear each other's soft sounds of cry. That silence spoke thousand words and connected us at a deeper level that we never experienced before.

She managed to ask how I am doing. I managed to say I am fine. Operator's voice came in reminding us that it was already 5 minutes and it was going to cost way more if we continued. With a mix of tears, smiles and contentment we said good-bye promising to write letters, which used to take 10 to 15 days to reach Odisha from Toronto. It also took that long for a letter to come back from Odisha. Generally if we asked something in a letter, we would get the answer in 20 to 30 days. Very far from the WhatsApp instant messages that we all are used to now. My mother being a writer and a poet used to write 25-page letters filled with expression of love of a mother for her daughter and detailed accounts of everything back home, which literally took me back to Odisha every time I read it. It also created a yearning to meet and connect with other Oriyas in Toronto to recreate feelings of home away from home.

By that time my husband was in Canada for 5 years already. Being a very bright student, he received scholarship to come to Canada for higher studies. By the time we got married, he had already finished his master's degree in systems design (computer studies) from the University of Waterloo, Canada, and was working for IBM. He bought a two-bed room condominium in Toronto and got the apartment all furnished before I came. He was already part of the Oriya community there and quite popular with friends with his singing capabilities and humorous jokes. We were invited to a welcome reception at Manaranjan

Babu and Mini Apa's house. It was truly a memorable day for me. Meeting all the Oriya families, wearing sari, talking in Oriya with so many people and eating sumptuous food from Mini Apa's cooking felt like I was back home in Odisha. That feeling of home, like back in Odisha, came even stronger when my husband organized the OSA convention in Canada for the first time. Our apartment was filled with Oriya families. They were all unknown to me before that weekend. But within 2 days, I felt, they were all part of my extended family.

It was decided that some of the cooking for convention will be done in our apartment. Fortunately, or unfortunately, I didn't know any cooking at that time. I was trying to learn cooking from a cookbook with occasional disastrous result. Visiting families from Detroit and Boston took over the kitchen. I just watched them in awe and amazement, having never seen such efficiency in cooking up to that time. There were 100 people gathered together for the convention. Meeting so many people from Odisha, seeing Odissi dance, watching the entire program created deep impression in me. I found the connection of a family in a distant land. Suddenly I felt, Toronto was no longer a foreign land; it was home.

The fondest memory of my childhood is listening to my mother's mellifluous voice reciting Oriya poetry. My mother loved poetry. She used to get inspired by seeing sun setting or clouds floating in the sky and start reciting poems from famous writers. Poetry was ever present in our house throughout our childhood, during breakfast or teatime or anytime. My father was a science major and didn't write poetry. But he would listen to my mother's recitation with intent interest with a soft admiring smile on his face. My mother loved writing poetry. To me it felt as if poetry flowed through her like a touch of spring, like the water in a brook, or like the first drop of rain. It was as if nature and life expressing themselves through her words.

She published her first poetry book at the age of 16 after her marriage. My father was her inner strength and was instrumental for her book publication. Loving Oriya poetry was natural for me. My mother also made sure that I learned to appreciate Oriya language by refusing to send me to an English medium school. That is why I was very surprised when she agreed to send me to Canada. My husband's knowledge and love of Oriya literature, in spite of his engineering background, truly impressed my mother. My husband also became the editor of OSA newsletter for many years. Being with Oriya families, attending OSA conventions, discussing Oriya literature recreated that special feeling of home even in Canada. I finished my master's degree in the University of Toronto. Then we moved to California, USA; I was pregnant with our first child. Again, I was coming to a new country and a new place. But the beauty of California filled my heart with a sense of awe and joy. With my husband by my side, I felt, the world was a wonderful place.

Love, care and friendships of the San Francisco Bay Area Oriya group instantly made me feel at home. My heart was filled with gratitude for the blessing of having these people in my life. They became part of our extended family. They became our two kids' brothers, sisters, Mamu. Maain, Mausai, Mause, Aja and Aae. We made sure our children would learn how to speak in Oriya. I also started and taught Oriya (at the Chinmaya Mission, Los Altos) for 3 years, teaching our kids basic reading and writing skills. Even though this is my personal story I know many Oriyas like me also went through similar experiences. Our extended Oriya family feeling has been the real strength of our community. They help us to stay connected to our roots and they have also become our strength and support over the years.

OSA convention has been the source of our connection to Odisha's art and culture. Every time I see these little girls all dressed up in Odissi outfit dancing meticulously on stage, my heart gets filled with joy. I feel admiration for their parents for their great dedication. When I see our second-generation kids performing Odissi dance (at a level I have never seen before even in Odisha,) I feel immense pride. At the convention in 1994, I saw SriGopal Mohanty's direction and production of famous Oriya story 'Chaa Maana Atha Guntha' written by the 19th century writer Fakir Mohan Senapati. It was truly an epic drama with superb acting. But what was most amazing to me was the dedication of actors to perform such a complex subject with true authenticity. I could see the true love and respect of Gopal Babu for this art form and literature, which enabled him to create something extraordinary. Then I heard little boys and girls singing Odissi, Champu and Chhanda for competition at the convention. I couldn't believe my ears. How can it be possible when it is so hard to hear them in

Odisha? Dedication of Lata Mishra made this impossible task possible. She had to face many challenges, but her love for this art form and faith won over all obstacles. These are only few examples. There are many more examples of such dedication to our culture.

We are completing 50 years of the OSA and will celebrate it in the July 4th weekend in Atlantic City. I feel the Oriya community and OSA conventions have contributed immensely to the lives of people like me. People who came to a distant foreign land with fear and apprehensions but found home away from home. I just wanted to express my heart-felt appreciation to all those people who worked tirelessly so that we can experience Odisha even in a foreign land. Your love for Oriya and Odisha made it possible.

Let us celebrate with gratitude & joy.

6789 Glenview Drive, San Jose, CA 95120



Cuttack *Bali Jatra*: The Grand Festival Becomes Grander

Annapurna Pandey



Growing up in Cuttack, I always have taken pride in being a *Cuttakia* and believed that I knew everything there was to know about the historic *Bali Jatra*, a festival so special to this city. As children, we looked forward to the annual *Jatra* all year long. This festival took place about two kilometers away from my parent's home where I spent my childhood and adolescence. I was deprived of the fun and festivities when I was away spending a few years at a premier university in Delhi. Then I came back to Cuttack to spend the rest of my adult life till the age 30. For the last several decades, I have been living abroad. After a long absence, when I visited *Bali Jatra* last year, I was taken by surprise. *Bali Jatra* is no longer just a celebration for the city of Cuttack, but it has also taken a Pan-Indian form, with a grander, more magnificent display of wealth and resources. It has become an extravaganza of art, culture, technology, and spread of Bollywood, making the festival more dramatic and colorful. It also showcases village artisans, especially women, and it offers a happy combination of traditional and modern India.

Bali Jatra is the biggest festival ever, a three-day-long celebration on the banks of Mahanadi, starting on *Kartika Purnima*, which marks the closure of the holiest month of the lunar year, *Kartika*. The landmark *Jatra* marks the beginning of winter. The full moon day of the *Kartika* month is observed as a remembrance of Odisha's glory of its maritime traditions. Today, the glory of ancient Odisha is symbolized as the festival of sail boats with lighted lamps. People sail *biotas* (boats) made out of banana leaf, and now, many new varieties made-up of plastic, papier-mâché and cardboard papers etc., in the sea, river or in

pond with flowers and lighted lamps.

In the ancient times, Odisha, then known as Utkal, was known for maritime trade. The *sadhabas* (maritime traders) used to sail off to distant Indonesian archipelagos (Java, Sumatra, Borneo and Bali) for trade and cultural exchange in *boitas*. They chose the *Kartika Purnima*, an auspicious day, for starting their onward voyages. Then the *sadhaba bohus* (wives and womenfolk of the *sadhabas*) gathered on the seashore to bid their husbands farewell, for safe and successful voyage. They used to sing "Aa-Ka-Ma-Bai", which is the abbreviation of the four lunar months (*Aa* for the month Aswina, *Ka* for *Kartika*, *Ma* for *Margasira* and *Bai* for *Baisakah*) and signifies that those months were safe for voyage. The river bank reverberated with the sounds from the *sankha* (conch), *ghanta* (bell), *hulahuli* (an auspicious sound made with rolling of tongue) and lights from *dipa* (lamp). The maritime trade by the *sadhabas* is now a memory. But the past tradition is still alive in a symbolic form as *Boita bandana utshava*. After an early morning bath on the *Kartika Purnima*, people of all ages gather to sail miniature replicas of *boitas* made of banana barks or *solo* (pith) in nearby rivers, ponds or water bodies. They fill the *boitas* with a little grain, beetle leaves, and nuts, which are symbolic of merchandise, and a tiny oil/ghee lamp as a nostalgic reminder of ancient tradition, uttering the limerick "Aa, Ka, Ma, Bai. Pana gua thoi. Pana gua tora. Masaka dharma mora," which literally means: dear mother river, come and accept my betel and

betel nut and bestow me with the good deeds of the auspicious Kartik month. Then, they are joined by the womenfolk, who break their *Kartika brata*, or fasting ritual. I had the pleasure of participating in this festival in 2017 and 2018 and reveled in the spectacular site when the pond in front of my house was illuminated with the lights from the tiny lamps in these miniature boats.

While growing up in Cuttack, my experience of the *boita bandana* ritual went like this: we would wake up at the crack of dawn, walk to the river, Mahanadi, to take a dip before dawn, offer betel nut on a betel leaf in a boat made up of plantain skin, and send it off in the water making a wish for the blessings of the river divine. We then make a beeline to have a *darsan* of Lord Siva at *Gadgadia Ghat*. By evening, we are ready to go to Bali Jatra, pushing ourselves through the crowd under the strict vigilance of an elder, buying all sorts of earthenware toys (plastic was non-existent), eating famous *thunka Puri* (a giant puff bread made up of white flour, straight coming out of hot oil) with *Chenna tarkari*, (paneer in a gravy), riding the merry-go-rounds and hand-drawn swings, and finally, ending the evening with pink cotton candy as we wait for hours to get a cycle-rickshaw to bring us home.

Today, the Jatra has physically expanded from the upper ground of Barabati Fort to the sandy banks of Mahanadi, stretching over about ten kilometers of the coast. The Jatra ground is marked by a massive gate crowning a *boita*, (the replica of a ship that the traders used to sail to trade in faraway places like Java, Sumatra, and surrounding islands). *Boita bandana* continues to be a symbolic worship of the sailboat, reminiscent of maritime trade, that once flourished in the state of Odisha. The traditional three-day-long Jatra has been extended to ten days of celebration—because it is virtually impossible to cover the entire Jatra

in one day. The festival stretches from the upper to lower grounds with thousands of stalls. The number of stalls has also increased, with a wider range of traditional household goods being sold, such as spices, dry fish, brooms, cups, garments, and textiles. These goods are not just produced in Odisha, but now are produced all over India. One can buy various types of modern gadgets, small or large, such as telephones, a wide variety of toys, bikes, motorbikes, and cars. Even innovative and cutting-edge gadgets are launched, while Ollywood films and television programs are also inaugurated on the Jatra ground.

The Bali Jatra festival has become a grand celebration which people from all over Odisha come to enjoy. The major attraction is the panoramic, open ground where the night never stops, and nobody sleeps under the star-studded sky. With better transportation facilities people from all over Odisha come together to celebrate Jatra and participate in the festival. Now travel between states has become much easier, so, it is common to see vendors from nearby states, such as West Bengal, and from farther states, like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Gujarat.

Food is a major attraction at the festival, and represents different parts of Odisha as well as of India. Innovative dishes are a big hit among the *Bali Jatra* visitors. *Thunka puri*, which was a popular food item when I was growing up, is still part of the *Jatra* menu, but added many novel dishes have been added as well. Traditional dishes, like *thunka puri*, *dahi bara-aloo dum* (fried lentil balls dipped in yogurt with mouthwatering potato curry) and *mudhi mutton* (puffed rice with mutton curry, a cuisine from the city of Baripada, Mayurbhanj) are still popular, but people are also keen on paying top prices to try new dishes. *Pineapple chicken*, *mushroom chili roti*, *bamboo chicken* (chicken roasted in a piece of bamboo stem on

the stove) and *fried ice cream* (cashew paste and cornflakes cooked with the ice-cream), are very popular. Families, and especially young people, come to Jatra to try trendy snack-food like kababs, pastries, noodles and fried ice-creams, which satisfy both vegetarian and non-vegetarian palettes.

Along with textile and all kinds of state-specialized garments, the Jatra is also famous for its exhibition of handicrafts from all over India. Dishes and cooking utensils, including pots and pans, are very popular to showcase and sell. Today, people are reverting to—historical preferences for earthen pots and pans, which promote better health.

The earthenware dolls from my time are no longer a major attraction, and are now have been replaced with more modern toys—which no more promote environmental awareness. Many women's self-help groups (SHGs) have produced beautiful toys, such as dolls, kites, pen-stands, photo-frames, and flower-pots, among other household necessities manufactured from used paper. Products like toys, brooms, mats, etc. are made of Sabai grass, which grows in the hill tracts of Kandhamal, has become another major attraction. Women from this region come to display their creations and are seen working on site to transform the Sabai grass to beautiful artifacts, turning unwanted waste to useful products.

Many artisans, specializing in household products, come from far and wide and join the festival to showcase their handicrafts and handlooms. The artisans get the rare opportunity to display their beautiful creations in –different stalls. This year, Tirumalla Saha, from Assam, has showcased vanity bags made with bamboo, a popular item at the fair. Odias find it very surprising that bamboo can produce beautiful creations, other than floor mats.

Cultural programs are also major attractions in

the *Bali Jatra*. The state sponsors Odissi, and several folk dances and types of music from every corner of Odisha. Every evening, cultural activities are packed with performances by well-known artists from the state, as well as across India. Even Indonesian dancers came to perform at the festival this year, as part of a state cultural exchange program.

This year, I learned that the *Jatra* is not only reflecting on the culture but also refracts our culture. For example, hijras are given a special spot to showcase their talent as well as their leadership. A stall, completely manned by the twelve *hijras*, also known as *Kinnars*, has been introduced since last year. They produce many beautiful materials, like incense sticks, scented soaps, and herbal products, among other things that have been attracting huge numbers of customers to their stall. Their goods range from twenty to two hundred Rupees, and their beautiful attire and positive spirit have made them showstoppers this year. Different nonprofit organizations (NGOs), socially responsive corporations, and Self Help Groups (SHG) are also spreading their message. This year, an awareness camps for Women's empowerment has been installed, educating people about gender sensitization, women's education, and economic empowerment. They are offering information how to report violence, sexual abuse, dowry and any sort of injustice against women,—and this is very popular among the visitors.

Cuttack, the ancient capital of Odisha, is known for its historical glory, fame, and rich cultural heritage. Since 1949, Bhubaneswar has become the new capital of the state and most administrative offices have moved there. Now,—all the state's developments are taking place in Bhubaneswar, leaving Cuttack deserted and forlorn. Even though it is

known for having the oldest medical university, major private hospitals have opened up in the capital city. There has been a paradigm shift between Cuttack and Bhubaneswar. In the Middle Ages, trade was quite common, and all the maritime trade started from the banks of Mahanadi river. Cuttack still has the Barabati Fort symbolizing the power and glory it once had. Since India's independence, the state's identity, prosperity and progress is tied to Bhubaneswar. It is not a surprise that since last year, Bhubaneswar also has started Bali Jatra, on the banks of the Kuakhai river, a branch of Mahanadi. Still, the extraordinary extravaganza of art, culture, and heritage demonstrated at the *Bali Jatra* defines the uniqueness of Cuttack and the state of Odisha. *Bali Jatra* has only become more dramatic and colorful with

today's use of technology and social media. Participating in -this year's *Jatra* reminded me of writer, artist and philosopher Makoto Fujiama's work *Culture Care*, in which he says that there has been a great effort in many societies that have endured many ruptures to restore and heal their culture to 'come back beautiful, vulnerable and whole in their broken places'. *Bali Jatra* celebrations connect different pieces of Odia past and showcases Odisha's achievement in the present.

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A Small Community's 15-Year Journey

Mamata Misra



It started in October 2004 around *Dasahara*, when Austin, Texas had only about 20 or so Odia families. Austin Hindu Temple (AHT) was starting out. One day, one of us, Tusar Swami, had a crazy dream that he shared in a simple email, quoted below:

“As most of you know the Austin Hindu Temple (AHT) has acquired 76 acre of land and is in the process of building a grand temple. How nice it will be if we, Odias can have our *Ista Devata* Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra in the main temple! Then we can have our Annual Ratha Jatra right here in Austin.”

A temple? How can we pull through something that big? The idea was mostly outside of the imagination, passion, or capacity of the small community. The response was lukewarm at best. But no one objected. After all, in matters of Gods, who is a man to object? Thus, an uncertain community embarked on an unclear journey through unknown territory, one milestone at a time, over a foggy mountain trail, driven by a one-man engine, as if powered by the magic of Sri Jagannath Himself. Tusar started his homework, reaching out to leaders associated with Jagannath temples in other cities, collecting relevant information, learning and sharing with the community. He wrote a proposal that got accepted by the AHT Board, adding a new reality to the dream. In 2005, the Austin Odia community participated in the groundbreaking ceremony, the Bhumi puja, of the land where the phase one construction of the temple would begin.

Slowly but surely things started moving. A multi-purpose community hall with a kitchen was completed in spring 2007, where small

ceremonial idols were installed for all the AHT deities including Sri Jagannath *parivar* idols brought from Puri. Community members visiting Odisha started procuring and bringing materials needed for puja and festivities, which in turn excited others. Not long before Deva Snana Purnima, the community met to decide what to do about Ratha Jatra in such a short time. By then, the community was no longer lukewarm or uncertain about this project; more and more people had jumped into the bandwagon, and the vehicle had grown more engines to add noise, and fun to the collective journey.

However small, the community did not lack the skills and enthusiasm needed to build a ratha from scratch in a few months. Engineers, carpenters, tailors, and painters among us took to work and a well-thought out, colorful, and functional ratha was ready to roll on time for the very first Austin Ratha Jatra, which has become an annual event, drawing hundreds of people from Austin and other cities. The ratha jatra is also used to showcase Odissi dances and honor one individual every year with the offer of the special *Chhera Pahnara* (sweeping) opportunity in front of the Lord.

In 2008, monthly Jagannatha *darpani abhisekas* started. These events fulfilled important religious, spiritual, cultural, and social desires and needs of the community. Young families kept coming with babies in arms, towing toddlers behind. A bhajan booklet with many traditional Odia bhajans was compiled which was put to use for group singing during the change of attire for Sri Jagannath. We also started researching, learning, and sharing articles about various

aspects of the Jagannath culture through the temple publications.

In 2010, Gajapati Maharaja of Puri visited Austin, and gave an educational presentation on the history and uniqueness of Sri Jagannath of Puri and encouraging the community to carry on the work with an attitude to serve, making authentic resources and expert advice from Puri a little more accessible. But always it seemed there was a magical aspect to it. Things needed often happened unexpectedly – beautiful garlands or attires appearing from kind strangers that fit perfectly as if they were made to order, answers to important questions from someone you meet accidentally, and so on.

In 2012, we reorganized our bhajans and created a new bhajan book that included pictures, Sanskrit compositions from Gita Govinda, and *suktas* and *mantras* chanted during the puja by the priests. We fondly named it 'Nirmalya'. The main temple construction was expected to be complete in 2013, where the permanent idols would be installed. This called for a whole new focus – raising funds and getting the large idols made in the traditional way. A *karigar* in Puri was selected after consultation with Gajapati Maharaja, and the process started with identification of an appropriate tree that would provide the wood (*daru*) needed. A *daru brahma homa* was done in Puri after the carving was completed. The *daru* images were covered with seven prescribed layers to complete the creation of the idols. *Beshas* needed for special occasions were also created for the new idols. In the beginning of 2013, everything was packed and boxed into 18 big trunks and shipped from Puri to Chennai to be placed in a container with all the other deities made in different parts of India and loaded into a ship bound for Houston, USA.

Now, we had to figure out how the *Ratna Vedi* was to be created. More research was needed and expert advice from Puri was sought. We learned that *saligrama* and precious metals along



with specific Yantras and other special items were to be embedded in the *vedi* just under the seats of the deities during *pratishtha*. Again Tusar went to work, organizing procurement of each special item, and getting them brought over. In spite of many obstacles, somehow magically, everything arrived just in time for the *prana pratishtha* of the new idols in the main temple - a six-day ceremony, performed in June 2013, with the help of numerous priests who had come from India. *Prana pratishtha* took place a little after 2 am by a few priests. As the auspicious moment arrived, all except the priests waited outside in the dark and to their joyful surprise, a light rain drizzled from the sky as if to bless the occasion.

The new idols being much bigger than the previous ones, the community remodeled the ratha, expanding the area for the 2013 Ratha Jatra. In 2014, we transliterated in Devanagari script the Odia book called *Daru Brahmanka Sankhipta Puja Paddhati*, approved by the Mukti Mandap of the Puri temple, and worked with the temple priests to implement the procedures in the monthly *abhisekas*. In 2015, the Naba Kalebara year, our two-year old deities did not need new bodies. But we installed a new statue of Garuda on a new Garuda *stambha*. Also, we got silver filigreed *mukutas* made in Odisha, which made visitors pause and stare in awe

during Naba Joubana Darshana. Many people said that they had never seen such beautiful ornaments. We also created *tahias* for use during Ratha jatra. That year, Swami Tejomayananda, the global head of Chinmaya Mission, visited the Temple on the day of Ratha Yatra, and during his discourse said, “If your natha is Jagannatha, you can never be anatha.”

Traditional ornamentation of the temple also started in 2015, making AHT look like an Indian temple with distinct architectural features found in South India. Thirteen *shilpis* from India have been sculpting traditional shapes and symbols inside and outside the temple buildings, turning the abodes of deities into authentic looking temples and works of art. AHT is designed by Padmasri Muthaiah Stapathi, who is the architect for many temples in the US, including the Nashville Ganesh Temple, HCCNA in Alabama, and Minneapolis Hindu Temple. We aspired to ornament Sri Jagannath sanctum so that it will remind us of the Kalinga style architecture found in temples in Odisha. Muthaiah ji understood our wish and drew in many features that the *shilpis* crafted skillfully. Some of these are listed below:

A sanctum with large visible *sankha*, *chakra*, *gada* and *padma*

The top domes and corner projections inspired by Kalinga style

Under the Amalaka Sila (top stone), a sculpture of flying Hanuman as present in the top part of the Jagannath temple in Puri

Kalinga style two-bodied-single-faced lions at the front corners of the Amalaka sila
Gajalakshmi in the top center

An ornamented backrest to give the appearance of a traditional *simhasana*

The Garuda *stambha* with Garuda’s eyes

meeting the feet of the deities allowing a traditional darshan from behind Garuda

Nilachakra on top with Patita Pabana Bana

We also improvised to add more features that the architect couldn’t provide:

A *pattachitra*-inspired laser engraving on a customized granite slab that covers the front and seat of the *simhasana*

Pattachitra cutouts of *dasa avatara* stitched and hung on top of the sanctum entrance.

Now the small community has grown at least four times. Many more people are participating in the activities and taking leadership roles. Last year the community built three beautiful palanquins to make it easier to carry the larger, heavier deities, without causing damage to their traditionally painted bodies.

In 2018, Gajapati Maharaja visited Austin again and had an open Q/A session with the temple community, which was very well attended. He encouraged everyone to go beyond the ritualistic part of the worship, which is just the beginning of one’s spiritual journey. In the same year, Paramahansa Prajnanananda, leader of Kriya Yoga International, visited the temple and gave a discourse on ‘Abheda Darshanam Jnanam’, the phrase that also appears on the logo of AHT, and reminds us to not lose sight of unity in diversity.

Over the years we drew inspiration from many other temples, especially from temples in Minneapolis, Omaha, and Nashville. We are grateful to them and numerous others, who sometimes came out of the woods to support this effort. In this 15 yearlong magical journey, a small and uncertain community came together rallying behind a wild dream, growing

stronger, more confident, and (we hope) kinder and humbler. As if pulled by the big round eyes of the weird shaped, adorable Sri Jagannath, slow transformations started happening to people at personal level on this journey – skeptic turning devotee, or pessimist becoming optimist. As we pause to admire this tangible and magnificent sight of this “God to be experienced” (*anubhabara thakura* as a song

says) it seems important to look back in gratitude for the magic that made it possible. The temple provides an important environment to gather, learn, explore, and discover. The journey never ends. It must never be taken for granted.

Austin, Texas



Was I Ever A Young Man?

Anadi Naik

In the 1960s Government was the only source of any meaningful employment in India. In villages everybody's livelihood depended on land, but a vast majority did not own any of it. Those who owned land also controlled the social and economic life of others. A similar situation in other countries such as Cuba and China had caused bloodbaths. When the British left India, they divided the country and because of the partition there were communal riots in many places. Leaders of a young democracy in India did not want another bloodbath for economic reasons but the Communists were pushing for it. As the saying goes: A hungry man is an angry man. In villages all over India there were many angry people who wanted a piece of land to make a living. In 1952 a well-known nonviolent activist named Vinoba Bhave tried to solve India's land problem in a nonviolent way. He asked landowners to contribute some of their land for their poor neighbors. And all over India, they did.

The change in landholding in India triggered many other changes as well. Those who received land had to change their lifestyle. For many, excessive drinking was a problem. Women could not do anything to change the behavior of their husbands or sons or brothers because they lacked education and had no way of earning a penny. India's community development programs were years away. It fell on the nonviolent activists to work among those villagers who received land. On the one hand the workers collected land from landowners. On the other hand, they worked among those who received land to become farmers. For twenty-five years from 1952 to 1977 this activity became a "movement" throughout India. Thousands of people from all

walks of life including many political bigwigs joined this movement. Having been a student at a Gandhian school in my village, I became attracted to this nonviolent movement and while still a teenager, I joined it.

In order to create a positive atmosphere for the collection of land, some of the senior activists of Odisha traveled in different parts of the state at different times. They were Gopabandhu Choudhury and Rama Devi, Acharya Harihar Das, Pandit Krupasindhu Hota, Ishwarlal Vyas and Gunanidhi Mohanty. After Gopabandhu Choudhury's death, for three years Acharya Harihar Das conducted a walk, *padayatra* throughout Odisha. I walked with him the entire period. The Acharya whom everybody called "Acharya mahasaya," started his life as a schoolteacher. In order not to work at a government school he taught at Pyarimohan Academy, a newly established high school at Cuttack. His friend and mentor Pandit Gopabandhu Das tapped him to start a new school at "Satyabadi" of Sakhigopal. He was helped by a group of highly educated young men – all cousins and relatives. By being the eldest among them, Harihar was called "Acharya" by the students, whereas other teachers were called "Pandit." All of the teachers of the School except Godibarish Mishra became Satyagrahis and endured long prison terms. Acharya mahasaya had been sent to prison many times and had served years behind bars. By the time I traveled with him, he had become a revered figure, a legend. His name was known to all those who had ever enrolled in fourth grade by reading his *Child's Easy First Grammar*, a textbook. Later on, I wrote a column about him for many weeks in *Kalinga*, a daily newspaper edited by

Manamohan Mishra. The articles were published as a book "Jane Jatri." Because of ill health, Acharya mahasaya's padayatra had to be terminated. He was taken to Puri and I was sent to Cuttack to work among students and intellectuals as well as to look after the Odia weekly "Sarvodaya"—the mouthpiece of the Bhoodan movement.

Pandit Krupasindhu Hota and Acharya Harihar Das were two towering figures in Odisha's public life. Both were former teachers. Pandit Hota was expelled from his teacher's position because he hugged a Dalit (then, untouchable) boy who had done very well on his exam. After this incidence, Pandit Gopabandhu Das called him to Sakhigopal, and Krupasindhu Hota became a part of the "Satybadi group." A powerful orator, he worked for India's freedom and was taken to jail repeatedly between 1921 and 1942. After the padayatra, whenever he had to travel outside Puri, he usually took me with him. From these two elderly men, I came to know about many historic personalities and incidents that one could not find in history books. To me, they represented history!

In the 1960s, India was soundly defeated by China. African countries were fighting for freedom. The civil rights movement in the US was following the Gandhian path. A war in Vietnam had just started and President Kennedy was killed. Students were protesting everywhere—France, USA, Pakistan and India—toppling powerful men like Charles de Gaulle and Ayyub Khan. At a personal level, in those days I used to wear dhoti and chaddar made of my own hand spun threads and was getting up at 4 am every day.

Concerned that a conflict between India and China was bad for humanity, a group of pacifists was trying to bring understanding between the two. So, the members of the group wanted to walk from Delhi to Beijing. The Chinese government denied them a visa to

travel. They had no choice but terminate their march at the India-China border. One of the participants, a Quaker named George Willoughby, decided to travel through some parts of India after the march was terminated. When he came to Odisha, I was drafted to travel with him as his translator.

Willoughby had refused to serve in the army during WW II for which he had gone to jail. Now he was active in helping to eliminate War altogether. A pacifist, he believed in nonviolent social change. When we were at Puri, with Nandini Satpathy's (a.k.a. kuni nani) request, I took Willoughby to the Panigrahi residence to attend her cousin Chandrika's wedding. He spoke at several villages and visited some centers of Gandhian activities. We spent 4 days together. Somehow, Willoughby was impressed by my translation skill. Before leaving Odisha, he suggested that I should experience nonviolent movements in the US. It sounded good but I did not take it seriously. A few months earlier, an Australian pacifist named Mrs. Ferguson also had suggested the same thing. Nothing came of it.

The situation in western Odisha's industrial towns - Rourkela, Jharsuguda, Raj Gangapur and Tensa – became tense because of the communal conflicts. A few of us went there to restore peace. Then I went to Barbil, a small town at the border of Odisha and Jharkhand. Because of the volatile situation there I chose to stay at Barbil among mine workers - a complex mixture of Christians, Muslims, Tribal folks and lower caste Hindus. A few months into my stay there, I got a letter of invitation from Pendle Hill, a Quaker institution in the US, to study there. It was 1965 right after the India-Pakistan war.

In those days passport office was in Calcutta. At Barbil, there was no one who could give me guidance on how to apply for a passport. Pendle Hill was like Santi Niketan at the time

of Tagore, an institution of learning but not a college or a university. Indian bureaucrats had hard time in issuing me a passport. How I reached Pendle Hill is another story.

During my two years, I met a few interesting people, whose life stories tell us of a very different America. One of them was Wilmer Young, a grandfatherly figure. During the First World War he refused to join the armed forces because of his belief in nonviolence. He served time for his conviction. At that time, he was coordinating peace activities and organizing protests against the Vietnam War. When you read about nonviolent movements in America his name always comes up.

Norman Thomas was another. In some ways he had molded the modern history of the United States of America. By the time I met him, he had lost his sight and looked weak and elderly. He was a socialist, who had contested four elections against Franklin Delano Roosevelt and lost each of them. He was proud that the programs he stood for such as minimum wage, social security, worker's pension, were eventually incorporated in FDR's New Deal. Thomas also helped Leon Trotsky to escape Stalin's Russia and sheltered him in Mexico at his friend Salvatore Dale's villa. He was the originator of the labor movement in the US.

Byard Rustin, a Quaker, was another figure I met. A black man, grandson of a woman who used to be a slave, he had refused to bear arms during World War II and now stood against the war in Vietnam. He was a great organizer. The Civil Rights March in Washington where Martin Luther King Jr. made his famous "I have a dream" speech in 1963 was the result of his idea and organizing skill. In 1959, he visited India along with King and a group of civil rights activists. Rustin once told me that for him "non-attachment" was Gandhi's greatest teaching.

Meeting Horace Alexander was a unique

experience for me. He knew both Gandhiji and Lord Mountbatten. He was a friend to the Nehru family. During the partition he lived in Kolkata and saw firsthand the ruination of the city. He had also interacted with Sayad Surawardi, the provincial prime minister. During the Simla Conference, where conditions for Independence were carved, Horace Alexander was the conduit between the British and Indian negotiators. Both sides trusted him. He knew all the top Indian leaders of the time. When I met him, he was in his late 80s. He and Rebecca got married when he was 69. V.K.Krishnamenon, whom he called "Krishna" and "a very dear friend" was his best man at the wedding. He went to Odisha in 1932 to investigate how colonial government was pushing opium into villages so that he could report his findings to the British public. By listening to him I felt I was listening to history itself

Like the United States, India is a vast and diverse country. In those days both were not always on the same page. All the colonial powers and dictators were being supported by the US whereas India was supporting the movements against colonies and apartheid. Within Indian society everything was not honkey dory. Against a backdrop of many odds, Gandhians in India were trying to elevate their society to a different level. Solving the problem of land ownership was just one of many activities. And I was just one among many.

Experience tells me that no matter where we are or what we do, we become affected by the big events around the world that we may or may not see or feel. That is how, starting with a remote village in India, I ended up near Washington DC, the capital of USA. For me, as a twenty something filled with a sense of defiance to the brim, those days of 1960s were both alluring and challenging. Now I wonder: Was I ever a young man? – To quote William Wordsworth:

**"Bliss was in that dawn to be alive
But to be young was very Heaven."**

*He writes a weekly column for India this week
and a monthly commentary for The Frederick
News Post.*

Anadi Naik is a former president of OSA .



Are Odias Really Lazy Or

True Brahma Jnanis?

Prashanta Padhy

Many of us have heard the tale of an Odia NRI meeting a fisherman taking a nap in the afternoon breeze, while on a visit to Odisha. The NRI tries to convince the fisherman on why he should work hard, start a business, make money, employ others and expand his business, as seen in the Western world. Eventually, he would make a lot of money and then he could take his family to visit places while on vacation. The fisherman quietly states: "that is what I am doing, sir, and you are disturbing my vacation!"

This story has been stated many times and ridiculed often. As I grew older as a person, and my personal journey started from the world of known to the unknown, many ideas and understandings got squashed, replaced with newer understanding.

In *Chandogya Upanishad*, sage Uddalaka asks his son Svetaketu: "Do you know That, by knowing which, everything is known? Do you know That, by which the unheard becomes heard, the unknowable becomes knowable?" Svetaketu, who was proud of his educational qualifications, quickly realizes that he did not have an answer to the question asked by his father. As a brilliant student, he was intrigued by the question, that there exists such a knowledge which he never came across during his entire education. Additionally, Svetaketu recognizes that if there was such a knowledge by knowing which everything is known, that should be taught before anything else; so he admits that his education has no answer to the question. He humbly requests his father to teach him That knowledge. The father, as the Guru, narrates to his son the knowledge which is known as *Brahma Vidya* or *Atma Vidya*.

Whosoever knows this knowledge is called "Enlightened" or "*Brahma Jnani*."

The above paragraph sounds too mythical and ancient knowledge but it's quite simple. We say "I" in almost all our sentences ("I am X," "I did this," "I am a man," "I am the VP," etc.) As long as we are awake, we keep referring to the body as "I." When we go to deep sleep, "I" seems to vanish. When we wake up, "I" comes back again. In all our education, has anyone taught what this "I" is, which we constantly refer to? The understanding or the true knowledge of "I" is *Atma Vidya* or *Brahma Vidya*. If one knows "I," everything is known because the exterior universe of names and forms are all connected to "I." Without knowing "I," nothing is known because the knower is a myth.

Shankaracharya's final edict is: "*Brahma Satya Jagat Mithya; Jivo Brahmo Na Parah.*" The meaning is, this independent existence as an individual, perceiving separation while awake is NOT real; rather we are all ONE at the core of existence, appearing to be different. The perceiver of differences is an unreal entity, which when searched for, cannot be found as an entity. As long as there is identity, there is an "I" entity. Finding the real meaning of "I" is *Atma Vidya*.

In *Ashtavakra Gita*, the great Sage Ashtavakra tells Maharaj Janak:

*Vagmi prajna mahodyogam janam muka jadalasam
Karoti tattva bodho yam atas tyakto bubhuksu bhih*

Meaning: "This knowledge of the Truth makes one, who is eloquent, intelligent and highly active, dumb, inert and lazy respectively; therefore, this knowledge of the Truth is left off by those who want to enjoy the world. Later, Ashtavakra states: "Only the one who feels unhappy in the activity of even closing and opening of the eyelids, for that master idler alone happiness exists; for anybody other than

him, there is no happiness.”

These statements are impregnated with deep meaning of who we are, in true essence. Shankaracharya stated that even if one goes to all three *dhams* (Jyotirmath, Sringeri and Dwaraka), they must go to Puri to redeem the fruit of visiting all the dhams. Shankaracharya attributed the Mahavakya “Pragnam Brahma” (from Aitreya Upanishad in the Rig Veda) to Lord Jagannath.

Of the many Puranas, the Bhagabata Purana is considered as the greatest. The Bhagabata purana is considered to be the nectar (*Rasa Amrita*) of immortality that Sage Vyasa wrote at the end, on the advice of Sage Narada. Interestingly, it is only in Odisha, there is a “*Bhagabata Tungi*” in every village and a copy of the Bhagabata Purana (by Atibadi Jagannath Das) is typically found in everyone’s house. This is not so outside Odisha. Typically, in the olden days (occurs in some places even today,) the people of the village, irrespective of caste and creed, will assemble at the *tungi* (or temple) and a pundit will recite an “*adhyaya*” from the Bhagabata Purana. Typically, the pundit may explain in layman terms the meaning of the lines to the people assembled. Many of you may have seen this happening in your own home. This tradition of reading an *adhyaya* every day isn’t seen anywhere else in India, outside Odisha. Outside Odisha, there is a lot of logic-based discussion and discourses given based on Vedanta and similar texts. There are more intellectual discussions instead of Bhakti, which typically brings humility. It’s only in Odisha, this is a tradition in almost every village and in most homes.

Have you ever wondered why? Odisha has had the long tradition of this establishment in every village and household of Odisha. Today, this is probably slowly disappearing, as people are moving from villages to cities and pacing up their lifestyle to become modern. Odisha being

the state where Lord Jagannath’s temple is, it seems as though the people of Odisha may have been blessed with understanding the true meaning of this knowledge. Typically, in villages, if you ask someone how they are doing, the answer is: “*Jagannatha nka daya*,” implicitly indicating a level of humility and surrender to a higher power, instead of stating good or bad, as an individual.

In Chapter 15 of Bhagvad Gita, the Lord declares:

Iti guhyatam sastram idaamuktam mayanagha
Etadbuddhva buddhamansyat krtakrtyasca bharata

Meaning: “This most secret science (teaching) has been taught by Me, O sinless one; knowing this, a man becomes wise, and all his duties are accomplished, O Bharata.”

The more I travel in the villages of Odisha and speak to them, the stronger is my belief is that the people of Odisha behave more like the enlightened ones or *Brahma Jnanis*, who are supposed to be humble, have less desires in life, always happy and content with what they have, and living a simple life with an attitude of gratitude. Lord Krishna explains on how to recognize an enlightened one, by observing some of the traits and characteristics. The people of Odisha, blessed with this scripture that is described as the nectar of immortality, probably know the Truth that is to be known. Hence, they appear lazy and lethargic, but NOT in a worldly sense.

Happiness is the result when all desires are fulfilled or where there are no further desires to be fulfilled. There is no further desire for a person who is content with what he has. People in the cities are aggressive and ambitious, constantly searching to define success in terms of wealth, education and power. However, there is always someone who is ahead of them, and hence, any achievement is not good enough. Therefore, the rat race never ends. One who follows the path of “simple living; high thinking” does not live a restless life driven by desires. They are at peace with themselves and everything around them.

In the olden days of *Gurukul*, education system in India constituted of two branches of knowledge, which was considered as complete:

- Knowledge of the external world (*apara vidya*)
- Knowledge of the knower or "I" (*para vidya*.)

The two branches of knowledge are the wings of a bird to guide one to have a balanced and successful flight of life. Today's education system educates only about a single branch of knowledge – i.e. the knowledge of the external world but no education about the "knower" is available in the curriculum. One may be very successful in a certain aspect of life, unaware of who one really is. And, this is the missing piece.

Today, we enjoy the ultimate level of comfort and luxury in life compared to our forefathers,

, but are we happier than them? Are we able to sleep better than a simple villager? Are we able to make our lives more spiritual than a villager in Odisha? Do we have any time to have a spiritual discussion, with our family? Do we have time to read the nectar of immortality (Bhagabata) everyday?

This article is only an effort to kindle the deeper quest of life. The answer to the initial question is left to the reader to decide if Odias are really lazy people or are they really *Brahma Jnanis*, with a deeper understanding of the Truth.

This is a humble surrender to the great tradition, cultural heritage and deep introspecting people of Odisha. It is a great privilege to have been born in this land.



Can you adjust your biological age?

Arun Misra



Age might be just a number, but age-related numbers are important markers in personal finance, particularly in retirement. For example:

59½ is the age at which penalty-free withdrawals can be made from qualified retirement plans.

62 is when most Americans become eligible to receive reduced Social Security Benefits.

Sometime between 66 or 67, depending on your birthday, is your Full Retirement Age, when you can receive your full Social Security benefit.

In the year you turn 70½, you must commence with Required Minimum Distributions from qualified retirement plan accumulations.

These age requirements for retirement benefits, like the ones that determine your eligibility to vote or right to consume alcohol, are somewhat arbitrary. But because these age-based benchmarks exist, they often become default standards for retirement planning. However, because everyone is unique, retirement planning should also consider one's biological age as well.

Chronological vs Biological Age

Chronological age is simply how long someone has lived, measured in hours, days, months and years. **Biological age**, sometimes referred to as **physiological age**, is an assessment of your physical and mental function relative to your chronological age. A 65-year -old leading a healthy and active life may be physiologically similar to the average person who is 55

chronologically. Thus, we might say this healthy 65-year-old has biological age of 55.

There are any number of ways to measure biological age, from on-line self-assessments to comprehensive medical evaluations. Most biological age assessments are based on a combination of:

- physical condition (measurables like height, weight, blood pressure, vision, physical fitness)
- lifestyle (exercise and diet habits, stress levels, relationship status, i.e., single, married or divorced)
- heredity (the lifespans of others in the family tree, and the prevalence of specific diseases or illnesses)
- location (the climate, level of personal safety, and access to health services).

Impact on Personal Finance

None of these biological age measurements are as exact as chronological age. But your biological age could be the deciding factor in many retirement decisions. For example:

1. A biological age lower than chronological age projects to a longer life expectancy. This probability could change your retirement planning in several ways, such as:
 - Anticipating a longer life, you might need to save more. Or, with the expectation of good health, you might want to work longer.
 - A lifetime annuity could be attractive for retirement income, because there's a financial benefit for living beyond chronological life expectancy.

2. Conversely, a biological age that is higher than your chronological one might prompt other decisions.

-Taking Social Security at 62, rather than waiting until you reach Full Retirement Age.

-Selecting an aggressive spend-down schedule that increases your retirement income.

-Restructuring your life insurance plans to ensure a death benefit for a surviving spouse.

You Can Change Your Biological Age

Chronological age is immutable; the only way to change it is with a fake ID (which is both sketchy and illegal). On the other hand, most individuals can adjust their biological age through better lifestyle choices. It's all about taking care of your telomeres.

Telomeres are protective structures at the end of our DNA strands. As we age, our telomeres get shorter. When telomeres get too short, the DNA is no longer protected, and cell regeneration processes break down, leading to cancer and other chronic medical conditions.

Fortunately, we can preserve telomere length and reverse aging at the cellular level. Dr. John Day, a cardiologist and author of "The Longevity Plan," lists six actions that improve telomere health, and the degree to which these changes can adjust your biological age.

1. Managing stress saves up to 10 years of telomere decay.

A University of California at San Francisco study found that "Those who perceived they were under the most stress for the longest periods of time, prematurely aged their telomeres by about 10 years." Another study from the same researchers showed that meditation and relaxation techniques could reverse this premature aging.

2. Exercise can preserve 10 years of telomere

life. An English study of 2,401 twins found that regular exercising slowed telomere aging by about 10 years when compared to their non-exercising sibling.

3. A healthy diet can reverse telomere aging by 5 years.

Diets high in vegetables, fruits, fish, nuts, seeds, and legumes can protect our telomeres. Sugar, processed foods, and processed meats have the opposite effect.

4. Maintaining an ideal weight is worth 9 years.

Obesity is another cause of premature aging. Excess weight causes oxidative stress, or "rusting," which results in telomere shortening. Maintaining an ideal body weight can lengthen telomeres by 9 years.

5. Sleep at least 7 hours.

Sleep is recuperative. One study found that older people who slept at least seven hours each night had the telomeres of middle-aged people.

6. Maintain social connections. Social isolation is a strong predictor of heart disease and telomere shortening. Staying connected to friends and family slows the aging process.

Biological Age Is a Huge Planning Variable

Because it can't be quantified on a spreadsheet, biological age doesn't get much attention in retirement planning. But health and wealth are intertwined. Adjusting your biological age could dramatically impact every facet of retirement planning.

Particularly for those who haven't been able to accumulate adequate savings, lowering your biological age could play a key role in catching up, because it theoretically expands your window for working and saving. And in retirement, a lower biological age translates to a higher quality of life, for a longer time.

6000 East Andechs Summit, Johns Creek GA 30097

Seventy Years and Counting!

Part I

Dr. Balabhadra Mishra



The dollar was around three rupees and a few annas between 1947 and 1949. Three rupees and one anna, that was the exchange rate when I came to the United States. I look at the seventy rupees for a dollar and realize how much times have changed.

I was born in 1928 in Jemadeipur in Ganjam district, with the nearest towns being Purushottampur, Khalikot and Rambha. Taratarini temple, situated by the famous Rusikulya river was as far as we would go from home. I wonder how far I have come from home. Youngest of ten children, I was considered a brilliant student by my teachers. Born in 1928, to Sri. Gopal Krushna Bhatta Misra and Smt. Malati Bhatta Misra, I lost my father at a young age and was raised by my brother and mother. I matriculated in 1942 in British India. After completing my studies in Purushottampur, I moved to Paralakhemundi, graduating from the two-year Maharaja College in 1944. From 1944 to 1947, I studied Science with Chemistry honors at Ravenshaw College, graduating as best graduate for 1947. Following that, I went to the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore to get a masters degree, but mid-way through the program, I was accepted into the MS program at Columbia University, in New York City. I landed on US soil in 1948, with an ambition to succeed in pre-civil rights America. As far as I am aware, I was the second Odia to come to New York. [New York](#) was won by local [Republican Governor Thomas E. Dewey](#), who was running against incumbent [Democratic President Harry S. Truman](#), during the 1948 United States Presidential elections. I was fascinated by life in New York city and the many opportunities it provided. The city's imposing skyline and the opportunity to study

at Columbia Engineering reminded me of all that I had dreamed of. By then, I was married to Nalini.

I was named as Mayurbhanj Maharaj Gold Medalist and assured a seat in the prestigious Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, which only allotted two seats per state at that time. While all people I knew aimed to take the IAS exam, my dream was to go abroad. At the time everyone was going to United Kingdom for higher studies but I had my heart set on America. Mr. Rasa Bihari Patnaik, who was my senior at Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore and Dr. Prasad, Principal of Ravenshaw College, encouraged me to come to the United States for higher studies. Mr. Patnaik had come to the United States to get MS in Chemistry and I planned to do the same, with the ultimate goal of building a fertilizer factory in Odisha when I went back. In the 1950s, the Odisha government was considering such a project, and they sent me to the United States with a full scholarship. I took the initiative to communicate with Columbia University, Carnegie Mellon University, and MIT and was accepted into all the schools. I was the favorite student and mentee of Dr. Prasad, then Principal of Ravenshaw college; I received a recommendation for full scholarship by the Government of Odisha, to study abroad. He granted the scholarship to get a degree in Chemical Engineering at Columbia. Post Independent India and Odisha, in particular, were looking to build new industries at the time. During a short trip from Bangalore, I got married to Nalini, my dear wife.

Sri. Jagannath Padhi was my friend Madan Padhi's older brother. He knew

Nalini's father Mr. Ananta Mishra as a successful publisher in Cuttack and introduced the families. Ananta Mishra, who established and ran the Cuttack Students store, was a successful publisher, and was from a well-off family in Cuttack. I took the train to Bhimpur where I got married. Next morning, I went to Jamshedpur for a forty-five-day program at Tata Steel and then to the United States. Now it has been seventy years since we have been together.

I was deputed to return back to Odisha to help build a new Odisha. Once I completed the Master program, I toured within the US, looking for factories that built fertilizer equipment for six months. At that time Odisha Govt decided not to build a fertilizer factory. Seeing no prospect of return with a secure engagement, I requested Professor Bonilla (from Spain) at Columbia, head of Chemistry Dept, for advice and he asked me to stay back and complete my PhD. He asked me to complete some research for him and I stayed up to create a summary for him that would fund my PhD in Chemical Engineering. Once my PhD was completed, I worked for the Pittsburg Plate Glass company to study heat transfer through transparent materials like glass. Nalini joined me in the United States while I was working in the Plate Glass Company. We moved from the small private apartment we rented to housing provided by the University where our older son Bijoy was born. We took the Pullman from Buffalo to Los Angeles when we moved with one child, another on the way. At that time there were no Odia families that we knew of either in New York or in Los Angeles.

After completing my PhD in 1955, I received an offer from Aerojet General Corporation, where I worked from 1959 to 1973. After completion of PhD, I was engaged in experiments in mechanism of transfer of heat through transparent materials like glass. Wanted to join the rocket company. While at

Aerojet, Azusa, California, I got citizenship. While it was being done Russians launched Sputnik. Well, I wanted to join the Space program, that worked on manned lunar mission. You must be a citizen to join the program. I changed the student visa to a Resident Visa and become a US Citizen to go to California for a Rocket research company. The company had selected an oxidizer and was looking for a new rocket fuel option. My work at Aerojet led to selection of Unsymmetrical Dimethylhydrazine (UDMH) as the rocket fuel. At Aerojet, I worked in the classified lunar landing program. I developed rocket fuel for a successful lunar landing. In 1950, their research into the rubber binder had led to much larger engines and then to the development of the [Aerobee sounding rocket](#). Aerobee was the first US-designed rocket to reach space (albeit not orbit) and completed over 1,000 flights before it was retired in 1985. Aerojet designed and built a total of 1,182 engines for all four incarnations of the [Titan](#) rockets, which were used for civilian projects ranging from [Gemini's](#) manned flights to solar system explorations including [Viking](#), [Voyager](#), and [Cassini](#). The newly formed [US Air Force](#) used Aerojet as the primary supplier on a number of their [ICBM](#) projects, including the Titan and [Minuteman](#) missiles. A new plant was set up in Sacramento that took over most rocket construction, while the original Azusa offices returned primarily to research. One of Azusa's major projects was the development of the [infra-red](#) detectors for the [Defense Support Program](#) satellites, used to detect ICBM launches from space. The new research arm was formed as Aerojet Electro-Systems Corp. and a new umbrella organization oversaw the three major divisions, Aerojet General.

[President Kennedy's](#) challenge to place a man on the Moon by the end of the 1960s led to increased civilian work at Aerojet. Previously, they had repeatedly lost contract bids for large engines for the [Saturn](#) and [Nova](#) boosters,

being designed in the late 1950s, to their rival [Rocketdyne](#), but in the end were selected to develop and build the main engine for the [Apollo Command/Service Module](#). In 1962 they were also selected to design a new upper-stage engine to replace the cluster of five [J-2s](#) used on the Saturn second stage in the post-Apollo era, but work was ended sometime in late sixties after it became clear that the public's support for a massive space program was going down. After the success of the lunar landing, the scientific community in the space program started working on a manned mission to Mars using a nuclear rocket. There was significant criticism in the scientific community to put a nuclear rocket in earth's orbit, with heightened risk of nuclear contamination for people on earth in the case of a failure or accident. President Nixon cancelled the initiative.

At that time, in addition to nuclear work, the Argonne National laboratory had maintained a strong presence in basic research of physics and chemistry. I decided to move to Chicago to work as a scientist at the Argonne National Laboratory from 1973 to 1995, when I retired. During my tenure at Argonne, I developed components for the *Liquid Metal Fast Breeder Reactor* (LMFBR) program and developed a system to remove carcinogenic sodium from the breeder reactor. I published close to hundred papers that are a part of the Science and Technology credited references maintained by the US Department of Energy office. After a successful pilot study, I was in the process of productionizing the venture when the program was shut down due to the massive dangers posed by the Chernobyl nuclear power plant disaster in 1986 in the former Soviet Union. My groundbreaking work on "Feasibility of decontamination of LMFBR coolant by low-pressure distillation" was published in the Journal of American Nuclear Society, and my work presented at the 1978 winter meeting of the American Nuclear Society in Washington

DC, USA was recognized. I was listed in the Who's Who of Science and Technology, 1985

World events like the launch of the Sputnik convinced him to join the ambitious space program during the 60s. I worked on experiments with the end goal of sending a manned mission to the moon, working on developing liquid fuels for rocket launches. Another inspirational person was my supervisor at Aerojet, from Caltech, Dr. Kazuhiko Sato. I was invited by the United Nations to return to India and advise the fledgling Indian government on building a breeder reactor for the Indian Atomic Research Center. The issue was how to remove sodium isotopes from sodium coolant. I was selected to advise the Nuclear Reactor team at Kalpakkam on safe building of a sodium pump, Sodium Isotope 62 is highly carcinogenic.

Since my retirement, I have enjoyed my time reading scientific and trade magazines, stock trading and gardening.

I have been associated with the Odisha Society of the Americas in Chicago since the very beginning. I was perhaps the second Odia to come to the United States. I believe that the Odia Society was a significant achievement by the Odia community in the United States. I have attended the first Odia meeting in Chicago in 1981 and in Glassboro in 1984. During the early days of Odia society, there were very few Odia families in the United States and everyone knew everyone else. Odia families met at someone's home, had Odia guests whom they had never met, in their homes. Lifetime bonds between families initiated. Perhaps every older generation goes through this nostalgia. But times have changed. We have become a different generation as many new families have come to America and made it their home. We miss the OSA conventions of the early years, so full of life, our life. Then we were poorer, we stayed

in inexpensive college residences, cooked our meals together, and had a grand time creating an illusion of being back in Odisha, eating odia food, talking in Odia, and enjoying the organized and disorganized chaos. By 1960 there were about twenty Odias in the US and Canada. It was common practice during those days to go through a printed phone directory and look for Odia surnames and then call them when you visited a new city in the United States. Usually there is excitement and at the receiving end to hear another Odia voice, followed by a dinner invitation. Odias dispersed in small isolated pockets in the east and west, got to know each other and about each other. One by one, in city after city, the number of Odias in the US and Canada increased.

Work on this next generation of fast reactors—clean, resource-efficient, waste-reducing reactors—was halted by Congress in September 1994 as the laboratory's mission was redirected by the Department of Energy into the development of electrometallurgical technology for DOE spent fuel treatment, reactor and fuel cycle safety, and decontamination and decommissioning technology. By then, Argonne's original mission—to provide safe nuclear energy for civilian purposes—had been achieved.

Meanwhile, the laboratory was also helping to design the reactor for the world's first nuclear-powered submarine, the U.S.S. Nautilus, which steamed for more than 513,550 nautical miles (951,090 km). In 1982, the Integral Fast Reactor



concept — a revolutionary design that reprocessed its own fuel, reduced its atomic waste and withstood safety tests of the same failures that triggered the Chernobyl and Three Mile Island disasters. In 1994, however, the U.S. Congress terminated funding for the bulk of Argonne's nuclear programs.

¹ Argonne National Laboratory test facilities involved in the conduct of the national LMFBR research and development program. The next generation reactor, the fast breeder reactor was a major initiative in advanced reactor concepts. The design allowed creation of energy from waste—not only its own waste, but also that produced in commercial reactors, as well as plutonium from dismantled nuclear weapons. The passive safety characteristics of metal fueled liquid metal reactors (LMRs) were clearly demonstrated and confirmed in 1986 with the conclusion of the Experimental Breeder Reactor II landmark testing program. Other technical accomplishments included: development of metal fuels for LMRs capable of very high burnup—up to 20 percent; development of electro-metallurgical technology for possible applications to spent nuclear fuels, weapons plutonium, and LMR fuels; and performance of a series of safety-related transient reactor experiments which established the failure mechanisms, failure limits, and post-failure behavior of oxide and metal LMR fuels.

Seventy Years and Counting!

Part II

Nalini Mishra



Seventy years! I made it!! Seventy years together with a man whom I did not even see before I married him. As if waking from a dream, my reality dawns on me. I am unsure where seventy years have gone. I am a different person, made of steel and iron. When I came to America, women were also not as free as they wanted to believe. When most of my age group preferred to stay at home, I had a job. Living in this country has taught me to be self-reliant in many ways, which sometimes others fail to appreciate. I was determined to do something, and I knew the keys were in my hands. I realized that my determination that tried to keep our relationship through all these years. As I have travelled through life, I have experienced joys and sorrows and I am thankful for the life I have created in this country. No matter how we love and grow, unconditional love is what I give, that is the only thing that keeps me moving. Time has taught me to have faith on the Lord who has given me this life. I count my blessings, use my instincts and better understand myself. Marriages are indeed made in heaven, meant to be preserved on earth.

I was born in 1934, the eldest daughter of Sri. Ananta Mishra and Smt. Annapurna Mishra of Cuttack Student Store, a well-known publishing company in Cuttack. Being the eldest daughter out of ten children, I was used to being in charge of my siblings. I went to school till grade six after which I was home schooled by tutors in various subjects and took care of my siblings. I never saw my future husband before getting married. In those days it was not done. I was married in 1949 but only arrived in the United States in 1955/56 after Bali had completed his

PhD. It was a completely different world culturally and I was determined to make my mark. I learnt things on my own and tried to fit in. When I first arrived in America, I brought my Lakshmi statue that I got from my mother, packing it carefully with a small Jagannath photo in a new folded saree. She has stayed with me looking after me all these years. I remember our Thakura ghara where Bou was busy doing her daily rituals and I setup mine in the United States. I would wear sarees on campus in New York and later when we moved to California and immediately stood out in the crowd. People started referring to me as a model, which I eventually took as a compliment and pursued when I became a beautician and model.

I watched her putting flowers and sandal paste on the pictures, and I did the same. I don't want anything from God because he has given me everything. I spend hours on puja in morning, fasting on special occasions. But it is getting harder to do all that. I pray upon Durga Kali and Lakshmi for strength. I have volunteered at the Children's hospital, working with special needs infants and children for many years in Sacramento, California. I have held many jobs, always trying to help old people in hospital, library, and children day care. I worked over fifteen years in retail at Walmart, retiring after many years I have been active in fundraising events for the hospital children ward, beautician and hairdresser, restaurant hostess. I started home day care in Naperville, demos for food and cooking schools, flowers decorations, worked at Taco Bell, K-Mart for three to four years, at Moser Lumber Company doing accounts - Moser

owned half of Naperville, selling cosmetics and modelling in fashion and cosmetics retail - I have started a number of home-based businesses. I have worked as a fundraiser for many Charities and am very proud of my accomplishments. But my proudest so far have been my family, my son, four grandchildren and my great grandchildren.

When I celebrated my fiftieth anniversary, I wondered if by God's grace I will get to see sixty or even seventy anniversaries. It was a dream at that time. Today I walked into the store to get a card and the person at the counter was amazed at how many years we have been together. And now I am seventy years married and still counting. What an achievement to celebrate. When we came to Chicago area, Surya and Tiki Mishra, and Rajendra Supkar were two Odias who were in the area. Later Mr, Laxmidhar Jena came. Since then many more families have move to the area. It has become increasingly difficult to keep track, but it is always nice to connect with them at local events. Most people from those days are no longer here but new friends and people are always fun to engage with Odia



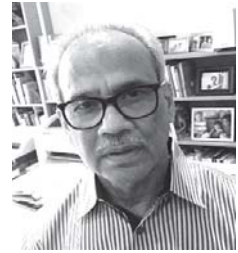
food, culture and music. We have enjoyed raising our family in Naperville, and spending most of our life here. Sometimes I get nostalgic for the life I had in California, but I have learnt to go to bed, grateful to Lord Jagannath for the good day that has passed. Marriages are indeed made in Heaven to be preserved on Earth.

Naperville, Illinois



Adi Guru Pankaj Charan Das Life and Times of an Iconoclast and Pioneer of Odissi Dance

Binod B. Nayak



Guru Pankaj Charan has been acclaimed as the “*baristha*” (the senior most) guru amongst all gurus of Odissi dance. He is also known as the *Adi* Guru (the First Guru), as well as, the “Father” of Odissi Dance.” In this short essay, we will briefly explore the life and times of this multifaceted individual, who was an iconoclast and pioneer, who along with many of his disciples, was instrumental in transforming Classical Odissi dance to Neoclassical Odissi.

To begin with, if one cares to find out the names of his disciples, one discovers that it runs like who’s who list of Odissi dance. He was the guru of several renowned Odissi gurus notably Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra, followed by Guru Mayadhar Rout, Guru Deba Prasad Das, Guru Bhagawan Sahoo, Guru Gangadhar Pradhan and Guru Durga Charan Ranabir. Many of his students were bestowed with Padma Shri and, Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra was bestowed with Padma Vibhushan in the year 2000. No wonder that he has been called the *Adi* Guru as well as the “Father” of Odissi dance. When it comes to renowned danseuses, Late Padma Shri Sanjukta Panigrahi, Yamini Krishnamurthy, Ritha Devi, Padma Shri Dr. Minati Das, Dr. Priyambada Mohanty-Hejmadi, Dr. Ratna Ray, Padma Shri Smt. Kumkum Mohanty, and Smt. Nandita Behera are his distinguished disciples.

Prologue: His Difficult Childhood

Guru Pankaj Charan Das was born on March 17, 1925 and passed away on June 11, 2003. (Although there are differences of opinion with regards to the exact date and year of his birth, and the exact date of his demise, the author

decided to use the dates and the years that appeared in the Wikipedia of April 2019.) His father Dharmacharan, a *Mardalia* (played *Mardala* – a type of Indian drums) passed away when his wife Kshetramani was expecting Pankaj Charan. After the death of his father, his mother decided to move to the house of Fakira Mahari and Srimati Ratnaprabha Mahari, his aunt, to escape hardship and poverty. It is here that at a tender age of eight, Pankaj Charan was exposed to the beauty and intricacies of temple dance and music of the *Maharis*. Pankaj Charan had sharp features and a beautiful voice. He could sing and act well. He also learned gymnastics, music and dance from traditional *akhadaagharas* (Pathar *Akhadaa*) of Puri under the guidance of Jagu Mohanty.

As a young adult, he learnt dance from his aunt Ratnaprabha, Guru Ranganath Dev Goswami and Guru Bhikhari Charan Dalei. While aunt Ratnaprabha taught him the *Mahari* style, gurus Ranganath Dev Goswami and Bhikhari Charan Dalei exposed him to *Rasa Leela* style of *abhinaya* and dance. Unbeknownst to him at his tender age perhaps he was already fusing two important styles of music and dance, i.e. that of *Mahari* and *Rasa Leela* styles.

As ill luck would have it, Pankaj Charan lost his mother when he was fourteen. Not sure how to survive, he struggled to make a living, Pankaj Charan became a peon. For a while he became an entrepreneur by setting up a betel shop. He tried to make both ends meet

through occasional performances in newly formed Hajuri Theatres (a repertory) of Balabhadra Hajuri Khuntia. The fact that, he could fight throughout his childhood to survive and keep his passion burning to become a dancer and a choreographer, shows the strength and tenacity of his character to stand up for what he believed in.

His Professional Career: Trials Tribulations of a Performing Artist

In the Odisha of the early 1940s, the life of a performing artist, particularly that of a dancer was difficult to say the least. The legacy of the Moguls in Odisha was followed by the “anti-Nautch” movement of the British, and had already led to a decline in the patronage for Odissi. Girls from respectable families were not pursuing dance as a career. It is in this ethos of pre-independent India that Pankaj Charan had to struggle and establish himself as a dancer and guru.

During this time the emergence of the theatre movement in Odisha was a boon to the young artist. For a while he was associated with the new theatres of Odisha in Baripada. Here he started teaching dance for a living and also learn the vigorous style of Chhau dance. However, his association with New Theatres was brief. From 1942 to 1948 Pankaj Charan became the dance director of the Annapurna Theatre (B Group.) During this time Kelucharan (who later became Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra and was bestowed with Padma Vibhushan award) and his wife Laxmipriya were his leading disciple. After a stint at the Annapurna(B) Group, Guru Pankaj Charan worked for a while at the Utkal Sangeet Samaj in Cuttack and later at the Odisha Sangeet Parishad in Puri. In the early 1960s, he joined Utkal Sangeet Mahavidyalaya in Bhubaneswar as a senior Lecturer in Odissi, from which he retired as the Principal in-charge in 1983. In 1984, after his retirement, he established his own institution,

“Udra Nrutya Pankaja” in Puri, with branches in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar.

The Vision of a Budding Dancer and Odissi Guru

Guru Pankaj Charan Das was the main force behind the revival of the *Mahari* style in neoclassical Odissi. The classical Odissi started a process of decline during the Mogul period (around 1592 AD,) when Afghan invaders looted and plundered the temple of Lord Jagannath in Puri – not just once – many times. Due to such looting and plundering, the three icons (*bigrahas*) of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra were hidden from the public eyes. In addition to it, various rituals including singing and dancing by the *Maharis* were discontinued for a long period at the Jagannath Temple, Puri. When such rituals were reinstituted after the decline of the Mogul rule, the revived *Maharis* did not get back their original prestige that was accorded to them during the pre-Mogul era. While the construction of neoclassical Odissi to the present form has been dominated by “Gotipua” style, the richness and beauty of Odissi that we see today owes much to Guru Pankaj Charan’s dedication and untiring efforts at reviving the *Mahari* style into the tapestry of emerging neoclassical Odissi.

“Jayantika”: The Emergence of Neoclassical Odissi

Until the late 1950s, Odissi did not emerge as a neoclassical dance form in India. Its reemergence as a premier dance form not only in India, but also on the world stage is a fascinating story that needs to be deconstructed and reconstructed time and time again. But one should be rest assured that in this process of deconstruction and reconstruction, the name of Guru Pankaj Charan Das and *Mahari* style would be written in golden letters for all times to come.

“Jayantika:” The late 1950s and the early 1960s were the most productive period in establishing Odissi as a neoclassical dance form. The role played by Jayantika in rationalizing and codifying Odissi as a major neoclassical dance form cannot be overemphasized. Initially most of the major gurus of Odissi were members of this group along with Odissi scholar Dr. Dharendra Pattanayak and Sri Lokanath Misra. Other notable members of this group included Biranchi Narayan Routray, Dayanidhi Das, Kelucharan Mohapatra, Deba Prasad Das, Mayadhar Rout, Raghunath Dutta, Sridhar Prasad Nath Sharma, Batakrushna Sena, Gorachand Mishra. It was Biranchi Narayan Routray, who had proposed the name of the organization to be “Jayantika.”

Jayantika for all practical purposes became a laboratory for experimentation, analytical discussions and ultimately rationalization and codification of neoclassical Odissi, which has served the evolution of Odissi well over the years. But during the process, divergences of opinion surfaced, particularly during the composition of “*batu nrutya*.” This led to the departure of Guru Pankaj Charan Das and Guru Deba Prasad Das from the group. By going against the grain, Guru Pankaj Charan showed his independence. But indirectly he was making a statement through his conviction that the emergent neoclassicism in Odissi should imbibe into its tapestry the rich tradition of the *Maharis*.

The Creative Genius: The Iconoclast and the Pioneer

In some sense, all great artists are iconoclasts. They shatter conventionally held images that we find so difficult to let go. In real life, Guru Pankaj Charan must have shattered many such images and particularly societal taboos, that must have constricted and suffocated his life as a dancer and a guru in the performing art ethos

that prevailed in Odisha in the early 1940s, 50s and 60s. This experience must have served him well on the stage, particularly in the art of choreography, when he was confronted with reviving Odissi in its neoclassical style. It has been widely acknowledged that Guru Pankaj Charan’s choreographies were rooted in tradition, but at the same time it broke with tradition in subtle and elegant ways. He was a superb craftsman, who used slightly off beat techniques to give a different dimension to his creations.

It is at the Annapurna Theatre (B Group) that Guru Pankaj Charan used his creativity to choreograph *Vasmasura*. The cast consisted of none other than Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra as *Siva*, Laxmipriya Devi as *Mohini* and Guru Pankaj Charan himself as *Vasmasura*. This choreography of his, is considered as a landmark in the then evolving neoclassical Odissi. He claimed that in 1946, in Aswini Kumar’s drama, *Abhiseka*, he started Odissi in his own style. His choreography of *Dasavatara*, with *pakhawaj* score by Durlav Chandra Singh, and with Guru Kelucharan Mohapatra and Laxmipriya Devi in the cast, is considered as the first choreography in neoclassical Odissi. He has been also credited with introducing *Jagannathastakam* into Odissi at the time of *Mancha Prabesh*. While compositions of *pallavis* and *abhinayas* by him has his indelible signature, his genius excelled in composing dance dramas in Odissi style, which has been highly acclaimed. In this sphere some of his landmark compositions include, *Matrubandana*, *Glanisanhara* and *Krishnavatara*. Besides these compositions, he will be remembered for being the dance director of movies such as *Sri Jagannath*, and *Kavi Samrat Upendra Bhanja*.

Felicitations and Laurels

In 1970, Guru Pankaj Charan was felicitated with the Central Sangeet Natak Akademi

Award, which was followed by Odisha Sangeet Natak Akademi award in 1971. He was also a recipient of Odisha Sahitya Akademi Award. He received Sharang Dev fellowship by Shur Shingar Samsad, Mumbai in 1984. In 1986, he was awarded the title of Udra Nrutya Bhusan, from Kalinga Bharati in Cuttack. In the same year he also received Sarala Puraskar. The President of India awarded him Padma Shri in 1992, in recognition of his contributions to Odissi dance (Wikipedia).

This is a revised version of the article, "Guru Pankaj Charan Das: 1921-2003: Life and Times of an Iconoclast and Pioneer of Odissi Dance," which appeared as an "In Memoriam" in the "Program" brochure of "2nd International Odissi Festival," organized by IPAP (President: Shri Pratap Das), which took place during August 28 – 31, 2003, in Washington DC.

I am thankful to Padma Vibhusana Guru Kelucharn Mohapatra for his generosity in explaining to me the underlying history, the beauty and intricacies of Odissi dance with special reference to Guru Pankaj Charan Das. I am also thankful to Smt. Rajashree (Chintak) Behera, a renowned dancer on her own right and late Dr. Subhakanta Behera for sharing an audio recording of an earlier interview of Guru Pankaj Charan Das, and several other useful references for this article. I have also used other sources of reference for this article, i.e. "The Guru of Gurus: Padmashri Guru Pankaj Charan Das," by Dr. Ratna Ray and "Guru Pankaj Charan Das – A Tribute," by Sri Gopal Mohanty, published in the Journal of the Orissa Society of

the Americas, Souvenir Issue, 2003. Other references that I consulted include, "Odissi Nrutya," by Shri Dhirendranath Pattanayak, Orissa Sangeet Natak Akademi, 1988, and "Odissi Nrutya Kaahaani," by Shri Dhirendranath Pattanayak in "Swara Jhankar," July 1991, Editor: Shri Gopal Chandra Panda, "Guru Pankaj Charan Das: A Life – Timeless and Boundless," by Sutapa Patnaik, and "Pankaj Charan Das" – Wikipedia.

Maharis are musicians and dancers who perform before Lord Jagannath in the Jagannath Temple, Puri, Odisha. The word Mahari has been derived by the fusion of two words "Mahat," (honorable) and "Naari" women. These honorable women dedicate themselves as temple dancers at the feet of Lord Jagannath.

"Gotipua," literally means a "single boy dancer" who sings as well as dances dressed as a female artist.

Citaristi, Ileana, The Making of a Guru: Kelucharn Mohapatra – His Life and Times, Manohar, New Delhi, 2001. I came across this book in New Delhi in 2002, and was surprised to know about the group of Odissi gurus who formed Jayantika in order to classify, rationalize and codify rich traditions of Classical Odissi Dance, which later became a springboard of Neoclassical Odissi.

Citaristi, Ileana, "On the Trail of Jayantika: An Introduction," Nartanam: A Quarterly Journal of Indian Dance, Volume: XVIII, No. 3, Jul-September 2018. I am thankful to Shri Pratap Das for lending me a copy of the Journal for this article.

Kalinga and Magadha In the third century BC

Pradyot Patnaik



The third century BC: The history of India was in the making, a defining period in ancient India, whirling around its two most powerful kingdoms, one was Magadha (presently Bihar and the Gangetic plain) and the other, Kalinga (presently the coastal Odisha and its south.) While Magadha was expanding in leaps and bounds, conquering kingdoms after kingdoms, Kalinga on its south, its nemesis, stood like a rock, strong and independent, challenging Magadha's supremacy. There were however many divergences between them. While Magadha grew in size with military might, Kalinga was the most prosperous land at that time, a trade hub, possessed a strong navy and developed maritime routes to many South Asian nations. Kalinga was also recognized for its strength and valor, and also for its artistic skill. Though peace loving, the land of Kalinga, in contrast to most other kingdoms of India at that period, would not acquiesce to any domination by outsiders. It would fight to its end to retain its independence.

The kingdom of Magadha, once confined to its capital Pataliputra and its vicinity during the time of King Bimbisara in the fifth century BC, grew much larger under his son, Ajatashatru and expanded further under the Nanda dynasty. Though the Nanda kings conquered Kalinga, but they could not hold it for long. During the reign of Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of Maurya dynasty, Magadha empire covered almost the whole of India except Kalinga and its south. Emperor Chandragupta, fascinated by Kalinga's magnificence and prosperity, attempted to conquer the land but was repulsed valiantly by its fighters. King Bindusara, Chandragupta's son, after succeeding his father and inheriting a vast empire in 297

BC yearned to bring Kalinga under his control, which would have been a jewel in the crown of Magadha empire. He too did not succeed.

While Kalinga was passive and peaceful at that time, Magadha in contrast was restless, tempestuous, and simmering beneath its surface. The kingdom of Magadha was embroiled in infighting, jealousies, conspiracies and power struggle. That was the time of King Bindusara, and some of those accounts are stunning, mostly mentioned in the Buddhist and Jain texts, and it may be worth mentioning a few of those narratives. There may be some discrepancies, however, on their veracities or accuracies. There are not much historical documentations of these events. Rebellions were erupting seldom in different parts of Magadha. King Bindusara, under Chanakya's wise advice, would resort to diplomacy first before going to any war to keep the region under Magadha's surrogacy. During his reign one such rebellion broke out in Takshashila in the Kandhar region of his empire. He sent his sons, Sushima and Ashoka there to quell the rebellion. Sushima was his eldest and favorite son. He was apportioned the task to work out a deal to keep the rebel region under Magadha's rule, while Ashoka was to protect his brother in the event any war broke out. Ashoka though young, barely eighteen years of age at the time, was arrogant, physically strong and an accomplished swordsman. When Takshashila did not agree to Magadha's terms, an impatient Ashoka with his small posse of adroit fighters launched a blitzkrieg attack. In the ensuing battle one of the powerful chieftains of that region died, who happened

to be the father of queen Noor Khorasan, King Bindusar's youngest wife. The young queen never forgave Ashoka for this. Prince Sushim felt ignored all throughout and was angry at Ashoka. The rivalry between both these brothers was slowly brewing and this was one such instance.

As mentioned before, Kalinga never accepted Magadha's hegemony and had repulsed its attacks previously. There were also a few other independent territories besides Kalinga, mostly located to the south of Magadha. One such independent land included a loose confederacy of sixteen small states lying west to Kalinga on the southern border of Magadha. Apparently emboldened by Kalinga's strength and audacity, the confederacy refused to surrender to Magadha's suzerainty. The kingdom of Chola, on the other hand, surrendered to Magadha's terms to avoid a war. Chanakya (Kautilya), the architect of Mauryan empire, known for his foresight and political skill was one of the most powerful faces of Magadha. He arranged to exhibit a show of strength of its massive army to its adversaries hoping that they would surrender. For this, a huge pedestal was built atop a hill near the battle field for the royals and the prominent people of Magadha to witness the spectacle of their might. Among those present were King Bindusar, his queens, his sons, Sushim, Ashoka and their other brothers. Chanakya was also there. Too old by then, his vision, however was focused somewhere else, far beyond that battle ground, contemplating faraway into a realm that he knew was hard to win — and that was Kalinga. In the battle against the confederacy the Magadha army crushed their opponents ruthlessly, vastly outnumbering them, inflicting heavy casualties. With this victory the Magadha empire extended further down into south during Bindusar's reign. And what was the reaction in Kalinga? — calm and unperturbed.

No other major battle took place during

Bindusar's rule. Kalinga remained independent until then, strong as ever and Magadha knew its strength. Chanakya also knew that well, and so did Bindusar. During his reign, Pataliputra, the capital was engulfed in royal feuds, power struggle and conspiracies. A few such tales may be highlighted below that shaped the Magadh empire and its future, as well as the political structure of the ancient India including Kalinga.

While Magadha was consolidating its own position and power, a rebellion erupted in Ujjain. King Bindusar sent his son Ashoka this time to quell it. There, Ashoka met a beautiful young woman, named, Devi, daughter of a merchant. Struck by her beauty he proposed to marry her, which she turned down first and then put a condition that she would marry him only if he did not harm the people of Ujjain. Ashoka did not agree to her conditions first, but later relented when Devi nursed his injury sustained in a skirmish. Devi eventually became Ashoka's first wife, kind natured, and full of compassion. Subduing the rebellion in Ujjain earned Ashoka high praise in the capital, Pataliputra. Sushim became jealous seeing Ashoka's rise. He manipulated his father and succeeded in sending Ashoka into exile to a place where Magadha would have no influence and from where Ashoka would not be able to stage any coup, nor launch any potential attack on Sushim. And that place was Kalinga.

Disguised as a soldier, Ashoka came to Kalinga. However, something else was also happening there. Someone was shadowing Ashoka, following him into Kalinga with a small assassin squad. That was Amatya Rakshasa, Chanakya's rival, disguised as a hermit. Rakshasa was dispatched to Kalinga by queen Helena to eliminate Ashoka first and then Sushim, so she could put one of her own loyalists onto the throne of Magadha after Bindusar. Sushim had no idea about this counter plot on his own life. Ashoka however sensed the plot; not known how he did that. The information might have

come from a very efficient spy or a counterspy network, both of which Chanakya had established earlier in Pataliputra. It may be noted here that Ashoka was Chanakya's pupil when he was very young and later was mentored by Radhagupta, another powerful figure in Pataliputra politics. Ashoka returned back to Magadha soon after that.

While in Kalinga, Ashoka came across a very beautiful young woman, named Karuvaki. Most historians believe that she was the daughter of a fisherman in Kalinga and not a princess as some legends say. Ashoka fell in love with her and later married her. Karuvaki was Ashoka's second wife, and also was kind-hearted in nature like Devi. Both the wives influenced his life greatly. Ashoka had three other wives.

Back to Magadha's politics now: away from Kalinga's poise and serenity. The internal rift and the conspiracies in Pataliputra were growing deeper and deeper with passing days. Chanakya, who was too old by then, had left Pataliputra, deeply hurt by the treachery of one of his own acolytes whom he mentored and installed as his successor, but who betrayed him by telling King Bindusar how his mother died because of Chanakya. Bindusar was angry but later learned the circumstances that led to his mother's death at the hand of Chanakya, only to save his own life at the time of his birth. The king was repentant but Chanakya felt letdown and did renounce the world soon after, starving to death in Jain tradition.

The last days of Bindusar era was coming to an end and Magadh was heading into an uncertain phase, a defining moment once again at the crossroads of India's history. King Bindusar was sick. He intended to bestow the throne to his favorite son, Sushim, who was in Takshashila for a long time, trying to quell a rebellion there without much success. Ashoka

by then had already marshaled the supports of all ministers including Khallataka and Radhagupta, the two most prominent of them. The ministers consigned the crown on Ashoka's head convincing the king that it was the wish of the Gods and that he would serve temporarily until Sushim returned back from Takshashila. Learning the events that were happening in Pataliputra, Sushim rushed back to the capital, not aware of the plot by Radhagupta, a powerful ally of Ashoka to eliminate him on the way. Burning pits of coals under cover were set on his path. Ashoka eventually eliminated all his 99 brothers, however sparing the life of Tishya, his youngest sibling from the same mother, and thereby consolidated his grip on the Magadha empire.

Kalinga in the meantime continued to remain an important center of commerce, and strong, independent and unconquered. If there was any defiance to Magadha's might, that came from Kalinga. Eight years after ascending to power, Ashoka set his eyes on Kalinga, which always persisted as a challenge, a test, and a cherished dream.

Magadha attacked Kalinga in 261 BC with a huge army. Kalinga defended its land to its last breath with all its strength and might. It was an epic war of all times, scripted in history as the Kalinga War, and one of the biggest battles ever fought in the history of India. The war virtually destroyed Kalinga, causing deaths of over one hundred thousand of its fighters. Magadha too was heavily battered, incurring an irreparable loss. The war changed Ashoka's heart and he embraced Buddhism. The Kalinga war is well documented in the history of ancient India and mentioned in Ashoka's edicts.

Analyzing the structures, politics and the lifestyle in the then India, one may notice some stark differences between these two

dominant powers. While Magadha remained expansionist and its power and the politics were controlled and centered around its kings, Kalinga in contrast remained introvert, not indulging in any war to expand its territory. There is no mention of any Kalinga king's name during or before the Maurya period. Some historians conjecture that Kalinga never had a king in the first place, and it was like a democracy, ruled collectively by chiefs of different regions. Even Ashoka's edicts do not mention the name of the Kalinga king who fought against his army. However, there is no supportive evidence of such hypothesis that Kalinga never had kings. Text written many centuries later mentions that the king of Kalinga was Raja Anantha Padmanabha. One of the legends says that the king was ill at the time of the Kalinga War. His daughter Princess Rajeswari took command. She bestowed the title of general to every individual minister and the chief of each region of Kalinga and died herself fighting in the war.

A pertinent question that may arise here is that why did not Queen Karuvaki, who herself hailed from Kalinga and who is credited doing numerous benevolent works, and immortalized in Ashoka's edict along with her son Prince Tivala (Allahabad edict,) stop such a devastating

war? The queen perhaps was too young at the time of the war, probably around 27 years of

age, assuming that she was born in 288 BC, and would not have much influence on the political and military decisions of Magadha. The same may be said about the other queen of Ashoka, Queen Devi, who refused to come to Pataliputra ever after marrying Ashoka, and lived in Ujjain rearing up her two children, Prince Mahindra and Princess Sanghamitra.

The Kalinga war conceivably was inevitable — unstoppable for the political and economic reasons, and also for the fact that Kalinga always remained an illusion, an aberration to Magadha's fantasy for a long period. The war

altered the course of India's history. And what happened to Kalinga? Over a century later, it rose up from its ruins under the Chedi emperor Kharavela, conquered Magadha and a vast chunk of India, avenged its defeat, and glinting its glory again. However, that was not the third century BC.

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A Bumpy Ride... I Miss the Most

Jigyansa Mohanty



The other day, as I was about to leave my house to pick my ten-year-old from school, my phone beeped. It was a message from a friend, requesting me to pick her twins as well, as she was occupied with some work. I immediately texted, “Sure” and drove off. Suddenly I realized, that her kids being six needed to be buckled up in booster seats. Without losing a second, I took out a spare one from my car trunk and placed it next to my younger one’s permanent booster in the rear seat of the car. My elder one being ten had already graduated to the next level and hence I felt three kids can easily share space in the back. But to my utter dismay the moment my son noticed, that he needs to squeeze into the lone space left in the back seat of the car, he made a face. Being a mother, it took me a second to read his mind. He was not happy compromising his comfort or in that case sharing space with the other two.

“Mom, how am I going to sit?” there came this question wrapped in form of a soft murmur.

As soon as I lowered the rear-view mirror, I could see his coerced smile which was synonymous with discomfort. I tried hard to distract his attention, but to no avail.....

This took me down the memory lane, when we were kids. Back in early 90’s we would commute to our school in light three wheeled hooded vehicles called as Rickshaws, a vehicle similar to a tricycle, having a seat for the passengers behind the driver. Those days Rickshaws used to be one of the chief modes of transport in my native town Bhubaneswar,

and they left no stone unturned in making the city vibrant with their color, speed and efficacy.

Based in our Government quarters in Unit 1, our daily commute to school involved a thirty-minute ride in these human pedaled vehicles. The Rickshaws had three wheels, a big one at the front pedaled by a Rickshaw driver, and two smaller wheels to support it from the back, such that its stability remained intact. Logically these carts were designed in such a way, that two adults or three kids could comfortably sit on it. But the quest to earn more, kept giving these Rickshaw pullers innovative ways to explore and expand its seating capacity. Especially Rickshaws plying school children would have one additional seat called Baby seat in the front, just opposite to the passenger seat. No.....it had nothing to do with a baby in any real sense. It was just an addition of a wooden plank on the front, which helped increase the seating capacity of these Pedicabs from three to six, — sad but true.

In my case, it would be three kids, each on the passenger seat and the baby seat. Occupying the main seat was a luxury which was on every kid’s wish list. The ones who were in higher grades would use their seniority and grab the main seat, while we the younger lot would reluctantly fit into the baby seat. The elevated passenger seat would be dazzling in color, while the baby seat being a dry wood piece wrapped in a thin layer of plastic had nothing much to offer. Certain pictures hung in the front, was enough to give the passengers a

sneak peek into the mind of the Rickshaw puller. For some it would be their deities, while for the rest it would be the postcards of their favorite Bollywood stars. Though from the far they all would look the same, but in reality, each Rickshaw would be unique in its color, brightness, shine, shape and structure. We would be so badly crammed against one another that, having our back packs with us in this half an hour ride would be a distant dream. The moment we would board our Rickshaw, the driver would take our bags and hang them on a hoop at the back, designed specifically for this purpose. Two iron hoops would carry the burden of all six backpacks. Still we never complained.....

We used to be our happiest selves boarding this tiny and shaky vehicle. There was something so nice about it. Five to six of us would sit next to each other in such a way that, we could hear each other breathe. "Uncle" as we used to fondly call our Rickshaw driver, would make us pass through the shortest of the routes, such that we reached school on time. Every driver would have this unique rubber or metal bell attached to their Rickshaw handle in the front. Just a little wiggling of this metallic piece, was enough to send a chill down our spine and we would rush to embark on this beautiful journey. The number of stops on our way was directly proportional to the number of kids the Rickshaw carried. We were six, so in our case there were six stoppages for us on the by lanes of Bhubaneswar, every day on our way to school. If anybody was late, then he or she ended up getting a thrashing from Uncle. Uncle would shout at the top of his voice there by ensuring that rest of the crew took it as a warning. After everyone boarded this pedaled vehicle, Uncle would then shout "Chall..... Chall....." and with full spirit make us zoom through the narrow lanes of Unit 1 Market. Those days Unit 1 market place would always be crowded with people but the petite size of these vehicles helped us escape any chaos with

ease. Unlike motorized vehicles they would emit no air or noise, hence we hardly bothered.

Amidst this swarm of people, there would be a group of itinerant salesmen like the hawkers and peddlers, who not only would call this place their homes but made it equally vibrant with their loud cries and chants. Once we had crossed those lanes and reached Rajmahal square, we would get to breathe fresh air enlivened with bright sunrays. In the meantime, to escape the scorching heat Uncle would take out the plastic collapsible "Hood" which was supposed to shield us from all-weather extremities. Not only it invoked a feeling of safety but also gave us the courage to fight tyrant weather.

With Bapuji Nagar and Ashok Nagar proudly situated on its either sides, Rajmahal Chhakk was one of the trendy destinations of Bhubaneswar. As kids we would enjoy passing through this busy place in the so called "pedicab" of ours. The connecting road from Rajmahal to Kalpana square was a steep ride and hence to ease Uncle from the grueling pedaling regime, some of our Rickshaw's mischievous yet concerned kids would get down from the Rickshaw and push it from behind. Once the strenuous path ended, they would again jump in to grab their places in the Rickshaw. By the time we reached at Kalpana square, our Rickshaw's speed had tripled. In no time we drove past the bumpy roads to arrive at our school, conceitedly located in BJB Nagar, the educational suburb of Bhubaneswar.

Uncle like a guardian would hand over our bags to us and then we would march ahead to start a fresh day at school. At the time of pick up too, our Rickshaw would be parked adjacent to our school building and it would hardly take us a minute to spot the same. During those times Rickshaw's use as a mode of transport was high and popular in my home state Odisha.

With time these Rickshaws have vanished from

the roads there, making way for the autos and the cabs. But no matter what, I loved those unsophisticated Rickshaw rides to the core. Be it smooth or bumpy, controlled or shaky, the journey had been exotic and full of fun.

“Mom, where are you going? Don’t we have to drop Shree and Sai first?”

Immersed in these thoughts when I was about to take right from State Street my son shouted

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An Untold Story...

Tapas Panda

It goes back to those days when I was in Bangalore, newly joined a software farm there. It's been a long time I visited my parents after joining the company. So, I planned for a trip to my home town Bhubaneswar, Odisha during the Puja vacation. I promptly booked the train tickets and started counting the day of journey.

Finally, the travel day arrived. I rushed to the station before time to make sure that I wouldn't miss the train. The entire journey to Bhubaneswar takes around 28 hours with a change of train at Chennai. Chennai express from Bangalore starts at night and reaches Chennai the following morning. Then after two hours, Koramondel express starts from Chennai for Bhubaneswar. I was waiting at the station thinking of the long journey and how to pass my time alone.

I took few magazines and chips and reached at my allotted berth. Got a bit relief after locking my baggage and taking the seat. Then a lady with a girl of my age came to the same cabin checking their tickets with berth numbers. I helped them locking their baggage. The girl had a very pretty look with long hairs and a smile on her face. Her eyes were innocent, looking here and there as if she was unfamiliar with train or not comfortable with new people around. I started guessing, *"She must be her daughter and they came here for a trip to Bangalore or Ooty"*. Then the lady requested me to exchange the berth as she wanted her daughter to sleep at the lower berth. I said "No problem, Mam" with a generous tone as if I did a great favor to them.

"Where are you going? To Chennai?" I asked to

the lady.

"No. To Bhubaneswar"

"Oh...good. I'm also going to Bhubaneswar"...I said

"You people were on a leisure trip here?" I asked

"Ok Son. It's time to sleep. I better take rest" ...Said the lady cutting me short.

"Did I ask something wrong !!" I was thinking..." *All aunties are like this..."*

I picked up the magazine and started reading. When I looked around in between, I saw that the girl was smiling at me. *(the famous Hindi proverb came to my mind immediately)*

I promptly said "Hi".

"Hi...what's your good name?" she asked.

"I'm Tapas. You?" ---"I'm Preeti"

"Were you on a leisure trip to Bangalore"? I continued.

"No. I study here. I'm a medical student in St. John Medical College"

"Oh...good to know that. I'm a software engineer in Wipro" I proudly mentioned.

"It's already late Preeti...please sleep now"...Aunty interrupted.

We said good night to each other and she went to her berth to sleep. I continued reading my magazine for some time before I slept.

The train reached Chennai, the following morning. A coolie woke me up and told that it reached there 10 minutes back. I found no one in the train. But my eyes were looking for someone. After I got refreshed and took breakfast, I got on to the next train to Bhubaneswar.

"Oh, they are here..." I told to myself. Coincidentally, Preeti and her mom were in the same cabin as mine again. Aunty went to sleep after sometime, though not in deep. She seemed to be very tired and looked worried. Then Preeti and I started talking.

Preeti started and was continuously telling about herself. She was a topper in her school all throughout, got good marks in the 12th grade as well. She was very studious and hardly knew anything in life other than her studies. She narrated how she used to wake up in the middle of the nights to study and how her father came to her and insisted her to sleep. She also told me how her parents inculcated in her a dream to become a doctor since her childhood.

However, Preeti went through a very bad time after her 12th. She could not get through any medical exam even at the state level, in her first attempt. Then she prepared for the second time. For that she joined a coaching institute. But unfortunately, she met with an accident just before the entrance test and could not appear in it. It was the most frustrating time for her. Then she could not even study for 2/3 months. By that time, all her old friends were in either medical or engineering colleges. She got very upset day by day. Then she started her preparation again, studied day and night. But every moment one thing bothered her mind..."*I'm far behind than my batch mates*". No one of her batch mate was there to share her feelings. Finally, she appeared in the entrance exam. Each day after the exam passed like a year for her till the results were out.

But this time Preeti got what she always dreamt of doing. She was the state level topper in the exam. She was so happy that she went to each and every friend and relative's house to tell that she was the topper. She chose 'St John College of Medical Sciences' in Bangalore, one of the best medical colleges in India. Now, she

is in third year of her studies. She is again topper in the first year MBBS exam in her college. All the professors and specialists are very happy with her performance....

I was quietly listening to her. She was narrating it as if she was in a dream. "What specialization you are planning to choose after MBBS? I mean which area interests you most?" I asked her eagerly.

"Pediatrics" she answered. "I'm always fond of little kids. I can't see them suffering from any disease. I will become a very good pediatrician and will cure all the children. I will be around with cute babies all the time. I will cure poor people free of cost...I will open a hospital to treat little ones....I will.... I will...", she continued non-stop.

I was amazed to see her passion and nice thoughts. I was rather very impressed with that. "Are you Brahmin?" I asked out of nothing. (I don't know why I asked that. There must be something going on in some remote corner in my brain which perhaps was dreaming about the future...marriage and life etc.). "Yes" she said.

I got a big smile in my heart. "I'm also a Brahmin" I said. "Can I read your magazine" she asked. "Oh yes...of course...take it"

There was an article on health issues in that magazine. She started explaining to me about human body and its complexities. I was listening to her very carefully. For a moment, I felt myself as if I was into a doctor's profession rather than engineering, though I never even studied Biology after the 10th class.

"Our body is a mysterious one, each second we lose thousands of cells and each cell contains a semi permeable membrane....." She went on all the day.

"Have your food my child" ...Aunty interrupted again. "Take this medicine too" she continued. I came back to another magazine I had. Preeti was smiling at me all the time. Her smile was full of innocence and childishness.

"Why don't you come to our house some time" Preeti asked me.

"Yah, of course I would" (*If your Mom has no objection, then...*) I said to myself

"I will show you all my books. All materials I prepared with...all my trophies...all my..." Preeti said. "Yeah I'll..." I told her quite confidently.

It was night by then. The best journey of my life would come to an end the following morning when we reach Bhubaneswar. "Take your magazine", Preeti gave me back my magazine. "Good night....do come to our house to see all my collections" she asked me before going to sleep.

I went back to my berth. I found a phone number written on the magazine she took from me. No doubt, it was her home phone number. Suddenly romantic music started playing in my heart. I was dreaming all night long without sleep. *"I always wanted this kind of girl to settle down in life...simple, sober...talented and smiling...hope my mom/papa would not object to this...in fact Maa would like her...Papa never had any problem in my matters...."*

Train reached Bhubaneswar the following morning. I woke up when someone touched me...and said 'bye'. It was her. I picked my stuffs and came out of the train. An old man came to the platform to receive Preeti and Aunty.

"He must be her father" I thought. Preeti gave a smile at me and started walking with her father. "Hey son...could you please come here for a moment ?" ...I heard this from Aunty.

I went to her slightly nervous and with full of questions in my mind. *"She is going to warn me not to contact her I guess"*...I was thinking.

"Hello son...you are a nice boy. I heard all your conversation (*aunty was pretending to sleep then!* I thought). I can also guess what might be going on in your mind. But please forget her. I could not tell you anything as Preeti was around. But I think I must tell you everything...now"

Aunty put me in a guessing state. Question marks were flying all around in air.

Aunty sat on the platform bench. I could not wait for a second to listen from her.

"She is not a medical student, neither had she got through the entrance exam ever. Whatever she told you was correct, but till a particular point. She was a very good student, got many prizes, trophies in her school and college career. She was very ambitious and always had the dream to become a doctor. She tried twice, but fate was not with her. She was very upset after that. She appeared for the third time. This time we were sure that she would come up with a very good result. But this time again, fate was not with her. Her name was not there in the list. All her teachers, me and my husband could not even guess why it happened. She must have been qualified...." Aunty went on telling all these with tears in her eyes. "Preeti could not believe the news. She told me that she is the topper this time. She told that she has seen it in all the result papers. I tried to explain her the fact but she was not in a state to listen to us. She started explaining us how she is going to be a good doctor and help all the people etc. She was not crying...she was not upset. In fact, she was very happy and went on telling all anyone she met that she was the topper in the exam. She explained to all, how she was preparing for the exam...how studious she was etc. etc."

...Aunty continued with more tears in her eyes. I could not believe to my ears. I was impatient to know what happened next, and how she joined the medical college in Bangalore?

"Then we showed her to a doctor" Aunty started explaining again, "Highly Schizophrenic patient, she lives in her own world..." said the doctor. We could not believe that. We treated her for a year with that doctor. Then he referred her to Nimhans Hospital, Bangalore. She is going through psychiatric treatment in Nimhans since last two years. We go there every three months for checkup and session. Every time she talks to any stranger, she tells them that she is studying in 'St John Medical College' and she was the topper etc. Doctor advised us not to force her to the reality. That's the reason we never tell her that whatever she thinks is fiction. We to buy stethoscope, medical accessories for her. She still studies her books every day and keeps on telling about her future plan and....." Aunty stopped as she could not tell anymore with full of tears in her eyes. "Ok son, have a nice trip. God bless you. Please pray to God to cure her soon" Aunty left the

platform wiping her eyes. I stood there, dumbfounded, confused and completely lost. I could not believe what I just heard. I could not believe my eyes which saw her smiling face. I could not believe anything....

I reached home. All my family members were happy seeing me. All were excited.

But something else was running in my mind, I was not there. I could not sleep that night. I was almost about to cry thinking about everything I heard from aunty. I thought a lot and finally decided to meet her once before I leave for Bangalore. I picked the magazine and searched for the number she wrote on that. I got that number and called her.

But..."Please check the number you have dialed...." This is what I got from the other side. I kept on trying the number several times during my stay. But every time I heard the same message from other end.

The show was over...stage was empty...hall was vacant...but the music was still running in the solitude...in my mind.



An Uphill Ride

Jayasmita Mishra, Ph.D

“Pinch me! Pinch me”! The kids yelled aloud as they stepped down the stairs of the aircraft. They had reached their dream land....America. Sheela was excited to see the decorum and cleanliness of the grand airport. She touched one of the steel beams as they glowed, each rod intertwined with another: an architectural splendor. She had flown a long flight along with two young kids to start a new life with her husband. Amar had secured a short term assignment with an Architectural firm in New York. The family reunion was warm, something they had longed for and the hugs were emotional.

Sheela was happy to be in an advanced country, which bragged about tall skyscrapers, wide roads and a disciplined traffic flow. Like a fairy tale, everything seemed perfect and welcoming. Inside the cab, the driver showed them the Statue of Liberty. He said, “it isn’t just a huge statue of a lady, she’s a symbol of hope and freedom for the millions of people who have migrated to the USA. The statue was the first thing they saw when they first arrived by boat and an audio guide revealed what an emotional moment it was for most of them.” Sheela, felt thankful and blessed, she dreamt of a cushy lifestyle and a promising career. Flash back something struck a chord, she realized that they were in a foreign land, leaving all their relatives and friends in India. Breathing in the fresh air, she could feel a sense of fear and joy at the back of her mind.

Cutting a long story short, days passed, things changed. Adapting to a new way of life in an alien atmosphere had its own drawbacks. Everything was not as sparkly as the initial

animation suggested, even the simple things such as kilograms/liters and kilometers needed serious revision into pounds/gallons and miles. Sheela missed home; the daily buzz of a busy metro life in the capital city of India. KARMA - let’s face it; the family geared up as a team!

Amar, a workaholic was engrossed with his job and future career prospects, the kids were in school trying their very best to be part of the milieu. Sheela felt a sense of void within her. She understood that her hopes and dreams were far from reality. Landing in the land of liberty, the lady with the torch mocked at her, without a work permit she could not even apply for a job. All her attempts to utilize her educational qualifications failed. Sitting within the four walls of the home was not her cup of tea, so she decided to do volunteering.

Public transport in the suburbs was limited, without driving skills getting around the town was not easy. Keeping in mind the limitations of commuting she decided to volunteer in Amar’s office, The office premises was close, the people were familiar and this would give her an opportunity to get out of the home and refresh her computer skills. She knew it would be difficult but was ready to push her limits a little bit too far.

Amar, was one of the corporate leaders while Sheela sat at a desk performing basic duties as an assistant. Dignity of labor that is what they say, never mind she was happy; this was a perfect opportunity to set the ball rolling.

When she was in third grade, Sheela was familiar with bullies in class, she kept a safe distance from those rotten apples. Reality dawned when in this office setting she

encountered people projecting negativity and back biting even as matured adults. Insecure and fearful people display such traits where the work culture is based on the dictum of....Hire and Fire. What else could one expect from people who were shallow and rootless? The atmosphere was full of rejection. Her adamant and defiant attitude, taught her to be her own advocate and stay grounded. encountered people projecting negativity and back biting even as matured adults. Insecure and fearful people display such traits where the work culture is based on the dictum of....Hire and Fire. What else could one expect from people who were shallow and rootless? The atmosphere was full of rejection. Her adamant and defiant attitude, taught her to be her own advocate and stay grounded.

----"My first instinct was to let them go their way and I would go mine; thus the situation would be well managed I have never killed an animal I was not obliged to kill; the sport in taking life is a satisfaction, I cannot feel. Yeah! This seemed to be even worse. I knew very well that I was the target for something else. I took a deep breath, closed my eyes and remembered the prayer, which we did every day in school, --- O God, Our Father, forgive those who do evil, give them the wisdom to distinguish between the good and the bad. May peace prevail."

Difficult times are those that help you recognize the best of friends. This time Sheela was extra tough, perhaps she had anticipated the worst. The phone stopped buzzing, friends never asked about her absence. Everything seemed to be so normal as if nothing had been affected.

"Are you crazy? I feel you need to get yourself checked by a psychiatrist", said Amar as he saw the changed Sheela. "You and the sacred book, stop chanting those prayers and prepare yourself for something more worthwhile. You

are blackmailing the poor Lord, you never thought of Him before and all of a sudden you have become such a saint".

A stimulus always provokes a response. Circumstances determine one's behavior pattern. Sheela very well knew that she could never be able to fight alone. It was indeed a deal of nine against one. She also knew that she would never be able to prove the world that she was innocent. It was indeed hard to believe.

Everything seemed to be so uneasy right from the day one. Her voice sounded shaky when she revealed the fears that lay within her heart — "I know I am treading on a dangerous path, but I am sure they are not going to hang me". This seemed to be the last resort for her and she didn't hesitate giving a trial.

Amar kept reminding her to be extra careful, as it was his dignity that was at stake. It was by sheer diligence and hard work that he had achieved his goal and he did not want anyone to point out to him because of any lapse on her part. A slight mistake, would reflect on his competency and caliber.

"I am not an idiot", thought Sheela. "I have the brains to learn and I am sure nothing is hard if one has the will to achieve." A strong believer in what God has given me," I find ways to love myself - I pray, I meditate, drink lots of water, take a bubble bath, walk on the tread mill, listen to music and have learned to hang around with a tribe of friends based on their integrity."

Amidst a cold and stifling atmosphere, somehow or the other her survival instincts worked hard to fight against all odds. She found within herself the invincible sense of warmth and learnt the job within no time. "Who has the time to teach you, the big boss must be mad to hire such a dummy without

any prior experience". These were the words she had to digest, but it was better to tolerate rather than create an issue. Day in and out she worked hard to please the rest. Weekends became working ones as she had to clean up a huge backlog. Stress piled up, but it was ok at least time seemed to go by and she did not have to sit and brood at home.

Sheela couldn't admit that the work pressure was too hard on her, "You can never show vulnerability; you can never say I'm not feeling good". So she swallowed it. Days, weeks and months flew off like a whip and she somehow or the other tried to become a part of the furniture within the office setting.

It was summertime for the kids. Her best friend and co-worker planned a family trip to go to her native land. "Do not worry, Renu", Sheela assured her, "go ahead and have a nice break, your work will be done." Nature has its own ways of taking care, if the left hand is broken the right one takes up more jobs to achieve the optimum. Willingly, she volunteered to take up Renu's job while others merely washed their hands off it. Though it was hard, she somehow or the other managed to do it.

Oh! Not a word of appreciation from her supervisor who never seemed to be satisfied. Like the wicked witch's story, the more she accomplished the higher was the expectation.

Every evening it was the same story at home, a tired Sheela had less energy in her to attend to the multifarious jobs that had to be done back home. The slightest complaint about her work atmosphere would ignite a spark, sufficient enough to have fights between the couple and thus nights used to pass with each other ending in separate bedrooms. Amar never ever seemed to understand, as a good samaritan in his own thinking he always found some fault or the other in his wife rather than realizing the cold environment where Sheela had to struggle

most of her time. He seemed helpless in helping her out and at times used to scorn — "learn to survive within the dirty politics of a work atmosphere."

After some days, Sheela became quite comfortable in her job, acquaintance gave a boost to her skill and as the days passed the tough things seemed to be easier. Weekends became relaxing ones and very soon she started to give more time to the family. It was indeed a triumph on her part.

Alas! Fate had willed it differently. One fine day, the boss ordered her to help out Peter in his job." I have never done that kind of work", said Sheela, and she still had to finish her own, admitted the perplexed Sheela. The boss retaliated by saying, "you could defer yours, Peter's job is a priority and the head has given orders that you could handle this assignment in a better way". Instances like this kept happening and no matter how much effort was put in, things never worked out in Sheela's favor.

Days rolled on and on and when things started taking a bad shape, she had to admit defeat and descend down the arena. Sheela was asked to stay home, officially she had lost the job. Today, she sits brooding into a vacuum trying to gain enough strength to move along her dream ladder; heavy at heart still, trying to reach her goal of self-actualization.

Perhaps she was destined to be a sinner, with no means and ways to get out of the trap. Groping in darkness a dazed Sheela tries her best to plead for innocence, a myth that would never ever turn into reality.

With folded hands she thanks heaven — "Lord, I am happy Amar is saved, I take pride in his growth, let him bloom and blossom while I remain a shadow beneath his strong shoulders"

"I am a woman, the queen of his heart, home and hearth. Our happiness lies in mutual understanding and respect for each other's dignity." He could never tolerate her exploitation that too right under his nose.

That's how fate played its role to end the torture.

21 Bridle Path Road
Ossining, New York, NY 10562



No One is Ever a Label

Piyush Das



Imagine there is a kid named Terrance who has a Korean ethnicity. Some kids in school unfortunately continue to bully him nearly all the time because he is Korean. They call him small eyes and they ask him when is he going to wash their clothes. This type of bullying for Terrance would be going on for months. One day these bullies teamed up with some other kids and they all started to call him names. They told him your race is only full of people who wash other people's clothes and they continued to taunt him because of his eyes like before during all of those treacherous months. Terrance then asked them a question which really made them think about their actions. Terrance exclaimed, "I'm not even Korean. That's just a label. We are all made out of the same material cells. Your cells and my cells aren't very different. We are all the same, we are all human beings. So why do you keep calling me these labels? Should all of us just rip off these so called labels?" After Terrance asked them these tough questions those kids stopped bothering him. The main question in mind is "Why do we have labels?"

Really why do we have labels? I remember once watching a Prince Ea video about who we really are. He states, "Human beings are just like lightbulbs. They come in all different shapes and sizes, but they all have the same energy. And that energy has no shape, size and color; it is all the same. We are all the same." And labeling is not necessarily have to do with race. Labels come in a variety of forms. People call each other ugly, loser, worthless, useless, stupid, idiot, fat, skinny, and bony. Why do we say these awful words to each other? How can human beings call each other such terrible things if we are really all the same? Think

about it — that it doesn't matter who a person is; that everyone is a human being just like everyone else. Yes, we all come from different places around the world, but honestly it's meaningless. We are all living breathing human beings. Rip the labels off. Those labels are not who we are. Politicians fail to realize using their pointless arguments about race. They keep mentioning the race, but the word, race should be thrown out. The words like loser, ugly and all those ugly labeling words should be removed from the dictionary because everyone has the potential to excel in life and nobody is ugly skin deep. People should much rather value the character and not go by the labels or looks. Keep this in mind that we are equally the same, and no one is different inside. We are all made of the same materials and our personalities is what makes us unique.

What motivated me to write this article?

Hmm... This must be the reaction of someone reading this before getting to this part. It's because of my personal experience. When I was in elementary school people always labeled me. They told me I was a stupid Indian and my RACE was inferior. I always felt that my RACE defined who I was. But, the word race truly is meaningless. And, really it wasn't only the race. Throughout the elementary school people labeled me as a loser and ugly, and they used these labels and continued to bully me and tried to make me feel inferior. And I felt like those labels were used to tell me who I was. When I started my high school, the bullying still continued. It ended for two year in my 7th and 8th grade, but came back again in the 9th. I began to feel as if those labels were

sticking to me and I began to embrace them.
But my advice to anyone who has been labeled
constantly is that those labels are all fake; rip

them off as they do not define who you are.
LABELS ARE JUST LABELS.
YOU ARE ANYTHING GREATER THAN A LABEL.



A Static Cycle

Srujani Das

Rusty, broken, and falling
Aimlessly reaching out
Reaching out but not holding
onto anything physical,
rhetorical, magical, unstoppable
Aimlessly pecking at a useless
and meaningless “something”
My character keeps going.
No one to stop him.
A sudden decrescendo in the
forever rhythm and my
arms give out.

STOP

Wake up call, a 360° turn
7:45am and the forever
rhythm starts again.
Something so simple but
meticulous, not materialistic.
A driving force, a ringing bell
a numbers game keeps
going on.
Round and round and round.

4003 Stilton Lake Lane
Katy, TX 77494

Beyond The Three Worlds

Nrusingha Mishra

Who am I really?
I am a living breathing entity
I wake up every day with a sense of gratitude,
I feel for others pain like mine in solitude
I enjoy things that give me pleasure,
I sleep and dream, wake up to think in my leisure
But all these things keep changing,
Sway me in the moment which is constantly fleeting
What is purpose of my life and ultimate goal?
Pass my days frivolously not thinking about it and my soul
I keep moving randomly within these three worlds,
My awake, dreaming and deep sleeping worlds
What is happening in the background?
Who is witnessing all these without any sound?
Pictures come and go in the screen
And the screen is witnessing
My consciousness behind all these remains constant
This life is a bubble and will burst in an instant.

20606 Summer Sweet Ter
Germantown, MD 20876

DREAM

Rabi Prusti



It is a dream for me to kiss the angel of peace
And hug the innocence who never got to wish

It is a dream for me
To give them the feeling of Truth and Freedom
And feel of Democracy and touch of Love
As they dare to come

It is a dream for me
Not to embrace fake news or alternate facts
Only a cult leader claim so,
And channels his wishes through the Dictator's Act
Have you witnessed the Fear Factors
That challenge your Democracy?
In the name of Service,
The Con man runs his show under clouds of secrecy!

When will you rise for your survival and protect the truth?
If not Now, When?
Freedom and Democracy are at the crossroads
And Thunder of Fear cannot reign!

"Many of you do not know" proclaims the Leader
And "I am the Supreme you have never seen"
"Just follow me, Trust me
I will give you everything for your loyalty,
And soon change your dream"

Just then I woke up
A bad, very bad Dream,
A chill on my skin, I see tears in your eyes!
It's morning, early morning, the Sun is rising
Feeling of joy
And I see the golden glow in the sky.

I hear the bell ringing
It's the Freedom
And I see smile, the Lady Liberty is coming here!
Then I know
Truth and Freedom
Honesty and Justice
Love and Peace
Are here to stay for Ever.

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The River And The Lake

Niranjan Mishra

Amidst the foothills of the Himalayas
and the deep and dark sylvan beauty,
On one side, is a quiet Lake with magnificent serenity
and the River, on the other, ever-flowing with rapid strides.

The Lake thinks:

Bestowed with the wealth of a vast reservoir of water,
peace and tranquility all around me,
From time immemorial, I am here, so much in peace
At one place, undisturbed and unperturbed.
Look at the River on the other side of the hills
Always in rush, never quiet at any time
Struggling to survive,
Scouring the banks as if in deep anger
Continues her endless journey
To the ocean at last:
I feel sorry for her incessant race and never-ending strives.
God give her some rest and live in peace!

The River thinks:

Tireless I am, boundless is my journey
Limitless is my wealth
Speed is my strength, and no one can stop me
I run across the land, the villages and cities,
I play music as my ripples keep singing
I am always in motion, and my journey never ends
Until I jump into the vast ocean that waits for me.
I feel sad for the quiet and stagnant Lake on the other side
how boring is his life, his world is small
bounded on all sides and nowhere to go
always looking at the sky in a pensive mood
as if praying to God to give him strength
so that he can raise his arms and can move like me.

But the reality is this:

It doesn't matter who thinks what
Who claim to be fortunate, and the other is less
It's good to have your soul-searching: and not to judge others
Everyone has a role to play and play it well.

There's no scale to measure one's sadness or happiness
There's no standard to measure one's smallness or greatness
It's all in your mind, in your heart and in your actions.

Amidst the bounties of nature,
Everyone has a role to play and play it well.
Everyone has a role to play and play it well.

1106 Delwood Court,
Sudbury On Canada, P3E4M4



Tranquil but Magnificent

Babru Samal



The passion flower is so gorgeous
Dressed in vibrant colors and patterns
Make me an instant devotee
But does the flower know about its own prowess?

The fragrance of the roses and jasmine flowers
The iridescent feathers of a peacock
Or the intense sanguine color of the maple leaves in autumn
The cascading water falls
With no sign of arrogance
But fill our hearts with a sense of being in paradise

Babies entice us with their smiles
But they don't know their power
That conquer us without a fight

Clouds during the sunrise and sunset
Become the canvas to display
The most amazing abstract artwork
But not being aware of it.

The snow-capped mountains of Patagonia
And its serene lakes
Are nothing but just magnificent
But they don't know it or brag about
Like us.

10201 Unicorn Way
Rockville, MD 20850

Village Mythology

Jayanta Mahapatra

Flickering lamplight, fanfare of trapped wings,
bears, and snakes darken into another Orissa night.
The sea might sweep up on the shore again
in a sudden aggressive embrace. And walls
of madness rise up to the skies in a malevolent dark.
Yet one's earth is never in real danger.

Firewood on their heads, a file of women
stagger along the last rain-wet road.
Suna, the faithful village wife, crawls
through darkness as she moves beyond birth and death
from one night of rape to another.

Here destiny goes nowhere, but is everywhere.
The real story she listens to from her children
is made up of school, books, and their bloodless pulp;
imagined loss somehow secretly feeds
her sense of herself.

The dropped anchor flounders in a sea without water.
In this forgotten sea, she is of the race
that can sing only of gods
who betray life with small embraces.

[Jayanta Mahapatra (born October 22, 1928) is the only Indian poet who has been widely published in American journals. He has published 22 poetry collections in English, 10 poetry collections in Odia, 9 translation collections and 8 other books. He has received many awards and honors including Central Sahitya Academy award and in 1981 and Padmashree in 2003 .]



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In Memoriam...

Pratap Babu:

As I remember

Srigopal Mohanty

I called him 'Pratap Babu' and he called me 'Gopal Babu'. Does it tell anything about us or our relation? But it might if one heard the way we called each other – a sense of friendship or bonding without any direct relationship.

It was 1969 when Pratap Babu was introduced to us through Late Rajendra Sarangi who lived in his neighborhood. He was a bachelor then. His charming personality and affectionate and genuinely caring nature not only helped to develop an immediate congenial relation between him and newly arrived Rajendra Babu and his wife but also made three of us to become close friends quickly.

Those were the days we were all searching for other Odias in the vicinity and far beyond. Already Pratap Babu knew a few, at least Pramod and Jitu (Chitrakleha) Patnaik. Soon he and Rajendra Babu moved to the apartment building in Old Dundas Road where Pramod Babu was staying.

To bring as many Odias together as possible became our burning desire which led to a 'Pakhala Party' at our house, 21 Skyline Drive, Dundas in July 1971. On that day, a chapter of OSA was formed, called Toronto Chapter which is now known as Canada Chapter (CanOSA).

In Pratap Babu's presence, the Old Dundas building where they all resided became the hub of Odia community for some years. The place was exploding with youthful Odia energy. The nostalgic new arrivals found in each other's company an incredible amount of excitement and comfort. They forgot that they were all in a foreign land.



Here was Pratap Babu – a flamboyant handsome young bachelor – among us. Was it a loss for emerging Ollywood in seventies, not to catch him? Perhaps so, he was meant to be a gain for us. Pratap Babu was an extremely accommodating team person – ask him anything to do and he would accept it gladly, even acting. In celebrating the Baishakhi Milan in 1973, we presented the drama, '*Pahadara Atmakatha*' by Suren Mohanty (this was the first drama staged by any OSA Chapter) involving four old persons. For good reasons, Pratap Babu who acted in it was given make-up first with professional touch and it happened that others did not get any. Even our best make-up person could not hide his handsome and youthful look (see the picture).



Pratap Babu, Rajendra Sarangi and
Sri Gopal in drama
'Pahadara Atmakatha' in 1973

Pratap Babu had religious inclination. He was also an out-and-out community person. Knowing actor Sriram Panda's abrupt abandoning Ollywood for quest of a spiritual life, it is difficult to say whether Pratap Babu was a loss for Ollywood.

Well, certainly he became an asset to the Odia community here and in North America. Yet we never gave up on him to act. He joined with us in several drama presentations, especially with me in '*Mo Odia Culturera Atmakatha*' and '*Chha Mana Atha Guntha*'.

Being a bachelor, Pratap Babu used to visit us frequently in early seventies. We two would talk on many things but had a common concern: unlike back home, we Odias could not openly and loudly talk among each other in group gatherings and enjoy sharing our cooking. There was a constraint of space as during our earlier days most of the Odia immigrants did not have a large enough space to accommodate most of us. Our desire to live like a free Odia, jump and sing around in the open air and having togetherness for a longer period as in any wedding or festive occasion therefore became stronger and stronger. We hit upon a novel idea: how about going away to cottage countries for a couple of days to relieve ourselves from our tight straight jackets and revitalize our Odianess. And thus, the seed for cottage picnic was sown. Pratap Babu with his friendly organizing ability took the lead and there in 1972 'Canada Odias Cottage Picnic' was born. The event caught Odia imagination everywhere in the North America like wild fire. Its popularity grew fast to attract the Odias from every corner of North America for years to come so much so that soon OSA adopted the Canada cottage picnic as a model for three-day OSA convention.

Pratap Babu was an avid bridge player and that became a coalescing factor in community's social relation.

Pratap Babu was a loving person and fond of small kids. He was very much attached to three little girls, almost of same age – Rajendra Babu's daughter Lita (who was a victim of 1985 Air India tragedy), Pramod Babu's daughter Ellora and our daughter Rini. Quite often Lita would be in Pratap Babu's arm or on his lap. When he found that we were not having any turkey during the Thanksgiving dinner, he would get immense pleasure in cooking it in his apartment for us, especially for our two young daughters, Jini and Rini.

Although my wife Shanti and I could not attend Pratap Babu's wedding ceremony in 1975 but we arrived at the bride's (Bani) house in Cuttack the next day just before the preparation of her departure to Pratap Babu's house in Bhubaneswar. On seeing us he was extremely jubilated. We were perhaps the only people close to him in North America who could be there and who also attended the *Chaturthi* ceremony.

After Bani's arrival in Canada, we have been visiting each other regularly. I felt, in Bani's companionship Pratap Babu who was influenced by western stylized life with liberal thoughts during his years in Europe before coming to Canada gradually transformed to bring a harmonious blend of both east and west.

Soon Pratap Babu became a regular visitor to Vishnu Mandir run by Dr. Budhendra Nath Doobay. During super-cyclone in Odisha, he decided to introduce us to Dr. Doobay. It resulted in getting a donation of about \$22,000 from the Mandir which was specifically directed to repair the girls' residence in Kanyashram at Satyabhmapur and a personal visit by Dr. Doobay to Satyabhmapur.

As time progressed our meetings became rare. Even on such rare occasions, we have always been privileged to share the warmth, cordiality

and good conversation with both Pratap Babu and Bani. He started his regular dialysis treatment and had his kidney transplant and yet would not give up his jovial and cheerful mood. He was a real fighter indeed.

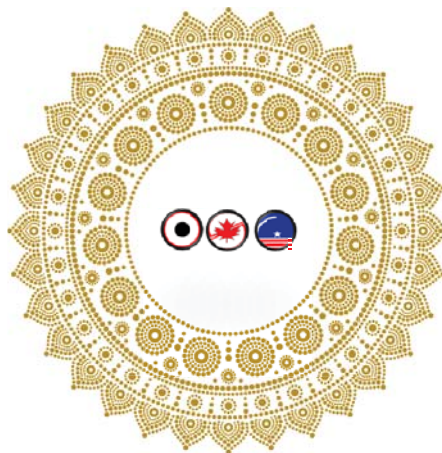
After a prolonged fight, he was in a situation when he was hardly eating and became extremely weak. We visited him one day and he was unable to walk very much. In our presence he became overwhelmed with emotion and yet felt good enough to come with us to the dining room. He became cheerful. And that was our Pratap Babu.

We witnessed an unbelievable sharp turn in him when we met next at the wedding of Pallavi, Prakash Patnaik's daughter in last September. He looked hale and hearty and could eat like anyone else. We talked as he loved to talk and he had his usual cheerfulness. We never knew that would be our last meeting.

May his soul be in peace.



(Members attending Pakhala Party without me; Pratap Babu is standing fifth from the left)



In Memoriam... In Loving Memory of Pratap Chandra Pattanaik

Loreena (Reena) & Loreeta (Lona) Pattanaik



Pratap Pattanaik (Dad) was born in Puri, Odisha, India on November 5, 1937. Dad had four siblings - two sisters and two brothers.

Dad completed his intermediate studies at Stewart College, Cuttack, and obtained his BSc from Ravenshaw College, and his Master's degree from Utkal University in Statistics. While doing his Master's degree, he received a job offer which he accepted and moved to Calcutta to work in a paper mill.

However, he always dreamed of moving abroad, and in 1963, he seized an opportunity to move to Sweden. With just \$22 in his pocket, he boarded a plane for the first time and left India. He travelled extensively throughout Europe and even worked in Germany for a short period of time. In 1967, he decided to take advantage of an offer to move to Canada, all expenses paid.

When Dad arrived in Canada in 1967, there were only a handful of Odias who lived in North America. These Odias relished a strong bond and became like a family since most of them couldn't go home to visit their parents frequently. In fact, Dad's first trip back to India

was six years after he had left. When he stepped off the plane, his mother didn't recognize him and asked to see his birthmark to verify that it was him. Her thin little boy had turned into a healthy, handsome young man.

In 1975, he married Purnima (Bani) Pattanaik. They had two children - Reena and Lona. The family grew when Lona married Sovan, and they went on to have Dad's two beloved grandchildren, Ishan and Sahil.

Dad spent a significant part of his life building his family, career, and community. He had a strong work ethic and spoke up for the causes he believed in.

Dad and Mom, both took great pride in helping build the Odia community in Canada and other parts of North America, and their intense bond have lasted over 50 years. Dad served as the Vice President of OSA from 1987-1989.

Even to the end, Dad would still reminisce OSA's humble beginnings with nostalgia. For instance, in 1975, the Odia convention was held in Toronto, and approximately 100 people attended it and stayed as house guests with

the local families. Although the visitors may have been strangers at the beginning of the weekend, they enjoyed staying with their newfound families. Back then, the conventions were only a day long as compared to the present 3-day events that are held in grand scale with professional grade stages, lighting, and sound and more than thousands in attendance.

When you visit Mom and Dad's house today, you can peruse their bookshelves to find a beautiful set of leather-bound Encyclopedia of Britannica's, a set of Compton's encyclopedias, and a colorful array of OSA souvenirs and directories.

In the 80's and 90's, our family vacations would also include taking the Odia directory with us. For example, during one of our vacations visiting Pittsburgh (late 80's), Dad and Mom looked up the local Odia's in the directory. Lona and I would be so embarrassed that Dad and Mom were calling strangers, but we were always amazed that after an hour-long conversation, they had shared their life stories and often found mutual relatives or friends.

Dad always undertook active roles in the cottage picnics, which began in the 1970's, and he was so proud that the younger generations continued the tradition. From the beginning, the cottage picnic brought in large groups, including Odias from the States. These picnics included lots of Odia food, skits, and Antakshari competitions, which would often run late into the night. Our family has continued to join the cottage picnics at the request of Ishan and Sahil, our third generation Odia's.

Dad applauded the preservation of the Odia language, food, culture, dance and music, and the various activities of OSA such as, conventions, picnics, Kumar Purnima shows, Ratha Yatra, and Jagannath Mandir events, that

have attracted entire family. He believed in encouraging the younger generations, including the second generation of Odias to take on leadership roles in OSA to ensure that the building of the Odia community continues to grow far into the future. His efforts and encouragements inspired me, his daughter, Reena Pattanaik, to serve as the OSA Canada Chapter president in 1998 – 2000, as well as Nick Patnaik & Leena Dehal who served as OSA President & Vice President, respectively in 2001-2003.

It was a tough 2 years during my term as I faced many obstacles including stubborn arguments and contradictory viewpoints among various members. At one point, I wanted to quit this "volunteer" position, but I stuck with it because of Dad. He was able to help me understand:

- Participating in OSA keeps us closer to our Odia roots,
- The hard work his generation spent building OSA would end if others don't take over, and
- There will be a loss of subsequent (2nd) generation Odias actively celebrating their parents' culture as their own.

Looking back, I can say that Lona and I gained a strong work ethic as we saw Dad work at OSA. The evenings would comprise of visits to numerous accommodation sites, stages, trophy vendors, etc. We gained important life skills as we had opportunities to speak in front of over 500 people, interact with the Ambassador and High Commissioner of India, organize events, sign and negotiate contracts, perform on stage, cue the lighting technicians, and more.

Dad's journey also included health challenges. His kidneys began to fail at the age of 67, and he began to undergo dialysis on a regular basis. On his 75th birthday, however, he was blessed with a kidney transplant. Dad rose above his health struggles and was still able to enjoy life

to the fullest. He never stopped doing the things he loved - spending time with family (especially the grandkids), playing bridge, organizing events, traveling (to Western Canada, India, London, Paris, and Alaska), and attending the OSA conventions and cottage picnics. Although we will miss him dearly, Dad is somebody who truly experienced and enjoyed every minute of his 81 years of life. He was so positive and vibrant and would have

been very proud that the OSA convention has hit a major milestone of 50 years. We were very sure that he would attend the 2019 New Jersey convention in verve and spirit. The final leg, the final destination of Dad's beautiful and exciting journey will come to a full circle when his ashes are scattered on the sea at Puri, Odisha — Dad's birthplace, hometown, the city of Lord Jagannath.



KALPANA DASH

The First Odia Woman Everester

Kalpna Dash (7 July 1966 – 23 May 2019)

was an Indian lawyer and mountaineer. She was a native of Dhenkanal, Odisha where she was a practicing attorney. She was the first Odia mountaineer to scale Mount Everest. She scaled Mount Everest on 21 May 2008 with a team of five members from the United States, Canada and Nepal. She had attempted to climb Mount Everest twice before, once in 2004 and once in 2006 but failed due to bad weather and health conditions. On 23 May 2019, Dash summited Everest with two others.

She became ill on the descent and died just above its balcony. Her body was recovered and brought to Kalinga Stadium Complex where Sports Minister Tusharkant Behera accompanied by his department officials paid their last respects to the departed soul.

Paying homage, Behera said, "Kalpana Dash was an ace mountaineer who brought fame to the state. She was an achiever who led by example and even in her death she will continue to inspire young aspirants to scale great peaks".

Ms. Kalpana Dash had numerous successful expeditions throughout the world.

Mount Kilimanjaro in East Africa (5895 m)
- October 9, 2014

Mount Aconcagua in South America (6962 m)
- January 16, 2015

Mount Elbrus in Europe (5642 m)
- July 31, 2015

Mount Cosciuszko in Australia (2228m)
- December 3, 2015

With a sponsorship from Dr. and Mrs. S.K. Dash, Kalpana visited USA and talked to 2000 Odias from USA and Canada at the 40th Convention of the Odia Society of America in New Jersey. Her next major appearance was at the 3rd Ratha Jatra celebration in Minnesota. Odias will always be proud of her unique accomplishments. CM Naveen Patnaik said,

"Her legacy in mountaineering will inspire the generations of young women in the state."





ସଂଚାର MOTION



A Journey with OSA RDF

Swapnalata Mishra (Rath)



It was 2008 MI OSA Kumar Purnima celebration where I had heard that Michigan OSA would host OSA Regional Drama festival 2009, the very first one in Northern region. I curiously contacted MI OSA president Dr. Jogesh Panda to know more about it. After the discussion, the concept of RDF seemed very interesting to me. Not only just because I have a weakness for Drama, but also because what RDF can do for OSA in a regional level. Also Odia drama is the best medium to promote odia language in our adopted land. Personally as a person with a passion for (producing, writing, directing and acting) odia drama I felt good that through RDF I can meet and witness the talents from nearby OSA chapters. I appreciated the concept and offered my willingness to support for the planning. In return I was proposed to take responsibility of coordinating Michigan drama for the event. When I discussed this with my husband he also agreed with me that this is a great concept. I felt encouraged. Producing Drama for Mi OSA had been my hobby from 1999. By then I had produced 6 odia drama for adults and 2 English drama for children. I knew it will not be an easy process and definitely time consuming. Still I moved on. It was a different experience. My journey with OSA RDF started from there. Little did I know I am moving with my passion towards some great experiences in my personal as well as my social life! Lessons I have learned through the process and the feelings I have captured are incredible and humbling.

I directed the Mi OSA presentation Mahisha Marddini Giti Natya with a team of 15 participants. Enthusiasm during 4 weekend practice and preparation for costume is still fresh in memory. A team from CanOSA joined

and it was also a great experience to see so many drama loving odia people from Canada attending the event. Michigan odias welcomed them with open heart and enjoyed both the drama as well as presented our local Basantotsava with high spirit. It was a memorable evening from every aspect. RDF 2009 in Michigan showed me the light of hope for RDF dreamers. I got positive that it will open a new door for OSA in regional level. I was hopeful that through drama, Likeminded people would get together and odia children will get closer to odia culture. In the process, odia language will get its priority for another reason in OSA forum.

2010 Chicago RDF and Diwali Celebration

I myself was inspired enough to arrange and lead a drama team (along with our families) from Michigan in following years to Chicago. I wrote and directed the drama. Participants from Michigan were Akshaya & Mona Ray, Debasish Acharya, Subhasish Mohanty, Sangram Basantia and myself. Entire team enjoyed the hospitality of our Chicago friends from Friday night till Sunday morning. Successfully Chicago OSA organized the RDF 2010 along with its Local Diwali event. Chicago OSA team as well as a team from Wisconsin OSA presented two other hilarious Drama. All three dramas were well accepted by the wonderful Chicago audience. I enjoyed the silence in audience during our presentation. No words to thank Gyana Bhai and Sujata Pattanaik for their warm hospitality by hosting me and my family.

2011 RDF Columbus Ohio

Again we, a four member drama team, from Mi OSA along with our family attended RDF 2011 in Columbus, Ohio. We stayed with my cousin Srikant Mishra. Other participants were Akshaya ray, Debasish Acharya, and Parag Mishra. They all preferred to stay at hotels. Again, it was a wonderful event filled with five hilarious dramas (two from Ohio, one from Canada and one from Michigan). This was the RDF where everybody thought it is a pressure on members of local chapter, either OSA or participating chapters should share the burden. 2012 RDF and Basantotsava Mi OSA

I took the responsibility as regional coordinator of RDF and basantotsava hosted by Michigan Chapter. Jogesh panda wrote and directed the drama presented by Mi OSA chapter. Dr. Basanta Mohapatra and Dr. Birendra Jena from Ohio, Mr and Mrs Abani and Rashmi Pattanaik from Canada represented their chapter respectively. It was not easy for both chapters to create a drama team till the very last moment. Chicago OSA could not make a team to attend. As the regional coordinator I felt attendance from other chapter was quite disappointing as our local organizers and performers worked hard to welcome our neighbors. But at the same time it was not that hard to understand how difficult it is to organize a team and need to travel four/ five hours to present a drama.

It was unfortunate that neither I nor anyone else from Michigan could make a team to attend the RDF hosted by CanOSA in 2013. CanOSA organizers and RDF Coordinators were disappointed. I understood their feelings but could not help.

2014 RDF Michigan OSA

Michigan OSA organized RDF along with local Basantotsava. Devasish Acharya took

responsibility as Regional coordinator and I took responsibility as Michigan OSA drama coordinator. I directed two dramas. One drama was for adult artists. Adult drama “ Pathara “ was written by Sharat Mohapatra from Odisha. Participants were Akshaya Ray, Swati Mishra, Parag Mishra, Sunil Pattanayak, Biswajit Pattanayak, Debasish Acharya, Ananya Kar and and myself. It was well accepted by the audience. But it was the children’s odia drama Satyara Jay, written and directed by me, stunned me as well as the entire audience. Outstanding performance of our children in delivering odia dialogues mesmerized the audiences. Audience also enjoyed two other wonderful drama presented by Ohio Chapter and CanOSA.

Once again it was impossible for me to participate in RDF 2015 and RDF 2016. It was hard to make a team to travel to Toronto and Cleveland.

2017 RDF CanOSA

Even though I was interested and ready to participate it was not possible for me to create a drama team from the beginning because no one showed interest to travel to Toronto. But I was determined to attend the event with my husband to honor the request of my drama group friends from Canada. Fortunately finally I got one enthusiastic artist from Michigan. Dr. Sangeeta Pradhan agreed to travel and perform with me. I wrote the script Jagnyassenira Nyaya and we practiced in a week by phone. We travelled together Friday night to Toronto along with my husband. Gagan and Sabita Panigrahi welcomed us to their home with big smile in mid night. Next day morning we practiced drama and attended the event in the afternoon. It was a wonderful evening filled with mind blowing performances by talented Can OSA artists of all ages. Three other hilarious dramas were presented (one drama by Can OSA and two others by Ohio OSA.).



Once again it was a memorable evening from all aspect.

It was not possible for me to attend RDF 2018 organized by Ohio OSA at Cincinnati. Unfortunately Mi OSA did not participate in RDF 2018 since no one else showed any interest.

Once again, after five years, Michigan OSA is hosting RDF 2019 this year on May 12th. Due to my personal situation I am not able to arrange so far any drama but eagerly waiting to

enjoy the evening watching talented performance by other teams from Michigan, Ohio and Canada.

After 10 years I have not lost my enthusiasm for RDF, if situation in my personal life permits me and if I get at least one enthusiastic artist to perform, I will try to my best to support RDF. It is not easy to attend every year. It is not easy to create a team every year. But I am hopeful. My sincere thanks to Sandip babu for his constant encouragement.

I hope this noble effort by odia drama enthusiasts in Canada and USA will continue and make the pioneers dream come true. My heartfelt thanks to Dr SriGopal Mohanty , Mr. Sandip Dasverma , Mr. Birendra Jena and all drama enthusiasts in USA and Canada who have been tirelessly working for last ten years for OSA RDF. The impact of RDF is visible now a days through the quality of the drama being presented in OSA conventions. OSA Convention can't allow a drama more than 20 minutes. That restricts a lot of possibilities to present a drama. Drama is a wonderful way to present Odia cultural value, historical and mythological stories and life story of ideal legends in front of our second generation. OSA RDF is definitely a wonderful forum to preserve our odia culture and promote odia language.

22546, Current Drive,
Macomb, Michigan 48044



Reset with Regional Drama Festival

Sarita Das

Lights! Sounds! Curtain Rise!

Thus, starts the journey of Regional Drama Festival. Every year, the southwest cities, Dallas, Houston, Austin, San Antonio and Arkansas come together to showcase their drama's.

A few months before we decide to participate in the festival, we work with our artists. There is brain storming sessions on the plot- should we do a social drama; or a story from Odisha's history; or just have a drama blending the lifestyles of East and West. Ultimately, the writers come forward with their plot for the Play. Team Houston is known all over USA in Odia community for their humor-based drama's.

The most fun part for the drama participants starts now managing schedule conflicts, time management, venue and menu discussions for the drama practice nights. So, the drama festival is just a way for all of us to "Reset" from our monotonous lives and bond over a common goal. This is where we make a travel through memory lane and discuss experiences from our past, some incident

about college days etc. It is during these sessions, I have heard stories that have molded the drama plot or drama dialogues. We relive, rejuvenate and reconnect with our roots.

On the D day, the teams from all different cities come together under the same roof to compete. Team Dallas, when travelling to an RDF venue, rent a big bus and come together. A lot of times, Team Arkansas also joins Team Dallas and travel together. At the end of the day, winning and loosing does not matter.

What matters is to meet Odia's and share our passion for food, art and culture together. One incident I remember from 2017 festival is when an artist from Austin Drama team offered to participate in the drama for Arkansas team just so that the city can continue to participate (one of their key artists could not participate due to personal issues). This is a "One Team" effort where collectively we want to make the event successful.

As I look forward, I want this festival to continue and I hope the younger generation will keep this alive. We need creative minds to come forward and help us transition from a traditional setting to a more techno -digital world of drama. Let us look forward to "Reset" every year.

Till then,

Lights Off! Sound Off! Curtains Down!

Houston, Texas

RDF in Southern Chapter

Prashanta Ranabijuli

Southwest Chapter celebrated its latest RDF on April 13, 2019 at Houston, Texas. This was our 8th RDF. Our 1st RDF was at Dallas in 2009. From 2009 to 2019, Dallas has hosted the RDF four times, Austin twice, and Houston twice. There were only three blank years. It is fair to say that RDF has been very popular in Southwest Chapter.

Southwest Chapter is geographically huge, encompassing Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. Despite such a large area there has been good participation from major cities. In 2009 Dallas, Austin, Arkansas, and Houston participated and presented four dramas. Around 115 people attended that event. In 2019 drama festival, Dallas, Austin, Houston, and San Antonio participated and presented four adults' dramas, one children's drama, and cultural shows by children. More than 250 people attended the event, which spanned more than 10 hours. It felt like a mini-OSA convention. Over the years we have learned the importance of children's participation. This approach achieves two goals: 1) exposes children to Odia language and culture, and 2) increases overall attendance as parents are involved.

As the festivals become bigger many challenges crop up. Logistics become a huge issue. Finding a decent venue with good auditorium, A/V equipment, dining facility etc. is not only difficult but also very expensive. Coordinating with cities to understand their requirements, handling registration process, money etc. become complex. Managing an RDF requires 10's of volunteers working for 3+ months. Without proper guidance it could take more. If

there was a reference document that walks through all the tasks involved, the timeline, do's, and don'ts etc. (for example, a readymade judging criteria document or a workflow document) it would cut down on the preparation time for a new organizing team. The prior RDF coordinators should come up with such a document for future events.

Balancing budget has been a major worry for every organizer. A decent venue costs upwards of \$2K. Add in insurance, A/V technician, custodians, other rentals etc. and the total facility cost would be more than \$3K. Including food the total cost could top \$7K. To increase attendance registration fee is kept at a nominal level. With the help of a few generous donors in the community we have been able to manage the events financially, but we should find a sustainable way to raise sponsorship money to support the facility cost. If OSA had a general event insurance that chapters could use, RDF organizers would save hundreds of dollars.

Regardless of all the challenges RDF has been very successful in Southwest Chapter. Each time we see new faces at the event, and the return attendees come with even more enthusiasm. Children are encouraged and recognized. New leaders are born. Long live RDF in Southwest Chapter!

Austin, Texas

RDF: The Other Side

Leena Mishra

Regional Drama Festival (RDF) a unique, popular Odia jatra event in North America, dream project of Mr. Sandip Dasverma started during the period of 2007-2009 OSA executives. OSA President Pratap Das being an epitome of cultural proponent in North America supported the idea whole heartedly. The idea which was sprouting then took a shape from the green grass field of Niagara Fall and staged as First RDF in Texas in the year 2009 as Southern Regional Drama Festival.

It's been a decade now. RDF has reached to many Odia Jatra loving Odia families in North America. More than 80 dramas have been staged so far. The initial idea was to simulate the home-based event gathering atmosphere of India here but due to many reasons it was hard to achieve however what was achieved far outweighed the initial imagination. It started with the idea of having fun together, but we never could think of the other aspects of the RDF especially the impact on our children. Apart from having fun together, there are numerous other benefits of RDF not limited to team work, improved memory, public speaking, communication skill and most importantly internalizing Odia culture and traditions through this process.

Being a parent of a North American Odia kid, responsibilities lies on us to be the torchbearer of the Odia Tradition and Culture. With the busy life we often forget or missed to celebrate, observe or follow our traditions and rituals at home which kept us binding for years and help us pass our values to the next generation. These are great tools to strengthen the ODia identity on a remote land. In ancient times these traditions were created very

carefully and practiced passing the values of the Odisha to next generation without even realizing the bigger goal behind it. But RDF plays an important role here as our gate keeper. It does the task for us that we leave incomplete. Combine acting, dialogue, or narration used in presenting an act often express a sentiment or mood or illustrate a specific event or daily act representing early days or historical stories or activities of Odisha. The instruments, artefacts, costume, scenery, place, and prop associated with presentation reminds us the intangible cultural heritage. These little tools used in the act plays a critical role to keep us connected to our root. Additionally, it helps our children gain insight on our past, regular day to day life, village activities, Odia vocabularies and many more. They synthesize the information at their free time and use this skill to communicate effectively especially when they visit Odisha. They enjoy speaking in Odia with elders and peers with their expanded version of Odia dictionary and they find themselves familiar in situations and adjust easily.

In short, acts presented in RDF are more than simply 'performances' for us. They play a crucial role in keeping our culture and traditions alive and help us stay connected to our root ignoring distance as a barrier. In the name of weekend practice sessions with friends we build a strong support system here for ourselves. RDF act as a vital force to maintain and promote the ODia language, heritage and culture among Odia diaspora in North America.

Washing DC Chapter

RDF Experience

Gopal Mohapatra

Southwest chapter of OSA has been holding Regional Drama Festival (RDF) for about ten years. The first RDF took place in Dallas where teams from Austin, Dallas, Houston and Arkansas participated to the cheer of more than two hundred strong audience. Houston team won the first RDF best drama award. Dallas served as an excellent host city. People enjoyed the dramas, delicious food and above all meeting friends and making new ones. They left with a pledge to meet again the next year and the tradition has been continuing for almost a decade now.

Subsequently Austin and Houston have hosted RDF a few times, Dallas having hosted for the maximum number of times. Plays of different genre have been staged – comedy, drama, fiction, and semi non-fiction. Actors from both genders have included amateur and experienced ones spanning a broad age spectrum. All the cities have bagged awards in different categories such as best entertaining drama, best acted drama, best scripted or simply the best drama. Old faces have given way to new ones. The torch is being carried on

by newer and newer faces.

Over the years, through this great event, Odias in SW chapter have grown as a family, knowing each other better, making new friends, sharing laughter, happiness, enjoying delicious food and most importantly spreading Odia culture and tradition.

This year OSA-SW RDF will be held in Houston, in which teams from Austin, Dallas, Houston and San Antonio are going to present their respective plays. This will bring in greater participation. Houston Odia community members are working hard to make this event a bigger and better than ever before by including several entertaining programs related dance and music.

We thank Sri Sandip Dasverma and Sri SriGopal Mohanty for starting this great regional event to bring Odias together at local level. We also thank OSA for patronizing this event to spread and sustain our rich Odia culture and heritage.

(Past President, OSA SW Chapter)



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Remembering the Creation of

SEEDS 25 Years Ago

Priyadarsan (*Darshan*) Patra

"Wherever you turn, you can find someone who needs you. Even if it is a little thing, do something for which there is no pay but the privilege of doing it." ~Albert Schweitzer

It was the year 1989, and I had recently joined the Ph.D. program at the University of Texas at Austin. Early, nebulous ideas of establishing a progressive, action-oriented group germinated in a series of informal discussions among several Indian, Indian-American, and American students on campus. I, being fairly young and restless then, vividly remember the excitement when we founded the India Progressive Action Group (IPAG,) a student organization, in the wake of a rally held to protest the insensitivity of Union Carbide towards victims of the gas tragedy at Bhopal, India. The protest was in connection with a visit to UT by a vice-president of that company to speak, ironically, on "How to do business in India".

While we, a gaggle of campus 'activists,' focused on various 'causes' and projects throughout India, my involvement gave me a special opportunity in 1990 to visit and work with Padwa Gramdani Sangh (PGS) in Koraput, Orissa. PGS, led by Sri Nishakar Das, worked to improve the socio-economic conditions of the villagers, in about 100 nearby villages, who were predominantly Adivasi (indigenous) people and were often stricken by famine, diseases and starvation deaths due to lack of irrigation facilities and clean water, compounded by official high-handedness. This was my first 'soul search' back in the remote areas of my birth state of Odisha that I had left

after high-school. By 1991, the problem had severely metastasized to multiple regions -- Kalahandi, Bolangir, and Koraput districts were hit especially hard.

The Kalahandi-Bolangir-Koraput Famine

India Abroad (June 25, 1993) reported, "Even as officials gloated over the government's success in creating a huge wheat stockpile, a little girl in far-away Orissa was digging in the earth for wild roots. The 4-year-old Ankhita had no special fascination for wild roots. She had had nothing to eat for days after her mother died of starvation in the southern district of Kalahandi, whose chronic starvation has come to symbolize the contradictions of the country's food situation. ... At least 11 million people, most of them in the tribes-dominated districts of Orissa and in Bihar, are reportedly trying to stave off hunger by eating wild roots, boiled leaves, and seeds, as famine and drought stalk over 6,000 villages."

We believed that these sorts of famines were man-made macroeconomic disasters, largely a function of local political and economic policies such as unemployment patterns, taxation, inflationary food prices, the absence of minimal employment or welfare relief, environmental degradation, and corruption. India Today (May 31, 1993) wrote that the governmental aid was all tangled up in bureaucratic bungling and corruption. So, we felt that it was a solemn duty to go beyond traditional charity, to do whatever possible to raise awareness and prod action widely.

IPAG lent its organizational support and a few individuals came forward to lead the so-called "Kalahandi-Bolangir Initiative (KBI)" which had by then grown to more than 60 ardent supporters and contributors over several regions in the USA and Canada at various university campuses. It was growing into a movement for participatory consciousness about grassroots and sustainable development, particularly in Orissa and generally in India. We raised some donations through presentations and were in touch with about half-a-dozen reputed volunteer development groups (NGO) in Orissa (now Odisha,) several development experts in India, and a few progressive sister organizations in the USA.

On July 15, 1993, I sent out an urgent appeal, to many students and families of Odisha origin across the campus and to many across the North American continent, which stated thus:

"I am part of a group of students, professionals, and professors keenly interested in participating in and contributing to people-oriented, sustainable development in Orissa, one of the poorest states of India.

In the wake of shocking new reports of destitution in the Kalahandi & Bolangir districts of Orissa, we have grown by drawing broad support of more than 50 students and professionals all over the USA & Canada to help, however modestly, the needy people of the said region by creating some developmental infrastructure in that area. We cannot, nor should we, largesse or "impose" our charity on the local people, alleviation of whose misery is all we seek. Our means are very limited, and our tasks are enormous considering the great distance from the USA and our other responsibilities. We want to succeed in looking after ourselves by lending each other a compassionate hand, but no hand-outs. The main wealth of our supporters here is their sincerity and zeal. I seek your support and ideas for this cause."

In this early phase, we sent correspondences and call-for-proposals out to social work groups such as Padwa Gramdani Sangha of Koraput, Orissa; India Development Service of Chicago; Orissa Society of Americas, North America; Pragati of Boston, USA; Parivartan of UPenn, USA; Center for Applied Systems Analysis & Development of Bombay, India; and Development Network of Pune for information and technical assistance, India; VISWAS of Khariar road, Kalahandi, Orissa; Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram of Sundargarh, Orissa; Jana Seva Parishad of Kendrapada, Orissa; and Sarvodaya Relief Fund, India.

From there, the "Kalahandi Bolangir Initiative" turned into a poignant journey. From the very beginning, the spirit was young and willing, and the fellow sojourners came from many walks of life and many regions of the world. Our goal was grand, a few times mistaken as grandiose. We wanted to have a movement of 'participatory consciousness'. What it meant to us was to energize all young at heart to become aware of the problems of human progress and to participate in a process that vigorously leads towards a more satisfying existence for people and their environment. We wished to attract the Indians living abroad towards the cause of sustainable and equitable development for the people in India.

The first bunch to lead this journey turned out to be from Orissa. Also, there had been only limited activism among non-resident Oriyas and that the political & economic condition of the people of Orissa had been traditionally weak. Therefore, the choice of Orissa as the initial focus of the group seemed natural. The outbreak of famine (or at least the news about it) in the South-Western Orissa crystalized the fluid thoughts among hitherto unrelated individuals, making them speak their mind loudly. The easy availability of electronic media provided the crucial communication link among the 'new activists'. Some of the activists

had prior experience with other progressive organizations and that helped garner immense support for the fledgling group. The group was neither philosophically oriented nor materially equipped for providing relief or charity. Involvement was voluntary and not remunerated. The primary focus was to catalyze the beneficiaries' interest and involvement in their own economic development, improve their political consciousness, functional education, and health & environmental well-being through our projects in Orissa (India). We also discussed, debated and learned the issues of development, education, political equity, and environmental sustainability, and we hoped to promote 'participatory' consciousness among non-resident Oriyas and Indians, in general.

Around 1992, our group (although not officially called SEEDS yet) had started working independent of IPAG as our focus narrowed down to Orissa.

Our First Kalahandi Project

Some people argued that poverty in Kalahandi (for example) was assiduously cultivated and marketed, while some others felt that there were no widespread starvation deaths in Kalahandi-Koraput-Bolangir area. While there may be some truth in each of the propositions above, the fact remained that a vast majority of people suffered inhuman misery, perhaps short of death, and failed to be contributing and happy citizens of the world. They represented one of the starkest examples of neglect and absence of basic human rights to food, healthcare, education, and shelter. We had realized that indiscriminate, ill-thought pumping of external aid to the region could even pervert and deprave rather than bring succor. Therefore, we decided to take a different experimental approach with Kalahandi area being the ground of our first experiment. We wished to:

Promote grass-roots effort for sustainable and equitable development and

Build our experiments on any existing local, non-governmental initiatives that showed potential and strength.

So, we went through a long process of project solicitation, selection, and debating and finally accepted a project proposal from Akhil Bharatiya Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA), Sundargarh. We established guidelines for its funding, execution, monitoring, and reporting. We scheduled for our colleague Dhanada Mishra to visit VKA and the project area - Lanjigarh block of M. Rampur tehsil in Kalahandi. The project called for the establishment of approximately two 'multi-purpose, one-teacher' schools and one fruit-sapling nursery per panchayat in 9 of the 12 Gram (village) Panchayats of Lanjigarh. VKA apparently drew inspiration and resources from Friends of Tribals Society (FTS) whose brochure stated that, "the 70 million vanvasis (tribals) living in 50,000 Indian villages have average, annual family income less than \$7, with literacy among men being 12% and among women 5%, while health care available to them is poor to non-existent."

Our guidance to VKA quoted below reveals the founding philosophy of SEEDS. *"Sustainability and self-sufficiency are the cornerstones of our philosophy. Hence, we would strongly request you to add a few more plant-nurseries and cut down a few village-schools in their place. We want to see people grow and take care of themselves and not be dependent on handouts. We also feel that it is better to do a few things well than to do a lot poorly. Therefore, we ask that you take up 15 'one-teacher schools' and 10 plant-nurseries attached to 10 of those schools. The nurseries should be built by the village beneficiaries themselves and should be tended by the students, too. Environment-friendly agro-techniques and development of means of earning through the cooperative selling of produce/saplings should be properly emphasized."*

During this period, in 1993, we named our group Sustainable Economic and Educational Development Society or “SEEDS” that best represented our philosophy and mission in both its short and long forms. In 1995, I completed my Ph. D. in Austin and moved to Portland, Oregon, where I continued the work that I had started in Austin. We registered SEEDS as a US nonprofit at Oregon state as well as Internal Revenue Service (I manually prepared and filed all the paperwork to avoid costs of professional help -- eliminating overheads to support the project beneficiaries to the full extent has remained a hall mark for SEEDS.) Gradually we undertook many more projects as we got approved as a public foundation.

In those early days, I was lucky to gain friendship and trust from a number of volunteers such as Srinivas Praharaj, Himanshu Baral, Umakanta Choudhury, Pritiraj Mohanty, quickly followed by Lalu Mansinha, Dhanada Mishra, Smriti Panda, Sri Gopal Mohanty, Somdutt Behura, Abani Patra, Gopal Mohapatra, Sikhanda Satapathy and many others. Also, equally importantly, many generous people throughout North America, including some of my professors, provided donations to execute our projects in Odisha. Not only generous individuals who heard or came across us but also several regional chapters of the Odisha Society of Americas had financially contributed to SEEDS projects. I note that from the inception to the present day, SEEDS has been a “negative overhead” organization. Every penny we collect as donation to SEEDS goes directly to the projects; there is no remuneration for volunteers and SEEDS executives, and additionally, the SEEDS volunteers and executives often spend their own funds to pay expenses related to SEEDS projects, such as project visits, donation shipment, telephone costs, etc. Many of the volunteers and donors have been supporting SEEDS in that capacity

from the beginning until now. I will blog-post photocopies of some of the memorabilia (letters from our early generous supporters and project photographs) to www.seedsnet.org

After about a decade, starting in 1999, SEEDS entered a new phase, what we now call Phase II of SEEDS. In the next few paragraphs, I recall how that came about, prompted by a natural disaster.

1999 Orissa Super Cyclone and Phase II of SEEDS

Orissa had been completely shattered by the worst-ever cyclone of the 20th century. Little did the people living in the coastal area know that the frenzied storm would bring their lives to an absolute halt at once. On the early hours of 29th October, Black Friday, as it came to be known, a massive and merciless cyclonic storm hit the coastal belt of Orissa killing thousands and displacing millions. The wind blew at an unbelievable velocity of 250-260 km per hour. The turbulent sea, rising to 5-8 meters high, with accompanying continuous rain, had swept lakhs of houses out of existence. Such was the fury of nature that nothing except lifeless concrete structures had survived. Children had lost their mothers and adults were constantly looking up for the never-reaching food packets. Cattle had died in thousands and other animal casualties were unthinkable. The aerial survey showed that the coastal Orissa from Puri to Balasore had become the extended Bay of Bengal. Bhubaneswar, the capital city, was lying quietly in darkness and all possible links with the outer world had been cut off by this Super Cyclone. Though there was no official estimate of the human casualties available yet, independent observers and local workers figured it to be at least 20,000. The port city of Paradip had casualty ranging between 8000-10000, where the deceased were mostly daily wage laborers, fishermen and women. Many general physical and power infrastructures

were severely damaged. Crop loss was at 100%.

The worst affected districts were Jagatsingpur, Kendrapada, Puri, Khurda, and Balasore, that had been totally disconnected from the rest of the country. Under these circumstances, we decided to intervene in those areas in some way. We didn't have the manpower to investigate, visit, implement, monitor and document every place. So, we selected a couple of local NGOs (Non-governmental organizations) who could ably assist. And we focused on mid-term rehabilitation, starting with farmers. We decided on helping the numerous areas on a rolling basis – few villages/ panchayats at a time. The farmers constantly faced the problem of “too much and then too little” water. To deal with that problem, we introduced a project using the scientific method of micro-lift irrigation (MILP). We recruited the experts (agriculturists, irrigation engineers In Odisha) to help and reduce implementation cost. Moreover, my colleagues and I thought of a way to get the local communities deeply engaged. We created a soft contract with a beneficiary village that would take the responsibility of recouping the project cost (given to them by SEEDS) from their next crops, which could then be used for the next MILP at a ‘neighboring’ village, making it a new beneficiary agreeing to the same contract. Thus, the notions of ‘self-help’ and ‘community bootstrapping’ spread from one village to another and the Pani Panchayats came into existence.

The success stories of the Pani Panchayats spread and even the government took some cues. The amount of money we raised for this rehabilitation was substantial (second only to that raised for the rehabilitation after Gujrat Earthquake in 2001, when we collaborated with another group). Yet, we had our many challenges too, especially, in maintaining, recycling funds and sustaining the project for

long periods. The learnings from the successes and challenges led to a second revolution in our thinking and how we got energized to enter the Phase II of SEEDS. The MILP got refined, optimized, and scaled to many villages in coastal regions and later implemented in Bolangir district as well. The model being low-cost, effective, community-driven, and planned for self-replication (implemented at about 14 panchayats), could help the most with the least.

More than 15+ more years have passed since then and our primary focus has shifted to “systemwide initiatives”. While we did and still do engage in some immediate disaster relief after major disasters, being true to our philosophy, we have spent most of our resources and time on long-term rehabilitation and development projects in rural Odisha ranging from across a wide range of fields: education, health, women empowerment, water harvesting, employing and applying Light Emitting Diode (LED) & Fly ash technologies, sustainable agriculture, and preservation of dying arts & crafts in Odisha. We hope to describe some of it elsewhere.

Sincere thanks to all who have been a part of the SEEDS Journey or have supported us in different ways! Whether you are currently active in SEEDS or not, please visit us at seedsnet.org from time to time and stay connected! And, warm wishes for the golden jubilee celebration of OSA.

Chandler, Arizona

OSA's Journey on Public Library Initiatives

Nishikanta Sahoo



The Odisha Society of the Americas (OSA,) the largest Non-Resident Odias' (NROs) organization, is proudly celebrating the golden jubilee during its annual convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey in the first week of July 2019. Historically, annual convention, the main event of OSA, has not been limited to celebration of only the rich cultural heritage of Odisha, but also includes many seminars related to Odisha development. Although formally OSA Public Library Initiative (OPLI) was formed in the end of the year 2013, it has been greatly influenced by OSA Odisha development seminars and advocacy programs in various forums that had been conducted over the years by many committed volunteers interested in public library development in Odisha. OPLI exemplifies how the NRO initiative transformed an idea of establishing modern public library to a reality, how the new digital library has been making the impact in the communities in Odisha, and how it has been pursuing in bringing the synergy towards public library movement in Odisha.

Background

The Phailin, one of the most devastating cyclones in Odisha, and the post Phailin flood had caused severe damage in Ganjam, Balasore and Mayurbhanj districts of Odisha in October 2013. The OSA had started the fund raising effort to support the affected people in Odisha. Since the fundraising process was long for a geographically widespread population in the Americas, and the OSA members were thousands of miles away from their motherland, it was logistically challenging to meet the affected people's immediate needs.

The OSA administration sought suggestion from its members on how the fund could be best utilized towards this cause. Most members suggested that the fund be utilized for infrastructure projects in the affected area as part of a long-term rehabilitation plan. Few OSA members suggested to renovate the affected educational infrastructures like schools and establish multi-purpose community centers that could be used as a cyclone shelters. We also had the proposal in the OSANET, the OSA's discussion group, to renovate and repair affected public libraries and/ or establish modern public libraries, like those in USA and Canada, in the cyclone affected area. The rationale was that a public library would serve a wider community; it could provide a broader set of services and could also be used as a multi-purpose community center. Many library enthusiasts, supporters, and well-wishers joined in the discussion in support of the proposal. The-then OSA administration approved the proposal to pursue the "Model Public Library Projects" in Odisha.

OSA contributed 63,000 USD(40 lakh INR) towards Odisha Chief Minister's Relief Fund (CMRF) with the understanding that the state administration would utilize the fund for educational infrastructure development in Phailin and post Phailin flood affected areas. The OSA formed the OPLI team comprising of enthusiasts and passionate volunteers to pursue the project as envisioned. A detailed proposal was sent to the Chief Minister Sri Naveen Patnaik to build Model Public Libraries in Odisha.

Vision

The core vision behind this initiative is to develop a well-integrated modern public library system in Odisha and India to empower individuals, build a stronger community and improve the socio-economic, educational and cultural system.

The main purpose was to create a basic footprint of world class public libraries in Odisha through the model public libraries, that can be an inspirational model to replicate similar Public Libraries at every District and Block level in other parts of the state by Government or private bodies. The vision was highly influenced by excellent modern public library system and public-school system of USA, Canada and other developed countries where it played a significant role for an exemplary socio-economic development. The OSA envisioned Odisha and India to follow similar model to bring sea change in the community development.

Mission

OPLI started with the mission to establish Information and Communication Technology (ICT) enabled model public libraries that would function as a resource center, information house, knowledge center, skill development center and community center to meet the socio-economic, cultural and educational need of the general public.

OSA Model Library Services

The OSA model public library was intended to provide the following services

High speed broadband internet
Digital contents
Traditional reading room service
Internet-Audio-Video enabled community center
Library automation service



Skilled knowledgeable staff
Focused activities
Involvement of civil society

Potential Impact to the community

With the envisioned model public library, the community will be benefited in various aspects like early childhood literacy, literacy, education, employment, entrepreneurship, health and wellness, e-government, civic engagement, e-commerce, and social inclusion.

The Journey

It is a very long journey while working with the Government of Odisha, district administration and volunteer friends in Odisha as it involved a lot of bureaucratic process and other challenges. There were a lot of follow-up, e-mails, personal visits and phone calls involved in the entire process to release the fund, perform the location assessment, evaluate technology for respective library locations. A lot of ideas evolved and friendship was built over the period of time.

The digital library project has historical significance to OSA, as it is perceived as a signature project of OSA in Odisha where OSA has proposed and funded to establish Odisha's first digital public library in Berhampur with support from state, local administration and civil society.



Urban Model Public Library

On April 4 this year, the “Odisha Public E-library, Berhampur”, the first digital public library of Odisha completed one year of operation in its new location at Berhampur Town Hall. Due to intellectual needs and demands of the youth, recently, the Berhampur Municipality Corporation (BMC) has increased the library hours and provided additional funding for construction of a new building to accommodate 200 more people. CCTV camera has been installed in the library facility. There are hundred plus registered youth taking advantage of high speed broadband internet, competitive books, text books, and seminars conducted in the library. The library has 12 thin clients and 2 server serving the people. There are two dedicated library staffs to monitor day-to-day library operations. The management committee is formed by a team of civil society members led by Dr BNR Subudhi, who closely works with the BMC administration. For smooth operations and transitions OSA has signed an MoU with BMC mayor to support in an advisory role to ensure that the library operates as envisioned.

Rural Model Public Library

Similar efforts are under development for establishing rural model public libraries in Baghada, Suliapada block, Mayurbhanj and Kulida, Basta Block and Balasore.

Public Library Advocacy

The OSA had actively pursued the Government of Odisha (GoO) for cabinet approval of “Odisha Public Library Rules Notification” in August 2016 that had been pending since the “Odisha Public Library Act” was passed in assembly in 2001.

The OSA had conducted many public library advocacy seminars, open houses, conferences both here in USA and in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

The OSA has already established an initial seed fund for “OSA Public Library Initiative (OPLI)” to support public library advocacy programs towards the vision of “well-integrated modern public library system in Odisha.”

78 Cherrywood Dr, Nashua, NH-03062

Prabasi Odia Samman



Odisha Forum conferred "Prabasi Odia Samman" on the Odisha Society of the Americas in recognition of its outstanding contribution in promoting Odia culture in

United States of America & Canada.

OSA was also recognized for its development activities in Odisha and holding Odisha flag high.



The award was presented by Pranab Mukherjee, President of India & Naveen Patnaik, Chief Minister of Odisha on the 6th of January 2017, which was received by Sushant Satpathy, President and Saradakanta Panda, Secretary on behalf of OSA at New Delhi.

THE ODISHA SOCIETY OF AMERICAS

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

As of March 31, 2019

	TOTAL
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
Checking Main	133,303.38
Convention Account	0.00
Emergency Relief Account	15,230.10
PayPal Bank	797.84
Syndicate Bank - India - Rupee Acct - USD	
Equiv	245.43
TD Ameritrade	202,234.75
Total Bank Accounts	\$351,811.50
Other Current Assets	
Loans to Michigan Chapter for Convention	0.00
Loans to NJ Chapter for 2019 Convention	10,000.00
Total Other Current Assets	\$10,000.00
Total Current Assets	\$361,811.50
TOTAL ASSETS	\$361,811.50
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	
OSA Various Short Term Payables	0.00
Mailing 2017 Souvenir in Canada	0.00
OSA Pacific NW Chapter - 2017 Utkal	
Divas Payment	0.00
OSA Pacific NW Chapter 2017 April	
MSFT Contribution	
0.00	
Sruti Mohapatra (2016 LTA)	0.00
Subrina Biswal Award - 2017	700.00
Video preparation for MFA by Praful	
Library	
0.00	
Total OSA Various Short Term Payables	700.00
Total Other Current Liabilities	\$700.00
Total Current Liabilities	\$700.00
Total Liabilities	\$700.00
Equity	
Opening Balance Equity	302,458.65
Retained Earnings	19,895.03
Net Revenue	38,757.82
Total Equity	\$361,111.50
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$361,811.50

Accrual Basis Tuesday, April 2, 2019 01:01 PM GMT-7



OSA AWARDS 2019

Distinguished Odia Award

Dr. Bigyani Das (MD)

Utkalamani Gopabandhu Dash Memorial Award

Anjalika Pattanaik (CA)

Arun Das Memorial Kalashree Award

Sabita Panigrahi (Canada)

Yuva Kala Vikas Award

Debanshi Nikita Chowdhury (Germantown, Maryland)

Subrina Biswal Award for Academic Excellence

Isha Mohapatra (Easton, PA)

Youth Volunteer Award

Alok Mohanty (MD)

OSA AWARDS 2018

Distinguished Odia Award

Dr. Annapurna Pandey

Arun Das Memorial Kalashree Award

Kuku Das

Subrina Biswal Award for Academic Excellence

Devyesh Satpathy

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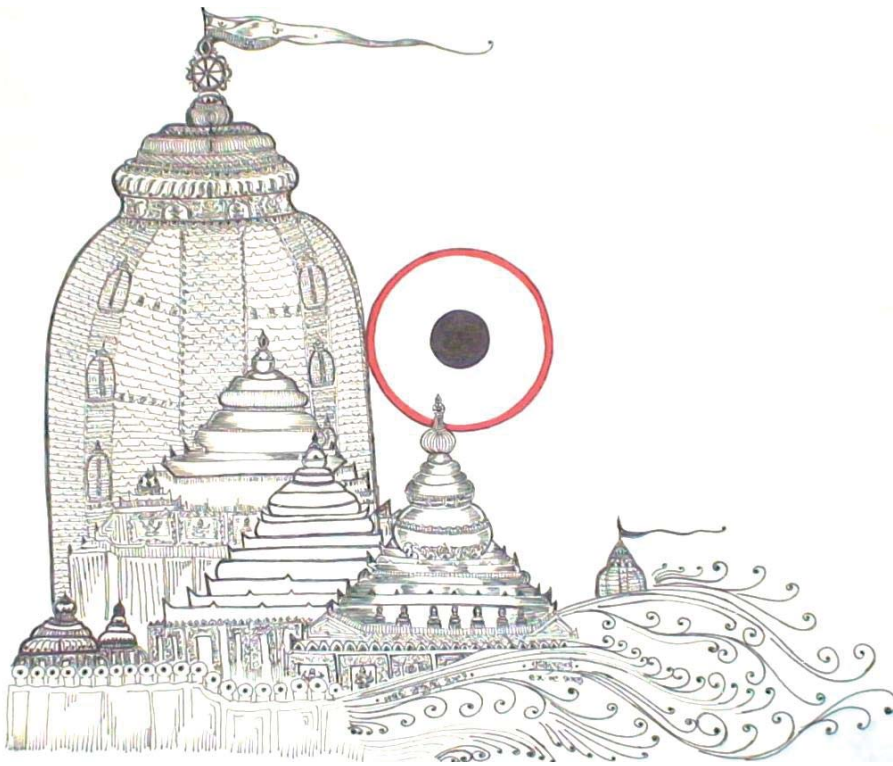
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The STEAM Works Studio as a Franchise chain was created by our own first generation Odiya entrepreneur “Shubhendu Das” with the support of a few like-minded friends in New Jersey. Incepted around the environs’ of the Princeton University and supported by many creative young brains from the ex-Princeton-ians, IIT-ians. Presently STEAM Works has grown to sparkling young minds in over 16 location primarily around in NY/NJ with branches around the Americas and globally as well.

Some of the key areas of focus with the STEAM Work proprietary Do-It-Yourself (DIY) enrichment include: Coding for Gesture Control Virtual Reality, Additive 3D printing and Laser-cut designs, Scuba and over-ground R/C Quad-copter engineering, Applied Rocket Sciences, Arduino based IoT Technology developments, Genetics Programming (iGEM), Applied Chemistry, Musical



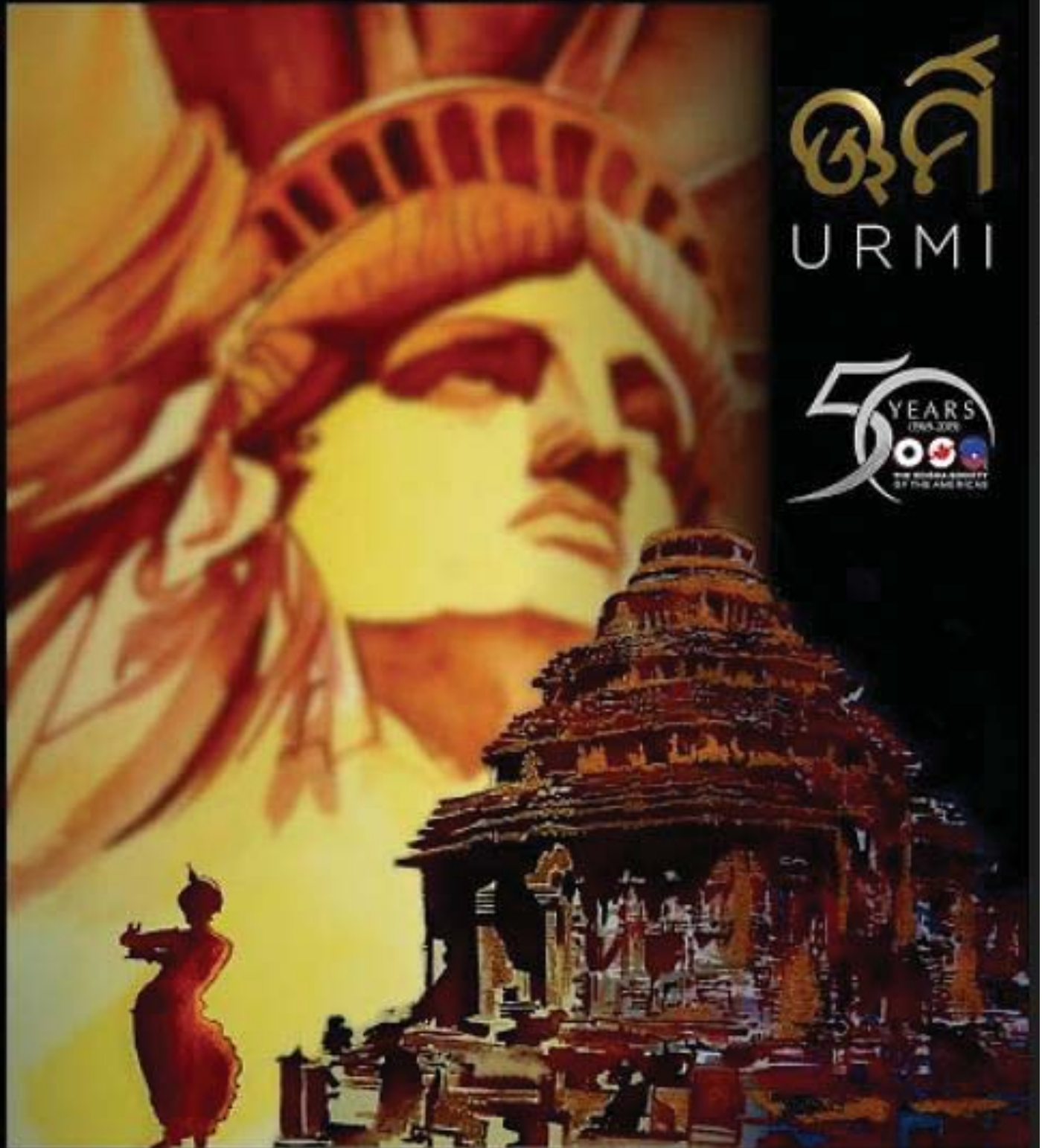
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U R M I

Journal of the Odisha Society of the Americas



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URMI



Atlantic City, NJ

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